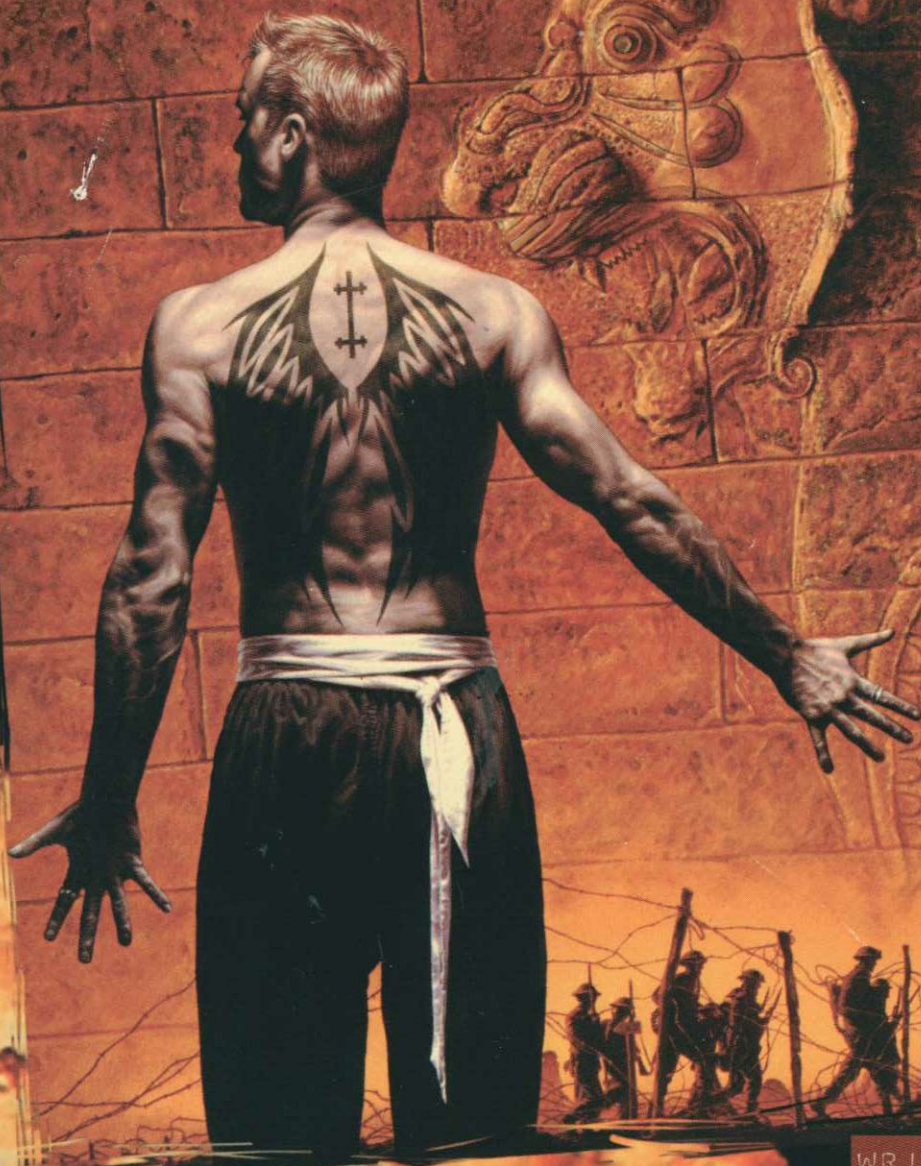


ARMAGEDDON™

The End Times Are Here



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A Word to the Wise:

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Parents should exercise their judgement as to whether this book is appropriate for their children. Some of the themes and ideas of *Armageddon* might not be to the liking of everyone, and are better suited to a mature audience.

Those of you who qualify, enjoy the game.

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Prologue

A Taste of Doomsday

"Brothers lift hands against one another; the ties of kinship are torn full of hate is the world and of shameless adultery; axe-time, this is, and sword-time, shields are cloven; storm-time this is, and wolf-time; the end of the Earth."

- the Prose Edda

"And I saw, and behold, a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."

- The Book of Revelations

The red-haired woman was following him, Greg realized. He was sure now.

He'd noticed her while leaving the subway, coming home after doing some research in the library; there were still books one couldn't download on the 'Net, he'd found out to his chagrin. He needed to keep his Grade Point Average up, and he was busting his ass to do so. The draft hadn't been reinstated yet, but it was just a matter of time. Every day, the news posted casualty lists. The war wasn't going well, and this time it wasn't a peacekeeping mission in some country only a *Jeopardy* contestant could find on a map. Two days ago, a spearhead had gotten within spitting distance of San Antonio before the Texas National Guard had contained the breakthrough. The casualty list had been particularly long that evening.

Greg had been worrying about the imminent draft when he saw her, standing on the platform, apparently waiting to board the car he was leaving. She stood out from among the crowd of early commuters. She was wearing a red overcoat and an old-fashioned hat. She was model-tall, but not skinny; even under the coat she seemed athletic and strong. Her face was model-beautiful, though; she could have easily made a living through her looks, although if he'd seen her face on a billboard or commercial or web site he would have remembered. Strangely enough, she had made eye contact with him and smiled. Out of town, she had to be; anybody who lived here for more than a few weeks soon learned better or got into trouble.

He'd started the three-block walk towards his dingy apartment, past the spray-painted buildings, which he'd gotten used to, and past the burning hulk of a building that had been hit by a cruise missile New York's air defenses had knocked off the sky. The missile had not hit the military targets it had been seeking; instead, the warhead had fallen on top of the building and turned it into a funeral pyre for twenty-nine people. Greg had been there, trying to help the survivors, trying to organize a bucket brigade. He hadn't done much good. He'd pulled out a screaming man, and had gotten burned himself, although not as badly as he'd first thought. That had been as close to the war as he wanted to get. At least he was good enough in math that he'd been able to switch majors from History - worse than useless for a nation at war - to Computer Engineering, which might guarantee him a civilian job, or at least a rear-echelon military post. Or so he hoped.

Greg was absorbed in his thoughts, but you don't survive in New York if you completely ignore your surroundings. As he turned a corner, he checked behind him. And there she was, the red-haired woman. She was half a block behind him, walking at a steady pace. Greg started worrying some more.

For a moment, his instincts failed him. He was so concerned with the stranger behind him that he failed to notice the car parked on the opposite side of the street. It wasn't until they started the engine and started driving past them that he noticed them. By then, all he could do was to scream in terror when he saw the car was full of men with guns, all pointed at him.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the woman who'd been following him, now running forward, her hand outstretched. They were *glowing*.

Then the guns spat flame and the whole world went dark.

Something cold and damp was pressed against his face.

Greg woke up. The woman was leaning over him,

The Armageddon RPG

The book you are holding now contains a roleplaying game, its setting, and its rules. So what is a roleplaying game? Simply put, it is a combination of board game, strategy game, and improvisational theater. It is a more mature version of the games of "let's pretend" that we all played as children. The rules are meant to avoid the old disputes about exactly what happened ("I shot you! You are dead!" "Am not!"). To enforce the rules and provide a coherent setting, one of the participants assumes the role of Chronicler (also known as Game Master or Referee). The rest of the players assume the role of one character; they control the actions of that character, limited only by the rules, the character's own abilities and limitations, and their imagination.

All roleplaying games have at their hearts the "What if...?" question. In ***Armageddon***, the question is "What if the world was at war?" and "What if you were a person gifted with supernatural powers?" What would you do if you could do things that most other people could only dream of? What if those powers also attracted the unwanted attention of strange creatures and shadowy organizations? You, by taking on the role of such a character, will have the chance to find out. ***Armageddon*** is a game that combines elements of horror (there are monsters in this world, and they are conquering the world) with mystic self-discovery (your character has the power to work magic, read minds, or be a god-like being) and conflict (an unspeakable evil is threatening the whole world; what are you going to do about it?).

By playing the game, the Chronicler and the Cast Members (the characters controlled by the players) will weave a Story together. The adventures, triumphs and tragedies of the characters will be part of a larger tapestry. In effect, the gaming group is creating and experiencing a novel or play, experiencing the double thrill of the creative act and the enjoyment of reading a book or watching a movie.

rubbing a wet handkerchief over his face.

He blinked, looked around. They were in his apartment. He was lying on the faded living room couch. There was no sign of Elmo, his cat. Probably done the sensible thing and bugged out.

"What... what happened?" he croaked. He felt exhausted, drained.

"They mowed you down on the street. Then I killed them, and carried you here," he woman replied. Her voice was nice, but businesslike, like a TV's anchor-woman, or a politician.

"Killed them? Shot me?" Greg struggled to his feet. That's when he realized that his shirts was full of bloody holes. "Shot *me*," he gasped, and fell back on the couch, his hands reaching for the wounds that had to be there. But he felt no pain, no blood on his hands.

The woman smiled. "Don't worry. You're fine." She picked a plate off the living room table. It clinked as she showed it to him. There were some ten bullets and fragments of bullets on the plate. "Pulled those out of you. They really wanted you dead, child."

Greg looked at the bullets - the slugs, really, all deformed and twisted. Some of the bullets looked like melted lead mushrooms. "Shot me," he whispered. Then he looked at the woman. Did you heal me? How? Then the obvious answer came to his mind. "Are you some kind of magician? A witch?"

Magic was real. So the news had been saying since Greg was a child. He'd never seen a magician or witch in action, but, like everyone else, he knew someone who knew someone who had gotten some sorcerer's feathers ruffled, and had been cursed as a result. He'd

only half-believed, until now.

But the woman was shaking her head, still smiling. "No, not a witch, although I know a few, and they might have been able to save you, and they might not. One of the bullets hit you in the head, you know."

Greg reached towards his forehead, and felt caked blood there. Almost between his eyes. "How come I'm not dead?"

"Mostly, you healed yourself, Gregory Fairchild," the woman replied. "I helped somewhat, but if you couldn't heal yourself, you would have died in the seconds it took me to kill those men."

"How could you kill those men?" He remembered them well enough. There had been four of them, and they all had pistols or shotguns. The woman simply gestured towards his window.

"See for yourself," she said simply.

Greg did. He had almost made it to his apartment when he'd been shot. From his window, he could see out the street. And he could see the car - the burning hulk of the car - lying on its side. There were a number of cop cars and fire engines at the scene. This neighborhood wasn't a Safety Zone, so a shoot-out like this had to attract attention. So she *had* killed them.

"What, you pack a flame-thrower in your purse or something?"

She shook her head. "No, but I have a few tricks up my sleeve."

"So you *are* a witch."

"I already told you I'm not. Are you calling me a liar?"

Greg decided that annoying a woman who had disposed of a carload of armed men was not a smart idea. His mouth had other ideas. "So what are you then?"

The woman stood up. There was a flash of light, and she was gone.

In her place stood a taller, glowing figure. She was, if anything, more beautiful than the other, but larger,

looking like an exquisitely sculpted statue. She wore a short tunic, with slits on the back for the huge feathery wings that grew there. Her eyes shone with a golden hue.

"I guess you can say I'm an angel. You can call me Daele."

With gulp, Greg staggered to the nearest chair and sat down just before he collapsed.

The angel changed back. "Now that I've got your attention, I think we should talk."

At first, Greg did most of the talking.

"Before I begin, I'd like to see how much you know about the world," she told him. "That way, I all have to do is fill in the gaps as you go, and finish up afterwards."

Greg nodded. She wanted to know how much he kept up with world affairs. Even now, some people did not know what was going on, caring more about sports scores than the harsh realities of war. They might not have a clue until enemy tanks were rolling down the streets of Manhattan. Greg had been a History major, though, and he had the added incentive that current affairs might determine his fate, in or out a uniform.

"Okay, let's see," he started, clearing his thoughts. "I guess it happened in 2009, when everybody in Munich died."

"2008, actually, but as good a beginning as any," she said. "Go on."

"So, everybody in Munich wakes up dead one morning, except there is this one guy, standing on some tower, waving at the news choppers." Greg remembered the old footage, which still played on television, eight years later. A man, perhaps in his thirties, looming over the carnage like some ancient god come to life. "He was the Dark Apostle, and he created this cult around himself, the Church of Revelations."

"The cult existed before the Dark Apostle first appeared," Daele corrected. "It made its first public appearance in 2000. And it was active, long, long before then."

"If you say so. Anyway, the Dark Apostle overthrew the German government in 2009 or '10, I believe." Greg remembered his father watching the news in utter disbelief, the fear that had been in his face when Greg asked him what was happening. "It was very ugly. He killed people by the carload. And then he invaded France, almost like World War II all over again."

"Which of course, made no sense. France, Russia, almost everybody had nukes. Territorial conquest had become obsolete sixty-five years before. But they invaded anyway, and when the French tried to use

their nukes, they found they didn't work. No explosive fission or fusion reaction has worked since the Church of Revelations started the war. Nuclear power plants still function, but nuclear bombs don't. It makes no sense. Do you know why that happened?"

Daele seemed a bit taken aback. "We have some... theories. But no, we don't know why that happened." She smiled ruefully. To be honest, we had always assumed that nuclear weapons would play a major role during this conflict."

That didn't sit well with Greg. If the angels did not know what was going on, who did? "So, with no nukes to slow him down, and with an army that had appeared overnight, complete with hordes of monsters and weird magic, the Church of Revelations conquered Europe, kicked the asses of the Americans that arrived to help, and then started spreading to other continents. Like Asia, like South America. They bombed Jerusalem and that Holy Rock the Muslims have in Saudi Arabia, and they killed the Pope. Although you angels tried to stop them." And failed, he did not add.

"As I will explain shortly, 'they' angels were not 'we' angels. There is more than one group of angels - we prefer the term Seraphim, by the way - in the world. The ones that got killed did so stupidly. They waited until the humans had been utterly defeated, and then they jumped in to get slaughtered as well." Her face grew angry, and, Greg, thought, also sad. "Those brave fools. So many dead, and for nothing."

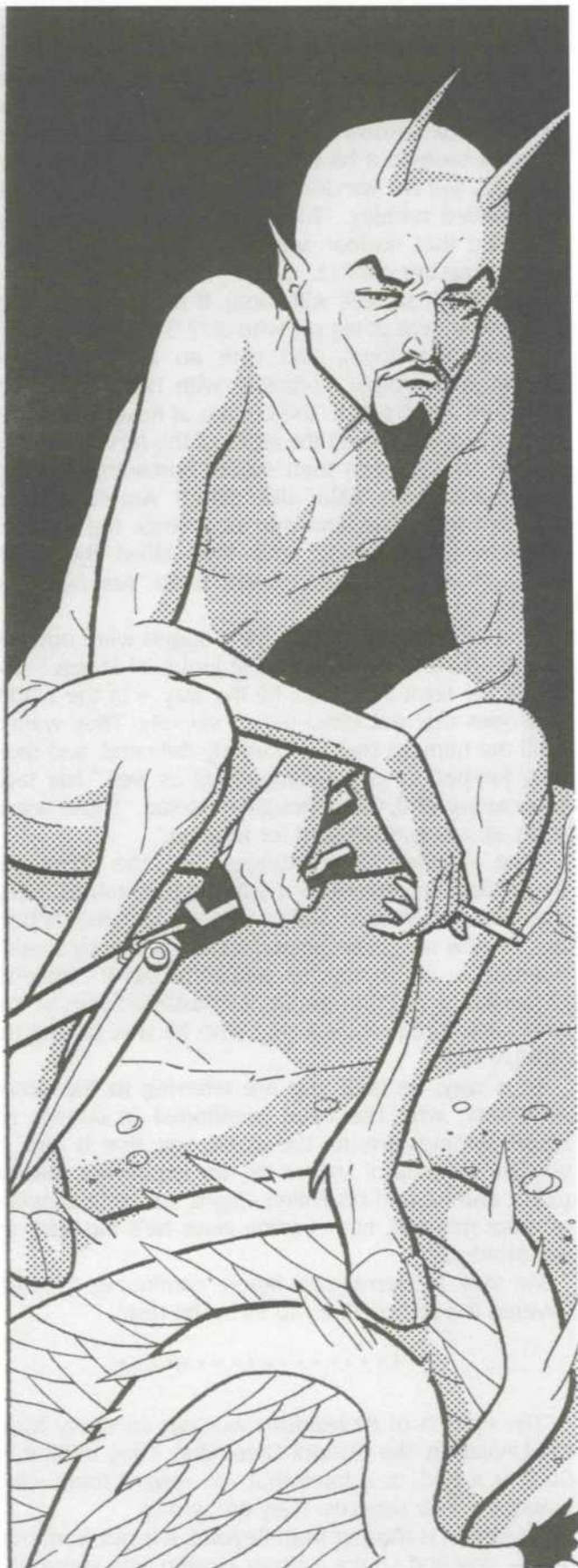
Greg decided to continue. "So, the Army of Revelations continued to roll through countries. They even reached Mexico, and were stopped at the US border. So now we get bombed once in a while, by Stealth bombers or cruise missiles, and some say it's the end of the world and that the Dark Apostle is Satan or the Antichrist." Greg remembered who he was talking to. "Well, is he?"

"In a way, he is. If you are referring to the Great Adversary, who has been mentioned in dozens of sacred writings around the world, yes, that is him. If you are thinking of Lucifer, no, he is not him. Lucifer exists, and he and his Fallen angels are quite capable of great mischief, but in some ways he's the least of our problems."

She took a deep breath before continuing. "You've covered the basics. I'll try to fill in the rest."

"The Church of Revelations worship an entity they call Leviathan, the Ancient Great One. They think it is God, or a god, or a force that will reward them with power for their services. They are wrong."

"Leviathan is a being from Beyond. It is not from our reality, you and I have a closer kinship with some sili-



con-based life form that might live in Alpha Centauri than Leviathan has with anything that lives in this Universe. The basic building blocks of reality are made of a substance or energy pattern, which occultists call Essence or Ether. Leviathan's universe is made of a different energy, like anti-matter is to matter. The two don't mix well. When beings like Leviathan manifest themselves on Earth, the world starts to become twisted. Water turns to blood. Children are born with strange deformities. Monsters walk the Earth.

"You have seen the Marks the Believers who worship this monster bear on their hands and foreheads. They are more than a symbol. They are the beginning of the Taint, a connection between Leviathan and Earth; eventually, that Taint will transform and destroy those who bear it.

"Leviathan has yet to manifest on Earth. If - or when - he does, reality as we know it will cease to exist. We will become whatever its twisted vision demands. We will lose the most precious gift of all, Free Will."

"So what is stopping it?" Greg blurted out. "God? The angels?"

"Actually, you are. Humans, that is - and you are mostly human, after all. As long as a living human refuses to accept Leviathan in his heart, there is hope."

Well, that explained some things. Like the attempts to forcibly convert all the conquered populations. That didn't explain the other thing she had said. "What do you mean, I'm mostly human?"

"Well, you are mostly human, but one of your parents was an angel. You are Nephelim."

"You mean the guy who..? He was an angel?" Greg had heard the tale; his parents had told him the truth when he was fifteen. His mother had been pregnant with him when she had married his father; he had known about it, and had adopted the child and raised him as his own. His mother had never spoken about the other guy, who had abandoned her before she knew she was pregnant, and until now, Greg had never had any interest in learning anything about his natural father.

"Yes, he was an angel of the Heavenly Host, who became enamored of a woman, and committed what their kind consider a great sin. He abandoned her in shame, and probably confessed and was punished. Which brings me to something I had mentioned earlier."

"Not all angels are the same. There are three major groups of angels. The identities of the larger two should be simple to guess."

"Sure. Heaven and Hell," Greg said absently. "The good angels and the bad angels."

"Correct. Although the goodness of the 'good' angels can sometimes be overestimated. The third group are angels who came to Earth long ago, to better understand Humankind. They are my kind of angels. We can

ArmaArmageddon and Witchcraft

Readers of the *Witchcraft* RPG may have already noticed the similarities between that game and *Armageddon*. In effect, the world of *Armageddon* is a possible future of the world of *Witchcraft*, here, the Reckoning has finally arrived, in a shape that has surprised most of the Gifted. There are some important differences in tone and content, however.

Witchcraft is like an occult version of *film-noire*, with hidden conspiracies, veiled threats and shadowy monsters that walk like men. *Armageddon* is like a metaphysical war movie, with larger-than-life heroes, an overt, terrible enemy. The first series is Anne Rice meets Stephen King meets Umberto Eco. The second is Clive Barker meets Tom Clancy meets *Star Wars*. Both may appeal to you, or you may find you prefer one to the other.

Chroniclers running a *Witchcraft* game can use some of the information or characters of *Armageddon* in their games, but they should not consider this book to be "the" future of *Witchcraft*. It is, after all, your game, and if the idea of a world war fifteen or twenty years from now is not your vision of the Reckoning, then by all means do something else.

You do not need *Witchcraft* to play *Armageddon*, or vice versa. Each game is a stand-alone product. If you are fan of the first series, however, you will find old friends here, the Covenants of the Gifted in a possible twenty-first century setting, beset by enemies and trying to make a stand for the sake of the world. Those of you who have picked this book may find useful material in the other. And it would not break our hearts here at Myrmidon if you decided you wanted both books and their related sourcebooks just as badly. Of necessity, however, there is some duplication in the books, including the rules, system of magic and psychic powers, and some of the character types. There are things in each book that you will only find there, however; half of the Covenants in *Witchcraft* are only mentioned briefly in these pages, for example.

So, to wrap up: different books, different settings and tone, same game system and (hopefully) same or better quality and potential for fun. You, of course, will be the final judge. So enjoy!

ourselves the Watchers. We also beget children from among humans, but unlike your father, we do not abandon them. And we also look for any missing orphans. Especially now, when we need all the help we can get to fight off Leviathan."

Greg was only half-listening. The facts he had heard were just beginning to sink in. "So I can fly and glow in the dark when I want to?" he asked. Better to deal with the details, and not think about the rest.

Daele shook her head. "No. Your human nature is stronger in some ways. Which is good. Humans were made in the likeness of the Creator, you know, while we Seraphim will never be more than servants. Some angels hate that fact - Lucifer was one of them, but he has plenty of company, both among the Heavenly Host and the Infernal Legion.

"The Nephelim have a number of special abilities. For one, they are almost impossible to kill. The men who shot you were prepared to cut you to pieces, douse your body with gasoline, and then burn it to ashes. The gunshots were just meant to slow you down while they did all that. By the time I dragged you to the apartment, you had recovered from half a dozen wounds that, on a mortal, would have caused an instant kill."

Greg looked at the bullets on the plate. "Neat," he said tonelessly. "So why were they trying to kill me?"

"The Watchers are not the only ones looking for Nephelim. The agents of the Church also operate in America, and whenever they find one of you, they try to eliminate him before he can be discovered. And not just Nephelim, either. There are many other beings out there who can threaten Leviathan. The Old Gods of myth also exist, and they have their own semi-divine children living among humans. Then there are

humans with magical powers, with the Second Sight, true Saints who are linked to the Creator in ways we angels cannot imagine. This is a War that involves everyone, and there is no escaping one's place in the war."

With a sinking sensation, Greg understood. He had been drafted after all.

Except he would be fighting a side of the War few knew about.

The World of Armageddon

The setting of the *Armageddon* RPG is the near future, a time of war and uncertainty, a world where magic and the supernatural have become a factor in the lives of every living person. Beings of tremendous power walk the Earth once again - the Old Gods of mythology side by side with Angels and Demons and even stranger creatures. These beings have returned to the world to fight an enemy that threatens their very existence - and that of our entire universe. An evil from beyond reality has risen in the East, and has already seized over half of the planet. Led by the Dark Apostle, the Believers of Leviathan want nothing less than the total submission of humankind. If they triumph, reality as we know it will cease to exist, transformed into a reflection of the twisted mind of Leviathan, the Outsider who was cast out by the Creator at the beginning of time.

The war is being waged in every plane of reality. The forces of the free world, led by the United Nations, oppose the war machine of the Army of Revelation. The most advanced weapon systems of the 21st cen-

Timeline

1980 - Birth of the Magic Generation. A disproportionate amount of the people born in the following years have the Gift, magical or psychic abilities.

December 25 - A newborn is found abandoned outside a church in Munich, Germany. The baby is adopted by a two doctors and baptized as Johann Goering.

1985 - A bizarre murder-suicide ends the lives of Johann Goerings parents.

1998 - Johann Goering joins the Armed Forces.

2000 - The New Millennium arrives. Psychics and occultists start seeing dark omens and signs of an upcoming conflict.

The Church of Revelations starts to secretly convert new members. Primary targets are the wealthy, up-and-coming political figures, and members of the police and military. Members call themselves the Believers or True Believers.

2000-2005 — The New Age: Reports of unexplained phenomena reach unprecedented heights. Psychic powers and True Magick are displayed on live television programs. A mass murderer is revealed to be vampiric blood-drinking creature; other such creatures are discovered soon after. As the scientific community struggles to explain these events, most people come to accept the supernatural as real. Religious extremists start persecuting purported "sorcerers* and supernatural creatures.

The Church of Revelations has over 200,000 members, all of them True Believers. Secret factories in former East Germany, and the other core nations (Argentina, Turkey and Vietnam) start producing advanced weapons and vehicles, while pilots and soldiers are trained in underground camps.

2003 - A mob torches the corporate headquarters of the Psychic Pals Network, killing six people.

2004-2006 - The Matthews Riots: Videotapes uncovering a racist network of "death squads" composed of off-duty police officers, coupled with increased welfare cuts, trigger massive race riots in a dozen US cities, from LA. to Chicago to New York City. Hundreds are killed before National Guard units cordon off the worst areas and literally wall off the people inside, a series of Safety Ordinances are passed, restricting travel to and from these "Safety Zones," effectively imprisoning millions of people in the worst slums of America and leaving them bereft of any law enforcement and other public services.

2005 - Johann Goering leaves military service and disappears.

2006 - Church of Revelations makes first public appearances in Germany, Argentina, Turkey and Vietnam. First recorded appearance of people with the Mark of Leviathan.

2007 - The Church of Revelations has over three million members, its numbers growing each day.

2008 - The Munich Disaster: the entire population of Munich dies, over a million and people. Johann Goering, is the only survivor. Germany is plunged into chaos and panic. The German Armed forces start mobilizing. In response, the French and the Polish armies do the same.

George J. Morrison (R) becomes the 44th President of the United States.

tury, backed by bravery and fanaticism, clash in battlefields in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Most of Europe has fallen already, but a newly-formed Underground continues to resist the Dark Apostle and his minions. In the Otherworlds, the war rages as well; the Death Realms, the Fey Kingdoms and the Abodes of the Gods are not exempt from invasion by the followers of Leviathan. Traitors, both human and supernatural, lend their resources to the monstrous armies of Dark Apostle, tilting the balance in his favor.

The prizes of this conflict are not land and resources, but human souls. In the fallen territories, the Soul Police oversees the forced conversion of the conquered peoples. Only when every living human being worships Leviathan will this being manifest itself on our reality, and bring an End to all time. If Leviathan is successful, everything will cease to exist, replaced by its own warped creations. And, slowly but surely, the number of converts is growing. The call of Leviathan is seductive, offering power and the fulfillment of one's darkest desires. Prayers to Leviathan are always answered, and many wishes are granted - at a price. The taint of Leviathan will eventually destroy the believer's sanity and his body and soul until they are no longer human.

Even before the Dark Apostle rose to power, the world had been undergoing severe changes. Magic had become a common force once again, wielded by many, feared by most. Supernatural predators of every ilk lurked in the shadows, hunting the weak or unwary. The Heavenly Host and the Infernal Legions had waged a millennia-long battle to determine the fate of Humankind. Covenants controlled by Gifted Humans pursued their secret agendas. Even now, with the True Believers unleashing their armies against the entire world, and Leviathan's Soul Police hunting down all supernatural beings, the old conflicts are not easily forgotten. Angels and Demons face a common enemy, but they refuse to work together out of hatred or mistrust.

What Everyone Knows

To the average person, the world of Armageddon is a place of fear and uncertainty. The world is at war. A fanatic cult known as the Church of Revelations has inexplicably risen in several nations of the world, overturning governments and amassing huge armies which then charged into neighboring countries. A madman who calls himself the Last Apostle (but who's referred to as the Dark Apostle by the free world media) has appointed himself the leader of this movement, and is now the most powerful man in the world.

Furthermore, the Dark Apostle and his acolytes also command enormous supernatural powers. Some prominent Believers (as the members of the Church

call themselves) have started to change, to become inhuman things. Many dismiss these rumors as mere superstition. The facts are horrible enough. When the Army of Revelations took Rome and seized the Vatican, the Dark Apostle executed Pope John XXIV on live television. The vision of the Apostle calmly firing a gun into the head of the spiritual leader of millions has become a symbol of the evil the enemy is capable of.

Nuclear war should have been inevitable. The atomic holocaust never happened, however. The free world tried to use tactical nuclear weapons against the relentless enemy: every device mysteriously malfunctioned. Nobody has come up with an explanation for this. Perhaps it is God's will. Maybe it is just magic.

This is no long-distance war. For the first time in two centuries, the US is being directly attacked by a foreign foe. Every week, stealth bombers pierce the air defenses of America and conduct air strikes. Texas and New Mexico have become huge armed camps, and enemy probing attacks have managed to establish short-lived beachheads on US soil. Every night, families gather in front of television sets to hear news of battles or skirmishes, and to see casualty lists scrolling down the screen.

Along with the war, the world is beset by supernatural events. Stories that once belonged to the wildest supermarket tabloids are now seriously reported in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Angels have come down to Earth in great numbers. As the holy city of Rome fell, a host of angelic beings appeared to make a futile last stand. As millions watched in utter disbelief, winged beings of light flew through the skies and battles jet fighters over the streets of Rome - and were overwhelmed by superior numbers and high technology.

To many people, the situation is clear. The End Times are at hand - the Apocalypse, Ragnarok, the Final Battle between Good and Evil. The Dark Apostle is identified with the Antichrist, the False Prophet and the Beast of the Book of Revelations. The fact that his followers sport a mark on their hands or foreheads has been recognized as the biblical "Mark of the Beast." Religious fervor has become a source of strength. This war is for far more than national interests, but it is a battle between absolute forces and principles; to those who believe this, no sacrifice is too small. Religious fanaticism has brought about internal strife and discord. To some sects, the free world is too sinful and tolerant to stand against the Church of Revelations. These zealots would like to create their own theocracy to resist the Adversary, and will go to any lengths to do so.

The United States, the heart of the free world, is beset by internal problems. The inner cities of the great metropolitan areas, wracked by riots and pover-

Timeline (Continued)

2009 - An attempt to arrest Johann Goering in Berlin starts a city-wide riot. Several military units, thoroughly infiltrated by the Believers, capture or kill non-converted soldiers and officers and take over several key strategic points.

In Turkey, a coup-d'etat unseats the government. The Black Imam, Priest of Leviathan, becomes the ruler of the country. The Patriarch of Constantinople, and all local Islamic, Christian and Jewish religious leaders are publicly executed. The Turkish Army mobilizes and masses on the border with Syria and Iraq.

2010 - Fall of Germany: Believer-controlled police and military units, supported by secretly-trained paramilitary bands equipped with ultra-modern weapons, seize members of the German Government and the Chancellor. The Dark Apostle becomes the Supreme Leader of all Germans, and High Priest of the Church of Revelations. The German armed forces are reconstituted as the Army of Revelations.

2011 - The War Begins.

April 15: The Army of Revelations launches surprise attacks using Punisher Stealth Bombers, over 80 of which had been produced in secret by the COR. The bombers strike in three continents, destroying key military targets in Europe, the US and the Middle East. Bombs also hit several key holy sites, including the Holy Rock of the Kaaba in Mecca, St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, and the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem; the bombs damage but do not destroy those sites, and the attacking planes are mysteriously destroyed. Two US carrier groups are also hit by stealth bombers. The US Nimitz is severely damaged, and two other carriers are destroyed.

The AoR (Army of Revelations), supported by monstrous beings, attacks France, while the one in Turkey crushes the Syrians and Iraqis. Local Believers start riots and acts of terrorism and sabotage in the invaded countries to weaken the local forces and facilitate the conquest process.

President Morrison resigns, replaced by vice-president Beatrice Holland.

2011-2013 - *War in Europe*: Hastily assembled British and American Expeditionary Forces battle the Army of Revelations for control of France. All nations of Europe save Switzerland declare war on Germany. By 2013, Paris falls, and France is all but conquered.

Dud Night: On April 20th, 2011, French forces use tactical nuclear weapons to stop an AoR offensive. The weapons fail to detonate. Repeated attempts show that no explosive nuclear reaction is possible; some unknown force is preventing nuclear fission to take place except in such controlled environments as nuclear reactors.

The Second Army of Revelations (from Turkey) conquers Syria and Iraq, stopped at the Saudi border by a coalition of Middle Eastern countries, including Israel. Angel-like beings start appearing over battlefield, engaging the monsters accompanying the Revelationists.

2012 - Beatrice Holland wins the Presidential elections with a significant majority of the popular vote.



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ty, have been walled off into Security Zones, turning them into giant prisons where no law exists, street gangs run rampant, and supernatural predators hunt at will. Although there have been numerous protests about this act of tyranny, with barbarians at the gate, most people have other things to worry about. The highways between cities are also plagued by roaming bands of cycle gangs, new nomads made up of army deserters, insane cultists, and militiamen. Some areas of the Midwest and South have effectively seceded from the US and established their own version of America, and the government currently lacks the manpower to retake those territories by force.

Still, people carry on. Even despite the shortages and fear, and the death and terror, many try to lead normal lives.

The Hidden Truths

Although supernatural creatures and events have now become a part of everyone's lives, they have always existed. Since ancient times, humans have learned to harness tremendous spiritual powers through the force of will and tradition. Magic, the Second Sight, and similar powers are real but often misunderstood and feared. Immortal beings have walked among us, sometimes worshipped openly, others hiding their nature from the world. Some of these entities had human attributes but superhuman power; others were utterly alien creatures with unfathomable purposes. These beings battled each other, or plotted to gain more power or avenge past wrongs, and recruited humans to assist them in their struggles.

In the past, there have been many moments of crisis, known among occult circles as Reckoning. A Reckoning is a period of chaos both mundane and supernatural, a testing time that affects most of the world in almost every sphere, political, social and spiritual. They are times of war and upheaval, often marked by plagues and natural disasters.

Towards the end of the century - and the millennium - occultists could sense a new Reckoning was at hand. More people than ever before were being born with the Gift - the ability to work magic, or the Second Sight. Supernatural predators, who for centuries had been few in numbers, were appearing at an amazing rate, to the point that even the normally unaware Mundanes were starting to realize that something was terribly wrong. The signs were clear for those who could see them. A storm was coming.

The Cosmology of Armageddon

In the world of **Armageddon**, the beliefs of every religion are disjointed pieces of a greater truth.

Timeline (Continued)

2013 - Argentinean government falls, replaced by the Supreme Archbishop of the Church of Revelations. The Argentinean Army becomes the core of the Third Army of Revelations, starts conquering South America.

2014 - Vietnam becomes the Fourth Archdioceses of the Church of Revelations. Parts of China are overrun by local Revelationists, supported by the newly-equipped Vietnamese army and by more monstrous beings, summoned by the Church Priests.

The Fleet of Retribution being built in preparation for an invasion of the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland), is destroyed in port by a freak storm, reportedly caused by the Norse gods.

A conspiracy tries to overthrow the US government; the movement is dominated by religious extremists who wish to "cleanse" the nation. The plot is uncovered by Gifted sorcerers and psychics, and the principal conspirators are arrested.

2014-2016 - The Third Army of Revelations overruns most of Western South America, Central America, and Mexico. Stopped near the Texas border by US armed forces. San Antonio is razed by bombardment.

2015 - Italy and Spain fall. Pope John XXIV is executed on live television by the Dark Apostle himself.

2016 - Papacy is relocated to New York City. Pope John Paul VII presides from St. Patrick's Cathedral.

President Holland is re-elected for a second term.

Mexico Counter offensive begins; the US Army, together with elements of the Mexican, Canadian and British armies, starts pushing south.

Monotheism is right: there is one Creator, a being of immense power who shaped our reality. But Polytheism is also correct: a myriad of entities of god-like power also exist, and for millennia demanded the worship of humans. Every myth and legend is an echo of ancestral memories and outlandish experiences that affected our ancestors.

Note: To the risk of repeating ourselves, we'd like to reassert that the cosmology of **Armageddon** is wholly fictional, containing ideas from a number of myths and metaphysical theories ranging from Norse sagas to Theosophism. It is not meant to debunk or deny any religion or real world belief. So relax, okay?

The Role of Human kind

Humans were created in the Creator's image. Within each and every one of us, from the wealthiest and most powerful to the most wretched and helpless, lies the Divine Spark. The human race is the result of billions of years of evolution and false starts. We still have a long ways to go. Humans are not the only species on this path, nor are they the first or the last. Many a world lies now dead in the Universe, the result of mistakes that could not be corrected in time. Occultists believe that the mythical civilizations of

Atlantis, Mu and Ultima Thule rose and fell millennia before recorded history, and were cosmic "stumbles" on the road to development.

Through a cycle of death and rebirth, and by moving to higher planes of existence, humans will eventually achieve unity with the Deity (what this means is as incomprehensible to us as airplanes are to ants). The so-called Higher Beings, like angels and pagan gods, do not have this potential for evolution. In time, we will match and even surpass them. Some humans, through the use of Magickal Formulas, inborn psychic abilities, or the strength of their Faith, already have the power to bind or even destroy these Greater Beings. In theory, all human beings have the potential to develop these powers. One day, occultists believe, humans will develop into beings able to manipulate reality with the ease of a child molding clay - and, soon thereafter, with the finesse of an sculptor bringing shapes out of stone. When Science and Magick and Faith all become one, the least human will be more powerful the greatest archangel. Of course, humankind is as far from this goal as a six-month old Albert Einstein was from developing the Theory of Relativity. But the process is just as straightforward and (it is hoped) just as inevitable.

Humankind in the Twenty-first Century has learned much about the physical realm, but had, until recently, disregarded the spiritual realm. One of the secret truths in the cosmology of this game is that both pure materialism and utter spiritualism are incomplete, and by themselves are dead ends. The hard-nosed scientist who cannot believe in the existence of the soul is as blindly wrong as the mystic who rejects the physical world as evil or inferior. Both are capable of tremendous feats, but are ultimately doomed to failure. In the developed and developing world, science and materialism seemed to be the only answers. Now, confronted with an enemy willing to use both Magic and Technology, and who can only be defeated by those willing to wield the weapons of matter and spirit, the world must change its outlook, or face defeat and destruction.

Those whose souls have advanced beyond the norm are known as the Gifted. The Gifted have learned or accidentally acquired the ability to manipulate Essence, the living energy of Creation and the Soul. Some manipulate Essence through the use of ritual and formulae, commonly known as Magic. Others have the Second Sight, which allows them to see and manipulate the world through the power of their minds alone. A third group has the ability to channel Essence as an act of Faith; their Divine Inspiration puts them in contact with the Creator in ways that the angels wish they had. The Gifted can use their powers for good or ill; in their choices lies the salvation of damnation of the human race.

The Greater Beings know the potential and possible fate of Humankind, and their reactions are varied, somewhat predictable. Some cherish the human race seeing in them the face of their Creator. Others, like bullies lashing out against those who are smarter than them, wish to make humankind stumble or even fall. Yet others, like domineering parents, want to rigidly control human development, lest they abuse the potential; the Heavenly Host has been guilty of this. There are opportunists who simply exploit us, while a few want to destroy us before we become more powerful than they are.

Humankind is the ultimate prize of the Great War. This is not to say that humans are mere sheep to be protected or slaughtered at the whim of beings of power. In **Armageddon**, humans are central of the story and the conflict. Having being made in the Creator's image, they have the potential of becoming the most powerful force in reality. It is no accident that angels and demons, mythological gods and nature spirits, all have eventually become human-like in both shape and behavior - imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, after all.

Gods and Angels

The gods of mythology and the angels and demons of religious belief had a common origin, an origin that dates back to the times of Creation. Gods and angels are the descendants of Sephyr, the Tools of the Creator, elemental beings who helped shaped our reality. The Sephyr evolved into two distinct orders of beings, the Seraphim and the Titans. The Seraphim were beings of spirit, the emissaries and servants of the Creator. The Titans were embodiments of different aspects of reality, such as War, the Elements and Justice, and they were the first to lose touch with the Creator and to come to Earth and set themselves up as deities.

The Seraphim were the ones who unleashed the Flood on Humankind when one of their kingdoms trafficked with the entity known as Leviathan. At some point before this event, they lost their connection with the Creator. For two hundred centuries or more, the Seraphim have operated without direct orders. they warred among themselves; the losers of this internal conflict were banished to the Realms of Death, where they formed the Infernal Legion. The winners, the Heavenly Host, tried vainly to communicate with the Creator, and after a long Diaspora returned to Earth to do what they thought was right.

The rise of monotheism was not mere happenstance; even as human missionaries gained converts throughout Europe, the pagan pantheons were being besieged and overwhelmed by the Heavenly Host. The Titans were forced to stay out of the affairs of the

Mundane, and most of them became the Old Gods, remembered only in folk tales and ancient myths. Centuries later, some Titans returned to the world, but in utter secrecy, afraid of attracting the wrath of the Seraphim.

Immortals — The Blood Of Atlantis

Not all the ageless beings who live unnoticed among Humankind are descendant of powerful spirit entities. A subspecies of humans, said to be descend from the fabulous civilization known as Atlantis, has existed for millennia. Their numbers have always been small, although they have been growing steadily in the past century. Very hard to kill, except through magic, or at the hands of another Immortal or Greater Being, these True Immortals stop aging after reaching the prime of life. What they do with this gift varies widely. Some tried to usurp the privileges of gods, and were eventually hunted down by the Titans or the Seraphim. Most operate in utter secrecy, after experiencing the hatred and fear of Mundanes.

Enemies of angels and demons, mistrustful (and sometimes contemptuous) towards "mere mortals" and often embroiled in ancient vendettas that span centuries, the Immortals are the wild cards of *Armageddon*.

The Church of Revelations and the Dark Apostle

The main antagonistic in *Armageddon* is the Church of Revelations. This organization combines the fanaticism of the most extreme cults with the ruthless efficiency of the Nazis, and are backed by enormous supernatural power, the most advanced technologies, and a seductive, corrupting doctrine that has garnered millions of followers. By the year 2016 (the "default" beginning of most *Armageddon* campaigns), the Church of Revelations rules supreme in Germany, Turkey, Vietnam and Argentina. Its armies have overwhelmed much of Central and Western Europe, South and Central America, Eurasia, South East Asia and the Middle East. Cultists operate secret cells in the free world, conducting campaigns of sabotage, terrorism and guerrilla warfare to pave the way for the devastating Army of Revelations. Many holy sites, from the Vatican to the Black Stone of Kaaba and Jerusalem, lie in ruins - the Church of Revelations makes it a point to destroy all the symbols of other faiths. Non-believers are persecuted, imprisoned, and, it is rumored, sent to death camps.

The Church of Revelations worships Leviathan,

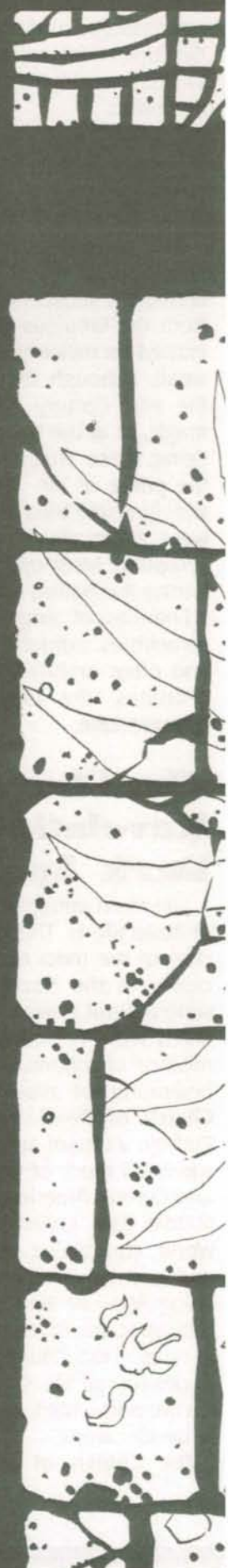
whom it calls the True God, unjustly banished and now returned to reclaim His Kingdom. The trappings of the Church ape Christian, Islamic and Buddhist models, but its doctrine is one of rigid intolerance and corrupt seduction. Through service in the Church, one's fondest, darkest wishes are granted. The Church encourages the fulfillment of one's desires, with no care for the feelings or rights of others - provided that one's service to the Church does not waver, and that the strict hierarchy is not violated or disrespected. Unquestioning loyalty is demanded, and almost always granted by the followers.

The goal of the Church is to spread the cult of Leviathan until every living man, woman and child is a willing convert. All those who refuse to submit will be killed. When this happens, Leviathan will once again be able to manifest on this world, remaking it in its image. From Earth, it will reach towards the rest of the Universe, seeking to devour and absorb all of Reality. With Humankind as its willing slave, it might well succeed.

A Time of Heroes

Armageddon is, above all, a role-playing game. So what are the roles you, the players, will assume? This world of chaos, this world on the verge of destruction, is in desperate need of heroes and leaders, people who by their actions will inspire the fearful, or will secretly ensure that others do not have to endure the horrors that lurk in the dark. Your characters can be those heroes, human or supernatural warriors who, by chance or design, have risen to challenge the dark tide threatening the world.

This setting also lends itself to *anti-heroes*, characters who act out of selfishness or are driven by destructive impulses or obsessions. Joining the Dark Apostle means becoming the slave of an alien, monstrous force (and is not recommended), but the turmoil of the war offers a number of opportunities for those ruthless enough to take them. And being on the side of the angels (sometimes literally) does not mean that you cannot occasionally pause to fill your pockets along the way. Many anti-heroes, by choice or circumstances, will eventually try to do the right thing, or risk giving ground to the encroaching forces of darkness. In the end, whether motivated by self-interest or heroic ideals, all living beings will have but to choices: to fight the Church of Revelations or be absorbed or destroyed by it.



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Chapter One: Roles

Transition.

It's always painful. Almost like being born again, pulled out of the nice warm comfort of the womb and dragged into the cold, loud world and given a good swat in the butt to get that crying started. The Higher Plane of Binah is the most wonderful place - and it's not even Heaven, at least not how I used to understand it. Saying Binah is Heaven is like saying an army camp during maneuvers is home; it may have some comforts, but it's nothing like the real thing.

Maybe one day I'll go to Heaven. For now, there is too much work to do.

I suck in a lungful of cold air. I feel like crying.

The Earth was never my favorite place. Even during my previous life, I found the cruelty and hatred of the world too much for me. I preferred to withdraw to the make-believe worlds of books and movies. And now...

As if to emphasize the point, my superiors have seen fit to Transcend me into the burned-out hulk of a building. Probably a result of the fire-bombing of 2011. Paris had been gutted then, and the Church of Revelations is just now beginning to reconstruct the city.

I step out of the ruins, carefully, looking around. I haven't been in Paris since 1998, in a small errand of mercy - a priest who was about to lose his faith, his plight so desperate that I had been allowed to go to him and help him tap into his inner strength. Those had been the good times, when I and the other Kerubim were sent here to help people. Now, we are more like glorified spies - sent on a forlorn hope.

It takes me a while to recognize the landscape, so scarred it is. I see the Seine - this must be the Latin Quarter. Make it 'used to be.' When the Battle of Paris became a house-to-house affair, the entire area was leveled. Some of the ruins were now used as low-income housing, mostly for people of Gentile status - second-class citizens, but better off than the Infidels. I wonder what happened to the priest whose soul I saved, not quite twenty years ago. If he's not dead, he is probably wearing the yellow jumpsuit that marks an Infidel, and is in some work camp or another; I know that he would not have submitted to the Church of Revelations.

The streets are deserted; this section of the city is poorly lighted, and is mostly empty anyway. I wait, hidden behind a half-collapsed wall. My contact should be here, soon.

"There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet," a voice whispers harshly behind me. The man is

very quiet; it is hard to sneak up on an angel, even the retread variety I belong to.

"Amen," I reply, turning around. He is human, of Algerian descent, short and stocky, his potbelly indicating softness, belied by the fanaticism burning in his eyes. He must have had to forgo most of the normal Muslim duties to escape being labeled an Infidel; the Soul Police makes it a point to snap up anybody who dares perform the five prayers, or show any other outward signs of faith.

"Come with me, Angel," he says. "We must hurry."

We walk in silence through the darkened streets. If it wasn't for the moonlight, we would be stumbling in the darkness; my night vision is slightly better than a normal human's but not by much. Finally, we reach our destination. From the looks of it, this used to be a coffee house, now converted into a dwelling. The man knocks on the door, two times, then three in rapid succession, then twice more. We hear a bar being removed from the door, and the clicks of several locks, before the door opens and we are allowed in, with no words being spoken.

"We are here," the Algerian says unnecessarily. A lamp is lit, revealing the dusty remains of the coffee house, tables and chairs still in place, and I can see the rest of the cell members.

A blonde man and a woman, clearly brother and sisters, smoking and sitting by a table by themselves; two pistols are on the table. A teenage boy, seventeen at best, standing by the bar, carefully putting down a submachinegun; at a glance, I can tell he has the Gift, the Second Sight in one of its manifestations. And, sitting by yet another table, shuffling cards now that the lamp has been lit again, another man, dark-haired, with movie-star good looks. My eyes widen with recognition when I see him.

"Oh my God!"

The rest of the cell looks at me suspiciously. The man smiles. "Welcome to our small corner of the Underground, Kerubim."

The aura is unmistakable. He is Seraphim - but he is not one of ours. That leaves two possibilities. He could be a renegade Watcher, or...

"The Boss sends his compliments," the Seraphim says. That and the nasty smile prove it. He is of the Fallen. If I tell the others he is a demon, and they believe me - not certain, maybe not even probable - then this cell will fall apart. At



the very least, the Algerian would not knowingly work for an emissary of Lucifer. One word, and a shoot-out may erupt. So I say nothing, and give a silent prayer that my decision is not damning.

"Yes, I thought you looked familiar," I said in a friendly tone, and the tension diminishes a little. I look at the group, my new allies, perhaps even my friend someday.

"There is much work to do."

Characters are perhaps the most important building block of any story. Without well-defined compelling characters, the best plotline will fail to attract the reader or viewer's interest. So it is with a roleplaying game. Each player controls a character in the game. In effect, you, the player, are both playing a part and scripting it: you make the decisions for the character, and the Chronicler and the other players will come up with the consequences for those decisions. Through the give and take of this process, a story will be created.

Creating a Character

This is one of the parts of roleplaying that works most like writing a short story or a script. You, the player, get to create a fictional person, somebody you would like to portray in a game. This character can be heroic, cowardly, sensitive or silly. Her habits, personality and typical behavior are completely in your hands. The character can be a carbon copy of yourself, or an utterly different person.

There are limitations, however. A character must fit the story, or in this case, the game setting. Rambo would be out of place in a Noel Coward play, and he would look silly and unrealistic in a Tom Clancy novel, for example. The scheming treacherous and complex Iago could not jump from the pages of *Othello* into a four-color superhero story - at least not as a main character. He would make a great villain, though - but generally it is the Chronicler who gets to play those.

This is not to say that your characters need to be heroes, or even the white-hat-wearing "good guys;" they can be flawed, selfish or misguided. Generally, however, they should be similar to fictional characters in a story: interesting, fun to observe (and play) and, most importantly, they should be helpful in the shaping of the Story, the final goal of any roleplaying game.

The Chronicler will have influence in the creation process. Ultimately, it is up to the Chronicler

to decide whether or not a character is appropriate for a campaign. In some cases, she might decide that a character would be disruptive for the story, or too powerful (or weak) for the tasks and troubles the cast is likely to face. Players should also try to keep in mind that roleplaying is a *group* activity. Creating a character for the exclusive purpose of dominating the game or hogging the spotlight may be fun for you, but will ruin everyone else's enjoyment - and may lead to no games being played. If the Chronicler disallows a character idea or conception, she probably has a good reason. Respect her judgment.

How to Create a Character

First you should be familiar with the setting of the game. **Armageddon** is a game of war, myth, and horror. What type of character appropriate for such a setting would you want to play? Several Archetypes, pre-created characters almost ready to play, are available at the end of this chapter; they can be played as-is, modified to suit your tastes, or used for inspiration to come up with your own creation.

The Chronicler should give the players an idea of the specific location and main themes of the game. For example, if the game deals with a Heavenly Host team of Seraphim and Kerubim waging a guerrilla war against the Church of Revelations, playing a pagan Inheritor is probably not a good idea, unless the initial plotline makes it possible (for example, the common enemy might force an alliance of convenience between the two groups). In some games, the Chronicler may drastically restrict the choices available to players. For example, the plotlines of many possible games will require that all the characters are members of the same organizations. Players should not feel they are being forced to play the same characters; even within a secret society or Covenant, there are many choices and possibilities for different characters.

Some players may feel overwhelmed by too many choices. Although the *Unisystem* used in **Armageddon** allows people to create a character fairly quickly, deciding what kind of character to play can take a while. Sometimes it helps if the Chronicler takes the time to help each player with the creation of her character, before the first game is scheduled. If all else fails, the Archetypes (the ones in these books as well as others in future supplements) may help.

The Creation Process

The *Unisystem* uses a "point system" to create characters. Basically, you, the player, "buys" different attributes and abilities by spending Character Points. The

better or more powerful a characteristic is, the more "expensive" it is. Some negative characteristics, known as Drawbacks, do not cost any points. Instead, they have a negative value - by acquiring them, you actually get more points to buy other things. Keep in mind, of course, that these Drawbacks will limit or hurt your character in some ways, so loading them on carelessly may not be a good idea.

Not everything is based on points, either. Some character elements are creativity-driven: the character's Concept (what kind of person he is), as well as the character's name and history. These depend largely on your imagination.

The Character Elements

Characters in **Armageddon** have nine basic elements. Some elements are conceptual (what kind of character is this?) while others are numerical attributes (what are the character's actual abilities?). As you make each selection, you will be narrowing down the possibilities of the character, until you finally have a clearly defined fictional individual ready to play.

Although the Elements are listed in numerical order, they do not have to be necessarily followed in that order. Creating a character does not follow a kitchen-recipe approach, with "steps" that must be followed in order. Look over at the different elements, and then deal with them in the method that works best for you. Sometimes, for example, it is easier to come up with a Concept or Association after the character's Attributes and Skills are filled in: maybe by selecting some skills, ideas about what the character is like will arise. Some players may want to do their Qualities and Drawbacks first, because they can get extra points from Drawbacks to put into

1. Concept: What are your character goals and principles?

2. Type: A character Type determines the general power level and nature of the character. Humans, for example, are divided among four general Types: Mundanes (who have no supernatural abilities), Lesser Gifted (who have a few special powers), Gifted (who focus mostly on the supernatural) and Greater Gifted (who are meant to be used only in high-power games). Non-humans are divided into two Types, Supernatural and Lesser Supernaturals.

3. Genus: Is the character human? If not, what species does she belong to? In **Armageddon**, possible Genera include Humans, True Immortals, Nephelim, Kerubim, and more. Each Kind has certain bonuses or penalties to their Attributes, or special Qualities or Drawbacks.

4. Attributes: What are the character's natural abilities, both mental and physical?

5. Qualities and Drawbacks: What innate advan-

tages or penalties affect the character?

6. Skills: What does your character know?

7. Metaphysics: What supernatural abilities does the character possess?

8. Possessions: What does the character own?

1. Character Concept

The Character Concept is a brief summary of the character's goals and personality. It also helps to determine the most important parts of the character's story and background. Described below are a number of Concepts. Each concept has a number of related questions, likely Qualities and Drawbacks, and Professions (which helps decide which skills the character should know).

The questions are among the most important steps; by answering them you can already start fleshing out the character before you even start choosing numerical attributes. Some people may wish to develop the character concept as the character is created, however; do what feels right for you. You can answer the questions quickly, jotting them down on a piece of paper, or you can just decide to answer them later, as you continue creating the character.

Coming up with a Character Concept is not indispensable; if a player does not find it helpful, he can always move on to the other creation steps. Also, sometimes it is better to select a Type and Association before moving on to the Concept. Use whatever works best for you.

Common Character Concepts

Listed below are a few common character concepts. Chroniclers and players are encouraged to make up their own. Also, players can pick more than one concept and mix its questions and suggestions into a unique whole.

Avenger

Someone has wronged you, and now you seek revenge. Your tormentors could have been individuals, or might belong to an organization; in that case, you might be seeking revenge against all members of that group. Whatever was done to you (or a loved one) was so horrible that now you are obsessed with the thought of paying your tormentors back.

Defining Questions: Who wronged you? Was it an individual, or a group? What did they do to you? Why did they do it (do you know why, or do you care)? How did the injury or insult affect your life? How are you going to get your revenge? How does getting revenge affect your life?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Avengers tend to have an Obsession with the target of their revenge. They will make enemies (acquiring the Adversary drawback), including those they are trying to destroy, any friends of allies of your target, and the authorities, who rarely approve of vigilante justice.

Professions: Any; the characters may come from any walk of life. The stereotypical Avenger is a former soldier, police officer, or somebody with combat training. An interesting Avenger type is the previously mild person with a mundane occupation (accountant or teacher, perhaps), who was totally transformed by the crimes he wishes to avenge.

Daredevil

You love to take chances; to you, life without adventure and risks is not worth living. That is why you insist in getting involved in dangerous capers, legal or not, whether you need the money or not. Maybe you crave the rush of adrenaline you feel after surviving yet another mad stunt. Or you may just love the challenge of pitting yourself against dangerous foes or situations.

Daredevils are people for whom danger is the spice of life. They may become jaded by previous shocks or experiences, or they are convinced that they are immortal and can get away with anything. In any case, they can often be as dangerous to others as they are to themselves. One day, most of them will take one chance too many and pay the ultimate price.

Defining Questions: What turned you into a daredevil? What do you do for thrills (and is it legal)? Would you risk someone you love as well as yourself? Do you always take chances, no matter what the stakes, or do you at least consider the consequences of failure before you jump into danger? Have your stunts gained you any rivals or enemies?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Many Daredevils have a Delusion (Nothing can happen to me/I am invincible) worth 2- to 3-points depending on how far the character is willing to test that notion. Note that in the dangerous world of *Armageddon*, the 3-point Delusion will be quite deadly. Most Daredevils gain a reputation that may reflect in positive or negative status, either as a hero or a dangerous lunatic.

Professions: Typical Daredevil professions include stunt man, acrobat, cat burglar (for the challenge more than the money), and test pilot (except the brass doesn't like it when you risk multi-million dollar planes as well as yourself).

Fanatic

You are a True Believer. This may be a religion, or a Cause, or some political ideal, but whatever it is you think it is the most important thing in the world, and you are willing to lay down your life (and, in some cases, the life of others) to serve your beliefs. Depending on what those beliefs are (and who you ask), you could be considered a dedicated hero or a dangerous madman. Patriots, religious leaders, and visionaries can all be Fanatics. Delusional paranoids also fit the bill. Which one are you?

Defining Questions: What do you believe in? How did you become a follower of this belief or principle? What made you a fanatic (as opposed to a normal follower of this belief)? What do you do to follow this belief in your everyday life?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Zealot is the universal drawback for these characters, of course. The Fanatic will often make many enemies (see the Adversary Drawback), and fellow fanatics can provide contacts and allies (as per the Contact Quality).

Professions: Some Fanatics are priests of a religion or cult; others have normal professions and occupations and worship or serve their beliefs in private. Patriotic Fanatics often serve in the military of the nation they love.

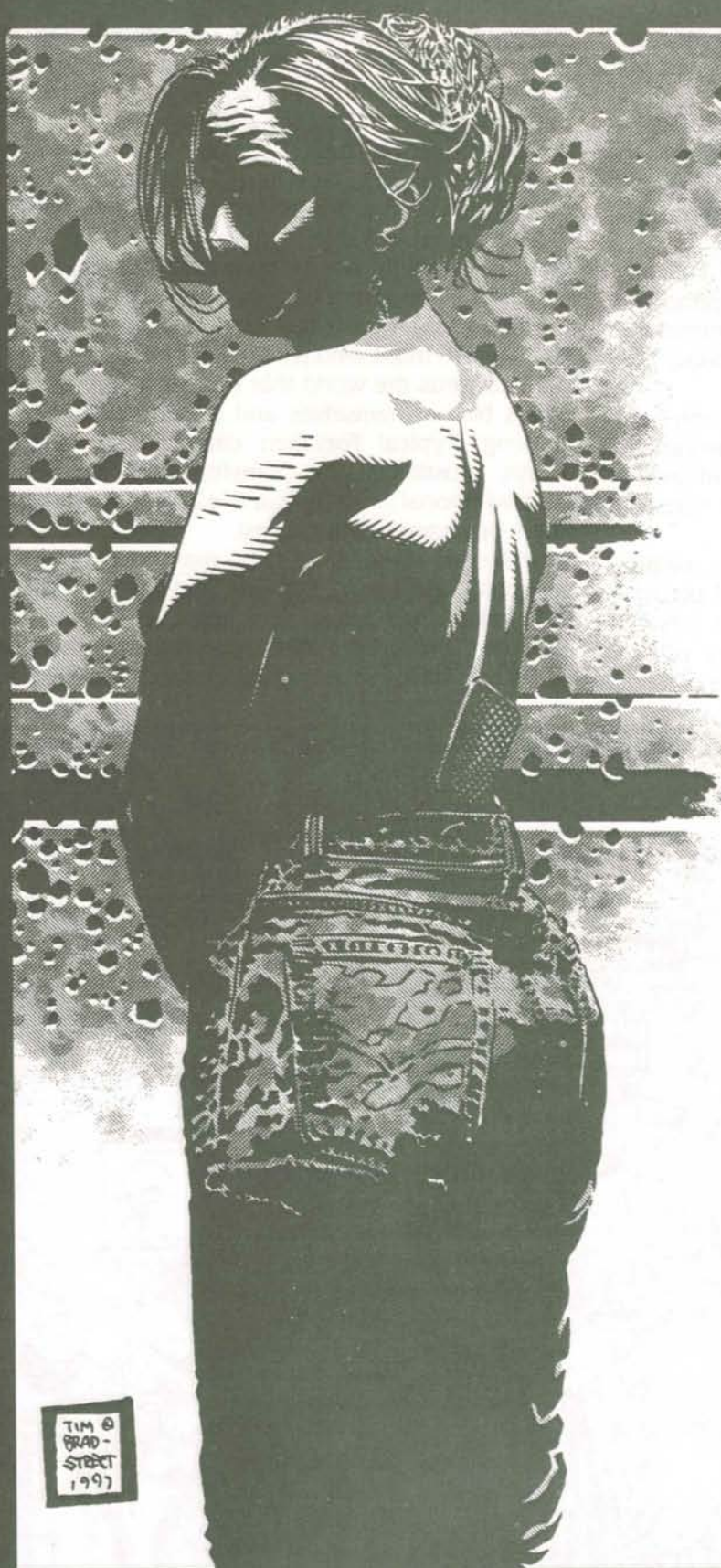
Forsaken

You have lost everything and nobody cares about you - or at least you think so. Maybe you ran away from home, or are an orphan. Perhaps you committed a crime so heinous that all your friends and loved ones turned away from you, or perhaps you were falsely accused of such a crime. You could belong to a group or sector of society that is despised by the mainstream, or are afflicted by a severe problem or disease that makes you undesirable or contemptible in the eyes of others. This might not be your fault, but society's, but the effect is the same: you are alone, and outcast.

The Forsaken have few friends, but they are often very loyal to those who would befriend them. Some are bitter towards the world that has rejected them, while others blame themselves and are consumed by self-loathing. Typical Forsaken characters include run-aways, prostitutes, the homeless, and people with unconventional lifestyles (punk, gay, gothic, and similar fringe or underground groups).

Unlike the Weird Ones (who may be just as unconventional; see below), the Forsaken's behavior or history makes most people react negatively. While a typical Weird One will inspire puzzlement and maybe a little fear, a Forsaken will attract hatred and contempt;





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whether or not the character has earned such feelings is up to each individual character story.

Defining Questions: What made you an outcast? Is it something you did (or people think you did), or just who you are or what group or minority you belong to? Why isn't your family on your side? Do you even have a family, and if not, what happened to it? How do you feel about being Forsaken? Do you return society's contempt with your own, or do you wish you could change?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Most Forsaken have very low Social Level and Resources. Many are Addicts or suffer from such mental Drawbacks as Delusions, Emotional Problems or Paranoia. Some have Contacts among other people in the fringes of society.

Professions: Many Forsaken work in marginal jobs, either low-paying (like busboy at a low-rent diner) or illegal (panhandling, prostitution, petty theft).

Fugitive

They are after you. "They" could be anybody - the authorities, the Mafia, the Combine, or the re-animated body of someone you did wrong, come back for some beyond-the-grave payback. Whoever they are, you know you don't want Them to catch you. To avoid getting caught, you may be on the run, wandering from place to place, never staying anywhere for too long, or you could be in hiding, maybe under a false identity - one you might have used for years, living a lie while still looking over your shoulder. You could be guilty of whatever you are wanted for, and are avoiding your just punishment, or you are innocent and are trying to prove your innocence while staying one step ahead of your pursuers.

Defining Questions: Who is pursuing you, and why? Did you do something to deserve the pursuit, or were you falsely accused? What are you doing to escape pursuit (running, hiding or both)? Do the people around you (friends and companions) know of your plight? Did they take you in or accompany you anyway? If you were framed, who framed you (if you know)? What are you doing to prove your innocence (if anything)?

Qualities and Drawbacks: The pursuers will be an Adversary. A character on the run will probably have very low Resources and Social Status. Fugitives who are pretending to be someone else will have a Secret instead of an Adversary. Most Fugitives end up developing the Paranoia drawback (with good reason).

Professions: Any. Fugitives can come from all walks of life.

Reluctant Hero

All you wanted was a normal life, but Fate had other things in store for you. Time and time again, you were faced with danger. Somehow, you actually came through and did a good job at it, but now people are

expecting similar acts of heroism from you. And you have the feeling that, instead of running away like a sensible person, you will do something really stupid like getting involved once again.

The Reluctant Hero is somebody who finds himself doing the right thing despite what common sense and his sense of self-preservation tell him. Many Gifted find themselves in that spot. They do not seek danger, but trouble seems to follow them wherever they go. Although they often hate doing it, they end up doing the right and heroic thing - and complain about it afterwards.

Defining Questions: If you hadn't been dragged into unusual adventures, what would you do with your life? What turned your life around and forced you to become a hero? Do you regret doing the right thing, or do you just claim to regret it? How did the incident affect your life?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Some reluctant heroes have the Clown drawback, and jokingly demean their own actions and the dangers of the situation. Many have a code of honor that forces them to help others.

Professions: Any, although most reluctant heroes have fairly safe and boring occupations; circumstances, not their jobs, force them into dangerous situations.

Scoundrel

You always looking out for number one, always ready to lie, cheat or steal. Even when you do the right thing, you often try to squeeze some profit or benefit for you. You may or may not exploit your friends, but strangers are almost always fair game. This doesn't mean that you are wholly evil - sometimes, you are acting with perfectly good intentions, but your path always seems to lead to trouble. Scoundrels can be humorously incompetent, or coldly efficient. Many are con men, gifted with charm and a good eye for human weakness. Even when fighting for a good cause, their methods will often be questionable.

Keep in mind that using this character concept does not necessarily excuse acting against the interests of other Cast Members. Even scoundrels have friends and allies they would not betray. Furthermore, even a villainous or weaselly character will not foolishly endanger his position (or his life) by incurring the wrath of powerful companions. Characters used by their players to provoke others should not be protected from the consequences of their actions.

Defining Questions: What made you into a scoundrel? Were you deprived as a child, and now you covet wealth and fortune? What do you want to acquire - money, power or knowledge, and how far will you go to acquire it? Do you seek to exploit everyone around you, or do you have some limits? Would you betray a friend for a large enough reward, or do you save your dirty tricks for your enemies only?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Covetous (see p. 00) is the most common Drawback. Successful Scoundrels may have high Resource levels, but the typical ones will still be relatively poor and hungry (which motivates them to do anything to get ahead).

Professions: Many (but not all) Scoundrels belong to illegal or quasi-legal professions, such as confidence man or thief. Others belong to mainstream professions, but tend to stick to their seedier aspects, such as ambulance-chaser lawyers or used car salesmen. Gifted Scoundrels

often exaggerate their knowledge and power to impress and exploit the gullible.

Seeker of Knowledge

You want to know the Truth. You hate to be kept in the dark about anything, and your goal in life is to accumulate as much knowledge about as many things as you can. In the course of your activities, you have discovered that there are many groups or individuals who wish to hide what you are trying to uncover, and that these people will go to great lengths to protect their secrets. You do not care, and continue searching for answers despite the risks.

In *Armageddon*, these characters are students of the occult, magicians, and investigators. They want to discover the secrets of magic and the supernatural. The Seeker of Knowledge may be trying to explain the supernatural in scientific terms, or may be accumulating occult lore for its own sake. Insatiably curious, these characters will risk almost anything in order to make yet another discovery.

Defining Questions: What knowledge do you seek? How did you become interested in the search? What do you hope to achieve? How are you trying to gain more knowledge? Is anybody interfering with your research or investigations? What have you discovered so far, and how much further do you wish to go? How does your search for knowledge affect your every day life.

Qualities and Drawbacks: Many seekers are Obsessed with their quest for the truth. Others may be suffering from Delusions or Emotional Problems caused by their constant search. Those who threaten the secrets of powerful hidden organizations may end up gaining powerful Adversaries.

Professions: Scholar, occultist, private investigator, journalist, conspiracy theorist.

Student

You have embarked on a quest for knowledge. Unlike the Seeker (see above), you have recently begun, and are just now being initiated in the ways you have chosen to follow. Whether you are a budding martial artist learning the legendary arts of Tao-Chi, or a graduate student of archeology being introduced to forbidden knowledge, you are eager to learn, and per-

haps a little too impatient. Sometimes you think you are more powerful and learned than you really are which may lead to serious trouble.

A Student must always have a teacher; he may be a new member of a Covenant, being introduced to the mysteries of the Gifted, or he may have been taken under the wing of a Solitaire practitioner. The teacher can be helping the character out of sheer altruism, or may demand a heavy price (typically in services rather than money) for his knowledge.

Defining Questions: What made you interested in learning the secret arts? Are you motivated by curiosity or ambition? Who are your teachers? How did you come to be their student?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Depending on their motivations and previous history, Students may have a wide variety of Qualities and Drawbacks. Some are Covetous (see p. 36), being motivated by the desire for power, while others might be Obsessed with their desire for knowledge. Many Students have low or average Resource levels, but their school or teacher will count as a Contact.

Professions: Since they must spend most of their time pursuing their vocation, Students largely work a part-time jobs, and can be anything from librarians to waiters to bouncers. Sometimes they are employed by the school in a number of capacities.

Survivor

You have lived through horror and tragedy. Whether you endured life with an abusive family, were victimized by a crime or accident, or underwent some devastating trauma, you were able to endure and carry on. Your experiences have affected your life; in some ways, you are a far stronger person, but you still carry the scars (physical or psychological) of your ordeal.

In the *Armageddon* setting, survivors may have been affected by a supernatural event or experience, or by the horrors of war. The character might have been raised by a dark cult which tormented him in his youth or he might be the lone survivor of a bombing raid. As a result of the event, the character is now aware that there are many horrors lurking beneath our everyday "reality." A Survivor's motivations should be strongly linked to the event or situation that marked her life. The character may be trying to make sure the situation does not happen to anybody else, or might be seeking revenge (in which case this concept could be combined with the Avenger one).

Defining Questions: What was the experience you survived? How long ago did it happen? How did you escape or endure the situation? Who else (if anybody) was affected by the experience? How has the experience affected the rest of your life? Are you a stronger person as a result? What do you want to do about it (if anything)? Is there any chance a similar (or worse

experience will happen to you in the near future?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Almost any mental drawback, from Recurring Nightmares to Emotional Problems and Delusions, can be experienced by a survivor.

Professions: Any.

Wanderer

You are a modern day nomad, never staying in a place for too long, never settling down. Eventually, you always find an excuse to move on. Maybe you are afraid of the responsibility of committing to one place and the people in it, or perhaps you feel there is something better waiting for you in the next city, or you might just be driven to travel and see new things. Unlike the Fugitive (see p. 00), you are motivated by your own inner demons or yearnings. Like many nomads, you may have a "circuit" of places you visit periodically, so that anybody who knows you will have an idea of where you'll be on a given time of the year, or you may wander at random, rarely returning to the a place you previously visited.

These characters travel through countries or continents, some on a vehicle, others on foot or relying on the kindness of strangers. The remote roads of **Armageddon's** America are dangerous places, and Wanderers traveling therein have to be quite adept at a number of mystical and mundane skills if they hope to survive. Any nomads, especially those that choose the roads less traveled, will often find signs of the Taint in small towns and lonely trails, haunting the wilderness or hiding in the cities' underbelly.

Wanderers work best for short Stories where the character arrives to a locale, deals with whatever conflict he encounters there (working with local Cast Members), and then moves on, or Stories where all the characters are also on the move for their own reasons (the other Cast Members could also be Wanderers, Fugitives or Seekers). On the other hand, a Wanderer might decide to stay in a place for an indefinite period of time if there is a compelling reason for it (i.e., for the duration of a Story).

Defining Questions: What made you choose your nomadic lifestyle? Do you have a destination (real or imagined) in mind? What is your preferred mode of transportation? How do you make a living as you travel? Do you stick to a general route, going back and forth between a string of destinations, or do you wander aimlessly, always going to a different place? Do you make friends in your travels, and do you ever return and visit them? What are your favorite places to visit whenever you arrive to a new destination?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Some Wanderers are motivated by a negative mental trait such as an Obsession or Emotional Problem. Most do not have much in the way of Resources, and only own a vehicle



and whatever they can carry in it. Wanderers who follow a specific path back and forth often have Contacts (and Adversaries) on some of their customary stopping points.

Professions: Most "ordinary" jobs are difficult to perform if you do not have a permanent address, so Wanderers tend to stick to temporary work. Many have to do what they can to earn enough money to move on: a Wanderer may play the guitar at a club in one town, and pick fruit for minimum wage at another town.

Warrior

Your life revolves around strife and conflict, and you plan to win every time. You may hate yourself for it, but you never feel more alive than when you are in combat, doing what you do best, meeting a worthy foe and coming out on top. You may care about the cost of war, about the butcher's bill that must be paid, but that does not prevent you from doing what needs to be done. You might be a nice person most of them time, but if you are put into a situation where it's kill or be killed, and you become a lethal, remorseless fighter.

A Warrior can be a veteran of a war (or, in the world of Witchcraft, the reincarnation of a veteran from many wars through history!) who has acquired a taste for battle in addition to the skills to fight in one. A warrior may be reluctant to get into a fight, but once he's in one, he plans to see it through.

Defining Questions: Where did you first fight in combat? Where and how were you trained? When did you discover that you enjoyed fighting? What do you do now? Do you go out of your way to seek fights, or do you prefer to avoid violence except when necessary?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Most Warriors will have Situational Awareness, Fast Reaction Time, Hard to Kill and other physical and combat-oriented qualities. Some may have mental drawbacks as a result of their exposure to the horrors of war.

Professions: Soldier, bodyguard, martial artist.

Weird One

You do not belong in normal society. Maybe it's just how you look - maybe you dress funny, or are overfond of tattoos and body piercing, or deliberately flaunt fashion. More likely, it's how you act... maybe you have beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that strike others as odd or disturbing. They may think you are crazy - and they may be right.

In the world of *Armageddon*, many Gifted are Weird Ones. Being raised by a family of magicians, believing that magic and spirits exist would certainly qualify a character for the scorn and disbelief of society as a whole. The fact that in the world of *Armageddon* all those things do exist will do nothing to disqualify the character as being "weird." Weird Ones can also be

characters who no longer care about conforming to social rules of behavior, or who have been so deeply traumatized they are not able to follow those rules.

Defining Questions: What makes you different from the rest of the world? Did you choose to be different, or was the way you were raised by your parents (or adoptive parents, or wolves in the jungle) that makes you unusual? Do you want to be accepted and cannot help being weird, or do you revel in your strangeness and rub it in other people's faces? How do "normal" people react to you?

Qualities and Drawbacks: Mental and social drawbacks may be common.

Professions: Usually something unusual, like undertaker, or artistic, like freeform poet or tattoo artist.

2. Character Type

The Character Type determines the combination of physical and mystical abilities of your character. In the Unisystem, the attributes and traits of a character are determining by allocating a number of points. In essence, the player "buys" the levels in attributes, qualities and skills he wants. Since the player only has a limited number of points to "buy" things with, she has to make choices. So, for example, if you make a character too strong, there may not be enough points left to buy a high intelligence. The Character Type determines how many points you have to "spend" on each character component.

Heroic

These character types are suited for most *Armageddon* games. Heroic characters are larger than life, but are not overwhelmingly powerful. Their abilities, influence and experience are great, but they are not the "movers and shakers" of the war; instead, they are the "foot soldiers," the agents and volunteers who put themselves in harm's way, often for purposes they do not fully understand.

Most Heroic characters in *Armageddon* will be Gifted (with full-fledged supernatural powers) or Lesser Gifted (with better skills and attributes but lower special abilities). Mundane characters are given a lot of points to spend on normal attributes and skills, but have no supernatural abilities; they will be at a disadvantage in most games, but can make for interesting characters, supplementing mystical knowledge with simple mundane know-how. Lesser Supernatural characters are young, inexperienced supernatural beings.

The Gifted

Quote: "We can see what others can't, and can perform impossible feats. But it is no blessing, I'm afraid, for what we see is often horrible to behold, and we must perform impossible feats just to stay alive!"

The Gifted have special powers and senses, and they have spent much of their time and energy honing those special abilities. For this reason, they get the largest amount of points to purchase Metaphysics, special powers and abilities. Being the Gifted has advantages and disadvantages: they are the most powerful characters in supernatural terms, but their very powers make them easily noticed and targeted by supernatural predators, other Gifted, and Mundane enemies. Also, the Gifted are the most likely to be dragged along by the currents of Fate; strange events seem to happen around them with disturbing frequency, and they often find themselves in dangerous and unusual situations, usually ruining any chance of leading a normal life.

Gifted characters get 15 points to distribute among Attributes, 10 points for Qualities (and can gain up to 10 points in Drawbacks), 25 points for Skills and 30 points for Metaphysics. For obvious reasons, the Gifted must purchase the Gifted quality (see p. 45); this is what defines them, and the basic prerequisite for their other abilities.

Lesser Gifted

Quote: "I don't like to rely on all that mumbo-jumbo stuff. If I need to contact somebody, I use the telephone: who needs spells? Sometimes, though, you need more than guns and phones and cars to survive, and I have got just a little edge I save for those occasions."

The Lesser Gifted are characters with only a touch of supernatural power. To make up for their lower occult powers, Cast Members who select this type are more accomplished in other areas. Although they are weaker in the area of magic and unusual abilities, the Lesser Gifted will have higher attribute and skill scores than their more supernaturally-adept counterparts. This is for game balance only; the "run of the mill" Lesser Gifted character would have average attributes and skills.

These characters are less likely to attract the attention of supernatural beings except when they actually use their special abilities. They have a better chance of living a relatively peaceful existence, although their powers will often lead them into trouble.

The Lesser Gifted start out with 20 points for Attributes, 15 points for Qualities (and can gain up to 10 points in Drawbacks), 30 points for skills and 15 points for Metaphysics. The Lesser Gifted also must buy the Gifted quality.

Mundanes

Quote: "I don't know what is going on, and I don't care. I'm sure there is a logical explanation for this, but for now I'll humor you -you seem to know how to avoid getting killed, even if what you say is crazy."

These characters have no supernatural skills whatsoever. Mundanes are at a serious disadvantage in the world of *Armageddon*, because they lack the ability to face (and in some cases even perceive) many of the dangers that hide beneath the shadows of reality. Mundane Cast Members should be extraordinary individuals (perhaps with a few attributes near or at the human maximum), whose great physical or mental prowess allow them to be of assistance to their Gifted allies and friends.

Mundanes start out with 25 points for Attributes, 20 points for Qualities (and up to 10 points in Drawbacks) and 35 points for Skills. They get no points to buy Metaphysics (and cannot not buy any even with extra points gained from Drawbacks), nor can they purchase any Supernatural qualities.

Lesser Supernatural

Quote: "I'm not human, but I share many of your problems. I can be thwarted and made to suffer; I can even be killed. More importantly, though, I'm on your side."

Lesser Supernatural characters are beings of great power who are yet not experienced enough to make full use of them. They could be young Nephelim or Inheritors who just discovered their inhuman origins, or neophyte Kerubim on one of their first assignment. Although more powerful than humans, their natures can be sensed by the Gifted and other supernatural beings, making them easier to find, for good or ill. Supernatural beings also have many ancestral enemies, from human cults to other inhuman beings.

Lesser Supernatural start out with 15 points for Attributes, 15 points for Qualities (and up to 10 points in Drawbacks), 25 points for Skills and 25 points for Metaphysics.

Legendary

Legendary characters are powerful and experienced. If human, they are very powerful sorcerers or psychics. They may not be leaders, but they will certainly be considered to be "major players," people that others in their field speak about with respect or fear. These characters will be able to make a deep impression in world events, and their deeds, if they ever become public, may become modern myths. On the other hand, their power can be a heavy burden; their foes - and often their friends - will never let them rest. Even soldiers are not expected to be on the front lines all the time;

heroes do not have the luxury of stopping. And their own success brings about more problems; they will become personal targets of the enemy, as will their friends and loved ones. Like the superheroes of comic books, they live in constant danger - and unlike superheroes, a determined enemy can destroy them.

Since playing the more powerful supernatural beings in the complex world of **Armageddon** requires a good deal of familiarity with both the game system and the game setting, Legendary characters are not recommended for beginning Stories. Mixing Legendary and Heroic characters is also not recommended for most games, because of the wide differences in power. A few exceptions are possible, however. For example, if a player is more mature and knowledgeable about the game world than the rest of the group, he could take on the role of teacher or mentor, and be rewarded for the extra work of having to know the world almost as well as the Chronicler by playing a more powerful character. With this power should come responsibility, however; the character should feel a great deal of care and respect for the "weaker" characters, and the designated players should not abuse their abilities by bullying his "pupils." As usual, the Chronicler knows best how her gaming group would deal with such situations, and she should make the final decisions. And of course, power is relative in **Armageddon**, a Mundane piloting an F-22 jet fighter will be the match of most angels in aerial combat, for example, and in the field of intrigue and conspiracies, mortals often manage to outmaneuver ancient supernatural creatures - one of the themes of **Armageddon** is that age and power are not necessarily accompanied by wisdom.

Supernatural

Quote: *7 have known war since men first forged weapons of iron and rode chariots towards their doom. It is amusing to see that the only improvements are in weapons. How foolish these mortals be."*

This type covers all beings of great supernatural power, such as the Seraphim. Their very high point totals are meant to reflect beings of great age and experience, as well as tremendous power. Supernatural characters will have attributes and skills high enough to make most things easy for them. Chroniclers should tailor the challenges and dangers they design for their games with this fact in mind.

Supernatural characters have 20 points for attributes, 25 points in Qualities (and up to 15 points in Drawbacks), 30 points for Skills and 30 points for Metaphysics.

Greater Gifted

Quote: *"Things have not been this lively since - well, since I was alive, and that was a long while ago. I get the*

*feeling that my entire existence has been nothing but a trail
ing run to deal with this situation."*

These are humans who have cultivated their occult powers to superhuman levels; they represent some of the greatest sorcerers and psychics of the world, movers and shakers of human affairs. Many of these humans are very long-lived or even immortal.

Greater Gifted characters have 20 points for Attributes, 15 points in Qualities (and up to 15 points in Drawbacks), 35 points for skills and 50 points for Metaphysics.

3.Character Genus

The Genus (plural Genera) of a character is his species. Humans are the "default" Genus in the Unisystem; their attributes represent the average range. Other Genera will have specific advantages and drawbacks; some will be stronger or smarter, while others may be slower or less perceptive, for example. If a race's inherent advantages and bonuses are greater than their drawbacks, then playing a character of that Genus costs a number of character points; the more powerful that race is than humans, the more character points it costs to play one. These points can be paid from either the Qualities/Drawbacks or the Metaphysical Categories.

Humans: Humans are just that - human. They have no inborn powers, other than the ability to reason and adapt, the product of billions of years of evolution. Although not as physically powerful as the supernatural races described below, humans' access to magic, psychic powers and technology can make them a match for all but the most powerful entities. Human characters use the Mundane, Lesser Gifted, Gifted and Greater Gifted Character Types. There is no point cost to play humans, which means they can put all their points they have to better use.

True Immortals: The Immortals are a sub-species of humans. According to their legends, they were created by the Lords of Atlantis, who used their magic and super-technology to modify themselves into god-like beings. True Immortals have a number of special powers, described on p. 200. They can recover from damage at incredible speeds, do not age, and have access to some of the lost Sciences of Atlantis. Immortals use the Gifted and Greater Gifted Character Types, and costs 12 character points to play one.

Nephellm: Angels sometimes mate with humans; the result of such unions are the Nephelim, beings who combine the divine nature of the Seraphim with the tremendous potential of humankind. The Nephelim are extremely strong and almost impossible to kill, and are

highly resistant to all occult powers. Nephelim can be either Lesser Supernatural or Supernatural Characters. Playing a Nephelim costs 18 points.

Inheritors: Distant cousins of the Nephelim, Inheritors appear when the Pagan Gods breed with humans. The Inheritors are tougher than human beings, and inherit one or more Aspects, unique powers of the gods over certain areas of reality. Inheritors can be Lesser Supernatural or Supernatural characters. It costs 17 points to play an Inheritor.

Avatars: Avatars are created as a human embodiment of a god's power. The Avatar is an independent being, but the god can sometimes see and even attempt to control the Avatar. Like the Inheritors, Avatars also have some of the Aspects of the god that created them. Avatars are Supernatural characters. It costs 25 points to play an Avatar.

Kerubim/Qliphonim: The lower rank of the angels, the Kerubim were once human, but they have now been given angelic powers to help defend Earth and Humankind. The Kerubim abilities are less flashy than those of mortals, but they are masters of subtlety. The Qliphonim are the Infernal equivalents, damned humans sent to Earth to corrupt others. The Kerubim can be Lesser Supernatural or Supernatural Characters. Playing a Kerubim costs 20 points.

Seraphim: The Seraphim are the angels and demons of legend. Extremely powerful and ancient beings, the Seraphim have many enemies, and their powers make them easy to find while they are on Earth. They use the Supernatural character type. The Seraphim are the most powerful character Genus in **Armageddon**, as such, they may not be suitable for some games. It costs 30 points to play a Seraphim.

44. Attributes

Attributes are inborn characteristics of a character: his physical strength, intelligence, senses and so on. By selecting a set of attributes, you are defining the limits of what the character can and cannot do. So, for example, if you "buy" a very low Dexterity for your character, do not be surprised in the course of the game if the character routinely fails at trying to do anything that requires grace and manual coordination. As you are buying attributes, you can start getting a sense of what the character would be like. Is he strong but dumb, quick but weak, sharp and alert but weak-willed?

When you are figuring out a character's Attributes (and in general, when you are creating the character), we recommend that you use a pencil to write the numbers down, as you may want to make changes or use leftover points from other elements to raise an attribute.





Buying Attributes

During character creation, characters get an allotted number of points to distribute on their attributes. The exact amount of points are determined by your Character Type (see Element #2). Attributes can be "bought" at up to a level 5 on a one to one basis (i.e., a Strength of 3 would cost 3 points, a Strength of 4 would cost a total of 4 points, and so on). Attributes after level 5 are much more expensive: 3 points per additional level. Human beings cannot purchase an attribute past level 6, the absolute maximum (buying an attribute up to level 6 would cost 8 points).

It is recommended that at least 1 point be put into all the Attributes; there are no useless attributes, and piling one's points into one or two characteristics will make the character's life difficult in the course of a game.

Primary Attributes

Strength

A measure of the physical power of the character, Strength determines how much damage the character inflicts with hand-to-hand weapons, how much weight he/she can carry, and helps determine how athletic the character is. Since Strength is a result of the character's physical condition, it also helps determine how much damage and exertion the character can withstand before collapsing.

Strength is useful to people who will do a lot of heavy lifting or anybody likely to enter hand to hand combat. Characters apt to have a high strength include athletes, manual workers, and soldiers. A low strength indicates either small size and body weight or just a lack of exercise.

Dexterity

Dexterity is a measure of the character's coordination, agility, and gracefulness. It is used to determine how proficient a character is with any skill or task that requires motor control and precision, from perform

ing card tricks to picking pockets to punching somebody in the face (Dexterity helps the punch land; Strength determines how much the punch hurt the other guy). Any task where the character's speed and coordination matter will be influenced by Dexterity. A high Dexterity is common among dancers, gymnasts, or pickpockets. People with low Dexterity are clumsy and ungraceful.

Intelligence

This attribute determines the character's ability to learn, correlate and memorize information. The higher your intelligence, the easier it is to improve "scholastic" skills. Also, this attribute is used to understand and interpret information. Note that intelligence and education are two separate things; you can be brilliant but illiterate. Education is covered in the Skills sections, which determines what a character has learned in his life.

Intelligence is very important to anybody pursuing a higher education, or performing most technical jobs; most computer-related skills (except arcade games) are dependent on the Intelligence of the character.

Perception

Perception governs the five senses of the character. It gives a general overview of how sharp is the character's ability to sense things. This attribute is helpful to find clues, notice things, and avoid getting surprised. Also, Perception determines the character's intuition and alertness. A character with a low Perception would be nearly oblivious to what is going on around her.

Perception is an important attribute for the Gifted; many of their abilities are based on the intuition and detection powers of the character, and this is where Perception plays a role. This attribute also comes in handy for detectives (to discover those important clues), poker players (to read the expressions of their opponents) and sports referees (to spot rules violations).

Constitution

This attribute determines how physically hardy or healthy the character is. Constitution is important when it comes to resisting diseases, damage, and fatigue. This attribute is also used (along with Strength) to determine how much physical injury the person can survive and still remain functional. Constitution also comes into play with physical skills that involve endurance, like swimming and long-distance running.

Willpower

This attribute measures the mental strength and self-control of the character, and her ability to resist fear,

intimidation, and temptation. Willpower is vital to magicians; after all, magic is "the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will." Most other Gifted abilities and powers are also dependent upon Willpower. This attribute is also important for the Mundane, however, for it can be used to resist magical coercion, psychic mind control, and the influence of panic, greed and lust, among other things.

Attribute Bonuses

Depending on the character's Genus, some attributes may be modified. If your character belongs to a race that is on the average stronger than human, for example, then characters of that race would have a bonus to that attribute. These are numerical bonuses, either positive (i.e., +1 to Dexterity for a graceful race) or negative (-2 to Intelligence for a race of drones or mindless brutes, for example). These bonuses are applied *after* attributes have been purchased normally. For example, if you spend 3 points on Dexterity, and your race had a +1 to Dexterity, then your character would have a Dexterity of 4. Taking the mindless race example, suppose you want to play a true genius among its kind; you spend 8 points to get a base value of 6 (5 points for the first five levels, 3 points for the sixth one). After the -2 modifier was applied, the character's final Intelligence level would be a 4. While buying attributes for non-human species, you also need to note what the racial maximums are; for example, if the drone race could not have an Intelligence higher than 3, then the most points you could spend on Intelligence would be 5 (for a base of 5, modified down to 3).

Human Characters

Human character get neither bonuses nor penalties to their attributes. Players with human characters distribute the allotted points among the six Primary attributes; if they put no points into an attribute, it would have a value of 0, which denotes a very weak attribute. A negative value means that the faculties determined by that attributed are crippled in some way. Someone with a Strength of -1 is barely strong enough to move under his own power, while somebody with a Perception of -1 would be nearly blind and deaf.

True Immortals

True Immortals get the following bonuses, due to the arcane magicks and technology that Atlanteans bestowed upon their breed: +1 to Strength, +1 to Dexterity and +1 to Constitution. Mental Attributes receive no bonuses; the Atlanteans feared manipulating the human mind.

Inheritor Characters

The bodies of Inheritors have been "super-charged" by their pantheistic birth; these demigods have these bonuses: +3 to Strength, +3 to Constitution and +1 to any one Mental Attribute.

Nephelim Characters

These demiangles tend to be physically and mentally superior to humans. They have +3 to Strength, +2 Dexterity and +2 to Constitution, and +1 to Intelligence, +1 to Perception and +1 to Willpower.

Kerubim

After their miraculous transformation into angels, the Kerubim retain the bodies they once had in life, but with greatly enhanced capabilities, both physical and mental. The only ability left intact is the character's native intelligence. Kerubim get +3 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity and +3 to Constitution, as well as +1 to Perception and +1 to Willpower.

Avatars

These humans infused with Essence of a god have +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, +2 to Dexterity and +1 to Intelligence, Perception and Willpower.

Seraphim

The most powerful of the supernatural allowed as Cast Members, the Seraphim are incredibly strong, hardy and fast, and their mental processes are far more advanced than those of humans. Seraphim characters have +3 to all physical attributes, and +2 to all mental attributes.

Attribute limits

The Unisystem is based on the "human standard," i.e., with attributes calibrated for human characters. Normal humans cannot have attribute levels higher than 6 (see p. 00). In the world of *Armageddon*, however, players can take on the roles of a number of supernatural beings, many of whom have superhuman attributes. The attribute bonuses given to each of those supernatural "races" are listed above. The numbers listed below are the maximum attribute levels which members of each race can reach. These maximums cannot be exceeded either at character creation or by increasing attributes through experience (see p. 00).

Attribute Limits Table

Humans: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Constitution 6, Intelligence 6, Perception 6, Willpower 6.

True Immortals: Strength 7, Dexterity 7, Constitution 7, Intelligence 6, Perception 6, Willpower 7.

Inheritors: Strength 8, Dexterity 7, Constitution 8, Intelligence 6, Perception 7, Willpower 8.

Nephelim: Strength 9, Dexterity 8, Constitution 8, Intelligence 7, Perception 7, Willpower 7.

Kerubim: Strength 9, Dexterity 9, Constitution 9, Intelligence 6, Perception 6, Willpower 6.

Avatars: Strength 10, Dexterity 8, Constitution 8, Intelligence 6, Perception 6, Willpower 6.

Seraphim: Strength 12, Dexterity 12, Constitution 12, Intelligence 9, Perception 9, Willpower 9.

The Meaning of Numbers

When creating a character, the player assigns a value to each of the six Primary Attributes, typically ranging from 1 to 5, with the maximum being a 6. This is done, as stated before, by "buying" an attribute value with the available character points. This value represents the limits of the character with that attribute. The higher the attribute value, the more accomplished the Character is in that area.

Here are some guidelines for attributes levels 1 to 5:

Level 1: The character is below average in that attribute. A Strength of 1 indicates a poor physique, either a petite or flabby, sedentary person. A Dexterity of 1 indicates clumsiness, a character who is likely to drop things, not to be trusted with delicate manual work unless the person has trained very hard to do so. An Intelligence 1 is below average - not mentally challenged, but certainly a bit slow on the uptake. A Perception of 1 is the trait of a character who is not very aware of his surroundings, likely to miss what's going on around him. Characters with a Constitution of 1 are delicate and often in poor health: they are the ones who get sick the first, and their low physiques may be caused by abuse of drugs, tobacco or alcohol. A Willpower of 1 depicts a person who is easily intimidated and influenced by others, a follower, and somebody who is likely to succumb to temptation.

Level 2: This is the average for human beings. Most people in any given group will have attributes in that range, typically with one or two attributes at levels 1 or 3.

Level 3: This is above average but not extraordinary. A Strength and Constitution of 3 show some athletic aptitude, probably belonging to somebody who works out regularly and vigorously, or a natural athlete who has not taken time to develop her talent. Characters with a Dexterity of 3 are graceful individuals. Intelligence 3 indicates a bright person who can easily learn new skills, if he has the temperament to do so. With a Perception of 3, the character has good senses and intuition, and is not easily fooled or confused. A

character with a Willpower of 3 will rarely be convinced or bullied under normal circumstances.

Level 4: An attribute at level 4 is well above average. Very few people, perhaps one out every ten persons in a random group, will have one or two attributes at this level. Strength and Constitution 4 can be found only in athletes, including the best football players in a large high school, or college campus, extensively trained Special Forces soldiers, and other people who spend a large amount of time and effort keeping in shape. A Dexterity of 4 would only be common among gymnasts, acrobats, dancers and other talented individuals. Mental attributes at level 4 indicate near genius Intelligence, very acute senses and intuition (Perception), and an Iron will" (Willpower).

Level 5: This is the "practical" human limit. While people with attributes at level 5 are not 'record breakers,' they are among the best and the brightest representatives of humanity. In a small or medium-sized community, only a handful of people will have one or two attributes at this level, and they are likely to be well known for their strength, wisdom or toughness. Cities, large college campuses, and groupings of the Gifted will have more of these extraordinary individuals, but even there they will not be common.

Superhuman Attributes: Anything above level 6 is superhuman. At levels 7 and above, characters can break down doors with ease, lift tremendous weights, reason at incredible speed, and hear with uncanny accuracy. Most tasks become absurdly easy for these characters. Only nearly impossible feats present any problems.

Secondary Attributes

Once the six Primary Attributes are determined, you will need to do some quick calculations to figure out the Secondary Attributes. Secondary Attributes are not bought; instead, they are determined by combining the values of the Primary Attributes and plugging them into the arcane formulas given below. The results are your Secondary Attributes.

With the exception of Speed, which basically determines how fast you can run at an all-out dash, the other Secondary Attributes determine a Pool of points. Certain factors (injury, fatigue, or the use of magic) will temporarily increase or decrease the amount of points in each Pool. For example, the Life Points Pool determines a character's current health. If an injury is sustained, the health (the Life Points Pool) of the character

is lowered; healing the damage will eventually raise the Pool back to its original level. The more severe the damage, the more points will be removed from the Life Points Pool. If enough damage is done to completely drain the character of all his Life Points, she will be in danger of dying! See the Injuries section on p. 00 for more detail.

Life Points

This attribute determines the physical health of the character. The Strength and Constitution of the character are the determinant factors; a big muscle-bound athlete can survive more punishment than a pencil-necked, cold-catching nerd. On the other hand, a bullet to the head or a solid whack with an ax will probably kill either character with the same ease. Life Points determine the amount of physical damage the character can take before being unable to function. Other things that will drain Life Points include disease, extreme fatigue, and some supernatural attacks.

Each species has a different formula for determining Life Points. Supernatural beings tend to be stronger and hardier than humans; a Seraphim, for example, could be shot several times before being crippled or slowed down.

Life Points Table

To determine Life Points, take the Strength and Constitution of the character, multiply them by a set multiplier, and then add a base number to the total. Each race has a slightly different formula, some with a higher or lower multiplier, others with a different base number. A race of giants, for example, would have a larger base number, to indicate their higher mass and resultant resistance to damage.

Humans: (Strength + Constitution) x 4 + 10

True Immortals: (Strength + Constitution) x 5 + 15

Inheritors: (Strength + Constitution) x 4 + 25

Nephelim: (Strength + Constitution) x 5 + 20

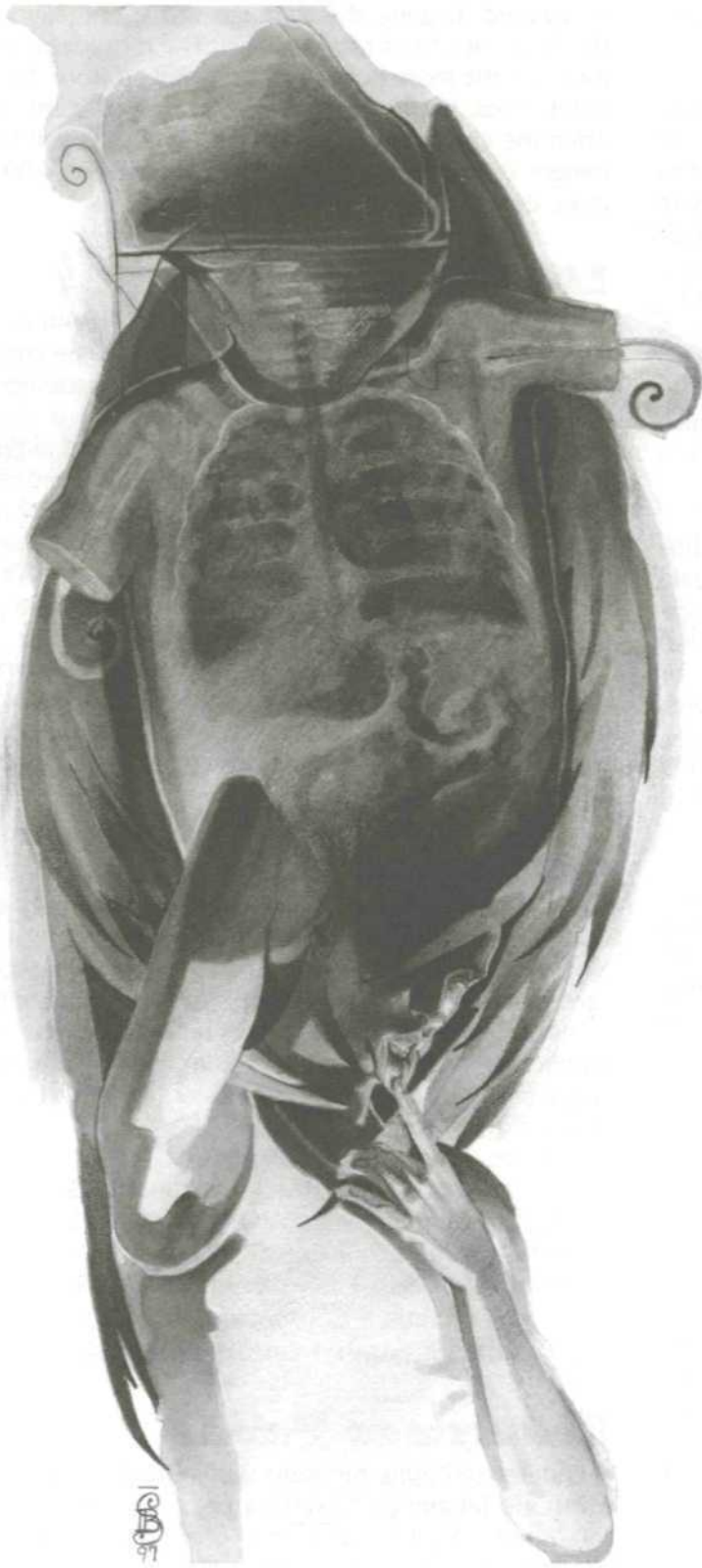
Kerubim: (Strength + Constitution) x 5 + 25

Avatars: (Strength + Constitution) x 5 + 30

Seraphim: (Strength + Constitution) x 4 + 50

Endurance Points

Endurance Points measure the character's ability to withstand fatigue and exertion before collapsing. Like Life Points, Endurance Points use Constitution and Strength, but they also use Willpower, taking into account that some people can push themselves past normal physical limits through the power of the will. The more Endurance Points a character has, the longer he can run, lift things, swim, etc. As the character exerts himself, he starts losing Endurance Points. When



be subtracted from Endurance Points instead of Life Points.

The Formula: (Constitution + Strength + Willpower) x 3 + 5(Human Range: 14 to 49). This formula applies to all the races.

Essence Points

Essence is the amount of spiritual energy the character has within herself. It measures, basically, the strength of the character's soul and life-force. Essence is also the binding force of reality; this means that inside each human being are the building blocks of Creation. Magic, Inspired Miracles and other abilities can channel Essence for a variety of powerful effects. Additional Essence can be purchased by the Gifted. Although Essence is used primarily in the performance of magic, it can also be temporarily drained by strong emotions (like fear and hatred), as well as by the attacks of some supernatural creatures. Totally draining a human being of her Essence can lead to her death.

The Gifted often have extra Essence, due to their greater control over the flows of primal energy; this extra Essence is purchased during character creation as a Quality (see p. 45).

Supernatural beings often have more Essence than most humans (although the Gifted can and often do surpass the angels themselves).

The Formula: To calculate Essence, add all the character's primary attributes together. That is the total for humans, although a number of Qualities can increase a character's Essence total. Other supernatural beings add a set number to this total.

True Immortals: +25

Inheritors: +20

Nephelim: +30

Kerubim: +40

Avatars: +40

Seraphim: +45

Speed

This represents how fast a person can run at maximum speed. This attribute only comes into play on the few occasions when running speed will be a consideration. In **Armageddon**, Speed will come into play most often when a character is chasing or being chased by somebody.

The Formula: (Constitution + Dexterity) x 2; that is

Endurance Points are reduced to 0, the character will pass out from exhaustion, unless he continues pushing himself, which risks injury (see p. 121). Additionally, in some cases light damage from non-lethal attacks will

the speed in miles per hour (Human Range: 4 to 20 mph). Half that amount is the number of yards that can be run in one second (Human Range: 2 to 10 yards per second).

5. Qualities and Drawbacks

Qualities are innate characteristics that give the character an advantage or positive trait. Drawbacks are characteristics that somehow limit or detract from the character. They help round out the character, and can be helpful both to roleplay and to "succeed" in the course of a game.

Qualities are desirable traits, and therefore they "cost" character points. Drawbacks, on the other hand, are limiting factors, and as a "reward" for acquiring them, the character gains extra points. Points acquired from Drawbacks can be used in any Character Category such as Attributes, Qualities, Skills and Metaphysics.

Numerical Qualities and Drawbacks

Some Qualities and Drawbacks are expressed in numerical ways: the most common examples include Attractiveness, Charisma and Wealth. These are similar to attributes. Qualities and Drawbacks change the character in positive or negative ways. As a result, they are represented as bonuses or penalties. For example, a Charisma of +2 represents a bonus of 2 levels on any task that involves influencing or manipulating people through social skills, while a Resource level of -2 indicates very low income and few possessions, well below the national average.

Bringing a Quality below the average gives the character extra points to put in other attributes, skills, or positive qualities. Unlike attributes, numerical Qualities have an average value of 0; so if a player does not want to deal with any Quality, it is simply assumed to have a base value of 0.

Raising and Lowering Qualities and Drawbacks During Play

After creating the character, some Qualities and Drawbacks may be acquired or lost in the course of a game. In some cases, circumstances can cause a change in a Quality or Drawback. For example, a scarring wound could reduce the character's Attractiveness,

or a change in fortune might increase or reduce the character's Resources or Social Level. When such a change is brought about during play, no experience points are needed to purchase them. If the player wants to purposefully change a Quality or Drawback, he must spend experience points and come up with a good reason for the change. Improving a character through experience is covered in p. 00.

Creating New Qualities and Drawbacks

The list below is far from exhaustive, although it covers most of the basics. In many cases, a "new" Quality or Drawback can be an extension or variation of an existing one. The value of the characteristic should be balanced out by the benefits or penalties it grants the character. Most Qualities or Drawbacks should be worth between 1 and 3 points; only the most powerful or crippling of them should have a value of 4 or higher.

List of Qualities and Drawbacks

Mental

Mental Qualities and Drawbacks affect the personality and viewpoint of the character, for good or ill.

Addict

Variable Mental Drawback

You crave a substance and must have it, even against your better judgment. Most addictive substances will eventually impact on your health; many of them are also illegal, and using or purchasing them may land you in jail should you be discovered. Those concerns matter little to you, however; when the craving hits you, you can rarely resist it. Addicts often do things they would normally never consider in order to satisfy their need, from cheating and stealing to committing serious crimes to selling their bodies or even betraying their friends.

When you haven't gotten your usual "fix," you suffer from debilitating withdrawal symptoms. Most mental actions and tasks (i.e., any tasks or tests using Intelligence, Perception or Willpower) are at a penalty equal to the value of the Drawback (so, a character with a 2-point Addiction will suffer a -2 penalty to most tasks) until the character can get what he needs. The most severe drugs (like heroin) will also produce strong physical effects; the addict will have a penalty of -3 to

all physical actions in addition to the above penalty on mental actions. To make matters worse, severe addicts will also suffer physically if they cannot or will not give in to their craving.

The value of this Drawback is determined by the severity of the Addiction and the relative effects of the drug. A detailed description of the effects of different addictive substances would fill an entire book or more (and this game's title is **Armageddon**, not **Getting High**), so these guidelines are general and may not be fully accurate. In the game, as in real life, drugs are dangerous and unpredictable, and an addict character is often unable to control herself.

Character Point Value: Varies with severity:

Habitual drinking or smoking: A point.

Heavy drinking or smoking, light use of Marijuana, LSD: 2 points

Heavy use of Marijuana, LSD: 3 points

Alcoholism or Habitual Use of Barbiturates, Cocaine: 4 points

Habitual use of Heroin, Heavy Use of Barbiturates, Cocaine: 5 points

Heavy Use of Heroin: 6 points.

Overcoming an Addiction: Unlike most Drawbacks, this problem cannot be easily overcome. Generally, the best a character can hope to do is to be an addict who has managed to deny his cravings for good, "one day at a time." Getting rid of this Drawback should never be a matter of saving up enough points to "buy it off." Resisting the craving will require a series of Willpower Tests (at first they will be Simple tests, but later becoming Difficult; see p. 00), with a penalty equal to the point value of the Drawback, plus an additional -1 to -4 depending on the strength of the drug and its availability (tobacco is so available and addictive that Willpower Tests are at a minimum penalty of -4 or even higher).

Once the character accumulates 10 success levels from successful Willpower Tests, 1 character point may be spent to reduce the strength of the addiction by 1 point; another 10 success levels are needed for the next point, and so on, until the Drawback is eliminated.

This struggle should be a major part of the character's roleplaying. A convincing depiction of the torments of the addict may be awarded with bonuses to the Willpower Tests, at the Chronicler's discretion.

Artistic Talent (Type)

3-point Mental Quality

Some people just have the natural gift to produce astounding works of art, even if they lack in formal training. Geniuses like Mozart and Picasso had the ability to create true art with seemingly effortless ease. A character with this Quality has the talent to become a famous artist. Artistic Talent affects only one form of artistic expression, such as Painting/Drawing, Sculpture,

Singing, etc. It is possible to buy this Quality multiple times; each additional purchase grants the bonuses to an additional form of art; Essence bonuses (see below) are cumulative.

Whenever a work of art is created, the character gets at +3 bonus to his Task attempts. Additionally, even if the Task is failed, a minimum of one success level is always acquired - even a failure by the truly talented will still have artistic merit.

In the world of **Armageddon**, true artists have very strong souls; characters with Artistic Talent add 12 Essence points to their pool, to represent the power of their spirits. This also makes artists more likely to be targeted by entities that feed on Essence, such as ghosts and Vampyres, which may explain the often tortured existences of these artists.

Charisma

Varies (1 point per level, positive or negative)

The personal magnetism and leadership qualities of the person, ranging from -5 to +5. A character with a Charisma in the negative range will be instinctively disliked by most people he meets; people will be naturally inclined to antagonize or avoid him. Charisma can be added to any task where the character is trying to influence other people. Negative Charisma will, of course, reduce the chances that any attempt to influence people will work.

Clown

1-point Drawback

The Clown refuses to take things seriously, and is always coming up with jokes and wisecracks, even during the most inappropriate moments. Perhaps the character is deeply insecure and tries to gain other people's acceptance through humor, or he simply delights in keeping people off-balance with his comments. The biggest problem these characters have is that they cannot keep their mouths shut even when they know a joke will only work against them.

Clowns are generally accepted and liked during situations where their quirky humor is not out of place (parties and other social gatherings, or among friends) their sense of humor will get them in trouble during tense and dangerous situations. Another problem the Clown faces is that people will often not take him seriously even when they should.

Covetous

1- to 3-point Mental Drawback

You want certain things and are prepared to go to great lengths to acquire them. You may be motivated by love of money, lust for sensual satisfaction, hunger for power, or desire for glory. Fame, fortune or influence, you want them badly enough to do almost any thing, limited only by any sense of caution or morality

you may have - and in some cases, not even by that. A Covetous character will usually refrain from breaking his own moral code or the laws of the land in the pursuit of his goals, but if a golden opportunity presents itself, the temptation may be just too great.

There are four types of covetousness, based on what the character wants: Greed (money and wealth), Lechery (sexually attractive people), Ambition (power and influence), and Glory Seeker (fame and renown). It is possible to Covet two or more of those things, but each additional source of desire adds a flat 1 point to the value of the Drawback.

This Drawback has three levels of severity, worth 1, 2 and 3 points respectively. The first level is relatively mild. You know what you want, and you will spend a great deal of time and effort to attain your goals, but you won't break your own rules nor those of society to do so. Your desire will otherwise dominate your life, however: most of your actions should be directed towards achieving your objective, directly or indirectly. An Ambitious Rosicrucian, for example will seek to advance his standing in the order in every way he can, from redoubling his studies to master new Arts to brownosing among the higher hierarchy.

The second level is stronger - presented **with** enough temptation, you may act even if it goes against your better judgment or morality. You may resist if the action you contemplate is truly wrong and reprehensible - stealing credit for a heroic deed performed by a friend, for example - but resisting will require a Simple Willpower Test, at a penalty of -1 to -3 if the temptation and possible rewards are great.

The third level is strongest, a desire so strong that it will often overwhelm any compunctions or scruples you may have. When presented with temptation, you can only avoid acting by passing a Difficult Willpower Test, with penalties ranging from -1 to -5 depending on the size of the "prize." For a high enough reward, the character will turn on friend or loved ones, and even betray his cause or principles.

Cowardly

1- to 3-point Mental Drawback

You are easily scared and intimidated. Furthermore, you are very reluctant to take any risks; putting your neck on the line always strikes you as incredibly foolhardy. Note that this does not mean that a Cowardly character will not fight if necessary; such a character will usually try to stack the odds in his favor before resorting to violence, but would have no compunction (except as determined by other Drawbacks) to attack others. A coward can hide his Drawback from others very easily, as long as he is not involved in a situation that is clearly dangerous; then his limitations may become apparent.

This Drawback has three levels of increasing intensi-



ty, worth 1, 2 and 3 points respectively. The level of the Drawback also acts as a modifier to any Willpower Test or Task to resist fear, intimidation or bullying. So, for example a character with the second level of Cowardly will have a -2 penalty to any Fear Test (see p.00).

At first level, the character will avoid taking unnecessary risks, but will fight when cornered (or when he thinks he has the upper hand). Simple Willpower Tests are necessary to avoid fleeing or surrendering when confronted by what the character considers to be superior foes, or to take even small chances, like confronting one's boss to ask for a raise, complain about some problem, etc.

The second level of this drawback is stronger. The character needs to pass a Simple Willpower Test to fight back even when he thinks the odds are in his favor, and needs to pass a Difficult Willpower Test to avoid fleeing dangerous situations.

The last level is the worst, requiring Difficult Willpower Tests to get involved in confrontations or risky situations even when the character has good chances of succeeding. Truly dangerous or heroic acts are simply impossible; the character will never knowingly or willingly endanger himself, and may actually even betray his friends if he thinks he will save himself in the process.

Cruel

1 - or 3-point Drawback

You enjoy making some people suffer. The truly evil will derive satisfaction from anybody's pain, while some people are perfectly normal and nice most of the time, but when angered or given offense, will make their enemies pay - and will love doing it. This Drawback has two levels or degrees of intensity. The second level is best restricted to villains, as it indicates a serious mental problem that may make most characters unsuitable for the typical campaign. As always, the Chronicler decides.

Level 1: You would never hurt a friend or loved one. Enemies, especially those who have really angered you, are a different matter. You enjoy inflicting pain (mental or physical) on those you feel 'deserve what they get.' Cats also have this level of cruelty; while they can be friendly and loving, they have the capacity to be nasty to creatures they see as their rightful prey. Characters with this level of cruelty are capable of committing atrocities under the right circumstances, but will not go out of their way to find opportunities. This is a 1-point Drawback.

Level 2: You are a true sadist, and never pass up the chance to inflict pain on others. Even your friends and loved ones are not safe from you. When it comes to enemies or those who get in your way, you enjoy nothing so much as their utter destruction or humiliation. When no enemies are available, you will use your 'tal-

ents" on those around you. Note that a Cruel character need not be into "whips and chains:" malicious gossip, workplace conspiracies, and small, petty acts that will bring harm and pain to people are just as effective as physical violence. This is a 3-point Drawback; people with this Drawback will rarely keep any friendships, and will quickly gain enemies. Many supernatural predators are Cruel, due to the combination of their habits and their nature.

Delusions

Variable Drawback

Delusions are beliefs that have no basis on reality - at least as reality is understood by society at large. The character will refuse to abandon such beliefs even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, or will at best come up with rationalizations to explain away any contradictions. The more impact a Delusion has on a person, the higher its value as a Drawback. Some examples are given below:

Prejudice: The belief that a group of people (racial, ethnic or national) has certain characteristics (positive or negative). While everybody has some prejudices in some way or another, a delusional person will staunchly hold to these beliefs. In some cases, the person will refuse to trust or befriend any member of such a group, regardless of the merits of the individual person. Such a Delusion will be worth 1 to 3 points, depending on how intense the belief is, to how large a group it applies, and how it dominates the character's life. At the 1-point level, the character could be an 'Archie Bunker' type bigot; at 3 points, he would be a rabid white supremacist, unable to communicate with people of the wrong color.

Delusions of Grandeur: **You** think you are somebody far greater and more powerful than you really are. In extreme cases, the character thinks that he is a historical or mythological figure like Napoleon or Sherlock Holmes. The more common type is more like an exaggerated sense of overconfidence. Some examples: "1 am a genius, but nobody understands me - which is why the best job I've held is cashier at a 7-11" (1 point); "1 am the Messiah; prepare the for the Second Coming, pitiful mortals!" (3 points).

Weird Delusions: Any strange belief that flies in the face of reality. Some examples: "Aliens talk to me through my wristwatch;" "I have to wear this tin foil cap so the laser satellites don't make me kill again;" "Dogs are the Spawn of Satan, and must be destroyed." Their value depends more on what the character does about the delusion than about the delusion itself. For example if the character in the last example simply refuses to pet dogs, and will avoid being next to a dog, that would be a 1-point Delusion. If he tells people about his beliefs all the time, and keeps pestering any dog-owning friends and neighbors about the dangers of

keeping such monsters around, this would be a 2-point Delusion. And if he carries his insanity to its "logical" conclusion and starts hurting or killing dogs, then his Delusion is worth 3 points and he is likely to get in trouble with the law.

Emotional Problems

Variable Drawback

You react in unreasonable ways to some situations and problems. The reaction can be anger, pain or anguish, typically more extreme than normal. Maybe a traumatic event in this life (or even in a previous life) has made you this way. These emotional problems can be triggered by ordinary events in normal life, events that may bring distress to most people but which in your case will prompt a very strong reaction.

Some situations that can trigger emotional problems include:

Fear of Rejection: You are afraid of rejection, and when you experience rejection (or think you have been rejected) you feel hurt and angry. People with this problem may be afraid to make friends or approach people they are attracted to, and if their fears come true, will harbor a great deal or resentment and anger. This is a 1-point Drawback.

Depression: Your emotional problems make the very act of living seem like a hard chore. Common symptoms of Depression include sleep problems (either oversleeping or bouts of insomnia), severe procrastination (to the point that the sufferer may lose her job), and a lack of interest in anything. A character with Depression will be at -2 to most task rolls, and will tend to avoid becoming involved in anything. This is a 2-point Drawback. A severe shock may snap people out of this state for a while (a life-threatening crisis will do it), but the character will sink back into inactivity afterwards. Certain drugs and psychiatric treatment can reduce the effect of this problem (which will also reduce its value).

Emotional Dependency: You tend to be "clingly" and overly dependent on others. Once you make a friend, you want to hang around him all the time; when involved in a relationship, you are excessively needy. This behavior tends to annoy people around you. This is a 1-point Drawback.

Fear of Commitment: Whenever you start feeling too close to somebody, you become afraid and start pulling back. Maybe you are afraid that if you let somebody get too close, they can hurt you, and it's not worth the pain. Or perhaps you fear that if you reveal too much about yourself, the other person will see the "real you" and will be appalled or disgusted. This makes it very difficult to have a healthy relationship with either friends or lovers. This is a 1-point Drawback.

Overcoming an Emotional Problem: A common theme in fiction involves characters who in the course

of the plot manage to overcome their flaws. Emotional Problems can be overcome by characters during play. This should always be roleplayed; if the player was able to convey the inner struggle of her character over the course of several games, the Chronicler might allow her to eliminate the Drawback without having to "pay" any experience points to do so (see page 90 for information on "buying off" Drawbacks).

Fast Reaction Time

2-point Quality

Unlike most people, who are easily surprised and blindsided, you can often anticipate your enemy's moves and counteract them. You almost never "freeze" in a dangerous situation. In combat, contact sports or other physical confrontations, characters with this Quality can act first without needing to check for initiative, restricted by common sense (Situational Awareness will not help the target of a sniper half a mile away, for example). Also add a bonus of +1 on Willpower Tests to resist fear.

Honorable

1 - to 3-point Drawback

You follow a code of honor, and will not break it lightly, if at all. The more restrictive and rigid the code is, the higher its negative value on the character. The character with the code of honor should almost never break its rules, no matter what the cause. In a life-or-death situation where honor needs to be ignored, the character might do so, but even then a roll using Willpower is necessary to break the psychological barriers reinforcing the code of honor. Players whose characters ignore honor for the sake of convenience should be penalized for poor roleplaying.

The levels of the Honorable Drawback are as follows:

First Level (Minor): You do not lie or betray friends or loved ones, or people you respect. Anybody else, especially people from groups you dislike or are prejudiced against, are fair game. This is a 1-point drawback.

Second Level: Your code of honor is more complex, and applies to everyone, friend or foe. You always keep your word and do your best to fulfill any promises you make. You will not betray the trust of others once you have accepted it. Note that the character may be reluctant to give his word except in a good cause, because once it has been given he will abide by it. This is a 2-point drawback.

Third Level: You live by a strict set of rules that control most of your actions towards others. In addition to all the other restrictions above, you will refuse to participate in acts of betrayal such as ambushes, striking a helpless or unsuspecting foe, or cheating in any way. Lying is anathema to you, and will only lie in cases of extreme need. Even then, you will feel guilty and will



not do a very good job at deceiving; any tasks requiring lying will have a -2 to -6 penalty, determined by the Chronicler and the circumstances.

Humorless

1-point Drawback

You lack the ability to laugh at life, and take everything with the utmost seriousness. Other people's attempts at humor leave you cold or annoy you. Most people will find this facet of your personality to be unattractive or bothersome. Clowns and practical jokers will most likely select you as their favorite target.

Lazy

2-point Drawback

You just don't like to work and are always looking for ways to avoid hard work. This limits how much you can learn or accomplish in your life. A Lazy character must roleplay an unwillingness to work, except in situations where the work is extremely important, and even then he will try to shirk his duties or select the easiest task. More importantly, the character has a hard time learning skills, due to his inability to spend the required time and effort.

When determining and improving skills for a Lazy character, the character point cost becomes higher after reaching a certain level. This level is determined by the character's attributes; a lazy but intelligent or dexterous person can learn a great deal with little effort - at first. Skills are purchased normally until their level is equal to the attribute most commonly associated with them. Combat and physical skills would be linked to Dexterity, technical and scholastic skills would be associated with Intelligence, and so on. After reaching that level, any further improvement costs double the normal cost! Lazy people are unlikely to ever excel at anything.

Example: Gert is a near genius-level woman (intelligence 4) who has never had to work very hard to be successful. She could have been a great computer programmer, but has instead settled for being a very good one. Gert's Computer Programming skill can be bought up to level 4 in a normal manner. After level 4 however, the cost to raise the skill is doubled, costing her 2 points to raise the skill to level 5, and 6 points to raise to level 6! Gert never goes beyond level 4, too lazy to transcend this limit.

Nerves of Steel

3-point Mental Quality

You are almost impossible to scare. Whether you are too dumb or too tough to be frightened is open to question, but you can keep your cool even in the face of unspeakable horror. Only the most bizarre and terrifying situations will make an impression on you, and even then you have a good chance not to succumb to

panic. The character needs to pass Fear Tests (see p. 00) only when confronted with the strangest supernatural manifestations, and even then he has a +4 bonus to his roll or draw.

Obsession

2-point Drawback

A particular person or task dominates your life, to the exclusion of most other things. To pursue your obsession, you will go to almost any lengths (as limited by your morality). You may neglect other duties, both personal and professional, to pursue that which fascinates you. This may be a person (who may or may not be aware of your feelings, but who will almost certainly be upset about their intensity) or a task (like getting revenge on somebody, or performing some important or notorious feat).

Paranoid

2-point Drawback

"They" are out to get you. Trust no one. Everything is a conspiracy, everyone is keeping secrets, and you never know when somebody is going to turn against you. A paranoid character will expect treachery at every turn, and will rarely trust even his friends and relatives. Note that in the world of *Armageddon*, where secret organizations like the Combine have run centuries-old conspiracies, being paranoid is somewhat healthy. However, a character with this drawback will see conspiracies and danger everywhere, including places where there are none. This makes his stories and beliefs less likely to be believed, even when they are true. Paranoids often suffer from Delusions and Emotional Problems (their point values are determined separately).

Photographic Memory

2-point Quality

You have an uncanny ability to remember things. After reading a book, you can quote passages without missing a word, and you almost never forget anything. The Chronicler will have to provide information that the character would remember whenever it is necessary. Also, characters with this Quality receive a +1 bonus on any skill where memorizing facts will be useful; most scholastic skills fall under this category. Also, any tasks where memory can play a role will have a +1 to +3 bonus, at the Chronicler's discretion.

Recurring Nightmares

1-point Drawback

You are plagued by terrifying dreams that relive some traumatic experience or which are just frightening and disturbing. Every night, the Chronicler may check to see if you suffer from the nightmare; she can do it at her discretion, or roll randomly (a roll of 1 on a

D10 means the character experiences a nightmare that night). On any night when you are afflicted by the nightmare, you will lose 1D4(2) Endurance Points as the result of your inability to go back to sleep.

Situational Awareness

2-point Quality

You almost always know what is going on around you, and can react with uncanny quickness to the unexpected. You gain a +2 bonus to any Perception-based rolls to sense trouble or danger in your immediate surroundings. It is very hard to sneak up on you; the same bonus applies to resist any Stealth tasks to approach you.

Untalented

2-point Mental Drawback

You are totally lacking in creativity and artistic talent. Maybe you are too stolid and practical, or maybe you just don't have the imagination to do anything artistic. This Drawback does not just affect your ability in the arts, but also in many social skills where flair and creativity are necessary. Untalented characters have a -3 penalty when trying to do anything artistic. This penalty does not affect Tasks where other people's art is judged; many expert critics are Untalented. When they try to do something themselves, the best they can hope for is a mediocre result. In addition to the penalty, the character can never get more than one success level in artistic pursuits, regardless of how high his skill, roll or draw are.

Unimaginative people also make poor liars, charmers or social butterflies. The same penalty applies to such skills as Intimidation, Seduction and Smooth-Talking - a lack of creativity affects your ability to influence others.

Zealot

3-point Drawback

A zealot is a person whose beliefs (political, religious or personal) are so strong that they dominate his life and behavior. Zealots are willing to sacrifice anything, including their lives (or the lives of others) in service of the ideals they hold dear. These characters are dangerous to themselves and others, and will show total disregard for the law whenever the law conflicts with their beliefs.

Physical

Physical Qualities and Drawbacks affect the character's body in some way.

Acute/Impaired Senses

2-point **Quality** or 2-point **Drawback**

Must be purchased separately for each sense.

These are the five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste. Normally, the five senses are represented by the Perception Attribute. Acute or Impaired senses indicate one or more senses that are higher than normal for a person with that Perception attribute.

When bought as a Quality, an acute sense gives the character a +3 bonus to any Perception-related roll or draw that depends on that sense. If acquired as a Drawback, impaired senses give a similar -3 penalty to Perception-based tasks that depend on that sense.

Some impaired senses (hearing and sight in particular) can be easily corrected in the modern age through the use of glasses, hearing aids and similar devices. If the impairment is eliminated by the use of such devices, the Chronicler should reduce the value of the drawback in half, to 1 character point.

It is possible to have more than one type of acute or impaired sense, or, for example, to have Acute Hearing and Impaired Eyesight, or similar combination of senses. For obvious reasons, you cannot select both the Impaired and Acute versions of the same sense!

Attractiveness

Variable Quality or Drawback

This Quality or Drawback determines the character's looks (or lack thereof). The average person has an attractiveness of 0, which means the person will look plain and undistinguished unless he or she takes steps to enhance his appearance (clothing, makeup and poise will always make a difference). Positive values in Attractiveness indicate pleasing features, while negative values indicate ugliness, scars, or unpleasant characteristics. The character's Attractiveness value can be added to or subtracted from any tasks that depend on making an impression on other people. In some cases, negative attractiveness values can be useful; when trying to intimidate or scare people, positive attractiveness values have no effect, but negative ones count as bonuses! For example, a character with an Attractiveness of -3 would add +3 to any task where intimidating people is a factor.

Note that the physical attributes of a character will determine exactly how her attractiveness will be expressed. For example, a character with Strength and Constitution 3 or 4 will appear extremely athletic, likely tanned from outdoor exercise, with a well-muscled body. A character with a Constitution of 1 and an attractiveness of +4 is probably a delicate-looking, very pale person with almost doll-like features.

Purchasing Attractiveness costs 1 point per level if bought as a Quality, or adds 1 extra character point if acquired as a Drawback. After character creation, Attractiveness can change only by events where the

character's entire appearance is modified, either through scarring, plastic surgery, or powerful magic.

Attractiveness can range from -5 to +5 in humans. A +1 or +2 make the person stand out in a crowd and attract attention unless the character somehow hides her features. At +3 or +4, the character can easily make a living through his looks alone, as model or entertainer. At +5, the character would be among the top models, beauty pageant contestants and movie stars in the world. On the other level, at -1 or -2, the person will have homely features, or unsightly blemishes or scars. At -3 or -4, the character's features will be downright repulsive. At -5, people will be taken aback by the character's appearance; looking at her will be a source of discomfort. Beings with inhuman features can have levels as low as -10!

Hard to Kill

1 to 5-point Quality

You are extremely tough, and can withstand an amazing amount of damage before going down. Even after being severely wounded, medical attention has a good chance to revive you, scarred but alive. This Quality is bought in levels; level 5 is the highest possible level for human beings. Each level of Hard to Kill adds 3 Life Points to the character's pool. Additionally, each level adds a +1 bonus to Survival Tests (see p. 82).

Physical Disability

Variable Drawback

This drawback covers any physical problems affecting the limbs of the character. A disabled character may suffer from limb loss, spinal column damage, and any number of tragic impairments.

Missing or Crippled Arm/Hand: The hand in question cannot be used to grab or hold objects. Any task requiring two hands may be at a disadvantage (-3 or worse) or be simply impossible. This is a 2-point drawback. A character with a prosthetic hand will be able to overcome some of these problems, reducing the drawback to 1 point in value.

Missing or Crippled Leg/Foot: The character is unable to walk or run normally. With the help of crutches or a cane, he can move at up to one third the normal Speed value of the character. Hand to hand combat tasks are at -2. This is a 3-point drawback. Prosthetics can reduce the penalties, increasing speed to up to half normal, and reducing combat penalties to -1; this also reduces the drawback value to -2.

Missing or Crippled Arms: Both arms are missing or crippled. The character cannot use any tools normally; some people with this handicap have learned to use their feet with great skill to compensate for their loss. This is a 4-point drawback.

Missing or Crippled Legs: The character is unable to walk; without the help of a wheelchair, the best he can

do is crawl or roll on the ground. This is a 4-point drawback.

Paraplegic Both arms and legs are crippled or missing, or the character is paralyzed from the neck down. Almost all physical activities are obviously impossible. A special wheelchair, operated with the neck or mouth, can help the character move around (if the unfortunate has access to such instruments). Somebody needs to take care of all the basic needs of the character, from feeding to changing him. This is an 8-point drawback.

Note: In the world of *Armageddon*, magic and technology can reduce or nearly eliminate some or all the penalties a person with a disability normally suffer. For example, with the right combination of Metaphysics, a Gifted paraplegic could overcome much of her problems. In such cases, the Chronicler can reduce the value of these Drawbacks as she sees fit.

Social

These Qualities and Drawbacks modify how the character deals with others around her, either by defining her place in society or giving her a unique advantage or trouble that determines how others react to her.

Adversary

Variable Drawback

Sometime in the past, the character has made an enemy, or she belongs to a group, race or nation that will automatically attract the enmity of others. An Adversary is more than somebody who dislikes you, however: he, she or they will wish nothing less than the destruction of their target, either by killing or ruining him.

The more powerful the Adversary, the higher its value. Chroniclers should determine if an adversary is appropriate to the game in question; if the Adversary is very unlikely to appear frequently, the Chronicler can reduce its point value or disallow it altogether. Individuals are worth 1 to 3 points as adversaries, depending on the resources and abilities. A normal person would be worth 1 point; a magician, a Green Beret or a multimillionaire would be worth 3 points. An organization may be worth 2 to 5 points, depending on its power; the gang of thugs would be worth 2 points, the police department of a city would be worth 3 to 4 points (depending on its size and competence), and a Covenant would be worth 5 points or more.

The player should have a good reason why his character has earned the enmity of the Adversary. The Chronicler then can weave this enemy into the plot of the Story in any way she sees fit.

Contacts

Variable Drawback

You have friends or allies who can provide you with

information, warnings and even help, should you require it. The more helpful the contact is, the higher its point value. In any and all Contacts, the Chronicler determines whether or not the Contact is available at any given time. Generally, the more time the character has to reach or get word to his contact, the more likely the Contact is to come through.

A Contact that only provides rumors and hearsay is worth 1 point. If the Contact usually provides reliable information and will help the character out in small ways (offering a ride, maybe letting the character spend the night at the Contact's apartment), this quality is worth 2-points. Actual allies who will help the character in any way they can will be worth 3 to 5 points, depending on the Contact's resources.

Minority

1-point Drawback

You are considered a second-class citizen because of race, ethnic group or religion. You are a member of a small or disadvantaged group, disliked by the mainstream. People of the dominant group tend to act in negative ways towards you; many will be automatically suspicious, fearful or annoyed at you for no reason other than what you are. Note that the 1-point value is for the relatively enlightened late 20th-century America, where people cannot be denied service in a restaurant because of the color of their skin (in most places, at least). In other historical periods or regions of the world, where prejudice has the full weight of the law and tradition behind it, this drawback might be worth 2 to 3 points.

Multiple Identities

2-point/Identity Social Quality

You have more than one identity, complete with such records as birth certificate, social security number, and credit rating. Only characters with extensive criminal or law-enforcement connections are likely to have this Quality, since they require access to good forgeries and computer records. Each fake identity costs 2 character points. Note that characters traveling under aliases or who have purchased a fake driver's license do not need to purchase this Quality; for the 2 points, the character is getting an identity that will pass all but the closest scrutiny. Most police organizations will be fooled by the fake identity; an all-out investigation by such agencies as the FBI or NSA would reveal the truth, but such investigations are not likely.

Resources

Varies (2 points per level positive or negative)

-5 Destitute. Has no money, the clothes on his back, and maybe ten dollars' worth of stuff and a maybe a shopping cart. Lucky to scrounge a few dollars a month.



-4 Miserable. Owns about 100 dollars' worth of property (includes the clothes on his back). May live in public housing, or might be homeless. Lucky to scrounge \$100 a month.

-3 Poor. Owns some \$500 in property and lives in low-income housing. Has an income of \$500 a month or what he gets from welfare.

-2 Hurting. Owns about \$1,000 in property, and lives in a small apartment in a bad part of town. Has an income of about \$1,000 a month before taxes.

-1 Below Average. Owns \$5,000 in property (including an old vehicle, perhaps), and lives in an apartment. Has an income of \$1,500 a month before taxes.

0 Okay. Owns \$15,000 in property. Has an income of \$2,500 a month before taxes.

+1 Upper-Middle Class. Owns \$50,000 in property (will usually include a house or condominium, not to mention vehicles). Has an income of \$5,000 a month before taxes.

+2 Well-off. Owns \$300,000 in property. Has an income of \$10,000 a month before taxes.

+3 Wealthy. Owns \$700,000 in property. Has an income of \$40,000 a month.

+4 Rich. Owns \$2,000,000 in property. Has an income of \$50,000 a month.

+5 Multimillionaire. Owns \$5 million in property. Has an income of \$200,000 a month.

Each Additional level adds an additional \$5 million in property and \$200,000 to monthly income.

Secret

Variable Drawback

There is a hidden fact about you that would hurt you should it ever come out. The more damaging the secret would be if it became known, the higher the value of the drawback. For example, damage to one's reputation and livelihood would be worth 1 point, a threat to the person's well-being (he might be arrested or deported if the truth were known) is worth 2 points, and if the secret could cost the character his life, it is worth 3 points.

Social Level

Varies (1 point per level positive or negative)

This is the standing of the person to the people around her; it includes any fame, glory or notoriety the character might have. Note that wealth and Status are often linked; a character gets a bonus to his Status equal to one half his Resource level (if positive). 0 is middle-class American; -5 is a homeless person, +10 is a member of an ancient noble house, a movie mega star, or the hero of millions.

Supernatural

These Qualities can only be acquired by Gifted

or Supernatural characters. Unlike other Qualities, Supernatural Qualities can be purchased with points from the Metaphysics Category.

The Gift

5-point Quality

This Quality is the prerequisite to acquire most Supernatural Qualities and to purchase Metaphysic powers and abilities. It is the defining characteristic of the supernaturally-adept human characters in *Armageddon*.

The Gift denotes a connection with the Otherworlds, a connection that allows the character to sense things that are hidden from the Mundanes. All the Gifted have the ability to perceive the presence of supernatural energies or creatures. By succeeding at a Simple Perception task, a Gifted character can sense if a supernatural being is near, and can detect strong flows of Essence in an area or object. This sensing is not accurate; it will not tell the character exactly what or who is emanating an excess of magical energies, although the Level of Success of the task will give the Gifted character more information (see the Systems Chapter for more information).

All human Gifted, Greater Gifted and Lesser Gifted characters must purchase the Gift, using their Quality or Metaphysics points. True Immortals (see p. 199) do not purchase the Gift, but a special Racial Quality (see below). Neither do other supernatural races.

Accursed

Variable Drawback

You have been afflicted by a powerful curse, one that may haunt you until the end of your days. The actual elements of the curse, and how difficult it is to remove it, determine the point value of this drawback. This Drawback is not meant to be removed by a simple application of magic or other Gifted powers. For the most part, it is the result of a misdeed the character committed in the past, and atonement for the misdeed is a major step (but may not be the only one) needed to remove the curse.

A curse of this magnitude is only possible for the worst crimes and injuries. It might have been something a character committed in a past life; perhaps the vengeful ghost of a victim is hounding the character through the ages. The Chronicler and the player may work together in deciding what the origins of the curse are, or the Chronicler may craft it himself. In the second case, the origin and solution of the curse should remain a mystery to the character.

Depending on its severity, a curse can be worth anywhere between 1 and 10 points. A 10-point curse would be a terrible thing, something that would utterly ruin any chance to lead a happy life, or which might kill the victim at any moment.

Some rules of thumb to determine the power of the curse are given below. As usual, the Chronicler is the final judge as to what is and is not appropriate to a campaign.

Effects: A major inconvenience or annoyance is worth 1 point. *Examples:* The character seems to attract flies, fleas and vermin, milk sours quickly in the presence of the victim, little accidents plague the accursed one. Something more dramatic and harmful would be worth 2 to 3 points. *Examples:* People tend to be distrustful and angry at the character for no apparent reason (-2 to -3 on all attempts to influence people); the character can never accumulate a lot of money without losing it (this would preclude any Resource level above 0); people around the character will be plagued by small accidents and annoying incidents (in this case, personal involvement is as important that physical proximity; a close friend of the victim will suffer from the effects of the curse regardless of how far away he is; by the same token, however, all the people sharing a subway car with the accursed person will also suffer from it). Severe or life-threatening curses will be worth 4 to 5 points. *Examples:* Every day, an accident, mishap or random occurrence will endanger the character's life - one day, a car will skip a red light when the character is crossing the street, a gang shoot-out will break out in front of him, or a similar chance event. If the character is alert, he might survive the mishap without injury, but every day, he has to live with the knowledge that sometime, somewhere, something dangerous and terrible is going to happen to him.

The difficulty in getting rid of a curse may add 1 to 5 points to the value of the curse. If undoing or atoning for a past misdeed is the only requisite, this is worth no points. If the misdeed is not known, this adds 1 point, as the character will have to spend time finding out why she was cursed. If the undoing process is extremely complex, or involves illegal activities (in some cases, killing the one who cursed the character is necessary), this adds 2 to 3 points. If a long quest culminating in a difficult magical ceremony, divine intervention, or a similar extraordinary factor is necessary to remove the curse, this would add 4 to 5 points. And some curses cannot be removed by any means; this adds 6 points to the value of the curse, but no measure will be effective in eliminating it.

Age

5-points/level Quality

Cannot Exceed 10 Levels

Most supernatural beings in this game are assumed to be less than a hundred and fifty years old, or, like the Seraphim, they are beings who combine brief periods of activity with long spans of "hibernation," limiting their overall experience and knowledge. Some beings have been alive and active for many human life spans,

and with age comes greater power and knowledge. Ancient characters are very powerful, having refined their powers with centuries of practice. This Quality assumes that the character has powers or natural abilities that allowed him to survive this long. Most of the supernatural races of Armageddon are long lived or even truly unaging.

Each level of Age adds an additional century to the character's life span. The truly ancient supernaturals (over a millennia old) have ten or more levels of Age, and they are extremely powerful. As such, they are not appropriate as Cast Members in Heroic games, although they might fit in some Legendary ones. Beings more than a millennium old are considered to be too powerful for even Legendary games, and they work only in Mythical campaigns.

In game terms, Age gives the character more points to put in their Skills, and it raises the character's Essence pool.

Each level of Age gives the character 1 additional point to spend in Skills for every level of the character's Intelligence attribute (so, for example, a character with an Intelligence 3 and 4 levels of Age would get an additional 12 points for skills). Each level also raises the character's Essence Pool by 1 point per level of Willpower.

Aspect **Variable Quality**

Prerequisite: Limited only to Avatar or Inheritor characters

An Aspect is a special power that defines a god. For example, War is one of the Aspects of the Norse god Thor; another Aspect of the same god is Thunder and Lightning. Avatars and Inheritors gain these Aspects as part of their semi-divine "legacy." Each Aspect is purchased separately, and has its own point cost. Avatars and Inheritors must purchase at least one Aspect of their patron or parent deity.

Beholden **3- or 5-point Drawback**

The Beholden are people who are linked to some powerful supernatural being. This link may have been established voluntarily (as done by the True Believers who surrender their souls to Leviathan), or unwillingly, like the Avatars who find Divinity roughly thrust upon them. There are two different levels of this Drawback; one is more severe than the other.

At the 3-point level, the Beholden can be used by the greater power as a source of information. The deity or entity can see through the character's eyes, and sense everything going on around them. The Beholden can detect this intrusion by passing a Difficult Perception Test; if successful, he knows the entity is using his senses. Trying to stop the entity requires a Difficult

Willpower Test at -2; if successful, the contact is severed for one hour per success level.

At the 5-point level, not only can the greater being use the character's senses, it can also seize control over the character! The character can try to resist by passing a Difficult Willpower Test at -1; if successful, he retains control for one hour per success level. If he loses, the entity seizes control, and the character's actions are in the hands of the Chronicler.

In either version of this Drawback, the entity can "speak" to the character, be it to offer advice, give orders or simply bother the character.

Divine Inspiration **5-point Quality**

Prerequisite: The Gift

Your faith has allowed you to transcend the limits of the flesh, and you have now become a tool of a Greater Power. You are Inspired to fight the forces of darkness, and will dedicate your life to this purpose.

The Inspired may be using their own inner strength under the delusion that their power comes from within, or they may be truly the instruments of an omnipotent being. The important thing is that they must hold dearly to the tenets of their faith, and must never go against them. If an Inspired character breaks a commandment or hesitates in her faith, she will temporarily (or even permanently) lose the capability to perform miracles. Furthermore, the powers of the Inspired can only be used in ways that will serve the higher power the character worships.

Characters with Divine Inspiration are able to channel Essence by their link to a higher power. Most Inspired consider this higher power to be the True God." Characters with Divine Inspiration cannot use Magic or Necromancy, but may have Seer powers.

Essence Channeling **Variable Quality**

Prerequisite: The Gift (for humans)

Essence is the Force of Creation. It exists in "solid" form in all facets of reality, in matter and energy. It is also present in "pure" form, but it is invisible to the Mundanes; Pure Essence is present in our minds and souls, in invisible currents in the physical world, and in apparently solid shapes in the Otherworlds, levels of reality that most humans only access through dreams or visions. Some among the Gifted have the power to channel Essence, to manipulate it and project the very strength of their souls into the world, changing Nature in accordance to their Wills. This is the Art of Magic.

This power is useful mostly to practitioners of Magic who use the flows of Essence to manipulate reality. The level of one's Essence Channeling determines how much power can be brought to bear on any single task

Characters without Essence Channeling can use magic, but such practices take a great deal of time and energy. See Chapter Four: The Wise Craft for more information.

Essence Channeling is bought in levels. These levels determine how many points of Essence can be used on a single turn; they also determine how many Essence points are recovered every minute.

Level	Character Point Cost
1-5	1 point per level.
6+	2 points per level.

Essence Pool

1/5-point **Quality**; 1 point **After Character Creation**

Prerequisite: The Gift (for humans)

While all human beings have Essence, the Gifted generally have the greater amount. Their connection to the Otherworlds has strengthened their souls, making them living beacons of energy. Having a large Essence Pool is both a blessing and a curse. While Essence can be used to affect the world in many ways, it also attracts the attention of evil Gifted and supernatural beings who feed on the Essence of others.

Spending 1 character point adds 5 points to the character's Essence Pool. This can be done multiple times. After character creation, each Essence point costs 1 Experience Point; this makes it more cost effective to build up Essence when creating the character, representing the relatively slow improvement of the Gifted's powers during their lives. Essence can be purchased after any game session where magic or Essence were used, to indicate a strengthening of the character's spirit.

Any character with the Gift can increase their Essence pool, although it is most useful to practitioners of Magic and to the Divinely Inspired. Supernatural creatures can also buy extra Essence.

Good/Bad Luck:

3-points/level

If you have Good Luck, Fortune smiles on you far more often than for most. Sometimes, you pull off amazing stunts that by rights you should find impossible to perform. Whenever you need a break, there is a good chance that circumstances will conspire to give



you one. If you have Bad Luck, on the other hand, Murphy's Law (if anything can go wrong, it will) always applies to everything you do.

In game terms, each level of Luck counts as a +1 bonus (or -1 penalty) that can be applied to a Task or Test, once per game session. Multiple levels can be added together for a big bonus for one Task/Test, or spread around several different actions. For example, if a character has three levels of Good Luck, he can get a +3 bonus on one action, a +1 bonus to three actions, or a +2 bonus for one and a +1 bonus for another.

With Good Luck, the player decides when it comes into play. Bad Luck, however, is in the hands of the Chronicler, who chooses when it will affect a given Task or Test. Chroniclers should exercise caution and good judgment when applying Bad Luck. If they use them for meaningless rolls, then the Drawback becomes little more than a minor inconvenience. On the other hand, applying Bad Luck to Survival Tests or other critical rolls or draws will generate resentment

among players. Make the Bad Luck count, but don't use it to needlessly abuse the characters.

Maleficia

Variable Qualities

Prerequisite: Restricted to Demonic Seraphim and Qliphenim characters.

Maleficia are dark versions of the angelic Theophanies (see below). Rules for purchasing Maleficia are on p. 174.

Miracles

5-point Quality;

Prerequisite: Divine Inspiration

People with Divine Inspiration are able to perform incredible feats in the name of their Deity. Miracles are never used lightly or in commonplace situations, however. To use the power of Healing to cure a small abrasion, for example, would demean the power. Miracles are meant to be used only in extreme situations, and only against the true enemies of the faith. Characters who use miracles frequently and for trivial reasons risk losing their divine powers.

Miracles cost Essence to fuel; the effects and abilities granted by these Miracles are described fully on page 146. Each Miracle purchased costs 5 points. Most Inspired only have two or three Miracles.

Old Soul

3 points/level Quality

The character has been reborn many times through her life. As a result, her soul has become stronger. Characters with Old Souls tend to be very mature and precocious for their age. It would be nice to believe that age invariably gives wisdom, but Old Souls are equally likely to be depraved or insightful, cruel or kind. Whatever their orientation, it will usually be more extreme, having been refined over several lifetimes.

This Quality can be acquired multiple times during character creation (but it cannot be acquired afterwards). Each "level" represents some 3-5 previous lives lived before the character's current incarnation. The player can determine who these former selves were, where they lived, and what they know, or he can leave such information in the hands of the Chronicler. From a roleplaying point of view, creating a "past lives tree" can be interesting, as one of the tenets in the *Armageddon* game is that one's previous existence will have an impact on a person's current personality and outlook.

Each level adds 6 points to the character's Essence Pool, even if the character is not Gifted. This makes Old Souls very attractive to evil mages, Vampyres and other predators. Additionally, each level also adds 1 character point to the Attribute Category; these character points can only be used to increase mental attribut-

es (Intelligence, Perception and Willpower); successive lives tend to increase the character's overall insights and understanding - for good or ill. Example: Mandy the Sorceress has three levels of the Old Soul Quality; this gives her 3 more points to put into her mental attributes, and 18 more Essence Points. Mandy's player raises the character's Intelligence from 5 to 6 by spending the 3 points.

Old Souls sometimes are able to tap into the knowledge of their previous lives. When attempting to perform an unskilled task, the character may receive a flash of knowledge from one of his previous lives. If the player took the time to decide what her character's previous lives knew, then this is task using twice the character's Old Soul level, but only the skills the previous lives knew are used. If the previous lives are not known, then do not double the Old Soul level for the task, but virtually any skill might be known. The only exception would be high-tech tasks that a previous life would be unlikely to know; trying to ask one's ancestral memories about how to hack into a computer system is not likely to work very well...

Theophanies

Variable Qualities

Prerequisite: Limited only to Angelic Seraphim and Kerubim characters

The angels have a number of special abilities. Theophanies are a combination of skill, supernatural power, and occupation. Each Theophany has a number of special abilities that to some degree define the angel. For example, Finder is a common Theophany; angels who are Finders can track down anybody and anything. The costs and types of Theophanies are described on p. 160.

6. Skills

Skills are learned abilities, the result of training, study or experience. All the skills of a character combined represent the sum of what she has learned in the course of her life. In general, anything that can be taught is considered to be a skill. The character's background, education and life experiences will determine what skills he would be likely to have.

Buying Skills

To get skills, use the character points allocated to the Skill Category (this is determined by the *Character Type*, see p. 24). Most skills cost 1 point per level from levels 1 to 5; after level 5, each additional level costs 3 points. Special skills cost 2 points per level until level 5, and 5 points per level thereafter.

Example: Lorna wants her character to have the

Driving skill. She decides that the character is an excellent driver - in fact, she could race cars for a living! Such expertise would require a skill of 5 or higher, and Lorna decides to go for broke and give the character a Driving skill of 7; this would cost her 5 points for the first 5 levels, and 6 points for the other two levels, for a total of 11 character points. Lorna's character will be an ace driver, but he won't have a lot of high skills in other categories.

The Meaning of Numbers

Like most numbers in the Unisystem, high is good and low is bad. The higher a skill level is, the more proficient the character is at using that skill. In general a level 1 indicates a beginner or amateur, somebody who has just learned the rudiments of the skill. A level 2 or 3 represents general competency, the ability to perform average tasks with ease. A level 4 or 5 indicates extreme competence in the subject, the result of a lot of study or practice. Higher levels indicate true mastery of the skill or craft, and the ability to perform the most difficult tasks with relative ease.

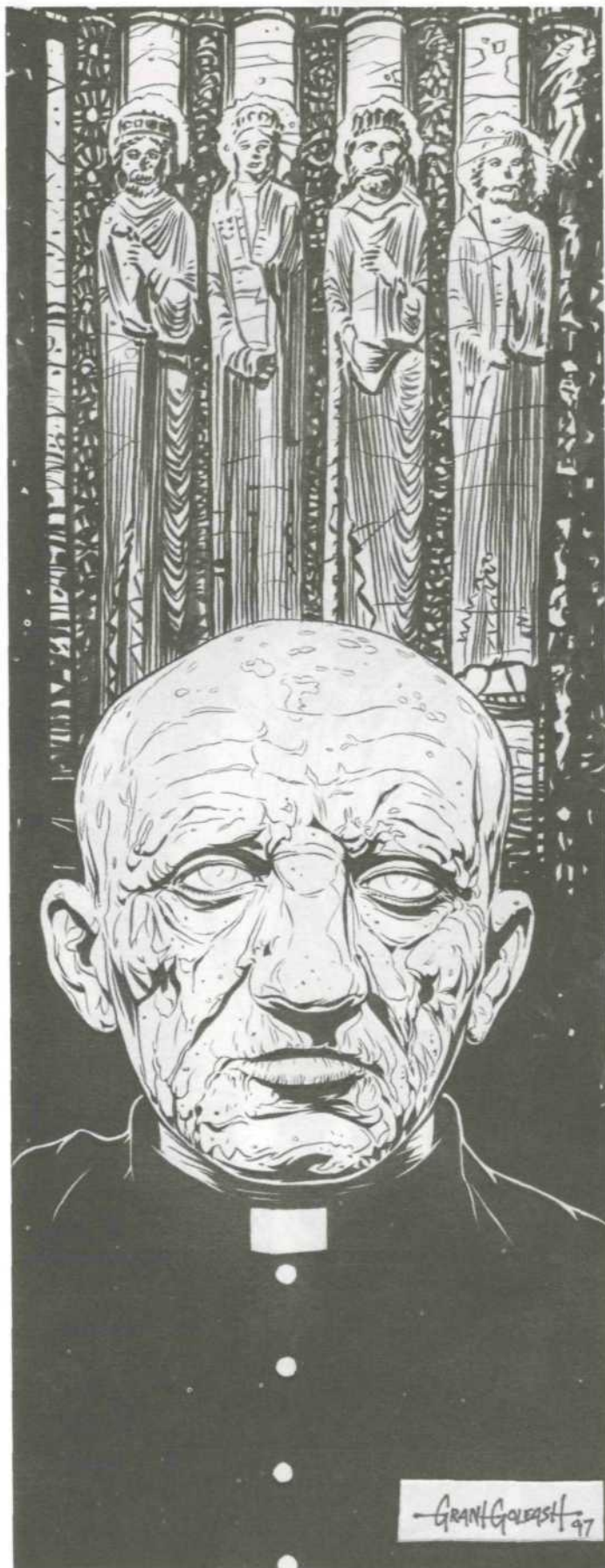
Specialties

Both fiction and real life have many examples of people who specialize in a specific aspect or field of study within a skill. A history student may specialize in the early medieval period, for example, or an occultist may know a great deal more about Vampyres than anything else.

In game terms, specialization costs 1 character point, and results in a +2 bonus on task rolls involving that field of expertise. This can be written as a separate skill: for example, a character could have History-3 (general), and History (Early Medieval)-5. As the base skill improves, so does the specialty. So, if the character's History skill rises from 3 to 4, his Early Medieval skill will go up to 6.

Learning New Skills

A character can learn new skills after character creation, during the course of play. This can be done in two ways: through formal study or training, or by hands-on experience. The first option is more time-consuming, but is the sure way to do so. Learning new skills from scratch is always more difficult than improving pre-existing skills. This is why it is generally better to have a character with a wide variety of skills at relatively low levels than an over-specialized character with only a few skills; the second character will have trouble learning new things. See p. 90 for more information about improving a character during the course of a game.





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Using Common Sense

The skill guidelines below, like all the rules in this book, should always take a second seat to plain common sense. If a player is trying to twist the letter of the rules to wring some unreasonable advantage Chroniclers should let common sense prevail.

List of Skills

Artistic Skills

Acting

The skill to convincingly simulate emotions or portray imaginary characters. Actors get into character and try to behave as that character would under the circumstances of the script or story. The better you are at it, the more convincing the performance will be. Use Intelligence and Acting to give a performance, and Perception and Acting to judge the quality of a performance (and maybe to discover if a person is faking his emotions).

Acting is not only useful in the stage or the screen. Con men and spies find the ability very useful. Master of disguise can assume not only the looks of a person but also his mannerisms and general personality. **This** requires some study of the target, and a Perception and Acting Task; each level of success in the Task adds a +1 bonus to rolls to impersonate the person.

Beautician

This is the ability to use make-up, hair dressing, beauty aids and cosmetics to enhance a person's appearance. A skilled Beautician can greatly modify a person's appearance. Use Intelligence and Beautician for the task; each Success Level in such a task will add a +1 to a person's Appearance by hiding blemishes and enhancing a person's good points. Modifiers to these tasks include the materials available (a +2 in a fully-stocked beauty salon, -2 or worse with improvised

materials), and the subject's basic Appearance level. Beautician skills can also be used to help change a person's appearance (Beautician + Intelligence), a skilled character can use hair dyes, contacts and make up to change a person's appearance greatly; this skill can be used to replace the Disguise skill, or can add +1 bonus to Disguise rolls for each level of success in such a task.

Using Beautician and Perception allow the character to see how extensive a make-up job somebody has on and may be used to identify a disguise (this task is resisted by the disguiser's own Intelligence and

Optional Rule: Zero-Level Skills

Skills can be purchased at "zero level" for half a character point each. This allows the character to avoid the penalties for unskilled attempts, and lets them improve the skill with experience. This optional rule allows the creation of character with a wide variety of skills at very low levels - your typical "Jack of all trades, master of none." Raising a skill from zero to first level costs one character point, however, because a character with a zero-level skill only knows the most basic rudiments of said skill.

This rule may require more bookkeeping than the gaming group may wish to deal with; the Chronicler can disallow it at will (as he can disallow any rule that does not fit with the temperament of the group).

Beautician or Disguise skills).

Dancing (Type)

This skill is not necessary to gyrate to a catchy tune; Dancing represents training in a form of dancing, and includes anything from ballet to tribal rituals to high accomplishment on the disco floor. The character must indicate the specific form of Dancing he is familiar with. Other types have a default equal to the dancing skill level -2. Dancing and Dexterity are used to actually dance, Dancing and Perception to recognize a type of dance and to judge the quality of another's performance.

Drawing/Painting

This is the ability to create attractive paintings or drawings. Rolls to conceptualize a work of art are done on Drawing plus Intelligence. The ability to render the concept onto paper or canvas uses Drawing plus Dexterity. Appreciating other works of art uses Drawing and Perception. Levels 1 -2 indicates an amateur, levels 3 and higher indicate a skilled artist. Use Drawing and Perception to make a drawing or painting by using models. When using only her imagination, the character should use Drawing and Intelligence. The success level of an artistic work, however, cannot exceed the skill level of the character - in other words, no matter how lucky the artist is, his work is limited by his training and experience. For example, a character with Drawing/Painting 2 cannot accumulate more than 2 success levels on a painting or drawing, no matter how high the task result is.

Sculpture

The skill of making three-dimensional works of art. In all ways, it works like Drawing/Painting, above.

Singing

While everybody can try to sing, this skill is necessary to know how to do it right. This skill reflects the training of the character's voice. Use Constitution and Singing for the quality of the song, Intelligence and Singing to remember every verse of a long or complex song, and Perception and Singing to recognize and measure the quality of someone else's singing.

Athletic Skills

Acrobatics

The ability to perform tumbles, somersaults and other complex maneuvers. This skill teaches balance, flexibility and speed. Use Acrobatics and Dexterity for most tasks. This skill is commonly known to circus performers, some dancers and martial artists, gymnasts, and athletes. Also, Acrobatics can be used instead of the Dodge skill to avoid attacks (see the Combat Rules on p. 67 for more information about dodging).

Climbing

A character with climbing knows how to best use any surface or object available to get to the top. Climbing tasks will use Dexterity and Climbing or Strength and Climbing, depending on the type of climb attempted.

Running (Type)

There are two types of Running. The first one is Marathon Running: this skill covers running for endurance and distance. A good marathoner can cover ten or more miles without stopping. An official marathon usually covers 25 miles; the best runners can cover that distance in about two hours. A character with Marathon Running can use this skill added to Constitution to resist the effects of fatigue after a long period of extraneous physical activity. Also, add 1 Endurance Point to the character's pool for every level in Marathon Running.

Running (Dash) trains the character to increase speed for short distances. On a dead run, you can use Constitution and Running (Dash) to increase maximum running speed; each success level acquired adds +1 to the character's speed in miles per hour.

Sport (Type)

This skill covers all types of competitive sports, from football to ping pong. Each sport must be learned as a

Optional Martial Arts Rules

These rules are meant to make the martial arts more varied, and to represent the different styles of Martial Arts that exist around the world. The list of Combat Moves is on Chapter Two, p. 00. These are optional rules; if your players and you don't want to bother with them, don't.

When a character learns a Martial Art, she automatically acquires a number of basic Moves, taught to all students. Additionally, she slowly develops more complex and effective Moves as she increases her overall skills. Each Martial Art has its own list of special Moves. Moves from other Martial Arts cannot be acquired unless the character also has that Martial Art skill. For example, a character could have both Karate and Judo in his skill list; with them, he could acquire Moves from either style.

With this optional rule, characters get a number of extra character points with which to purchase special Moves, those not learned for "free" through the Martial Arts skill. Every level in Martial Arts confers 3 "Combat Move points" with which to purchase these special Moves. Each Move is treated as a separate skill, and learned normally (1 point per skill level until level 5, 3 points per level thereafter; unlike normal skills, this cost does not go up after character creation).

Special Combat Moves cannot exceed the basic Martial Arts skill level. So, for example, if a character has Martial Arts at level 5, none of his Combat Moves can exceed level 5, and some should probably be lower. When a character improves the Martial Art skill through experience, the Basic Moves automatically go up, but the rest must be raised with the new Combat Move points provided with each new Martial Arts level. Moves can never be improved more than one level at a time, but Moves that were not acquired before character creation can be purchased if the character tried to use them during the game (reflecting teachings that the character had not practiced fully, but which now she is developing).

Example: Marybell (played by Judy) has Martial Arts (Judo) at level 4, which gives her 12 points to purchase Combat Moves. Judo has two "free" Moves, Judo Throw and Break Fall, which are automatically at level 4. Judo Special Moves include Arm Lock, Disarm, Roll with Blow, Shove, and Trip. Judy decides Marybell has good levels with Arm Lock and Roll with Blow, and some expertise with Disarm and Trip. Taking her 12 available points, Judy purchases Arm Lock and Roll with Blow at level 4 (the maximum allowable level), for a total of 8 points, and divides the remaining 4 points evenly between Disarm and Trip, buying 2 levels of each. Judy's Combat Move List (which can be listed under Skills) should look like this:

Martial Arts (Judo) 4
Judo Throw 4
Break Fall 4
Arm Lock 4
Roll with Blow 4
Disarm 2
Trip 2

separate skill. Depending on the type of task, use Strength or Dexterity and the Sport skill for most actions involving the sport (a football pass would use Dexterity and Sport (Football); a tackle would use Strength and Sport (Football) instead). To come up with a good strategy or game plan, use Intelligence and Sport (Type); to spot a rules violation, use Perception and Sport (Type).

Weight Lifting

When trying to exceed strength limits (see the Systems section for more information), weight lifting is very helpful. Use Strength and Weight Lifting instead of Strength times two, or, if Strength is higher than the Weight Lifting skill, add 1/3 of the Weight Lifting Skill level (rounded up) to the base number.

Combat Skills

Brawling

Brawling covers your basic street fighting, karate-parlor "martial arts" training, and similar basic combat skills. In hand to hand combat, Dexterity and Brawling are used for kicks, punches, and similar maneuvers, and Strength and Brawling for take-downs, wrestling and slamming people around (see the Combat section for more details).

Dodge

This is a basic combat skill, the ability to move out of the way of attacks. Dodges include such moves as sidestepping a blow, "hitting the dirt" to avoid gunfire, ducking behind cover, etc. As a skill, it is learned by people with some practice in diving for cover. Dodge is used with Dexterity for most tasks.

Guns (Type)

This skill allows the character to use any type of firearm. There are many types of gun. The most common categories include: handgun (pistols and revolvers), rifles and shotguns, submachinegun, and assault rifle. If the skill is taken for one type, the character can use other types of gun, but at a -2 penalty to all rolls.

Handgun and Dexterity are used to fire the weapon. Aiming rolls use Handgun and Perception; each success level adds +1 to the effective Handgun skill on the next shot fired at the aimed target.

Hand Weapon (Type)

Each basic type of weapon is a separate skill. Types include Ax, Club, Foil/Rapier, Knife, Spear, Staff and Sword. They must be learned separately. When using an unfamiliar weapon, use the most closely related weapon skill at -2 to -4 (depending on how dissimilar the weapons are).

Martial Arts (Special)

This is the skill in using an advanced system of hand to hand combat. Characters with Martial Arts can do more damage with their hands and feet; kicks and punches performed with the Martial Arts skill have damage bonus equal to the character's skill level. So, a character with Martial Arts level 3 will do an additional 3 points of damage with a kick or punch.

Martial arts are harder to learn than other weapon skills requiring 2 character points per level up to level 5, and 5 character points per level thereafter.

Martial Arts can also be divided into different styles. See the Optional rules in the boxes for more information.

Medical Skills

First Aid

This is the skill to perform basic injury treatment, as well as such techniques as CPR and the Heimlich maneuver. A successful Intelligence and First Aid task will restore some damage to an injured person (see p. 83) for more information. Typical tasks include identifying the problem (use Perception and First Aid), performing First Aid (Intelligence and First Aid), and giving CPR or applying the Heimlich Maneuver (Dexterity and First Aid).

Medicine (Special/Type)

This skill covers the knowledge a trained M.D. will have, and includes basic surgery skills, diagnosis and general medicine. Most doctors also specialize in one type of medicine, such as cardio-vascular, surgery, or neuro-surgery. In any case, Medicine is a difficult skill, costing 2 points per level until level 5, and 5 points per level thereafter.

Diagnosis tasks use Perception and Medicine, general treatment tasks use Intelligence and Medicine, and surgery uses Dexterity and Medicine.

Unconventional Medicine (Special/Type)

This skill covers all methods of healing not widely accepted by Western Science, including herbal medi-

Optional Martial Arts Rules (Continued)

list of Martial Art Styles

Karate

This style can also cover such styles as Kickboxing and Tae Kwon Do. Karate concentrates on hard attack and defense moves - punches and kicks, with the goal being to batter down the enemy. Karate is a good, solid style with a variety of Moves. Characters with Karate can select one extra Basic Move, representing his school's specialty.

Basic Moves: Punch, Kick, and one Special Move of Choice.

Special Moves: Back Kick, Counterpunch, Crescent Kick, Jump Kick, Spin Kick, Stabbing Hand.

Judo

This is a "soft" combat style in which the enemy's own strength is turned against him. Besides Judo, other "soft" styles include Aikido and Tai-Chi. Judo students are first taught throws and falling techniques, and then moves on to locks, trips and other maneuvers.

Basic Moves: Breakfall, Judo Throw.

Special Moves: Arm Lock, Disarm, Roll with Blow, Shove, Trip.

Boxing

Professional boxing is an effective combat system, despite its reliance on punches and lack of kick training. A good boxer can be a dangerous opponent.

Basic Moves: Punch, Roundhouse

Special Moves: Counterpunch, Jab, Sucker Punch.

cine, acupuncture, etc. The effectiveness of each type of unconventional medicine is determined by the Chronicler. If the skill is effective in treating disease and injury, use the same skills and effects as conventional Medicine (see above). Unconventional Medicine is also a difficult skill, costing 2 points per level until level 5, and 5 points per level thereafter.

Veterinary Medicine

As above, but applies to animals. A Veterinarian can treat humans, but is at a -3 penalty to all task rolls, and despite the results of rolls, cannot gain more than two levels of success.

Military/Spy skills

Note: In many cases, these skills are only available to people with a military, police or intelligence agency background. The only common exception is computer hacking.

Computer Hacking

This is the skill to penetrate computer systems through a modem, overcome protection and password programs, and steal information or inflict damage on the system. Most tasks use Intelligence and Computer Hacking, although spotting a specific type of defense or password system may use Perception and Computer Hacking instead.

Demolitions

The ability to set and disarm explosives. Use Intelligence and Demolitions to set up an explosive charge, Perception and Demolitions to understand the set-up of an unfamiliar bomb, and

Use Surveillance and Perception to keep track of a target or to check and see if the character is being followed.

Traps

This is the knowledge to detect, disarm and set traps, commonly known by Special Forces soldiers, guerrillas and the like.

Use Traps and Intelligence to devise a trap, Traps and Perception to detect a trap, and Traps and Dexterity to disarm such a device.

Outdoor Skills



Intelligence and Demolitions (resisted by the bomber's own Intelligence and Demolitions) to disarm an enemy bomb.

Electronic Surveillance

The skill to set up, use and detect electronic "bugs" - sophisticated microphones and even cameras hidden in a location to spy on or detect people. Use Electronic Surveillance and Intelligence to set up and use a "bug," and Electronic Surveillance and Perception to detect one (resisted by the operators original Electronic Surveillance and Intelligence task result).

Surveillance

This is the ability to follow and keep people under observation. A character with surveillance can attempt to keep sight of a target while following him through a crowded street, while trying to remain unobserved. By the same token, this skill allows a person to know if she is being followed or observed.

Snares

The ability to set traps for animals, from simple baited snares to well-hidden bear traps.

This skill can be used against humans, but at a -2 penalty. Use Snares and Intelligence to set the trap.

Tracking

This is the skill used to follow the trail of an animal or person, usually in wilderness terrain, but also useful in an urban setting if snow or dust are present in enough quantity to leave a trail. Most Tracking tasks use Tracking and Perception; attempts to hide one's tracks use Tracking and Intelligence.

Survival (Type)

This is the skill of living off the land. Each type of terrain requires a separate skill; attempts to use a different Survival terrain skill in the wrong place are at a -3 penalty. Common terrain types include: Forest, Mountain, Jungle, Desert and Arctic.

Scholastic Skills

Archeology

The study of the physical remains left by ancient cultures, such as ruins, tombs and writings. A good archeologist will spend at least some time "in the field," helping uncover and rescue artifacts from lost civilizations. A character with Archeology can spot historical artifacts amidst rubble by using Perception and Archeology, and can identify their basic origins with Intelligence and Archeology (the higher the success level, the more accurate the identification; this also assumes the artifact comes from a known culture - unknown cultures cannot be identified off-hand, of course). Most Archeologists specialize in a historic period (see the Specialization rules on p. 49).

Computers

This is the basic skill to use computers, including how to use a keyboard and mouse, basic commands, and so on. As computers become more "user friendly" with every passing month, Chroniclers can assume that most Computer tasks are Routine or Easy, except where they involve unfamiliar programs and operating systems.

Computer Programming

The skill to actually write a set of commands in one of the many computer languages. Writing a program uses Intelligence and Computer Programming; Perception is used to recognize elements of another program.

Law (Type)

You know the law of the land, and have a good idea about its terms and loopholes. Lawyers will know this skill at good levels (a law student would have a 1 or 2, a recent graduate or intern a 2 or 3, and a veteran will have the skill at 3 or higher). There are many specialties within the field (see the optional Specialization rules on p. 00), such as Criminal Law, Copyright Law, Contract Law, and so on. Other people likely to know the law include police officers (mostly in such matters as rights of suspects, search and seizure laws, and other criminal aspects; typical police officers will have Law at levels 1-2) and career criminals (who have been through the "process" so many times that something might have stuck to their minds).

In this case, each "type" of Law refers to the laws of a specific country; the laws of the U.S. are different from those in England, for example. Also, state laws vary from place to place within the U.S.; characters with knowledge of a state's laws may be at a disadvantage elsewhere (-1 to -3 penalty at the Chronicler's discre-

tion).

Myth and Legend (Type)

The knowledge of the mythology and folklore of a specific culture or nation. This skill can be used to identify supernatural creatures, but the information gleaned from myth and legend is as likely as not to be completely wrong or at least very inaccurate. Each culture and nation is a separate skill type.

Occult Knowledge (Special)

This is the skill of true arcane knowledge. It covers most of the basic facts of the Witchcraft world, including a working knowledge of Essence and its use in magic, the nature of the Otherworld, spirits and ghosts, and some information about a number of cults, Covenants and supernatural creatures, although some of that information may be flawed or incomplete. Occult Knowledge is harder to acquire than other skills, requiring 2 character points per level up to level 5, and 5 character points per level thereafter.

Rituals (Type)

The skill to perform rituals and ceremonies of a particular culture or Covenant (each Covenant counts as a separate skill "type"). Rituals that require dancing or other complex physical activity use Rituals and Dexterity; most others use Rituals and Intelligence to remember all the appropriate steps involved.

Sciences (Type)

Each science (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, etc.) counts as a separate science type. In some games, the Chronicler may just lump them all into one category, depending on how big a role such skills would play in the course of a Story. Most Science tasks use Intelligence or Perception.

Theology (Type)

The knowledge of the laws and dogma of a religion. A character with this skill will know the dates of special holidays and the basic duties and beliefs of those following the religion. Each religion must be learned as a separate skill.

Streetwise Skills

Intimidation

The skill to make people fear you. Used by bullies or in most confrontational situations. A good Intimidation task result may stop a fight before it starts by convincing your opponent that he doesn't want to mess with you. Use Intimidation and Willpower for "real" Intimidation attempts, or Intelligence and Intimidation

to bluff an opponent into thinking you are tougher than you really are.

Cheating

The skill at breaking the rules and tricking your opponent. Mostly used in games of chance and other forms of gambling. Use Cheating and Intelligence to perform the trick, or Cheating and Perception to spot such a trick.

Gambling

This is the knowledge of most common games of chance, their rules and techniques, and the best strategies to win the game. A character needs both Gambling and Cheating to effectively try to break the rules.

Lock Picking (Type)

Covers all the basics in breaking and entering. Most tasks use Lock Picking and Dexterity, modified by the difficulty of the lock. Electronic Lock Picking is a separate type of skill, which must be learned separately, and it uses Perception and Intelligence for the most part, to spot and neutralize electronic locks and security systems.

Notice

The streetwise version of "situational awareness," Notice represents the degree of alertness a person has about her. A character with this skill can use it with Perception to see what is happening around her, or Intelligence to remember something she noticed some time ago. A character with Notice can use it with Perception to spot or hear another character using Stealth.

Pickpocket

The skill of taking another person's hard-earned money without their noticing it. Most rolls use Dexterity and Pick Pocket, resisted by the victim's Perception and the highest of his Notice, Streetwise or Pick Pocket skills (if any, or Perception alone - not doubled - otherwise).

Seduction

The ability to make yourself sexually attractive to people by saying the right things and putting on the right act. Intelligence is used, modified by any Charisma or Appearance bonuses or penalties. Other skills may give bonuses to seduction attempts: previous tasks using Beautician and Smooth Talking will add their success levels to the Seduction attempt.

Smooth Talking

This skill allows the character to lie convincingly and to otherwise confuse and deceive others. This skill is commonly known by con-men, salesmen and politicians. Use Intelligence and Smooth Talking for most

tasks.

Stealth

The ability to move quietly and to take advantage of cover and concealment. Most task rolls use Dexterity and Stealth; Perception is used to find good hiding places.

Streetwise

The general knowledge of the lore and rules of the streets. A character with this skill knows how to behave in a given situation, knows the names and most of the faces of the more notorious local members of the underworld, and can identify most illegal transaction; and operations. Use Intelligence and Streetwise to recognize a local street name, gang color or criminal, and Perception and Streetwise to spot trouble or detect criminal activities around you.

Vehicle Skills

Mechanic (Type)

The skill to repair and maintain a vehicle. Each vehicle type requires a separate Mechanic skill.

Driving (Type)

The skill to control any land vehicle of the specific type. Each type of vehicle (car, truck, tracked vehicle and motorcycle, among others) requires a separate Driving skill. Most driving tasks use Dexterity and Driving.

Piloting (Type)

As Driving, above, but related to most air and water craft. Each type of craft requires a separate Piloting skill

Riding (Type)

The skill to ride horses, carts, chariots and other animals or animal-driven vehicles. Each type of animal or vehicle requires a separate Riding skill.

7. Metaphysics

Metaphysics are supernatural abilities and powers. They are the province of the Gifted and supernatural beings. Although in the world of **Armageddon** all humans have at least the potential to develop these powers, only a small percentage ever manage to develop them to any degree. The Mundane, normal humans are largely blind to the powers of Essence, the primal force of reality. Only the Gifted can sense and manipulate these powers, and by doing so they can stand up

to demons and angels. The Gifted are hated and feared by many supernatural beings; their existence is a reminder that humans were made in the Creator's image, and their potential is infinite. Some Metaphysical powers are primarily the domain of Gifted humans, while others are limited only to a particular supernatural Genus.

These powers are described (including their point cost) in Chapter Three: Cosmologies. They are, briefly:

Magic: The power to affect the world through rituals and ceremonies; available to Gifted humans and, to a limited degree, even to the Mundane.

The SecondSight The inborn talent to manipulate and sense the world without direct physical action or input. Seer powers include such abilities as telepathy, telekinesis and clairvoyance.

InspiredMirades: These are abilities fueled by the faith of those few devoted enough to appeal to the Creator directly.

Seraphim Powers - Theophanies and Malefida: These are abilities available only to the Seraphim, Kerubim and Qliphonim - the angelic ranks, both fallen and faithful.

Aspects -Powers of the Old Gods: These abilities are the province of the Titans and their progeny, the Inheritors and Avatars. They depend on the elements of reality that the god embodies.

The Undying Abilities: The powers of the True Immortals, these powers allow their wielders to manipulate the flows of Essence within themselves and in the world around them, or to create artifacts using the Atlantean Arcana.

8. Possessions

This is what the character owns. To determine a character's possessions, check their Resources level (see p. 00), which determines how much money they have in property. Then, distribute that money among all the things the character wants. Some things, like a car, could be partially owned (i.e., you are still making payments on it). Prices in the early 21st century are about the same for most things on the 20th century; the War may be causing prices to shoot up for some things very soon, however. Some changes include the following:

Cars: A gasoline vehicle costs twice as much as it does today, and most models tend to be smaller (two-door compact or sub-compact). Luxury gas models cost as much as \$100,000. Electrical cars cost the same as today's gas-powered vehicles.



Computers: A real computer with an independent memory, processor and read-write CD disks (floppy disks are all but extinct) costs between \$1,000 to \$4,000, depending on its power. Obsolescence is less of a problem; computer technology for civilian uses has slowed down as most new developments are classified 'Secret' by the military. Most people use a 'Netbox, a terminal with minimal processing and memory capabilities, which connects to the Internet and gets its operating system and programs from it. Netboxes cost between \$300 and \$600, and are less reliable than computers (if the local network is down, so is your machine) and can be more easily monitored by outside forces (if your e-mail is floating in cyberspace, you can bet somebody's reading it).

Weapons: Most weapons in the civilian market cost about the same as in the 21st Century. Caseless weapons are mainly used by the military; the common people make do with the old cartridge guns that have existed for a century and a half. Some states have very strict laws concerning handgun ownership: throughout the East Coast, buying a gun takes weeks of processing and a special permit. In the Midwest and South, the danger of invasion has made everyone anxious to have a gun, and gun laws are the most relaxed since frontier times. Also, some regions that have more or less "seceded" pretty much do as they please, and run around with stolen military equipment.

Some Weapons of Armageddon

There is no room in this book to describe the diverse military gear available to characters in the front lines.

The Armageddon: Battlegrounds sourcebook will have all the tanks, aircraft and small arms commonly used by the diverse enemies. Here are five samples of some of the new hand weapons of the 21st Century.

Ruger-99 Pistol

This is the official sidearm of UN and US soldiers. Used mainly by pilots, officers and rear-echelon soldiers. Some police departments also use this weapon.

The Ruger fires 9mm rounds, but uses enhanced cartridges with more punch than normal, and has a laser targetting system that adds +2 to aimed shots (see p. 00).

Damage: 1D6 x 5(15)

Shots: 15

Range: As per a regular pistol.



MP-16 Machinepistol

This is the standard issue weapon of the soul police. An 11 mm pistol with full-auto capabilities, it is a short-ranged and brutal weapon. Shown here with extended magazine used in anti-subversive operations.



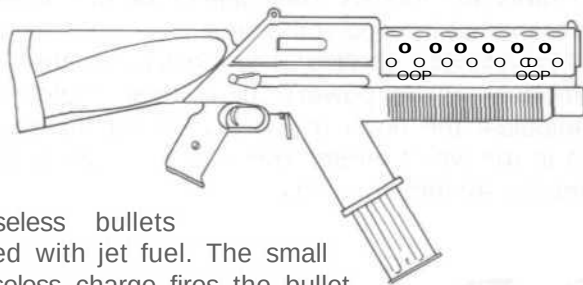
Damage: 1D8 x 5(20)

Shots: 16 or 32

Range: Use Heavy Pistol Ranges.

HAR-19 Rifle

The Heavy Assault Rifle was first manufactured by Colt Sidearms on 2013, after the U.S. Army's first encounters with Shaitan monsters; it becomes issued in large numbers by 2015. It uses advanced technologies to create a gun with the firepower of a .50 caliber machine-gun which can be handled by a normal soldier. The HAR fires ramjet rounds, .406



caseless bullets filled with jet fuel. The small caseless charge fires the bullet at a relatively low speed, but shortly afterwards the oxygen being pushed into the round ignites the ramjet and causes it to fly at supersonic speeds. This results in a low-recoil rifle that can fire rounds that have double the impact of conventional munitions. HAR-18s can be used against lightly armored vehicles and structures, in addition to being effective against supernatural beings and devastating against humans. The rifle also has a 40mm grenade launcher under its barrel.

Damage: Rifle: 1D10 x 6(30)

Grenade Launcher: 1D6 x 5(15)

Shots: 20 (Rifle), 1 (Grenade)

Range: As a .50 caliber machine-gun.

As a submachinegun for the Grenade Launcher.

KR-20 Rifle

The KR-20 is used by the Army of Revelations. It is a caseless rifle firing a heavy 7mm round at high speeds and a high cycle



rate, allowing it to shoot aimed 3-shot bursts with little recoil penalty (the shots are out of the gun before the shooter feels the recoil). The gun has a heavy, punishing kick, but its Armor-Piercing round will penetrate body armor at long ranges.

Damage: 1D10 x 4(20)

Shots: 30

Range: Equivalent to a Sniper Rifle.

LAAW-7 Rocket Launcher

The LAAW-7 was first issued on 2014 to ground units. It is a Light Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Tank Weapon, and fires two types of missiles, one a heat-seeking surface to air missile (SAM) similar to the Stinger, and a shorter-ranged laser-guided missile. The two missiles are clearly distinguished by color (SAMs are blue, anti-tank are red).

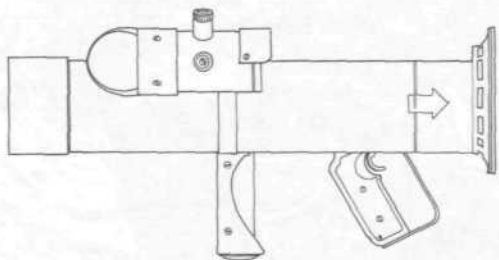
Damage below is for Ground Zero (see p. 00)

Damage: 1D10 x 6(30) (SAM)

1D10 x 5(25) Anti-Tank (Shaped-Charge)

Shots: One

Range: 4 miles (SAM), 2000 yards (Anti-Tank)



Finishing Touches

After you have determined all the basic elements, you are pretty much done with the character. All that's left is a few touches that make the character come alive and seem like more than a collection of numbers on a piece of paper. Note that these "finishing touches" can be done just as easily at the beginning as at the end of

the character creation process. Sometimes the last touches can wait until you start roleplaying your character; you may need to start playing before you get a "feel" for the role. You should do whatever works best for you.

Name: First, of course, is the character's name. This simple touch can add a number of roleplaying elements. The character's first and last name can give ideas as to the ethnic background of the character (an Italian name conjures images of growing up in an ethnic neighborhood in New York, for example) and the kind of family that raised the character (a Biblical name might indicate a strict Christian background, while a name like "Moonlight" might indicate the character's parents were Hippies). Some characters may adopt nicknames or "street names" in addition to their given names; maybe they hate the name their parents gave them. It's easy to come up with any old name, but having it mean something can add to the fun.

Appearance: The character's appearance and demeanor are also important. Whether or not a character is attractive and charismatic is determined by any Qualities or Drawbacks purchased during character creation, but the description makes the numbers come to life. Beyond obvious things like hair and eye color and general physique, there are other, subtler elements that can help the Chronicler and the other players get a better "handle" on the character. Does the character walk in a timid, stooped position, or does he swagger around like he owns the world? Does he have any nervous ticks or other habitual behaviors? Does he smile a lot, or does he have grim demeanor? The character's appearance should take into account his Attributes, Qualities and Drawbacks - a character with Paranoia may have tendency to look behind him every once in a while, or maybe he always insists in being the last one to enter any room, for example.

Speech Pattern: Not everybody is an actor, but it can be fun to have your character use a different speech pattern than your own. Maybe the character uses slang more heavily than you, or he affects a cultured vocabulary. Even something as simple as a word the character uses a lot will make him stand out and be remembered by the rest of the cast. Always keep in mind that making an interesting character does not mean she will try to steal the spotlight all the time, however.

After these finishing touches, you are all set, and you can take your character for a ride through the world of *Armageddon*.



Chapter Two: The Game

"Loader! Sabot!"

"Fire!"

The M-1A2 tank shuddered as it spat death downhill.

"Hit!"

The Holy Fist tank rolled gently to a halt some two thousand meters away. Smoke was pouring out of it, but it didn't explode right away. The Fist's fire suppression systems were as good as the M-1's, if not better. A man started to get out from the crippled tank. Lieutenant Brady stretched him on the ground with a burst from his cupola machine gun. See you in Hell, Churchie!"

"Loader, HEAT!"

The Holy Fist had been the only heavy tank in this attack. The rest were a motley array of funny-looking Brazilian tankettes and APCs. High explosive rounds would smash them easily; no need to spend the more expensive depleted uranium armor-piercing rounds.

"Fire!"

This time the target went up in a ball of flame.

The attack was lagging, Brady decided. Several staggered lines of burning and smoking vehicles showed the success of Captain Suarez's ambush. The reinforced tank platoon had gutted a mechanized company. One of the four M-1 tanks was a smoking ruin itself however, its turret half-torn away by the only shot the Holy Fist had fired. Captain Suarez had been inside. Brady was now in command.

No more targets were immediately in sight. More vehicles were coming in through the smoke, however. Vehicles and... "Oh, shit."

Winged shapes floated over the battlefield. Some looked like snakes with bat wings and human faces. Others looked like mutated versions of the gargoyles one saw in old buildings, or demons from the most colorful depictions of Hell.

"Churchie's deploying parabiologicals," Brady announced through the open channel. The Vulcan anti-aircraft gun behind the lines opened up. Its 20mm gun was woefully ineffective against modern jet aircraft, but it was great to shoot down flying monsters. The dug-in infantry, the Bradleys and M-113s that had carried them there, and the three M-1s' machineguns added their fire to it.

Most of the flying creatures - "parabiologicals" was the pathetic euphemism given to them by the U.S. Army - were shredded in flight. A few managed to reach the lines. Brady knocked one away with a point-blank burst, and he had a chance to see how huge and savage it looked. It also stank of open gravesites and old human blood and excrement. He'd never been so terrified in his life. A hundred yards to his left, two of the creatures pounced on Minelli's tank. Minelli got one with his machinegun, but the other one caught him before he could slam the hatch shut, and tore him apart with a couple of brutal swipes. Nearby infantrymen shot it off the tank before it could crawl inside, but that didn't help Minelli.

And, meanwhile, the second wave of the attack had gotten close enough to fire their light guns and missiles. One of the Bradleys got splashed by an anti-tank missile. Brady ordered a retreat to the next prepared position.

Looking behind his platoon as they retreated, Brady saw four of the flying monsters put a flag with the Church's Circle on the hill he'd vacated, almost like a mockery of that old picture with the Marines on it. He had them blown apart with an explosive round, out of sheer spite. It didn't change anything.

In this corner of the battle, the Churchies were winning.

is the game's end result is crafted.

When to Use the Rules

In most games, a great deal of the action does not require rules. Many of the character's actions do not need rolling dice and consulting charts. Common examples of such actions include:

Talking: Unless the character is gagged, mute or is trying to speak in a foreign language she does not know very well, speech is always possible, and all it requires is the player to recite the character's "lines."

Routine Actions: These include anything that anybody can do. Picking up objects, walking from one place to another, opening and closing unlocked doors. Any action that a normal person can perform with little or no effort does not require anything other than the player's announcing that his character is going to do it.

Traveling: Getting there is not always half the fun; just like in movies and works of fiction, the Chronicler can "cut" any long, tedious sections of the actions. For example, if the characters are traveling to Europe by plane, and the real action awaits them there, the Chronicler can sum up their trip in a few sentences: "You bought tickets for the first available flight; subtract the cost from your funds. The flight was quiet and uneventful; the plane was half empty, and it took off late at night, so most of the passengers were asleep throughout the trip. You enjoyed a few hours of rest, and now you are at the airport, going through Customs."

In general, if you do not need to use the rules, don't. The feeling that you, the Chronicler, and the players are crafting a story should be disrupted as seldom as possible. Only when the outcome of an action is in doubt, and the results of that action are important, should the rules come into play.

Dice

The Unisystem can be used with dice, cards, or without any random determinations. Dice are the most commonly used tools in gaming and, in this author's opinion, still the best method to determine random outcomes. The Unisystem relies on four kinds of dice: ten-sided, eight-sided, six-sided and four-sided. Of these, all but the ten-sided dice can be discarded by using

Like all games, the Unisystem has rules; they help the Chronicler determine what happens at some points of the story. No one game system can satisfy every gamer or gaming group, however; the Unisystem is designed to offer several options to Chroniclers and players, but the main rule is that it is your game, and you should do what works for you. If a rule does not satisfy you, is too complicated or requires more detail, or you just plain don't like it, change it. Be sure that the entire game group knows of any changes beforehand, however; this will minimize complaints and arguments that will detract from the enjoyment of the game.

How to Run A Game

Usually, roleplaying games develop in this way: the Chronicler or game master describes the situation, and then asks the players what their characters are doing. Dialog is conducted normally. A typical game situation would go like this:

Chronicler: *You are driving your car through a lonely country road. It is dark outside. Your car's headlights are barely enough to break the darkness in front of you. It almost feels like you are the only people on Earth. As you go around a bend in the road, you notice a pickup truck stopped by the side of the road, a couple of hundred feet away. A person - it's too dark to see if it is a man or a woman - is by the vehicle. He or she notices your vehicle and starts waving to you. What do you do?*

In this example, there are three characters, each controlled by a separate player. Each character has a chance to do something, although the character at the wheel has the most choices — she could stop the car by the pickup truck, slow down and see what is happening, speed up and avoid the accident entirely, or anything else. The other characters could talk to the driver, or look around for anything suspicious, for example.

In this case, and throughout most games the Chronicler presents a situation. When he asks "What do you do?" it is the player's turn to start contributing to the story. Sometimes the players take the initiative, informing the Chronicler of their plans or intentions; in that case the Chronicler describes the consequences of those actions. Through this interaction, the story that

some of the optional sub-systems described in this section. Typically, dice are denoted by placing a 'D' in front of its numerical value (i.e., a D4 for a four-sided dice).

Ten-sided Dice (D10s): Used for task determination as well as to determine the damage of a weapon, these are the most commonly used dice in the Unisystem. Entire game sessions can come and go without using any dice other than the D10s. They can be acquired (like all the other polyhedron dice) at any hobby or gaming store, and at many comic book stores. They can be replaced on a pinch by using two six-sided dice and subtracting two from the roll (treat a result of '0' as a '1').

Eight- and Four-sided Dice (D8s and D4s): In the Unisystem, these dice are only used to determine damage. The reason for different damage types is to represent the type of weapon. It stands to reason, for example, that a bigger weapon (like an ax) will do more damage than a smaller weapon (like a switchblade) when wielded by someone with the same strength. So, the smaller weapon uses a smaller damage die. For example, a switchblade would do 1D4 times the strength of the wielder, while an ax will inflict 1 D10 times the strength to the wielder. Dice rolls can be reduced or eliminated by using an average damage value (equal to half the value of the dice used), so that the weapon will always do the same damage. So, a switchblade can do 2 points of damage times the strength of the wielder, saving the trouble of rolling dice.

Six-sided Dice (D6s): These are the most common dice available, easily "borrowed" from any number of common board games. If D10s are not readily available, D6s can be used as a replacement.

Using Skills and Attributes

Rules are mostly used when a player tells the Chronicler his character is trying to do something, and the Chronicler needs to determine if the attempt is successful. The same rules are also used when the Chronicler wants to determine if a character notices or avoids or resists an occurrence. The rules come into effect to



answer the question "What happened?" If the answer is not in doubt, the Chronicler simply announces what happened. If it is, then dice or playing cards come into effect (see p. 87 for completely randomness rules).

Generally, the outcome of an action depends on the *Attributes* or *Skills* of the characters (all those numbers you have in your character sheet), the *Circumstances* (which may give you bonuses and penalty), and good old Luck (determined by the result of a dice roll or card draw). Those are all the factors.

The Basic Rule

Whether you are using dice or cards (the randomness system uses a slightly different method), all actions are resolved as follows. Roll of ten-sided die (or D10) or draw one or more cards; then add the attribute or skill numbers the Chronicler tells you to use. Tell the result to the Chronicler, who will then add or subtract any circumstances modifiers (for example, noticing something is more difficult in darkness than in broad daylight). If the final result is a 9 or higher, the action was successful. If the result is less than 9, the attempt failed. The higher the total value, the more successful the action is (in some cases, just being successful is enough; in others, the degree of success may have some significance). This is the center of the Unisystem; most other rules revolve around this basic element. This rule will apply to using skills, combat, working magic, and so on.

Tasks — Using Skills and Attributes

Most actions, from sneaking around in the dark to writing the Great American Novel, are considered to be Tasks. A Task always uses one Attribute and one Skill. The Chronicler decides which Attributes and Skills are appropriate to the action at hand. As before, the dice are rolled or the cards are drawn, and the Attribute and Skill indicated are added to the result. The higher the traits used are, the greater the chance the action will be successful.

Example: Peter, playing the indomitable Rosicrucian sorcerer Marcus, wants his character to identify the foul-smelling, furry humanoid creature he has spotted prowling in

his Shrine's courtyard. The Chronicler tells Peter to use Marcus' Perception (to see how good a look Marcus got of the creature) and Occult Knowledge (the character's knowledge of the supernatural). Marcus' Perception is 3; his Occult Knowledge is a whopping 6. Peter rolls a D10, getting a result of 6, which added to his Skill and Attribute produces a total of 15. Since it is dark outside, the Chronicler applies a penalty of -3 to the task, reducing the total to 12. That is enough. The Chronicler says "Marcus realizes that the ugly creature is a Wilding, a minor but malevolent spirit that has possessed and mutated a small animal. You remember that Wildings are often created by black magic practitioners to use as spies or gophers. What do you do now?"

Tests - Using Attributes Alone

Some actions use only a character's Attributes. Some examples include lifting things (which uses Strength), remembering something (using Intelligence), and so on. Sometimes two attributes are used; for example, spotting a face in a crowd might require a Perception (to look through the crowd) and Intelligence (to remember the face). These situations are known as Attribute Tests, or Tests for short. There are two types of Test: Simple and Difficult. Simple Tests are relatively easy things; lifting an object using your entire body, for example. To resolve a Simple Attribute Test, roll or draw and then add the Attributes involved (if two Attributes are called into play), or the single Attribute value, doubled. For example, a character with a Strength of 2 will add 4 to the result of the roll or draw for a Simple Strength Test. Difficult Tests are more challenging; lifting something with

Base Modifiers

Routine Task: No roll needed unless it's an unusual circumstance (treat as Easy).

Easy Task: +5 or more to the roll.

Moderate Task: +3 to +4 to the roll.

Average Task: +1 to +2 to the roll.

Challenging Task
(includes most combat rolls): No modifier.

Difficult Task: -1 to -2 to the roll.

Very Difficult Task: -3 to -5 to the roll.

Heroic Task: -6 to -9 to the roll

Near-Impossible: -10 or worse.

To Roll or not to Roll

It is often easy to get caught up in the mechanics of the game and lose track of the story. This may lead to people eventually getting bored of the game altogether. To make sure that this does not affect your game, you should take into account the following considerations

When to Roll? Sometimes Chroniclers and players fall into "roll-playing" model, rolling dice (or drawing cards) for all kinds of tasks, even those that really don't matter. When a player wants to roll to see how nicely her character can park a car (unless there is some storyline reason why this is important), roll-playing has crept in. Rolls should be made when the outcome of an action will make an impact on the story, especially if success is doubtful. Rolls can add to the excitement and tension of game, because nobody, including the Chronicler, knows what the final outcome will be. Will the Wicce finish her incantation before the phantasm can hurt her companion? This is the type of situation where a roll or draw may help heighten the mood.

Rolls Don't Rule: I was supposed to be a minor encounter: a mugger surprised two Cast Members and demanded their money. A fight ensued, and the Chronicler rolled several 10s in a row for the mugger, and maximum damage on his attacks. All of a sudden, enough damage has been inflicted on a Cast Member to kill her or at least incapacitate her for several weeks - thus ruining the main storyline. Chroniclers should sometimes consider "altering" roll results if those results are both highly unlikely and disruptive of the basic plot. In the example above, maybe the damage rolls or the outcome rolls could be "adjusted" to represent minor wounds or just a scary near-miss. It helps if the Chronicler makes his rolls or draws out of sight of the players.

However, if it becomes common knowledge that the Chronicler will ignore roll or draw results to keep the story going, the players will lose a great deal of the uncertainty that can add thrill to a role-playing game. The Chronicler should keep this practice to a minimum - so that when he needs to use it his players will probably not catch on.

only one hand, for example, makes for a Difficult Strength Test. In those cases, you only add the value of the attribute involved (do not double it). This, of course, reduces the chances of success.

Example: Kathy, playing the Wicce magician Lilith, is wandering through a forest at night, alone. What Kathy/Lilith does not know is that the reanimated corpse of a serial killer is prowling the selfsame woods, and is closing in on the unsuspecting witch. The Chronicler tells Kathy to roll a D10 and add Lilith's Perception attribute,

doubled. The woods are pretty quiet, and the relentless dead are not known for their subtlety; the creature is not even trying to be quiet, making this a Simple Attribute Test. Lilith's Perception is 4, which doubled adds a total of 8 to the dice roll. Kathy rolls the dice and comes up with a 7, for a total of 15. The Chronicler says "Lilith, you hear a guttural growling noise behind her. Something is rushing through the forest towards you. It should reach you in less than a minute; it's so loud you heard it some distance away. What do you do?"

Unskilled Attempts

Sometimes, a character must try to do something she is not trained to do. Unskilled attempts always have a hefty penalty, but very gifted or talented people may be able to get anything right even on the first attempt. Use the appropriate attribute (do not double it), at a minimum -2 penalty (in addition to any other modifiers). Furthermore, the level of success of the Task (see p. 69) can never be too high.

No matter how high the total outcome roll or draw is, only a Decent outcome (second level of success) will result from the attempt.

Some skills require so much training and preparation that untrained people have no prayer of performing them. A penalty of -6 to -10 can be applied if the character is trying to perform very complex skills. For example, trying to perform surgery with no help other than a few medical manuals will have a -10 penalty, or the Chronicler may rule that the attempt will



automatically fail (or, to keep the players in suspense, he may let them make rolls - who knows, they might get lucky).

Example: James is playing the part of Josh, a 12-year old with psychic powers. Josh is riding with his father. Suddenly, his father slumps over the steering wheel, unconscious (unknown to James/Josh, his family has been targeted by a malevolent sorcerer, and his father has just suffered a near-fatal stroke). The terrified 12-year old tries to stop the car before it can crash onto the incoming traffic. This Task would be normally resolved by using the Driving skill and the Dexterity attribute, but Josh has no driving skills! A penalty of -2 is assigned for the lack of a skill. Josh has a Dexterity of 4, so he adds 2 to the roll of a D10. If the total is 9 or higher (which would require the die roll to be a 7 or higher), Josh manages to hit the brakes and stop the car without causing an accident. Otherwise, his panicked attempts may cause the car to swerve, go into a spin, or worse.

Resisted Tasks/Tests

Sometimes, a character will try to do something and another character (either a Cast Member or a Chronicler character) will try to stop or hinder him. Similarly, an attempted action may be noticed or foiled by the target of victim of the action. When this happens, you have a Resisted Task to resolve. The same method is used to determine the result of most contests, including combat.

Resisted Tasks (or, if using only Attributes, Tests) use the same basic rule mentioned above, with the following addition. Both sides of the contest get to roll/draw and add the appropriate Attributes or Skills. The results are then compared, and the higher total result, after adding or subtracting all modifiers, is the winner of the contest.

Some examples of Resisted Tasks and Test include:

Arm Wrestling. This requires both sides to make Simple Strength Tests; the higher result wins the contest.

Pursuit Both sides use Dexterity and Constitution. If one person started running first, he gets to add a +2 to the roll. Also, the side with the higher speed gets to add the difference

between the two speeds (i.e., subtract the lower Speed from the higher one, then add the result to the faster character's roll). The winner manages to either catch up with or lose the pursuer, depending on her intentions.

Sneaking up on somebody: The person doing the sneaking around uses Stealth and Dexterity; the target uses either his Perception, doubled (as a Simple Perception Test), or his Perception with the Notice skill.

Combat Combat is described in more detail on p. 00. Most combat actions consist of Resisted Tasks or Tests.

Determining What Attributes to Use

The Chronicler often has to quickly decide what attributes to use on a given task. Rather than have to thumb through the skill list, let common sense be your guide. The following rules of thumb should be enough to let you determine what Attribute should be used in a Task roll or draw.

Strength: Strength only works when something requiring brute force is involved. Usually physical skills like sports, climbing or swimming will require Strength.

Dexterity: One of the most commonly used attributes, Dexterity applies to any tasks requiring accuracy, physical balance and quickness, and eye-hand coordination.

Intelligence: Anything that primarily involves memory and reasoning will use Intelligence. Remembering a name, understanding a difficult concept or idea, and solving a mathematics problem or a puzzle, all would use Intelligence.

Perception: There is some overlap between Intelligence and Perception. When in doubt, the Chronicler can have the player use the higher of the two (or the lower if the task is difficult).

Generally, Perception is used to spot, recognize or identify things. The overlap with Intelligence comes from the fact that you need your memory to recognize and identify things. In general, however, if the task involves any of your five senses, you use Perception.

Willpower: This attribute is most commonly used defensively, to resist other skills or abilities. It is also used on tasks where you are trying to intimidate others, however. Your Willpower will help you maintain eye contact during a stare

contest, for example.

Constitution: Constitution is mostly used in physical tasks involving long-term endurance and vitality.

The Role of Luck: The Rule of 10 and the Rule of 1

Sometimes, under the right circumstances, people perform feats they should normally have no prayer of accomplishing. That is why people often bet on the underdog in sporting events: you never know if the less skilled or talented person will get lucky this time. By the same token, even the most accomplished person will occasionally fumble or screw up even relatively simple tasks. Good and bad luck often add to the drama of the game; the Chronicler should always try to make such events interesting by describing the circumstances of the miraculous success or the tragic error. To simulate the effect of extraordinary luck in the game, the Unisystem uses the Rule of 10 (for good luck) and the Rule of 1 (for bad fortune). When a roll or draw (before adding or subtracting any modifiers) comes out as a 1 or 10, there is a chance that something really good or bad is about happen.

The Rule of 10: On a roll of 10, roll again, subtract 5, and add the result (if higher than 0) to 10. So, if you rolled a 10 followed by a 7, for example, you total roll would be 12 (10 plus 7 minus 5); if you roll a 10 followed by a 2, the total roll is 10, since 2 is less than 5. If a 10 is rolled a second time, add 5 to the roll (for a total of 15), and then roll again, subtract 5 from the result, and add it, if positive, to the 15. If a player rolls a string of 10s, he keeps adding 5 to the result and rolling again.

Example: Harriet the Seer, played by Roy, is trying to leap between two buildings, using her meager Strength of 1 and Dexterity of 2, with a -5 penalty because the two buildings are fairly far apart. Knowing his character is almost certainly doomed, Roy rolls the bones. He gets a 10. "Roll again," the Chronicler says. Roy rolls a second time, getting a 10 again! His total roll is a 15 so far, but he gets to roll a third time. This time the roll is a 3; since this is less than 5, he adds nothing to the roll total. The 15, plus Harriet's Dexterity and Strength, goes up to 18,

and is then reduced to 13 by the -5 penalty - enough to be successful. "You leap further than you could have imagined," the Chronicler explains. For a few moments, you actually feel like you are flying as you see the streets below flash past, and then you land well past the building's edge. You feel shaky and weak-kneed, and you know deep in your heart that you may not duplicate this feat in a hundred years."

The Rule of 1: On a roll of 1, roll again, subtract 5, and if the result is negative, reduce the result by that amount. If the result is positive, the roll is considered to be a 1. So, for example, if you roll a 1 followed by a 3, you get a total roll result of -2 (the result of 3-5); that means that unless the character's Attributes, Skills and other modifiers are 11 or higher, the task or test will fail. If you roll a 1 followed by a 9, the total roll is considered to be a 1 - not much, but better than a negative number.

If another 1 is rolled, apply -5 to the result, and roll again. Furthermore, a roll of 1 indicates a mishap of some sort; even if the total roll is still higher than 9, the degree of success cannot exceed the first level!

Example: Robin the Sentinel, played by Jennifer, is literally wrestling with the devil - a devil, anyway. Robin's normal Strength of 4 has been augmented by the Miracle of Strength of Ten, to a total of 9. The fiend he is grappling with is a relatively weak creature, with a total Strength of 5. Robin is trying to overpower the creature; both sides use their Strength, doubled, in the Resisted Test. Confident of her character's advantage (an 18 against a 10 before the dice hit the table), Jennifer rolls her D10 - and rolls a 1. Her second roll is a 2, resulting in a total penalty of -3, which gives her a total of 15 (her base 18, minus 3). The Chronicler rolls for the fiend; the die roll is a 7, which produces a total of 17. "In a burst of insane vitality, the fiend breaks free from your grip and tosses you across the room," the Chronicler describes. "Laughing maniacally, the monster lunges at you. What do you do?"

Using the Chronicler's Discretion

The Chronicler is the final arbiter of what a roll or draw means. Some Chroniclers will want

to apply the rules to the letter, and always consult the Outcome Table. Others will simply decide on the spot what a roll means. Remember, maintaining the flow of the game is always more important than the rules. Slowing down the game for a relatively minor action is not worth it; keep the game alive and interesting.

Modifiers to Tasks and Tests

Most of the time, tasks and tests only take into account the appropriate Skills and Attributes. Sometimes, however, circumstances can make some tasks or situations easier or more difficult. A ladder is a lot easier to climb than a greased pole, for example. Shooting at a target in the dark is a lot harder than at high noon. If the Chronicler feels that a task or test is made easier or more difficult because of circumstances, she can add modifiers, positive or negative to any result. Assigning modifiers is something that should be done only when absolutely necessary, as it may slow down the game. The Chronicler determines what modifiers are important, and decides how they affect an outcome.

The Outcome Table

Sometimes, just being successful is not enough. The degree of your success may have an impact on the game or on future actions. This is particularly true in social interaction rolls, where a high level of success may impact future interactions with the people you previously impressed; artistic endeavors, where your level of success determines how good a work you have produced; and combat, where a particular good or lucky blow or shot may end a fight right then and there. When the degree or level of success of a task is important, the Chronicler can consult on the Outcome Table below. This table serves as a guideline of how good a total roll or draw is, and how impressive the character's actions were. An imaginative Chronicler can use the results to add to the drama of the story. For example, a highly successful display of combat skill may cause enemies to surrender or flee, too intimidated to continue fighting, or a particularly successful performance may gain a

Outcome Table

A roll of 9 means the task was barely accomplished (this is good enough for most circumstances). Some situations may require the Chronicler to measure the degree of the success. For example, a singer giving a performance would need a 9 to remember all her lines and do an adequate performance, but how good was the performance? The degree of success is measured in success levels, and depend on the total roll (including all positive and negative modifiers).

9-10: First Level (Adequate): The task got done. If an artistic endeavor, it is just adequate, and critics/audiences are likely to give it "ho-hum" responses. A complex and involved task will take the maximum required time to complete. An attempted maneuver was barely accomplished, and might appear to be the result of luck rather than skill. Social skills will produce minimal benefits for the character.

Combat: Attack does normal damage.

11-12: Second Level (Decent): The task was accomplished with relative ease and even some flair. Artistic results will be above average, resulting in a warm reaction from many, but not most. Complex and involved tasks will take 10% less than the maximum required time. Attempted maneuvers are skillfully accomplished. Social skills will manage to gain some benefits to the character (including a +1 to further attempts on the same people under similar situations).

Combat: Attack does normal damage.

13-14: Third Level (Good): The task was completed with ease. Artistic results will be largely appreciated by connoisseurs and well-liked by the public (although some critics will be able to find something wrong). Complex and involved tasks will take 25% (one fourth) less time than normally required. Attempted maneuvers are done with seeming effortlessness, apparently the result of great skill. Social skills are not only successful, the character will be at +2 on future attempts on the same people (this is not cumulative with subsequent high rolls — use the highest bonus only).

Combat: This is the roll needed to target a specific body part, or to hit a vital area.

15-16: Fourth Level (Very Good): The task attempt was very successful. Artistic endeavors are rewarded with a great deal of appreciation from the intended audience. Complex and involved tasks can be finished in half the time. Social skills produce a lasting impression on the people involved, resulting in a bonus of +3 on all future attempts resulting in that skill on the people involved.

Combat: Increase the damage multiplier by 1.

17-20: Fifth Level (Excellent): The task attempt produced excellent results. Any artistic endeavor will impress the audience greatly, leading to a great deal of recognition and fame. Social skills have a future bonus of +4, as above.

Combat: Increase the damage multiplier by 2.

21-23 Sixth Level (Extraordinary): The task produces amazing results, typically accomplishing far more than was intended. Artists will gain fame after one such roll, but all his future accomplishments will be measured against this one, which may lead to the "one trick pony syndrome." Social skills gain a future bonus of +5, as above.

Combat: Increase the damage multiplier by 3. Add +1 to the multiplier for every additional success level.

Every +3 to the total grants an additional success level, should it be important to note it.

character new friends and admirers. As usual, this is meant to be used as a playing aid, not a restrictive law; the Outcome Table can be used as often or seldom as the Chronicler desires.

Combat

Armageddon being an adventure game, there is always a chance that confrontations will become physical. Combat is handled just like any other series Tasks. A character attempts to do what he wants (in combat, this usually

entails inflicting bodily harm on the other fellow); whether or not he is successful depends on his own skill, what the target is doing to stop him (if anything), and the luck of the dice or cards (or the determination of the Chronicler in the randomness system).

Running Combats: The Step-By-Step Approach

Combat in the Unisystem can tie as formal or informal as the Chronicler desires. To make

things more manageable, combat is broken down in Turns. A Turn is enough time to perform one quick action, and is meant to last between one and five seconds of game time. Each turn gives enough time for all characters involved to perform or attempt to perform the desired actions (within limits; some actions may take several turns). The suggested breakdown of a turn goes like this:

- 1) The Chronicler asks each player what their characters intend to do during the next turn - Intentions.

- 2) The Chronicler determines who gets to attack first — Initiative.

- 3) Attack and defense tasks are performed, in the order determined by initiative.

- 4) Any damage inflicted is applied to the targets; this can end the fight right then and there.

- 5) Any remaining attack and defense tasks are resolved and damage inflicted.

- 6) The turn ends; the process starts again.

Ideally, an entire combat turn should take no more than a couple of minutes of "real time" (very large groups entering combat will, of course, stretch that length of time). The Chronicler should eliminate any step she feels will needlessly slow down a combat situation. Determining initiative is often a matter of common sense; intentions can be summed up in a sentence or two, unless the Chronicler and the players enjoy a detailed description of action scenes. The actual dice-rolling and card-drawing in the is meant to be fairly quick; an attack-defense sequence will be solved in two rolls or draws.

It is the Chronicler's job to describe the action; rather than just say "You hit, and inflicted ten points of damage," descriptions should be more like "You slashed the guy in the arm; from the way the blood spurts out, you cut him deeply - the man yelps in pain and backpedals away." Keep the imagery lively; make the players feel that their characters are in a dangerous situation, and, just as importantly, that they are hurting people, not tallying off numbers. If the players start feeling squeamish about hurting their victims, you are doing your job right.

Turns

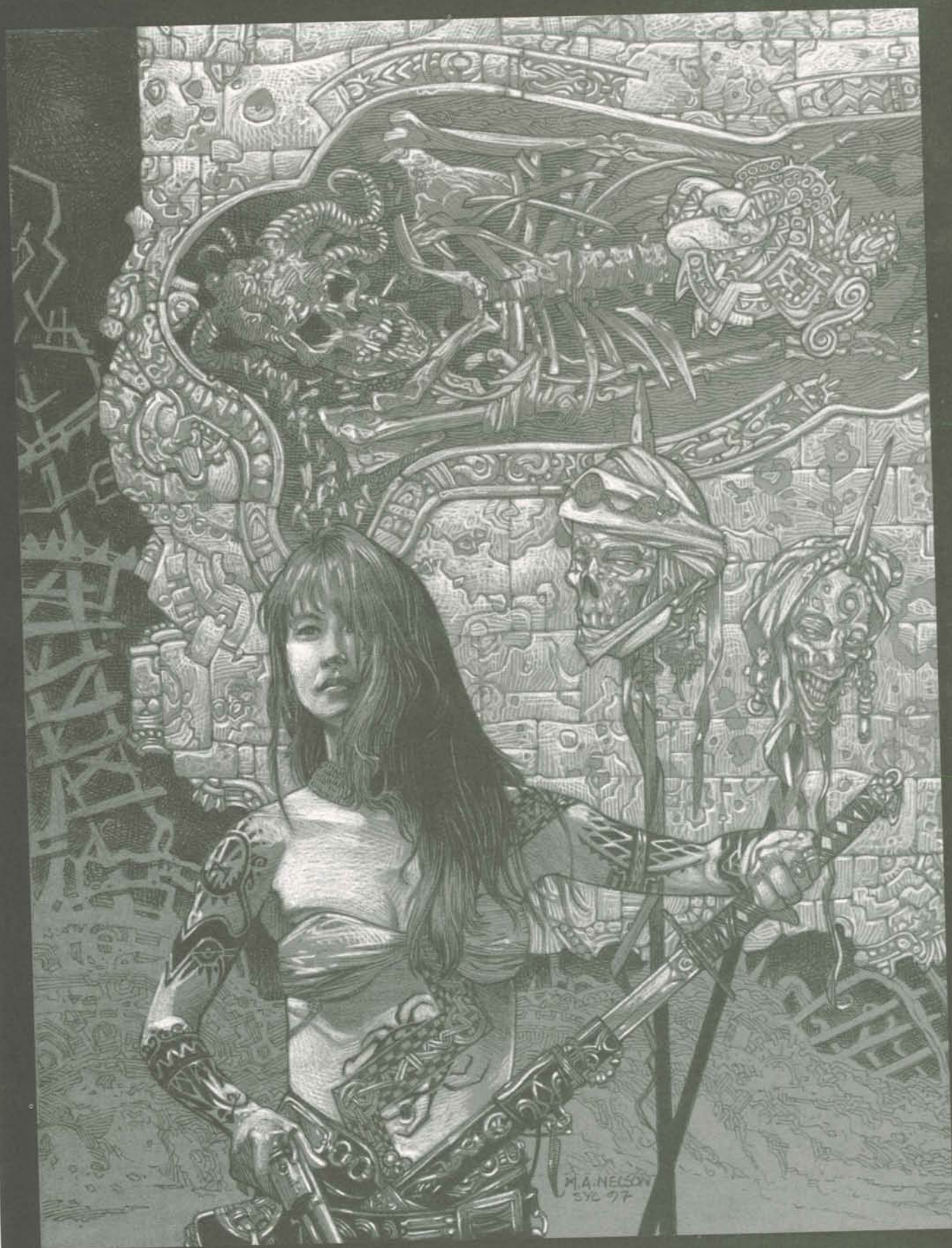
To simplify things, action is broken down in turns. A turn is a short length of time, about 1

to 5 seconds of game time in length. Basically, this is enough time for a normal person to perform one combat task, like slashing at an enemy, shooting a handgun, diving for cover, etc. The main reason for using turns is to keep things organized; in a turn, every character gets a chance to do something, and has something happen to him in return.

The Chronicler determines what action or actions are possible in a turn. While people can theoretically do a lot of things in just a couple of seconds, combat situations are highly stressful times. Something as simple as reloading a pistol can be delayed by adrenaline-induced trembling. It's easy to swing a baseball bat around, but actually delivering an aimed blow at a target requires concentration and deliberation. Remember, this applies both to the players and the Supporting Cast characters controlled by the Chronicler. While some monsters and creatures are exempt from such emotions, human opponents should also suffer from fear, "buck fever" and other combat impairments. Common sense is the most important thing; always remember that an extended action (emptying a gun at a target, for example) may prevent the character from doing anything else (like diving for cover if somebody shoots back).

Intentions: What do you want to do?

At the beginning of each turn, the Chronicler asks all the players whose characters are involved in the action what their intentions are for that turn. Each player gets to state his intention: this could be something as simple as "I duck for cover" or "I hit him with my baseball bat" or as complex as "I take aim at the guy's head, yelling 'Freeze or die!' and if he does not freeze I pump two shots at him." or "I cartwheel behind a crate, toss a grenade, and mutter a prayer." The Chronicler decides if the intention is possible, if it will take one turn or less, and what skills will be involved in the desired action. The Chronicler can point out to the player about any risks or problems the action may bring about - if the player's character would know or understand those risks. Some Chroniclers let a player's intentions stand even if they are stupid or suicidal; others try to "coach" their players through every action. Both extremes are bad. There is



hand weapons with their bare hands; those with Brawling or no hand to hand combat skills cannot.

An attack and defense set is resolved as a Resisted Task: if the attacker gets a higher result than the defender, his blow lands and inflicts damage; if the defender ties or gets a higher result, he manages to deflect the attack. Instead of Parrying, the defender may Dodge out of the way; this uses the Dodge skill (if the character has it) and Dexterity, or just Dexterity (not doubled) otherwise. That's all there is to it. The section on p. 73 has some optional combat maneuvers for those who want more detail in their combat.

List of Combat Moves

The most common Combat Moves are listed first. The others are optional, used only by players and Chroniclers who wish extra detail in combat.

Punch: Damage: 1 D4(2) x Strength.

Kick: Damage: 1D4(2) x (Strength +1). Special: On a failed attack Task, the character must succeed at a second Martial Arts and Dexterity Task, or he will be off-balance (-2 to all combat actions for the next turn). On the roll or draw of a 1, the character falls down.

Judo Throw: Damage: 1 D4(2), plus target is knocked down, which gives him a penalty of -4 to most combat actions until he gets up.

Arm Lock: Damage: 1 x Strength. The character must have successfully parried an attack or grabbed the target (a Resisted Task: the Attacker's Arm Lock and Dexterity versus the defender's Simple Dexterity Test or Dexterity and Martial Art skill). Once the Arm Lock is successful, the attacker can inflict damage once each turn; breaking free requires a Difficult Strength Test against the character's Arm Lock and Strength, or a Resisted Task between each side's Martial Arts and Strength levels (if the victim knows any Martial Arts, that is).

Back Kick: Damage: 1 D4(2) x Strength. Allows character to attack targets behind him without turning around.

Breakfall: Damage: None. Each level of success in a Breakfall and Dexterity Task reduces the damage from falls by one level. This will prevent damage from most Judo Throws and

Trips.

Counterpunch: Damage: 1 D4(2) x Strength. A quick follow-up to a successful parry. Each level of success in the Defense Task adds +1 to the attack Task.

Crescent Kick: Damage: 1 D6(3) x Strength.

Disarm: Damage: None. Resisted by the target's Dexterity and Weapon Skill. If the attacker wins, he removes the weapon from the target.

Head Butt: Damage: 1 D4(2) x Strength. On a failed attack task, the attacker suffers the above damage.

Jab: Damage 1D4(2) x (Strength-1). A light, fast punch: can be used twice in a turn without incurring extra action penalties (see p. 00)

Jump Kick: Damage: 1 D6(2) x (Strength+2). On a failed Attack Task, the character must pass a Difficult Dexterity Test or fall down, suffering 1 D4(2) points of damage.

Roll with Blow: Damage: None. Used if the character has been successfully hit in hand to hand combat. Each success level in a Dexterity and Roll with Blow Task reduces the damage multiplier of the attack by 1 (if the multiplier is reduced to 0, no damage is inflicted). However, the character is knocked back and must pass a Difficult Dexterity Test or he falls down.

Roundhouse Punch: Damage: 1 D6(3) x Strength

Stabbing Hand: Damage: 1 D4(2) x (Strength +1)

Shove: Damage: None. Used in a Resisted Task: Shove and Strength against the target's Strength and Dexterity or Strength and Martial Art skill.

Spin Kick: Damage: 1 D4(2) x (Strength+2). Other effects as per Kick, above.

Sucker Punch: Damage: 1 D4(2) x Strength. If the attacker wins a Resisted Task (Sucker Punch and Intelligence against a Simple Perception Test from the victim), the target cannot defend against the punch.

Trip: Damage: 1 D6(3), and the target falls down (see Judo Throw for effects of being prone).

Multiple Actions In Hand to Hand Combat

People can try to make multiple attacks of defensive maneuvers on a given turn. The main limitation is skill; dividing your concentration

Throwing Stuff

Ever since some ancient proto-human lifted rock and hurled it in anger, thrown objects have been one of the most common weapons available. Rocks, bottles, full beer cans and other improvised weapons can inflict some damage, although a single thrown rock is rarely lethal, unless it hits the target in a vital spot.

Light objects (small rocks, hardbound books, etc.) inflict 1 D4(2) x (Strength-2) damage (If Strength is 2 or 1, damage is 1 D4-1(1). If Strength is 0, damage is 1D4-2(1)).

Heavy objects (bricks, large rocks, metal tools) inflict 1 D4(2) x (Strength -1) points of damage. Hard, aerodynamic objects (like a baseball), thrown by a trained person (somebody with the Baseball Sport Skill, for example), can inflict 1D4 x Strength points of damage.

The range of thrown objects is between 20 and 50 yards or meters, with a point-blank range equal to the character's Strength, a short range equal to Strength x 2, a Medium range equal to Strength x 5,

will cost you. In some cases (like facing multiple attackers) you may have no choice but to do so. In general, you may perform one attack and one defense task each turn at no penalty. If attacking or defending multiple times, you will suffer a penalty equal to the number of extra actions you take in a round. This penalty is applied to all tasks you perform in that turn.

Example: Jimmy the Kung Fu expert, played by George, is facing three Wildings. The ugly little monsters all attack him at almost the same time. Jimmy decides to attack once and try to defend against the additional attacks. This will require two additional actions, resulting in a penalty of -2 to all actions attempted on that turn.

Optional Hand to Hand Rules

Some players may want more detail to their fights than simple attack and defense rolls. The optional rules below are meant to accommodate them. Chroniclers should reward good intention descriptions with a few bonuses in the appropriate Task rolls or draws. Some possible maneuvers and complications include the following:

Defensive Posture: The character remains on the defensive, forsaking any chance to attack

while concentrating on being on the defensive. A character using this tactic gets a +3 bonus on all defensive tasks he performs on that turn. This is a good tactic to use while trying to keep a superior enemy busy while reinforcements arrive, or to gauge an opponent's skill before making a move (judging the opponent's skill may require a task involving Perception and appropriate Weapon Skill - although if the attacker manages to hit you despite your defensive posture, no task roll is necessary...).

Aggressive Posture: You go all-out in your attack, abandoning any hope of defense to smash your enemy. This gives you a +2 bonus on all attack tasks you perform that round, but you cannot perform any defensive task. This is a good tactic if your enemy is unarmed or you think you can take any damage he inflicts before you finish him off. Most of the time, though, it is too risky.

Feinting: A feint is a false attack meant to distract your enemy and lower his defenses against the real strike. The Feint is resolved as a Resisted Task (your Intelligence and Weapon skill against your opponent's Perception and Weapon skill). If you win the contest, you get a +1 bonus on your next attack task for every level of success you achieved in the Intelligence + Weapon skill task.

Ranged Combat

Ranged combat involves any sort of missile weapon, from a thrown stone to a machinegun. The attacker with initiative gets to fire his weapon at the target; this is a Task involving the attacker's Dexterity and appropriate Weapon skill. Range, lighting and other modifiers will affect the result. In ranged combat, the target of such attack has precious few choices. He can stand his ground and fire back, hoping the attacker will miss, or he can duck for cover. Ducking for cover uses Dodge and Dexterity; if the result is greater than or equal to the attacker's result, the target was able to hit the ground or jump behind cover in time to avoid the shot. The only problem with that tactic is that this is the only action the target can take on that turn. That is why most firefights are dominated by the group that fires first; the targets are pinned down and cannot fight back.



nothing wrong with reminding a player of **something** he may have forgotten in the "heat of battle" if it is something that his character would have noticed. On the other hand, some players may resent being told what to do all the time.

Initiative: Who Goes First

Most of the time, this should be a matter of common sense; the party who initiates the violence will usually go first at the beginning of a fight. After the first turn of the fight, initiative should depend on what happened in the previous turn. Typically, the combatant who actually managed to land a blow or hurt his target would get to go first. The Chronicler can always decide who attacks first based on the circumstances. He can also determine it randomly. To determine it randomly, both sides of the fight (this can be rolled or drawn for each character, or, for more quickness, for the entire group) roll a ten-sided die and add the character's Dexterity. The higher result wins the initiative for that turn. A character with initiative can make the first move.

Some circumstances may also determine initiative. Characters with ranged weapons usually get to attack before those holding hand weapons or no weapons and all. A sniper firing on an unaware target half a mile away automatically gets initiative. The guy who sucker punches somebody also gets to go first. As always, the Chronicler has the last word about such matters.

Hand to Hand Combat

Hand to hand combat is any fight conducted a roughly arm's length by people using their fists, feet, or hand weapons such as knives, swords and sticks. In hand to hand combat, the character with initiative gets the chance to strike first. The target may attempt a defensive maneuver, like blocking the attack with a hand weapon of his own, dodging or jumping out of the way, or a similar maneuver. Striking at an enemy is a Task: use the character's appropriate Weapon Skill and Dexterity. If the enemy has a hand weapon of his own, he can try to Parry the attack, using his own Weapon Skill and Dexterity. Characters with Martial Arts can parry

A shooter can also try to take some time to aim his weapon. This delays his attack to the end of the turn (giving the target a chance to fire first, move behind cover, or perform other actions), but it makes the attack more likely to hit. Aiming is a Task involving the character's Perception and Weapon Skill; each success level at the Task adds a +1 bonus to his attempt to strike.

Modifiers to ranged weapons attacks are listed on the table on p. 75. If looking for modifiers is taking too much time, the Chronicler should feel free to dispense with them.

Firing Multiple Shots

Even one to five seconds can be a lot of time for modern automatic and semi-automatic firearms. Your average sub-machinegun has a cyclic rate (the number of bullets fired if the trigger is kept pressed) of over 600 rounds per minute - meaning up to 10 shots fired in one second! Even a semi-automatic pistol or double-action revolver (which fire as fast as you can pull the trigger) can be emptied in under five seconds. The main drawback of firing multiple shots is that most of those rounds will miss the target. If you are rapid-firing, most automatic weapons will experience "muzzle climb" as the gun bucks in your hands and starts firing higher and higher up. Semi-automatics will also experience recoil, often ruining your aim.

The rules below will help take those factors into account.

Semi-Automatic Multiple Shots: Any weapon that fires a shot every time you pull the trigger can fire multiple times in a round. Each successive shot is at a cumulative -1 penalty (so the second shot is at -1 to strike, the third shot is at -2, and so on). If the gun has a heavy recoil (a .44 magnum, for example), the penalty is a cumulative -2.

Automatic Fire -

Bursts: The ideal way to fire an automatic weapon is to shoot short bursts of three to five shots. This allows the fire to keep control of his weapon. A burst fires at no penalty; each success level in the Task result means the attacker scores a hit, up to the total number of bullets in the burst. So, for example, a shooter firing a three-shot burst who scores two success levels will hit with two bullets, each doing damage separately; if he had racked up three success levels or more, he would have struck with all three rounds.

If firing multiple bursts, each successive burst is at cumulative -3 penalty.

Automatic Fire - Rock 'n Roll: A favorite in the movies, this is when the shooter keeps the trigger depressed and "hoses" the target with a stream of bullets. In reality, most of the bullets fired are going to go high as the gun's muzzle is forced up by the constant recoil. Most automatic weapons have 20 to 40 shots in a magazine. Firing on full auto will empty those guns at the end of one turn. Each group of ten shots counts as a "group;" make a strike task for each group. Each success level means a strike with one bullet. Each group of shots after the first is at a cumulative -4 penalty.

Automatic Fire - Suppressive Fire: The last way to use automatic fire is to "sweep" an area, suppressing (i.e., making them kiss the ground and prey for deliverance) any targets in the area and hitting anybody stupid enough to stick their head into the "beaten zone" (the area your shots are spraying). This does not require a roll, just

Ranged Attack Modifiers

* Lighting modifiers also apply to hand to hand attacks.

Point-Blank Range: +1 to Strike Tasks, and add 1 to the Damage Multiplier

Short Range: No modifier

Medium Range: -1 to Strike Tasks

Long Range: -3 to Strike Tasks, and reduce Damage Multiplier by 1

Extreme Range: -6 to Strike Tasks, and reduce Damage Multiplier by 2

Poor Lighting Conditions (A dark alley, candlelight, moonlight): -1 to Strike Tasks

Bad Lighting Conditions (Moonless night): -4 to Strike Tasks

Total Darkness: Use a D10 roll with no other modifiers; only a natural roll of 9 or higher strikes the target. If a character makes a Difficult Perception Test, he can add each level of success to the D10 roll, accounting for the use of senses other than sight to spot the target.

Multiple Shots: -1 for each additional shot, or -2 if the weapon has a heavy recoil.

Gun Scopes: A telescopic scope will add +2 to +5 to any Aiming Tasks.



the intention to spray an area with gunfire. Rather than have to look at cones of fire and complicated formulas to determine the area covered, assume that most automatic small arms will sweep an area the size of a doorway or two. Anybody straying into the area will be struck by 1-4 shots (roll 1D4 to determine how many).

Keeping Your Cool

A factor rarely taken into account in most games is the ability (or lack thereof) of people to remain controlled while under fire. Most people who are shot at tend to freeze or panic; only the very brave, the very stupid, and combat veterans are likely to keep their cool and do the right thing when every instinct in your body is telling you to start running, *now*. Chroniclers wishing to run a heroic game are free to dispense with this factor, although its use may discourage hot-headed players from getting their characters into firefights at the drop of a hat.

When being shot at, the character must pass a Simple Willpower Test (double your Willpower and add it to a D10 roll or a card draw) to continue carrying over his original intention. A failed test means the character freezes or hesitates, and loses any chance to act on that turn. This rule also applies to Supporting Cast characters, so sometimes it is a good idea to fire blindly in the general direction of one's enemies, if only to make them "keep their heads down."

Damage

Once you hit your target (or your enemy hits you), the damage inflicted must be determined. Damage rolls work differently than task resolution rolls. Damage is measured in points, which are marked off the character's Life Points pool. If the Life Points pool is reduced to 0 or below, the character is critically injured and is at risk of dying. For the effects of damage, see p. 81.

Most forms of damage in the Unisystem are determining by rolling a die; the result is then

multiplied by a set number (called, for obvious reasons, the Multiplier). For example, a .22 pistol does 1D4 x 2 points of damage; in this case, the 2 is the Multiplier, and to determine damage you roll a four-sided die and multiply the result by 2. Why express damage in this manner? First, the Multiplier can get modified by a number of facts. In the case of the pistol, a bullet hitting somebody at point-blank range will do more damage than one fired from a hundred feet away. A point-blank range, the Multiplier will be increased, while it would drop at longer ranges.

Also, some weapons will have a variable Multiplier. Most hand weapons, for example, do damage based on the Strength of the wielder. It stands to logic that a baseball bat wielded by a ten-year old will not do as much damage as the same bat in the hands of a weight-lifter. So, to figure the damage, the base damage of the bat (1D8) uses the Strength of the wielder as a Multiplier.

Finally, although you could roll multiple dice and add the results together, using a Multiplier increases the chances that maximum and minimum damage will be inflicted. When rolling several dice, low rolls tend to "cancel out" high rolls, usually resulting in an average damage roll. If you just want to get an average damage roll every time, use the numbers listed in parentheses instead of bothering to roll dice (see the Reducing Dice Rolling section below).

Special Weapon Types and Damages

Not all weapons are created equal. Some are better designed to inflict bodily harm than others.

Two-Handed Weapons: Hand to hand weapons used two-handed raise the effective Strength of the wielder by 1. For example, a Strength 3 character wielding a two-handed ax will have an effective Strength of 4.

Slashing/Stabbing Weapons: Edged or pointed weapons have a better chance of inflicting permanent damage on their victims. An edge can slice muscle tissue and even chop through bone; a point can reach deep in a target's vital organs. To simulate this, any stabbing or slashing damage that is applied to a target (after taking into account any armor reductions) will be *doubled*. Blunt weapons (from fists to dropping

safes) do not enjoy this benefit, although they often do more general damage.

Hollow Point Bullets: These special loads are designed to expand after penetrating flesh, inflicting large and gruesome wounds on their victims. Hollow points are less likely to penetrate obstacles and armor, however. Double any Armor Value or Barrier Value that the round hits. However, any damage that penetrates the armor (if any) will be *doubled*.

Armor Piercing Bullets: These rounds use hardened materials to minimize deforming upon striking a target. AP bullets are more effective in defeating armor, but since they do not deform, they transmit less energies to their targets, and inflict less immediate damage. In game terms, reduce the Armor Value of any target (both vehicles or heavy armor) by 3 levels, but reduce any damage inflicted by *half*, rounded up.

Shaped-Charge Explosives: These are explosive weapons (rockets or launched grenades) that are designed to channel the energy of their explosions along a narrow focus. This allows the explosives to penetrate the thick armor of tanks and armored vehicles. The explosion is concentrated and becomes a super-hot jet of gasses that melts armor, inflicts horrible burns on humans, and ignites flammables. Shaped-Charge Explosives divides the Armor Value of hardened armor or other surfaces by 3, rounded down (so, for example, an armored car with an AV of 1D8 x 10(40) will only have an AV of 1D8 x 3(12) against the an anti-tank rocket). This also applies to giant monsters like the Greater Shaitan.

Hand Weapons

This list covers most hand weapons one would expect to find in 20th century America. Future Unisystem sourcebooks will include a larger variety of ancient and modern weapons (for those who care).

Weapon Type	Damage
Knife (Small)	1D4(2)x (Strength-!)*
Knife (Large)	1 D4(2) x Strength*
Short Sword/Huge Knife	1 D6(3) x Strength*
Fencing Foil	1 D6(3) x Strength*
Katana Sword	1 D8(4) x Strength*
Small Club	1D6(3)x(Str-1)
Police Baton	1 D6(3) x Strength

Weapon Types and Ranges

Each weapon type has a different range. Handguns, for example, are almost useless after a few dozen feet, while some rifles remain lethal at ranges of over a mile. Listed below are the most common weapon types and their ranges. These are ballpark figures; weapons experts should feel free to pencil in any more accurate ranges, or plug in the latest *Guns and Ammo* statistics. The ranges listed are the limits: anything below the limit is considered to be in that range, anything beyond it goes to the next step. Note that most bullets will continue traveling a fair distance after going past extreme range and may still be lethal, but the chance of hitting the designated target are basically nil.

Pistol:

Point-Blank Range: 10 feet.
Short Range: 30 feet.
Medium Range: 60 feet/20 yards.
Long Range: 60 yards.
Extreme Range: 120 yards.

High-Velocity Pistol (.44and'.357magnums):Add 50% to all ranges.

Sub-machineguns:

Point-Blank Range: 15 feet.
Short Range: 60 feet/30 yards.
Medium Range: 60 yards.
Long Range: 200 yards.
Extreme Range: 500 yards.

Rifles (Assault and Civilian):

Point-Blank Range: 30 feet/10 yards.
Short Range: 50 yards.
Medium Range: 150 yards.
Long Range: 600 yards.
Extreme Range: 2000 yards.

Special Sniper Rifles and Highly Accurate Hunting Rifles:Add 50% to all ranges.

Heavy Machineguns (12mm and larger):

Point-Blank Range: 30 feet/10 yards.
Short Range: 150 yards.
Medium Range: 300 yards.
Long Range: 2000 yards.
Extreme Range: 6000 yards.

Large Club/Baseball Bat 1 D8(4) x Strength
Wood Ax 1 D8(4) x Strength*
Chainsaw 1 D10(5) x Strength*

* Indicates a stabbing/slashing weapon. After penetrating armor (if any), damage is *doubled*.

Ranged Weapons

An entire list of weapons would be too big for this book; a list of generic weapons and a few specific weapons (the sidearms of the UN and the AOR) are presented here. The **Battlegrounds** sourcebook will have plenty of hardware.

Weapon Type

.25 caliber Pistol/Revolver
.22 caliber Pistol/Revolver
.32 caliber Pistol/Revolver
.38 caliber Pistol/Revolver
9mm Pistol
9mm Ruger P-99
10 mm Pistol
11mmMP-16
.45 caliber Pistol/Revolver
.44 Magnum

Damage

1 D6 (3)
1 D4 x 2 (4)
1 D6 x 2 (6)
1 D6 x 3 (9)
1 D6 x 4 (12)
1 D6 x 5 (15)
1D8 x 4 (16)
1D8 x 5 (20)
1D10x4 (20)
1D8 x 5 (20)

.22 Rifle	1D6 x 2 (6)
Hunting Rifle	1D8 x 6 (24)
Sub-machinegun	1D6 x 4 (12)
Assault Rifle (Light)	1D8 x 5 (20)
Assault Rifle (Heavy)	1D8 x 6 (24)
HAR-19	1D10 x 6 (30)
KR-20 Rifle	1D10 x 4 (20)
.50 Machinegun	1D10 x 6 (30)

Explosives

Things that go boom are terribly destructive, and as such they have been favored by the militaries of the world. In all wars since WWI, more casualties have been inflicted by artillery and other explosives than by bullets or tanks. Explosives also demoralize troops ("shell shock") and destroy buildings, factories and other infrastructure without whom an army cannot sur-

vive. They are also a favored weapon of terrorists and guerrillas.

Explosions inflict damage in two ways. First is the Shockwave, which is nothing more than gas or air traveling at tremendous speeds. More dangerous are the fragments the Shockwave throws around at bullet speed. Fragments come from either debris from anything the Shockwave encounters (bricks, earth, rocks), or from specially designed metal casings or shrapnel (the metal case of most bombs are designed to break into jagged metal fragments to inflict maximum damage; some pipe bombs are filled with nails or ball bearings for the same reason). The Shockwave damage is rapidly reduced by distance; that of fragments isn't.

To make matters simpler, explosive damage in *Armageddon* is expressed as one value, which takes into consideration both fragmenta-

Explosive Areas of Effect

These areas are expressed as a radius (the distance in from the center of the explosion to the edge of the circle-shaped area it affects). Those using the Metric system can convert yards to meters on a one to one basis (and you get a little under 10% increase in range free of charge)

Explosive Type	Ground Zero	General Effect	Maximum Range
Offensive Grenade	1 yard	3 yards	5 yards
Defensive Grenade	2 yards	6 yards	10 yards
40mm Grenade	2 yards	6 yards	10 yards
Mortar Shell	3 yards	8 yards	15 yards
Light Artillery/ Light Bomb	5 yards	10 yards	20 yards
Heavy Artillery/ Medium Bomb	10 yards	25 yards	50 yards
Heavy Bomb	20 yards	50 yards	100 yards
Fuel-Air Explosive Bomb	150 yards	300 yards	700 yards
Light SAM or Air to Air Missile	1 yard	2 yards	5 yards
Large SAM or Air to Air Missile	5 yards	10 yards	15 yards
Light Anti-Tank Rocket*	1 yard	2 yards	5 yards
Medium Anti-Tank Rocket*	1 yard	5 yards	10 yards
Heavy Anti-Tank Rocket*	1 yard	10 yards	20 yards

* Indicates a Shaped-Charge weapon; Shaped-Charge effect only on Ground Zero. See p. 00 for details.

tion and Shockwave damage. Simple concussive devices will do less damage than fragmentary ones. Damage will have three areas of effect: Ground Zero (very close to the explosion), General Effect (the area of most widespread damage after Ground Zero), and the Maximum Range (the area after which the explosion ceases to inflict significant damage). The ranges of most common explosives is listed on p. 00. These measures are not strictly scientific and accurate, but any more detail will bog most games down needlessly; some Chroniclers may wish to simplify matters by simply using the General Effect Damage.

Another form of explosive damage is that

used in rockets and anti-tank weapons: these weapons use the Shaped-Charge Effect to better penetrate armor. See the box on p. 80 for more information.

Armor

Since the time the first caveman decided to wear an extra fur around him to ward his body from a sabertooth's claws, people have been trying to use all kinds of materials to protect against attack. Heavy cloth, leather, wood, metal, ceramics and plastic have all been used at one time or another to turn spear points or bullets, to cushion blows and to, hopefully, ren-

Explosive Damage Table

Each weapon has three damage numbers; this is the damage the weapon inflict at different ranges. See the Table on p. 00 for more information. If a bomb, shell or grenade explodes in direct contact with the target, Ground Zero damage is doubled against that target. Missiles are assumed to explode in contact to the target; do not modify their damage. Rocket damage degrades quickly with distance: the weapons are meant to destroy specific targets.

Weapon Type	Ground Zero	General Effect	Maximum Range
Offensive Grenade	1 D6 x 4(12)	1D6 x 2(6)	1 D6(3)
Defensive Grenade	1D6x5(15)	1D6 x 4(12)	1 D6 x 2(6)
40mm Grenade	1D6x 5(15)	1D6 x 4(12)	1D6 x 2(6)
Mortar Shell	1D8 x 4(16)	1D8 x 3(16)	1D8 x 2(8)
Light Artillery/ Light Bomb	1 D8 x 6(24)	1 D8 x 4(16)	1D8 x 3(12)
Heavy Artillery/ Medium Bomb	1 D10 x 6(30)	1 D10 x 4(20)	1D10x3(15)
Heavy Bomb	1D10 x 8(40)	1 D10 x 6(30)	1D10x3(15)
Fuel-Air Explosive Bomb	1D10x20(100)	1D10X 10(50)	1D10x5(25)
Light SAM or Air to Air Missile	1 D10 x 6(30)	1D8 x 3(12)	1D6 x 2(3)
Large SAM or Air to Air Missile	1D10 x 10(50)	1 D8 x 5(20)	1D6x4(12)
Light Anti-Tank Rocket*	1 D10x5(25)*	1D6 x 3(9)	1 D4 x 2(4)
Medium Anti-Tank Rocket*	1D10x8(40)	1 D6 x 5(15)	1 D4 x 4(8)
Heavy Anti-Tank Rocket*	1D10X 12(60)	1 D6 x 8(24)	1D4 x 8(16)

* Indicates a Shaped-Charge weapon; Shaped-Charge effect only on Ground Zero. See p. 00 for details.

ler the
wearer
immune
from harm,
the protec-
tion of any
suit has an
armor
value.
Armor
Values are
expressed
just like
damage
rolls, with a
base die
and a
Multiplier.
This repre-
sents the
fact that no
suit armor
offers the
exact same
protection
over every

inch of body. When a character is struck, roll the
base die times the Multiplier, and subtract the
result from the damage number. If the armor
result is greater than or equal to the damage
roll, the character takes no damage. If you'd
rather do away with rolling more dice, use the
fixed number written in parentheses instead.

Encumbrance

One of the problems of wearing heavy armor
is that it slows you down and makes some
things (like being quiet, or reacting quickly to
danger) difficult. These problems are measured
by the Encumbrance Value of Armor. In general,
armor with *Light Encumbrance* will bring about a
penalty of -1 to Speed and any Tasks or Test
requiring silence (like stealth) or fast reaction
time (like most Initiative rolls). *Medium*
Encumbrance gives a penalty of -2 to all those
things, *Heavy Encumbrance* raises it to -3 and
Extra Heavy Encumbrance gives a penalty of -5.

Optional: Characters with high Strength can
reduce Encumbrance penalties (except penalties
on tasks requiring being silent). Every level of
Strength past 3 reduces all other penalties by 1;

Body Armor

Listed below are some types of ancient and modern body armor. Ancient armor
(like chain mail and plate armor) is very rare outside events of the Society of
Creative Anachronism.

Armor Type	Armor Value	Encumbrance
Cloth Armor	1D4-1 (1)	None
Leather Jacket	1D4 (2)	None
Leather Armor	1 D6 (3)	Light
Chain Mail	1 D6 x 2 (6)	Medium
Plate and Mail	1D8 x 2 (8)	Heavy
Plate Armor	1D8 X 3 (12)	Extra Heavy
Light Kevlar Vest	1D6 X 2 (6)	None
Medium Kevlar Vest	1D8 x 2 (8)	Light
Heavy Vest	1 D8 x 3 (12)	Medium
Riot Gear	1D8 X 2 (8)	Medium
Riot Helmet	1D6 x 3 (9)	Light
Hard Kevlar Inserts	1 D8 x 5 (20)	Heavy
Mark 3 Combat Armor:	1D10x5(25)	Heavy
AOR Battle Dress	1D8 x 6(24)	Heavy
Mark 3 Helmet	1D8 x 3(12)	(Head Only)
AOR Helmet	1D8 x 3(12)	(Head Only)
AOR Helmet Faceplate	1D6 x 2(6)	(Face Only)

thus, a character with a Strength of 5 would
have no Speed or Initiative penalties while
wearing Light or Medium Encumbrance armor.

The Effects of Injury

Damage in the Unisystem is measured in Life
Points, a measure of the character's vitality and
toughness. As Life Points are depleted, the abili-
ty of the character to continue moving and per-
forming actions is impaired, and if they are
reduced to below 0, the victim will be incapaci-
tated and in danger of dying.

When describing a person's injuries, the
Chronicler is encouraged to go beyond the num-
bers and use creativity. As a rule of thumb, a
wound inflicting less than 2 points is superficial
- a cut or a bruise. One doing 3 to 5 is deep but
not life threatening, except against weak or sick-
ly individuals. A wound doing 6 to 10 points is
severe: a stab in the stomach, a deep cut in an
arm or leg that will cause massive hemorrhage,
cracked or broken bones. 11 to 15-point
wounds are life-threatening: a chest wound, a
head injury, damage to a major organ or a
wound that will cripple a limb.

A character reduced to less than 5 Life Points will be severely hurt; it will be difficult to do anything unless the character is driven by adrenaline into pushing himself. Most tasks will be at a -1 to -5 penalty due to pain and shock.

At 0 points or below, the character will be knocked down, stunned and semi-conscious; a Willpower and Constitution Test is necessary to get back on his feet, but the penalty is equal to the amount he is reduced to below 0. When reaching -10 points or worse, there is a chance the character will die (see Survival Tests, below).

Poisons

Poisons are foreign substances that, when introduced in a person's body, cause harm, injury or death. They include manufactured chemicals, or substances secreted or injected by animals or supernatural creatures. In the real world, some poisons can kill a person instantly, while others have varying degrees of lethality. Used as a weapon, poison is often unreliable and can be as dangerous to the wielder as to the intended victim.

In game terms, poisons all have a Strength rating. This Strength determines how much damage the poison inflicts, or how difficult it is to resist its effects. The Strength rating of a poison depends on the type of toxin. There are three basic kinds of poisons: corrosive, irritant and narcotic (also known as nerve poisons). Each kind has its own characteristics.

Corrosive poisons include a number of acids, and several common cleaning fluids. They can burn the skin directly, inflicting a number of points of damage (see the table on p. 82) every

turn the person is exposed (being splashed with the liquid means the victim is exposed until the corrosive is washed off with water). If ingested they can do as much damage until the poison's neutralized with an antidote, or ejected by vomiting.

Irritants include such poisons as arsenic; they are more slow-acting, and require multiple doses. Instead of direct damage, the poison slowly drains Life Points, typically one point per every two Strength levels of the poison, for every dose ingested (if the poison has a Strength rating of 1, damage occurs after two doses). This Life Point damage can only be healed if the poison is purged from the system. When the victim's Life Points are reduced to 0, the victim may die (a Survival Test, using the victim's basic - not depleted - Constitution, will postpone death).

Narcotic, or nerve poisons include curare, chloroform and strychnine. They directly depress the victim's nervous system and such functions as breathing. They can induce unconsciousness, paralysis, or death. These poisons do not inflict damage directly. Instead, they use their Strength rating in a Resisted Test (see p. 66), opposed by the Constitution of the victim, the poison's Strength wins the contest, the victim suffers the poison's specific effects. Typically they include drowsiness or unconsciousness (for weak narcotics), or heart or respiratory arrest (resulting in death by suffocation unless first aid or medical care are immediately provided).

Supernatural Healing and Poisons

Any Gifted power that heals injuries can undo the damage inflicted by corrosive and irritant poisons. If the poison is still in the victim's system, it must be removed or the damage or effect will continue to work on the victim. Mindheal can cause the body of the victim to expel the poison; this requires a Resisted Task using Mindheal and the Willpower of the Seer against a Simple Strength Test using the poison's Rating. The Touch of Healing Miracle (see p. 148) will undo the effect: of any poison and remove them from the body of the victim, at the cost of 10

Poison Damage

Corrosive Poisons Inflict Damage When ingested or exposed against the skin. The Strength rating of the poison determines the damage, as shown below:

Poison Strength Rating	Damage
1	1 point
2	1D4(2)
3	1D6(3)
4	1D8(4)
5	1D10(5)
6	1D6 x 2(6)

Other Sources of Injury

Sometimes, you can get hurt by circumstances or accidents. Among these dangers are the following:

Drowning and Suffocation: Without preparation, a human being can hold his breath for 1 and a half minutes plus $1D10 (5) \times \text{Constitution}$ seconds. After that, the person will pass out and die in a couple of minutes.

Falls: A falling human being takes $1D6 (3)$ points of damage for every yard or meter he falls down, to a maximum of $1D6 (3) \times 50$ (terminal velocity). Note that a few people have survived

falls from thousands of feet. This damage is usually in the form of bruises and broken bones.

Fire: Being exposed to fire inflicts $1D4(2)$ points of damage per turn. Being engulfed in fire does $1D6(3)$ points of damage every turn. A character who takes more than 5 points of damage has experienced severe second-degree burns or one third-degree; one who suffers over 15 points of damage has second and third-degree burns over a large area of his body; this may cause permanent or crippling injuries.

Essence points.

Survival Tests

When a character has been reduced to negative 10 Life Points, he may be killed instantly. To see if this happens, the character needs to make a Survival Test. Survival Tests are a special form of Attribute Test, using Willpower and Constitution, at a penalty of -1 for every 10 points below 0 (rounded down).

This Survival Test only determines whether or not the character drops dead right then and there. Passing the test does not mean the character is out of the woods. Unless medical attention is available, the character may still die in a few minutes. Every minute that is spent without receiving medical help, a new Survival Test is required, at a cumulative -1 penalty. Characters with First Aid will stabilize the victim with a successful Task roll or draw; characters without First Aid or other medical skills can try to help by bandaging any visible wounds; whether this works under the circumstances is left up to the Chronicler.

Example: Tiny Tim (36 Life Points) is hit by a burst of submachinegun fire. After all damage is accounted for, he is at -24 points. His Constitution is 5, and his Willpower is 3, for a base roll of 8; this is reduced by -2 because he is at over 20 points below 0, for a total of 6. He needs to roll a 3 or higher on a D10 for the required total of 9. He rolls a 6 (for a total result of 12), and survives. To stay conscious, however, Tiny Tim needs to make a similar Test, but at a -24 penalty! Not surprisingly, he fails and collapses, unconscious. Every minute, he needs to

roll again, first at a -3 penalty (the original -2 plus an additional -1), then at -4, and so on, until he finally dies or he receives medical help.

Resuscitation

Even if the character is dying, or his heart has just stopped, modern medicine and ancient magick can try to bring the victim over the threshold of death. Once again, common sense is the rule. A multiple gunshot victim might survive if no major brain damage was inflicted, but somebody who was decapitated, or burned to a crisp in a gasoline explosion is not likely to benefit from any help in this world. A character who fails a Survival Test can be brought to life if extensive medical help (like that available in a modern Emergency Room) is made available within $\text{Constitution} \times 2$ minutes; if paramedics are available, this length of time may be extended by an additional minute for each level of success the paramedic gets on a First Aid Task.

The medical team in the hospital will try to revive the patient (anybody who's watched *ER* knows the drill). The doctor in charge performs a Medicine Task (typical doctors at an Emergency Room have a Skill of 4 and an Intelligence of 3); each level of success on the Task gives the patient a +1 bonus on his new Survival Test. The advanced life-saving techniques of the hospital add an additional +3 bonus. The recently dead character now must pass a new Survival Test, at a penalty of -1 for every 5 points he is below 0, plus all the bonuses described above. If he passes the Test, he lives. Otherwise, he Passes On.



Regaining life Points

So you got injured but survived. What next? The human body can recover from an amazing amount of damage, but, movie and fiction claims to the contrary, people who get shot of stabbed cannot just get up and keep moving - not without risking death. Also, a few bandages and blood transfusions will not restore somebody to full health immediately. In the world of **Armageddon**, only powerful magic or miracles can do that. The Chronicler can modify the guidelines below to make his world as "Hollywood" or realistic as she likes, of course. The default rules, however, assume that getting injured is a Bad Thing. Avoiding injury is much safer than betting a character's Life Points against the tender mercies of guns and knives.

Medical Healing

A First Aid and Intelligence task restore 1 Life Point per Success Level obtained. Performing First Aid on yourself is possible, but at -2. One task can be allowed for each wound inflicted (this requires players to keep track of how many wounds their characters suffered in addition to Life Point depletion - if the bookkeeping slows you down, ditch it).

A character can recover 1 point per Constitution level per day of rest under medical care until reaching 0 points or higher, and then a fixed 2 Life Points per day. In the example above, Tiny Tim would recover 5 points per day in a hospital until reaching 0 Life Points (this would take 5 days of intensive care) and then he would have to spend another 18 days in bed to fully recover, for almost a month of bed rest (and that only because he has such a high Constitution; a normal person reduced to -24 points, provided he survived at all, would spend over a month in the hospital).

Without medical care, a character injured below 0 points risk dying from complications such as infection and blood loss, but they may manage to survive and eventually heal. While recovering without medical care, a character must pass a Willpower and Constitution Test; he

recovers 1 Life Point per level of success (to a maximum of 1 Life Point per Constitution Level). If he fails the test, he loses 1 Life Point instead!

Supernatural Healing

A number of Gifted abilities can regenerate tissue, reduce shock and even bring a character back from the threshold of death. Those powers are fully described Chapter Three. Also, some supernatural beings recover from damage faster than human: their healing rates are listed below.

Humans: Up to 1 Life Point per Constitution level *everyday* until going up to 0 Life Points, and a flat 2 points per day thereafter. A number of Gifted powers can accelerate this healing rate.

Inheritors: 1 Life Point per Constitution and Willpower level, every minute.

True Immortals: 1 Life Point per Constitution level, every 5 seconds (one combat turn).

Nephelim: 5 Life Point every 5 seconds.

Avatars: 1 Life Point per Willpower level, every 5 seconds.

Kerubim and Qliphontm: Must spend Essence to heal, regaining 1 D6(3) Life Points per Essence point spent.

Seraphim of all Types: Must spend Essence to heal, regaining 1D10(5) Life points per Essence point spent.

Endurance Point Loss

Endurance Points measure the character's vitality and ability to resist fatigue after extended exertions. Typically, very hard labor (running at top speed while carrying a sack of rocks strapped to your back) will drain a character at a rate of 1D4 (2) Endurance Points per minute. Hard work (running a marathon) drains Endurance at the rate of 1 point every ten minutes. Bursts of frenzied activity, like very intensive hand to hand combat, drains Endurance at a higher rate, as much as 1 D4(2) points in one turn. Some non-lethal attacks do Endurance "damage." This damage is typically inflicted in friendly tavern brawls, boxing matches, and similar situations. Only blunt weapons (including fists) can be used in this manner; knives, bullets, energy attacks and similar always do life-threatening damage. Some magical or psionic attacks also inflict Endurance Point damage rather than

actual physical damage.

At 5 Endurance Points or less, the character will feel groggy and dizzy; all actions will be at a -2 penalty. If a character's Endurance is reduced to 0 or below for any reasons, he will be in danger of falling unconscious. A Constitution and Willpower Test is necessary to remain on his feet, at a -1 penalty for every 5 points below 0 the character is at. This Test is repeated every turn - eventually, the character will fall unconscious.

Regaining Endurance Points: Human characters recover 1 Endurance Point per Constitution level per half hour of sleep, or half that amount (rounded up) same amount every hour of rest. Endurance Points lost for lack of sleep can only be regained by sleeping (lose 3 Endurance Points per missed hour of sleep, using a minimum requirement of 5 hours). For other characters, see the table below.

Endurance Recovery Rates

Humans: 1 Endurance Point per Constitution level per half hour of sleep, or the same amount for every hour of rest.

True immortals: 2 Endurance Points per Constitution level per half hour of sleep, or the same amount for every hour of rest.

Inheritors and Nephelim: 1 Endurance point per Constitution level every minute of rest or sleep, or the same amount every hour, active or otherwise. They need to sleep, but only for brief lengths of time.

Kerublm and Qliphonim: 1 Endurance point per Constitution and Willpower level every minute of rest or sleep, or the same amount every hour, active or otherwise. They need to sleep, but only for brief lengths of time.

Seraphim of all Types and Avatars: Do not lose Endurance normally.

Essence Point Loss

Most of time, the only characters who need to worry about Essence losses are magicians and other Gifted. Severe emotional stress and some supernatural attacks will drain the Essence of Mundanes as well, however. Shock, terror and anger may also release Essence.

When a character is overwhelmed by fear, anger or some extreme emotion, the character

may lose Essence points. As long as Essence is not reduced below 0, there will be no major consequences; a character reduced to half of his Essence will feel numb, however, and it will be hard to elicit any strong emotional reactions from him. Also, mental Tasks are performed at a -1 penalty until the Essence pool is restored to half capacity.

When the Essence pool is seriously depleted, however, things become more serious. At 1 or 0 Essence, the victim will fall into a deep depression; all Tasks and Tests will be at a -3 penalty, and the person will find it difficult to concentrate or care about anything. If Essence is reduced to below 0, the victim must pass a Difficult Willpower Test, at -1 for every 5 Essence points below 0. If he fails, he will either lose one level in one mental attribute (the Chronicler may let the player choose which one), or he may gain a Mental Drawback worth at least two points.

If Essence is reduced to -30 Essence or below, the character must also pass a Survival Test (see p. 119), with a -1 penalty for every 10 points below -30. Characters killed by Essence drain will have no apparent cause of death; medical science will be at a loss to diagnose anything more than "heart failure" (meaning in this case that the heart simply stopped).

Essence Recovery-Rates

The rate of Essence recovery varies widely among the different orders of being in the world of Armageddon.

Mundane Humans: 1 Essence Point per Willpower level, every hour.

Humans with Essence Channeling: 1 Essence Point per Channeling level (see p. 00), every minute.

Inheritors: 1 Essence Point, plus any levels of Essence Channeling (if any), per minute.

True Immortals and Nephelim: 1 Essence Points per Willpower level every minute.

Kerubim and Qliphonim: 1 Essence Points per level of Willpower and Constitution, every minute.

Avatars: 2 Essence points per Willpower level, every minute.

Seraphim of all Types: 1 Essence Points per

level of Willpower and Constitution, every minute.

Breaking Things: Damage and Inanimated Objects

Weapons and accidents don't just hurt people. Objects and vehicles are also subject to destruction and loss. Instead of Life Points, objects have a Damage Point Pool. This pool determines how much an object can endure before it can no longer perform its intended function. A drinking glass, for example, can only take 1 or 2 Damage Points before it shatters. A metal safe, on the other hand, can take a great deal of punishment before somebody can force it open. Certain objects are also resistant to damage;

Object	Armor Value	Damage Points
Plywood Door	1 D4(2)	4/12
Door Lock	1 D6(3)	10
Plywood Wall	1 D6(3)	6/20
Wooden Door	1 D6(3)	6/25
Plaster Wall	1 D4(2)	15/20
Brick Wall	1D6 x 3(9)	25/50
Concrete Wall	1 D6 x 5(15)	30/70
Heavy Conc.Wall	1 D6 x 8(24)	50/150
Bunker Wall	1 D8 x 8(32)	100/300

they have an Armor Value, that works just like the one for armor (see above). Some common objects and the damage they can withstand before becoming useless are listed below. The walls and other structures described in the table have two separate damages; one is how much damage it takes to make a small hole on them (like a bullet, for example), which indicates how much protection the walls will provide against small arms fire (always a useful thing to know in a combat); a bullet striking the wall needs to overcome the Armor Value and the Damage Points of the first entry before penetrating and injuring anything or anybody behind it. The other reflects how much damage is needed to break down a man-sized hole on the wall (use-

ful for super-strong characters who don't want to bother using a door or window).

Diceless Roleplaying

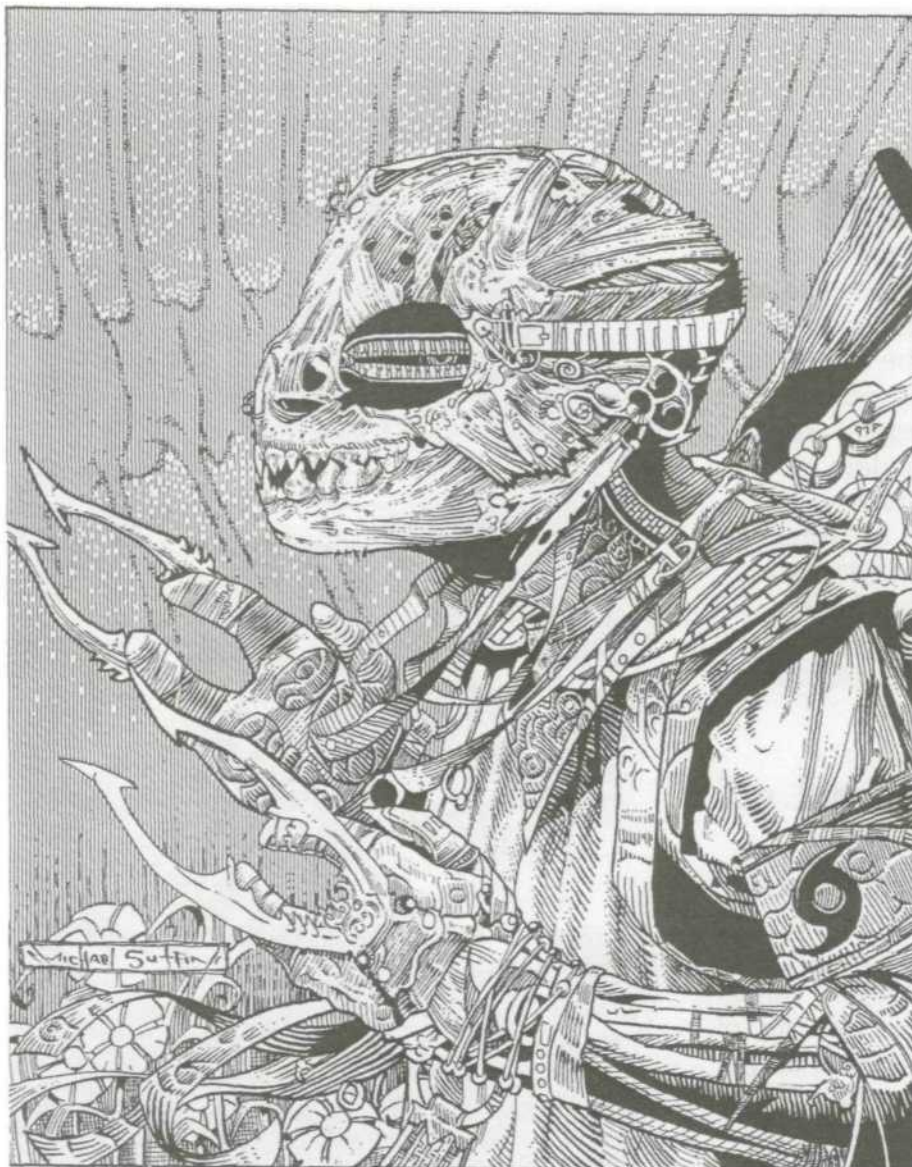
The base or "default" method of resolving actions in the Unisystem is through the use of dice. Not everyone likes dice - a few people actively hate them. Some dislike the idea of letting pure chance determine the outcome of a story; others would like a more elegant way to simulate randomness. To accommodate as many different playing styles as possible, we have designed the Unisystem to be usable in several different ways. In addition to the dice-based rules, the game can be played in two other ways, one using regular playing cards instead of dice, and the other eliminating randomness altogether.

Using Cards instead of Dice

For gamers who want to keep randomness when determining results, cards can be used instead of dice. Each player should start the game with a standard deck of 54 playing cards. The cards should be shuffled at the beginning of each game. When determining an action, draw a card instead of rolling dice. Aces are treated as 1's. Numbered cards use their value. If you draw a face card, consider the result to be a "5*" and draw again: if the next card is another face card, add the "5" to the value of the new card; otherwise, the draw result is considered to be a 5. If an Ace is drawn, use the Rule of 1. If a natural 10 (but not two face cards) is drawn, use the Rule of 10 (see p. 67).

Jokers can be discarded, or, if the Chronicler wants to add an element of unexpectedness, can be used as follows. If a Joker is drawn, draw another card; if the new card is black, a mishap has occurred. The attempted task fails in some unexpected and spectacular way, left to the Chronicler's imagination. If the card is red, the action is automatically successful, usually owing to luck rather than skill (again, the Chronicler can use his imagination to give the result an interesting and creative meaning).





Those are the only differences in the basic game. All the other rules described above apply normally. Damage rolls are either replaced with the set damage numbers written in parentheses, or you may want to keep dice for that part of the game.

Cards

Instead of using dice, standard playing cards can be used. Each player should have a deck of 54 cards (the standard deck plus two jokers). The cards should be shuffled at the beginning of every game, and after every card has been used in the course of a game. The player draws from the top of the deck for task resolution. Cards are not drawn to determine damage; instead, use the fixed damage rules, or use dice for damage

purposes only.

In the Unisystem, numbered cards range from 1 (the ace) to 10. "Face" or "court" cards (King Queen and Jack) are considered to be a special case; when a face card is drawn, draw again; if the new card is also a face card, the result is considered to be a 10; a number card is drawn, the result is considered to be a 5.

Optional Card Rule: Player-Controlled Outcomes

With card-based gaming, the Chronicler can allow the players to have more control as to their "luck" when performing tasks. This is a special sub-system that can only be used with cards.

At the beginning of the game, each player draws a "hand" of six cards from the deck. The player then decides which card he will use on a given task. If the player thinks the task is important and he really wants to succeed at it, he could play the best card in his hand. The player, however, cannot draw new cards until his entire hand is "dealt."

Unless the player's hand is downright terrible, she will be able to choose which tasks she will succeed at, simply by using her highest-value cards on a specific task. Of course, if the player uses up her best cards too quickly, she may be stuck with a couple of aces at a critical point of the story!

When the Rule of 10 and Rule of 1 (see p. 67) are used, the card following the result of 10 or will be drawn from the deck, not the hand. Also if the player initiates an action, the Chronicler may require him to draw from the deck; this eliminates instances of players using up low cards in meaningless actions.

This sub-system is particularly appropriate for dramatic moments; nobody wants to "fumble" when trying to cast the invocation that might

decide the fate of an entire city, for example. It also encourages strategic thinking; the player must decide when to play his best cards, and when to accept failure in good grace. By taking into account the needs of the story, the player may decide his character should fail at certain points, adding to the drama and tension of the game.

This optional rule requires that the players spend some time on deciding what cards to use on a given situation - they still do not know how difficult the situation may be, or what the opposition may draw against them. It will usually help move the story along in a dramatically appropriate way, as the player character will tend to have "good luck" when the story calls for it more often than not. On the other hand, this method will cut on the uncertainty of the moment, and may end up having the players think more about strategy than the flow of the story.

Story-Driven Roleplaying

For Chroniclers and players who want to avoid the complexity of random rolls or card drawing, the Unisystem can be used as a story-driven system, with the Chronicler assigning outcomes dependent on the flow of the story and the basic abilities of the player. The standard character creation system outlined in Chapter One are still used, but the resolution system is a lot more straightforward and roleplaying-based. Instead of using dice or cards to determine success or failure, the Chronicler is the final judge as to how an action turned out.

When two characters (either two Cast Members or a Cast Member and a Supporting Cast character) are using skills against each other (see Resisted Tasks on p. 66), the higher combination of attribute and skill wins. Only if special circumstances or tactics were being used would things hang in the balance. A weaker fighter who expresses he is going on the defensive and being extra careful may last for a while before being defeated by his stronger enemy. A player who comes up with a good "dirty trick" or tactic may prevail against superior odds. Again, it is description, narrative skills and the Chronicler's judgment that are the final determi-

nants of most outcomes.

In diceless roleplaying, the burden lies on the storytelling abilities of the Chronicler and the player. The Chronicler has to describe the actions and results, and will determine the outcome of most actions by either assigning a Difficulty Number and then comparing it with the character's traits, or simply deciding if the player's roleplaying and imagination are convincing enough to deserve success.

Task Resolution

Instead of the system described above, Story-Driven games use a straight number comparison. If the character's appropriate Attributes and Skills are equal or greater than the Difficulty Number (see the table below), the task or test is successful. The Chronicler determines what the Difficulty Number is. This determination is based on the Chronicler's judgment, the needs of the story, and how detailed and creative the player is in describing her character's action. If the roleplaying part of the action is good enough, the numbers involved should not be a factor, and the action should be successful automatically.

Example #1: Bertha the Witch, played by Holly, wants to Smooth-Talk a security guard into letting her sneak into a private party. Holly gives a great performance as Bertha, vamping it up and weaving a wild but believable tale. The Chronicler does not bother comparing numbers or results, but simply plays the guard, who, with a stunned smile on his face, lets her pass.

Example #2: Boris, Ex-KGB agent now serving the Sentinels, played by Louise, is trying to break into a safe where some important documents are kept. The Chronicler decides that this is a Difficult Task, and asks Louise to tell him what Boris' combined Dexterity and Lock Picking skill are. Boris' Dexterity is a 4; his Lock Picking is a 5. The total of 9 is better than what is required for a Difficult task (usually a 6 to 8), so Boris is successful.

Diceless Difficulty Numbers Table

Difficulty Number	Type of Task
1-2	Easy
3-5	Challenging
6-8	Difficult

9-10	Very Difficult
11-12	Heroic
13-15	Impossible

Diceless Haulage

For the most part, diceless games tend to have less combat, or less emphasis in combat, than die-based games. This is an area where the Chronicler's judgment as to the needs of the story will be important, but where the player's roleplaying will be important. If characters start taking needless chances because the players trust the Chronicler will keep them alive, some hard lessons may be necessary.

In the Diceless version of the Unisystem, damage can be applied using the fixed values (listed in parentheses in all weapon or damage description), or, if math is not the gaming group's cup of tea, use the following guidelines.

Damage can be adjusted to suit the dramatic needs of the game. If the characters are fleeing a gang of thugs and are being shot at, maybe one or two of them could be grazed by a near miss, inflicting a painful scratch.

A light wound is a cut on a limb, a nasty bruise, a cracked rib. It is not immediately incapacitating, but will require medical or supernatural help or it may worsen in time. Most weapons that inflict an average of less than 10 points of damage under the normal rules will inflict light wounds.

A serious wound can do a number of things: it can drop the target immediately (the victim may or may not survive the ordeal) or it can kill the victim if no medical help is available (the victim may still continue to move and act for several minutes or even hours, however). Being shot or stabbed in the torso area is the most common serious wound. The Chronicler decides if the victim falls down, either as the result of physical shock, or just the psychological realization that he has been injured, or whether the victim carries on with his actions (people have been known to continue fighting or running even after sustaining mortal wounds). As a rule of thumb, any weapon whose average damage is 10-20 points will inflict serious wounds on a direct hit.

Consider most handguns, regardless of their average damage, to inflict serious wounds if

they hit somebody in the torso area. Even small caliber bullets can do a lot of damage by bouncing inside the victim's body.

A critical wound instantly drops the victim, and in probability causes an instant kill. Critical wounds include beheading, a large caliber bullet hit to the head, being cut in half by a train, and similar mass trauma.

Experience

People change with time. In the Unisystem, characters live and learn and become more experienced as they participate in the stories created in the course of the game. After several such stories, the character will be more skilled and powerful than he was when he began. This is also borne out in fiction: the Hobbits from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy were much tougher, stronger and experienced at the end of their quest, as shown in the last book.

This character improvement is represented in the Unisystem by Experience Points. Experience Points are awarded to each player at the end of every gaming session. The better the game and the player's performance were, the more points should be awarded. With these points, the players can improve their character's Attributes, Skills and other elements.

This experience point system is used for all Unisystem games, both dice-driven or diceless.

Awarding Experience

In the Unisystem, experience is awarded with experience points that work just like the points used during the creation of the character. These points can be used to improve skills, attributes and metaphysics (see below). At the end of each roleplaying session, the Chronicler will award each player with experience points. Outlined below are some guidelines as to how many points should be awarded on a playing session: average awards will range from 2 to 6 points, with the higher awards going the best roleplayers.

For Being There: All characters who participated in the game session receive 1 character point.

Good Roleplaying: 1 point.

For Advancing the Storyline While Remaining in Character: 1 to 3 points. This awards players

whose roleplaying and character actions helped develop the story.

For Heroic Roleplaying: 1 to 3 points. Given to players whose characters remained true to themselves even when it meant they would suffer for it. The heroic type who risks his life for others, or even the coward who runs or surrenders when the wise course would be to fight are good examples of this.

Ingenuity Award: 1 to 3 points. Given to players who used impressive and unexpected tactics and problem-solving to deal with a plot device. This, however, only applies if the devious plan or tactics were true to the character (not the player). If the village idiot suddenly starts having spurts of Machiavellian brilliance for no good reason, then no award should be given.

Improving Characters With Experience

So what do you do with all these Experience Points? They work much like the character points you used to create your character (see Chapter One: Roles); you can use these points to raise your Attribute and Skill levels, to acquire new Qualities or reduce or eliminate your Drawbacks, or to increase your paranormal abilities. The cost of these improvements is different from the cost of acquiring them during character creation, however. After you defined your char-

acter, it is a lot harder to advance in some areas. To determine how to improve your characteristics, refer to the following table.

Reasons For Improvement

Just having enough experience points to raise a characteristic is not enough. There must also be an explanation of why the character improved in this or that area, and usually those reasons are determined in the course of the game. If the character used a skill or attribute repeatedly in the previous few game sessions, then it would make sense for that skill or attribute to get better through practice. To learn a brand-new skill, the character must have spent some time and effort learning that skill before being allowed to spend the points to acquire it. To acquire a Quality or eliminate a Drawback, there must have been a series of events or circumstances that make it sensible for the new characteristic to appear in the character.

Saving Experience Points

The player does not have to spend all earned Experience Points right away. He can elect to save them for a later date, perhaps waiting to have enough points to raise a characteristic.

Experience Point Table

Characteristic	Experience Point Cost
Raising an Attribute	5 points per level until level 5; 10 points per level thereafter.
Raising an Existing Skill	2 points per level until level 5; 4 points per level thereafter.
Special Skills (see p. 00)	5 points per level until level 5; 8 points per level thereafter.
Buying a New Skill	6 points for level 1; other levels purchased as detailed above.*
Buying a Quality	Same cost as per character creation.*
Buying Off a Drawback	Pay off the original value of the Drawback.*
New Invocations	10 points for the first level
Previously Known Invocations	5 points per level until level 5; 8 points per level thereafter.
Seer Powers (Strength)	6 points per level until level 5; 10 points per level thereafter.
Seer Powers (Art)	5 points per level until level 5; 8 points per level thereafter.
Inspired Miracles	10 points per new Miracle.
All Other Supernatural Powers (Theophanies, Aspects, etc.)	Double the cost at character creation.

* Indicates an improvement that requires a story-based reason before it can be purchased. The player must come up with a reason for getting the improvement; this may require actions performed during play.



Chapter Chapter Three

Cosmologies

Armageddon is a world of magic and supernatural beings. Occult forces are as much of a threat as the rampaging armies and economic chaos of the mundane side of the War. This chapter describes the metaphysical elements of the game, from the role of humans to the secrets of the so-called greater beings.

Ait Understanding of Our World

by Breanne Cassidy

(The following excerpts are from the Watchers'' files, written by Breanne Cassidy, a Nephelim member, in 1998. Copies are handed over to new members, to give them an understanding of the strange new world they have entered.)

If you are reading this, I feel sorry for you. Not only are you about to be immersed in a sea of overwrought prose (this writer knows her limitations, but this task has been given to her by people who still prefer to end every chapter with "Those who have ears, listen"), but, if you let it be known that you have read this, there are people out there that will try to kill you. Hopefully, that will get your attention. Don't be spreading this stuff around, or somebody will put a bullet in your head, and if that doesn't work, they will strap you to two thousand pounds of explosives and see if that does the Job.

The material in these pages is what we hold to be the Truth. I got the Job because I was born in this century, and most of our recruits are as young

or, more likely, younger, and any piece of text littered with 'verily' or 'begats' is going to produce glazed-over eyes and precious little understanding. This is only a summary, and a very biased summary at that. The other thing I'm trying to do, and I have the backing of Shemizael, my boss, is to make you understand that nobody out there has the whole picture. Not us, not the Heavenly Hosts or their arch-rivals (or evil twins) the Infernal Legion, not the Pagans, not the Buddhists or Shinto or anybody else. Each of us has a piece of the truth, in some cases such a small and distorted piece that a complete fabrication would be more useful. I think the Watchers have a bigger piece than most — some of our founding members were present at events that occurred before our species was born — but don't make the mistake that our way is The Way. Some of the stuff in these pages may be mistaken or even outright false, so take it all with a grain of Salt. If you become too self-righteous, next time you look in the mirror you may find out that there is no difference between you and your enemies.

In the Beginning...

Most religions have this part right. In the Beginning, there was Nothing, or, more accurately, Very Little. The Creator, whoever She/He/It may be — not even the oldest angels really know much about the One — got things

rolling, started the Big Bang or the Cosmic Egg or whatever you may want to call it. Things were rather more complex than most religions claim, of course — the Universe doesn't get built in one day, or seven — except that, to the One, maybe it all happened in one day, or seven; His/Her/its perspective is not necessarily like our own.

The Creator was not alone in the Universe for long. The oldest beings in the Universe were the Sephyr, who were created just before Creation to serve as tools and helpers. Think of them as cosmic construction workers, with God as the engineer and architect. They were the Builders. Next in line was another order of being, creatures who were born the moment the Universe was born. They were the Naturas, the Elementals. Now, when I call the Sephyr and the Naturas "beings" and "creatures," I might be deluding you into thinking they were anything like us. They were to us what we are to viruses — and to the Creator, they were what they are to us. They were — for all I know, they still are — beyond our comprehension. In most of the ways that matter to us, they weren't even truly alive. Their actions, their very thoughts, were so slow as to be non-existent to creatures like us, who think of centuries as a significant measure of time.

In many ways, these entities were more crude and primitive than a virus. Their perspective was huge and dispersed. These creatures' thought patterns were on stellar time frames — a million years were like an eyeblink to them. Cosmic events often came and went before they even became aware of them, let alone formulate a plan to deal with them. The Sephyr and the Naturas were vastly powerful, however: they could open and close black holes and trigger supernovas by the force of their wills. When they fought — and the Sephyr and the Naturas fought

each other and among themselves quite often back then — entire galaxies were obliterated. These beings existed on levels of reality that we cannot understand. They were god-like, but they weren't God.

Soon after Creation, a third order of beings entered the stage. Unlike the Sephyr, they were not made by the Creator, and unlike the Naturas, they were not native to this reality. They were the Outsiders, beings from beyond, strangers whose mere presence caused destruction and twisted the laws of nature. According to some traditions, the Creator It/Him/Herself had to step in and stop some of the nastier Outsiders from utterly wrecking the universe. Others fought the Sephyr and the Naturas almost to a standstill before they were finally pushed back. More Outsiders continued to appear, even to this day. They represent the greatest threat to all of us, because their goal is to destroy our reality or at least transform it into something of their own making.

Billions of years went by. Life, true life as we know it, started to evolve. Many among the Sephyr and the Naturas became irresistibly attracted to these living beings. Wherever life appeared, these entities were pulled towards it like moths to a candle. And wherever they interacted with life, both the Sephyr and the Naturas changed radically. They became smaller and weaker on an absolute sense, but their perspective changed. Instead of thinking of millions of years as mere instants, they narrowed their focus, first to hundreds of thousands of years, then to mere tens of thousands. When the first sapient beings appeared, this time perception slowed to decades and centuries. With this concentration came a diminishment in power: no longer could these beings send galaxies careening against each other, although their abilities were still mind-boggling

Their shapes also changed, imitating the forms of these lesser but so complex new beings. On Earth, when the first species evolved and develop sapience, the ancestors of many beings of mythology came into being.

The Sephyrs became beings like the Seraphim and the Titans. The Seraphim are the beings we know as angels (and, for that matter, demons); they were the heralds and enforcers of the Creator. The Titans (just one of their many names) were the cosmic equivalent of construction workers, descendants of the Sephyr who helped put together the Universe. They became the beings most ancient cultures worshipped as gods. The Naturas evolved into the Dragons (who appeared sometime during the age of dinosaurs) and the Fey and Sylvan races, the Elves, Satyrs and Dryads of myth and legend. They rarely claimed worship from mortals, but they sought to live among them. The lesser versions of both the Sephyr and the Naturas became small, weak, and sometimes stupid or even mindless spirits, the elementals, kami or Loa of animistic cultures.

When the Sephyr evolved into complex beings, they re-established contact with the Creator. They were given a new missions to protect life in the Universe, especially the species that had evolved sentience, for they were on the path of becoming beings like God. Humans and similar species had been indeed created in "God's image," and will (or rather, may) eventually evolve into godhood. Evolution is not over; humans have a long way to go. Humans and all sapient species are the heirs of God. The Sephyr are meant to be our the caretakers.

Some Sephyr did not take the news well. The notion that those primitive species would one day become beings greater than themselves came as a shock to them. Not surprisingly, many Sephyr had become quite arrogant.





Even after their transformation, they were vastly powerful, and some of them had come to think of reality as their own domain. Furthermore, when they became like other living beings, they acquired free will, and some chose to disregard the new orders. The Titans, especially did not like the idea of just handing over Creation and being mere caretakers for the young upstart species. Many Seraphim found the whole idea abhorrent as well.

Mythical Civilisations and the Flood

I haven't been able to squeeze a lot of details about exactly when and how the First Celestial War occurred. Either some of the memories of those times are so painful that even our local angels have blocked them out, or there are some secrets I (and you) are not meant to know. Apparently, the Seraphim were unsure as to how to proceed with their mission to protect all life. Lucifer, the Lord Archangel, wanted to guide Humankind through the path of development. Under his guidance, some Seraphim communicated with early humans, and taught them some of the secrets of reality. Humans proceeded to surprise the angels by discovering such things as magic and technology, trays of controlling and manipulating reality that the Seraphim had not even suspected existed. These early humans built the Elder Kingdoms, powerful city-states that we know by such names as Atlantis and Hyperborea, Ultima Thule and Mu. The legends are but vague echoes of an era in which humans wielded powers far beyond anything we've developed since.

It seems that these civilizations became so powerful so quickly that the Seraphim became scared. Lucifer and his chief advisors, Gabriel and

Shemizael, started having second thoughts about the wisdom of letting humans run rampant. When a civilization in what would one day become Northern Europe made contact with an Outsider, the Seraphim's worst fears were confirmed. Ultima Thule, as this civilization was known, became a bastion of Leviathan, one of the most powerful Outsiders ever to threaten the universe. War raged across Earth, and humans, Seraphim and Titans alike were slaughtered in great numbers by weapons so terrible they make nukes seem puny by comparison. Nukes only destroy flesh and stone; the weapons the Atlanteans and the High Priests of Thule used could destroy souls as well.

Lucifer became enraged. His solution to the problem was to unleash the Flood, an event so terrible that it has lived on in the ancestral memories of every culture on Earth. The Seraphim and the Titans collaborated in the effort. The polar caps were melted and the waters focused into tsunamis of incredible force. All the continents were eradicated by raging waters. All the great civilizations of the time were obliterated. The disaster was so widespread that all non-marine life might have been destroyed, if it hadn't been for the intervention of a few Seraphim and Titans who warned small bands of humans, usually from the most primitive and marginal cultures of the time, of the impending disaster. This event is the fact behind the tales of Noah. Utnapishtim and Deucalion, all of which depict a righteous man and his family (in some cases carrying animals or seeds) surviving the terrible deluge.

The Flood was followed by the last stage of the ice Age. Huge glaciers ground the ancient cities to dust, erasing almost every sign of their existence. Other cities were sunk deep into oceanic trenches, giving rise to the tales of sunken continents.

Humanity was forced to start from zero, their previous culture reduced to old, confused tales of a Golden Age in which our ancestors had been like gods. A handful of people from Atlantis escaped: their powers had made them immortal, and they fled the deluge, some hiding in the most inhospitable regions of the world, others hiding among the survivors, passing on the Blood of Atlantis — the gift of immortality. Their numbers are so few as to be non-existent.

The First Celestial War — The Fail of Lucifer

The Lord Archangel was not content with the destruction of human civilization, however. He wanted to go even further, and eradicate the human race altogether. Let a new species rise and take Mankind's place, Lucifer told the Seraphim. Before taking such a drastic step, however, the Archangels (the most prominent and powerful Seraphim) wanted the Creator's approval. Lucifer claimed that he had it, but when other Seraphim tried to contact God, they got no answer. The Creator, who had become less communicative over time, had fallen completely silent. Lucifer knew this, but had kept this fact from the other angels, fearing their response. There are thousands of opinions and theories about what this silence means, but I won't bore you with them. To most of the Archangels, however, it meant that God did not approve of Lucifer's handling of the situation. They staged a coup d'etat against their leader.

There are many tales about how this was accomplished. The most lurid of those claims that Michele, the warrior archangel (and a female, contrary to popular myth) seduced Lucifer and then struck him down by surprise. After his body was destroyed, he was Cast Down into the Death Realms, a

shadowy level of reality where the souls of deceased humans go between reincarnations or when they are not willing or ready to enter the higher planes of existence. Angels don't die that easily, however, and Lucifer, although banished, was not defeated. He called the Heavenly Host and the Titans to come to his aid. To his shock and dismay, only a minority (something like a third) of the Seraphim answered the calls for the most part, these were Seraphim who had come to despise or envy humans. These loyalists were overwhelmed and also cast down to join Lucifer in captivity.

That's the short version of the story, of course. The war is said to have lasted centuries. While the survivors of the Flood tried to pick up the pieces on Earth, Heaven was wracked by war. Acts of betrayal and savagery were committed by both sides, some so terrible that the hatred they inspired still burns. No war is as brutal as a civil war, and very few angels and demons who fought it have forgotten the atrocities perpetrated by both sides. The Titans, who up to this point had been subservient to the Seraphim, took the opportunity to break free from their overlords. Some Titans took sides on the struggle, but many others carved their own petty kingdoms both on Earth and in other levels of reality.

Eventually, a truce was declared, Lucifer's attempts to break free from the Death Realms had been thwarted, but any more warfare might weaken the very fabric of reality. Lucifer and his loyalists were allowed to establish their own kingdom in the Death Realms, a place where the souls of evil humans would be punished for their sins. Strict rules were established to control the interaction between humans and angels. Contact with humankind was strictly limited: the new leaders of the Host felt that too much interaction had ended up "pol

luting" the Seraphim with humankind's impulsive and emotional character, and had given humans too much power and influence.

The Watchers and the Schism

No new Lord Archangel was appointed to take Lucifer's place. Instead, a Council of Four was instituted. The Seraphim figured that one leader was more likely to screw up than four. The original Four were Gabriel, Shemizael, Michele and Raphael. At first, things went well. The Heavenly Host stayed away from human affairs, and the Titans kept their distance from both humans and angels.

The plight of humans after the Flood was just too much to bear for some Celestials, however. The first to disobey the mandate of the Council was the Titan known as Prometheus. He covertly came down among humans and passed down some of the knowledge that humans had lost. He was followed by a number of Seraphim and Titans who settled in several communities on Earth, living and eventually mating with humans. These hybrids were the Nephelim and Inheritors, who combined the tremendous power of the Greater Beings with the potential for divinity inherent in humans. Both Nephelim and Inheritors became legendary figures, revered heroes or feared monsters. The renegade Seraphim called themselves the Watchers, the self-appointed protectors of Humankind.

The truth about the involvement of the Watchers eventually came out. Prometheus was seized by his fellow Titans and tortured for thousands of years. The renegade Seraphim were also persecuted. Their leader was discovered to be none other than Shemizael, one of the members of the Council.

The conflict that followed was not as drawn out as the First Celestial War, Shemizael and his accomplice, the archangel Azazel, escaped to Earth and disappeared. Many Watchers and their Nephelim progeny were destroyed, but not all. To scour the world searching for them would bring about too much contact with humankind, which would defeat the purpose. Instead, a new High Archangel, Uriel, was chosen to take Shemizael's place, and the surviving Watchers were left alone, unless their actions attracted too much attention. Any time a Watcher or a Nephelim became a public figure, he or she was destroyed. Some of the old heroes, like Gilgamesh, Samsom, Nimrod, Goliath and Hercules were almost certainly Nephylim; it is no coincidence that all of these warriors had unhappy ends.

Maybe one in ten of the remaining members of the Heavenly Host became Watchers. About half as many kept silent about their sympathies and remained among the Seraphim, spying on them for Shemizael. The Watchers continued to help humans, although with the utmost secrecy and subtlety.

This, by the way. Is the semi-official condensed story of our little organization, the Watchers. We continue watching over Humankind, giving little pushes here and there where we think they'll do the most good. Our batting average isn't great, but at least we're trying to help.

The Diaspora and the Rise of the Old Gods

All these shocks, and the continued silence of the Creator, weighed down heavily upon the Seraphim. Despondency set in among the members of the Heavenly Host; doubts about their purpose and self-worth grew until they became overwhelming. Eventually, most of them chose to go



in search for the Creator. The Great Diaspora saw the departure of all but a small contingent of Seraphim from Earth? the Heavenly Host ventured into the higher planes of existence, a dangerous journey that took thousands of years and caused the destruction of nearly a fifth of the travelers I don't have many details of the trip (naturally enough, since none of the angels I keep in touch with joined the Diaspora) but it wasn't a pleasant one. The angels ran afoul of unevolved Sephyr and Naturas. were preyed upon by Outsiders, and encountered beings and places beyond their comprehension.

Besides the Watchers (who stayed hidden on Earth), only a tiny contingent of angels, led by the archangel Michele, remained behind, mainly to ensure that Lucifer and his Legions did not escape from the Death Realms. This they accomplished, although with great difficulty. They did not have the numbers or the power to do much else, however.

The departure of the Seraphim had left a power vacuum on Earth. The Titans, who did not follow their cousins into the Diaspora, moved in to fill it. Over the centuries, the Titans had developed into numerous clans or families, each of which had become attached to one of the human cultures that were emerging on Earth after the flood. These clans "adopted" these cultures and became their patron gods. Thus were the mythological pantheons created. The gods demanded worship and sacrifices from their followers; this increased their power, as they fed on the collective Essence of their worshippers. In return, the gods were supposed to protect and help their people.

So what was their track record? If you read the mythological accounts of all cultures, you can answer for yourself. The gods were too much like normal people. They got angry and

lashed out without thinking. They became bored. They acted on a whim instead of being impartial. Sometimes they rewarded the Just and punished the guilty — and sometimes it was the other way around. Those who tried to deny the gods and stick to Monotheism — like the Egyptian Akhenathon, and the Hebrew tribes — ended up getting a raw deal. The gods fought each other over territory — whenever a nation warred against its neighbors, their respective deities clashed in other planes of existence. Most of the time, the god wars were like comic book slugfests between superheroes: spectacular, but gods rarely killed each other in them. Instead, the defeated deities were often absorbed into the victorious pantheon as secondary gods.

As caretakers, however, they were largely a failure. They helped keep us ignorant and dirty — no new Atlantis allowed, thank you — and they tried to control us mainly through fear. Some gods, like Zeus, were lechers who fathered hundreds of Inheritors. Others reveled in war and destruction. They helped shape our cultures, for good or ill, although more often than not they were shaped by our cultures. Or maybe I'm prejudiced. Only one Titan did a good Job, in my humble opinion: the Gea, Mother Earth, who in many guises has been worshipped by hundreds of cultures. She is the oldest and wisest of the Titans, though, and her cult has survived centuries of persecution mainly among women, who understand the role of a mother.

The Second Celestial War

The Seraphim returned to Earth sometime before the Christian Era. As you may guess, this is no coincidence.

The Diaspora had failed. The angels had not found God. Upon returning, however, they found a new purpose. The Old Gods had usurped the role of the Creator, and Humankind had become corrupted. The Seraphim made it their mission to overthrow the Titans' rule over humankind.

While Rome fell, angels attacked the Realm of Olympus and nearly slew Zeus. While human Christians converted the Irish and the Norse, Seraphim battled the Celtic and Germanic gods. It was a war of mystical forces and over the minds and souls of humans. The angels would not have won if it hadn't been for humans. The teachings of the Creator awakened the faith of millions, and sparked a religious fervor rarely seen before. In some ways, though, the victory was not complete. Many Pagans went on worshipping the Old Gods, often thinly disguising them as saints.

This war was fought in many fronts. As missionaries traveled to far-off lands and convinced "barbarians" to abandon their old ways, and armies marched and slaughtered millions in the name of God, the Seraphim stormed the realms of the Old Gods. War raged in Olympus and Asgard at the same time it did on Earth. Slow to make alliances, the pantheons were defeated piecemeal by the more numerous Seraphim. Just as the old ways were not utterly eradicated on Earth, neither were the Old Gods completely destroyed, however. Deprived of worshippers and weakened, many Titans became shadows of their former selves, still far more powerful than mere mortals, but no longer a threat to the Seraphim's plans. Many withdrew completely from the affairs of humans, while others continued to involve themselves through such agents as the Inheritors and Avatars. In some places, like in much of Africa, the victory was far from complete, and the local Old Gods retained much of

their strength, possibly because they were wiser and less whimsical than the ones in Europe and the Americas. The pantheon of India survived, partly because it had venerated the Creator in the form of Brahma, partly because they were able to fight off both the Seraphim and the Muslims and Christians who tried vainly to eradicate their religion on Earth.

Eventually, the work was done. Monotheism ruled supreme over half of the world. The Seraphim and their champions, the Christians and Muslims (Jews overall did not go out of their way to convert others) would eventually conquer Europe, much of Africa and Asia, and America. Along the way, entire cultures were eradicated, and millions of people were killed, I don't know if the result was worth it.

The funny part is, most of the work was done by humans, with little or no help or manipulation from the angels. So, before you condemn the Seraphim (or more correctly, their leaders), understand that humans are as much to blame. The Seraphim could not have won without human warriors and teachers helping them. Even if monotheism is to some degree closer to the Truth than polytheism, the way in which it was spread was ugly and brutal. Teachings of love and brotherhood were twisted into instruments of war and conquest. Then, when there were no more pagans left to convert, the monotheists often turned against each other, with Christians warring against Muslims or persecuting the Jews, or different sects of Christians and Muslims fighting each other. Once you unleash the idea that religion is worth killing over, it is not easy to control it.

The Secret Plan: The Combine

Even as they were trying to "save" humankind from the Old Gods and re-establish the worship of the Creator, the Seraphim were also dealing with another issue. Memories of the Elder Kingdoms still evoked fear among the angels. Gabriel and the Council of Four agreed that humankind was far from ready to advance. Both magic and technology were suspect, and both were persecuted. The Seraphim and their human allies were equally adept at persecuting sorcerers and scientists. It is no accident that the same authorities that suppressed the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo were also in charge of burning witches. Knowledge and progress were considered dangerous, lest humans learn enough to take control over their destiny.

Gabriel drafted the Secret Plan, a project so covert that even most Seraphim, even members of the Council of Four (with the exception of Gabriel and Criel) did not know of it. The Secret Plan called for the creation of an organization of humans, dedicated to suppressing dangerous knowledge and, to some degree, manipulating human affairs to keep the masses largely ignorant and thus easy to control. These human agents were provided with huge mundane and supernatural assets, and they came to control much of the wealth and influence in the planet. Somewhere along the way, Gabriel lost control over his creation, however. This shadowy group, which has no given name, but is known as the Conspiracy, the Combine, or the Illuminati by conspiracy theorists and occultists, has been behind many crimes in history. It serves its own ends; not even my little conspiracy group, the Watchers, is quite sure



of its goals and purposes.

If the Secret Plan had been successful, we'd still be in the Middle Ages, dying in droves during the winters or whenever a plague decided to sweep down upon us, most of us working the land to scratch a meager living, barefoot and ignorant, hoping for a better life after death. Humans are not so easily crushed, however. It took centuries, and the efforts of a few secret societies (we Watchers had something to do with it, other groups, like the Masons and the Templars, were even more heavily involved), but eventually events like the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Reformation shook loose the power of the Combine over the world.

This is not to say that these changes were wholly beneficial or positive, far from it. The new movements helped the creation of things like the printing press and modern medicine, but also such things as gunpowder and poison gas. While the living standards of a growing section of humankind grew, the same process also upset the balance of Nature. Looking at the sum of human progress, some might be tempted to say that the angels were right, and we were not ready to advance beyond our humble station. Personally, I think that every child who does not die before age five carries the potential to do something great one day, and that those new lives are only possible thanks to the advances that many brave men or women fought and died to make public.

The Secret Plan was upset, but not completely eliminated. The Combine survived, and learned to master technology and use it to control and manipulate the masses. Some of my more paranoid associates claim that the Combine is to blame for the fact that we still use gasoline instead of electricity for most cars, that the cure for cancer is still nowhere to be

found, that a depressingly large proportion of the world's population is still living under conditions that would make a medieval peasant despair. Personally, I think much of it is caused by our own stupidity and greed — why look for conspiracies for what can be explained by human nature? But I have seen with my own eyes some of the deeds of the Combine — assassinations, fallen governments, economic upheaval.

So what do we do about it? We Watchers are content giving little pushes here and there — feed some information to the right reporters, identify — and sometimes eliminate — high-ranked agents, and protect those who may help humankind to advance further. Some of us think that we always risk doing more harm than good, so we are careful about what we do. Besides, foiling the Secret Plan is not our only concern.

Other Enemies

Beneath the facade of normalcy that most Mundanes see as reality lies a boiling cauldron of supernatural beings and secret societies. Even my organization does not know everything else that is out there. I've seen blood-drinking vampires, beings from beyond our universe, and conniving demons. And, above all, I've seen the ultimate failure of the Secret Plan. By conspiring to keep humans ignorant, the Seraphim have allowed the creatures of darkness to proliferate with relative impunity.

These enemies can be divided into three broad groups. First, we have the Predators, those who hunt or exploit humans. Some are monsters as bad or worse than anything imagined in novels or the movies, while others are humans who use their Gifts to satisfy their lusts. Then, the fallen Seraphim, the beings commonly known as "demons," who, while forbidden to

directly harm humans, do their best to mislead and corrupt them. Ironically, their methods are not so different from those used in the Secret Plan, although both angels and demons would try to lop your head off for even insinuating this. Then, we have the Mad Gods, those beings beyond the limits of Creation, who wish to invade — or maybe devour — our universe. Their agents are human or half-human cultists, utterly insane and dangerous beyond measure.

Generally, the numbers and influence of those beings are relatively small. They are probably responsible for the deaths and disappearances of a few thousand victims every year — cigarette smoking kills more people. The main problem is that their numbers growing. By the end of the millennium, they may be too numerous to remain hidden, and I don't know what the response of the Mundane world will be then.

That about wraps it up. Welcome to our brave new world. Best of luck dealing with it.

Humankind Rising

Humans are the ultimate prize and the ultimate hope of the world of **Armageddon**. Born with incredible potential, humans can evolve into beings of god-like power. As a species, however, humankind is in its infancy, often using its powers without the benefit of wisdom. Creative, adaptable and resourceful, humans are masters of technology and the crafts. Those who have learned to perceive the invisible worlds of magic and the occult are often more accomplished than most supernatural beings. Although not as physically powerful and long-lived as angels or demigods, humans with the right magical or technological tools can be the match of those beings.

The Seraphim know the Creator's plans for Humankind. Humans are the Children of God, and

heirs apparent to all of Creation. That does not mean that they "own" the Universe - that the concept of ownership still exists among humans shows that they are not ready to assume their inheritance. By the time humans evolve into readiness, untold years or millennia in the future, they may become something completely different, able to combine the physical sciences and the metaphysical arts in forms that would be unimaginable today. Destroying Humankind now would be akin to murdering a baby in his cradle, long before he achieves adulthood. But, unlike a baby, humans can defend themselves from both angel and pagan god. Even though the ultimate merger of spirit and technology is far from reality, humans can use both the tools of science and powers of the occult to fight their enemies.

Once before, humans grew in power until they rivaled the angels and gods. Their impatience and ruthlessness led them to open warfare and untold destruction. Eventually, one group in the losing side of the conflict consorted with dark forces more dangerous and evil than they could imagine. As a result, the Seraphim destroyed all the Elder Kingdoms and sent humans into a dark age that took ten thousand years to overcome. Now, the same dark force that ultimately caused the destruction of Atlantis and the fall of Ultima Thule has risen again, and threatens all of Creation. Humans will be the deciding factor in this conflict; should they choose wrong, the best efforts of the Seraphim or the Old Gods will not be enough to stop the arrival of Leviathan.

Essence and the Human Soul

Essence is the main building block of reality. It is a force and an element, a source of power and the foundation of all matter and spirit. It is the *Chi*, *Baraka* and *Mana* described and acknowledged by most cultures and legends. In its purest form, it can be found in currents floating through the world, or swirling around places and people of power. It ebbs and flows somewhat like the tides, strongest at certain, specific times. Those who can sense and manipulate Essence can create and destroy with the force of their wills. Magic, psychic powers and all the supernatural abilities of myth and legend ultimately depend on Essence to work.

Essence is also the stuff souls are made of. Each human has a soul, an Essence matrix that is as unique in each individual as one's genetic pattern. This Essence pattern is almost indestructible and, unless unraveled through malice or misfortune, it is eternal and immortal. The basest human soul has a good chance of outliving the most powerful archangel, and a better chance of surviving an attack. Immortal as they are, however, human souls can be enslaved,



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twisted and tortured by those who know the right secrets.

The strength of a human being's soul is reflected by his Essence capacity. Magicians and other Gifted humans have very powerful souls, representing their more advanced state. Unfortunately, the advancement or raw power of a human soul has nothing to do with the morals and disposition of the person. Free will is as much a gift as a curse, and those who wield great power are at constant risk of being corrupted by its use.

By learning to project the power of their souls, and combining it with the power that flows freely through the world, magicians, psychics and saints can manipulate the world with their minds and will alone.

Reincarnation and life After Death

Since souls are eternal, death is not an end to their existence. The spirits of the dead, once released from their mortal shells, have a number of choices. They can be reborn in a new body, adding each new lifetime's experience to the soul, becoming stronger and more experienced with each new existence. They can enter a higher realm of existence, a place where even the Seraphim and Old Gods cannot follow. Or they can wander in the Death Realms, shadowy dimensions where the Death Gods and the Fallen Seraphim often prey on the souls of the wicked and the weak.

Reincarnation is a major element in **Armageddon** games. While reincarnated souls rarely retain any conscious memories of their past lives, these memories, and the feelings and instincts attached to them, can be reawakened. People who were linked in a previous life very often encounter each other in the next, perhaps in different roles, and always reflecting the consequences of previous interactions. A formerly betrayed lover could return in the next life as an implacable enemy, with neither participant truly knowing why they feel antipathy or hatred for each other. Immortal or long-lived beings are often haunted by new reincarnations of those they wronged in ages past.

Essence and Immortality

Many cultures, from the Gnostic heretics of early Christianity to the Taoists of China, have held belief in Immortals - enlightened humans who have transcended the boundaries of life and death and who are no longer subject to the ravages of age. In the world of **Armageddon**, some of these "immortals" are supernatural creatures, beings like Vampyres or the Seraphim, whose life spans are much greater than those of common mortals. Some of these Undying

Ones are Gifted humans whose power and wisdom have defeated the aging process. Those who know the occult truths of the world refer to them as "Lesser" or "Common" Immortals.

Any Gifted character whose Essence Pool grows beyond certain limits will start aging more slowly. Characters with over 75 points in their Essence capacity age *one third* as fast as normal people; that means that a character would only age the equivalent of ten years over a period of three decades. Many magicians reach their sixties and seventies while still appearing to be in their late thirties or early forties - enough to be the envy of their contemporaries but not unprecedented in modern times, where plastic surgery and "clean living" can hide the effects of age. Gifted characters with over 100 points of Essence age at *one fifth* the normal rate; these men and women can be over a hundred years old, but still appear to be fairly young; they need to cover the tracks after a certain point, or their continued good health and youth will become suspicious to those around them.

After exceeding 125 points of Essence, the aging process is reduced to *one tenth* the normal rate, resulting in people living for over two centuries without looking to be much older than forty years old. Some of the leaders of the Rosicrucians Covenant (see p. 00) were alive during the American Revolution, for example. Upon reaching 150 Essence points, the aging process nearly stops, and the character ages at *one twentieth* the normal rate.

Regardless of how much Essence the character had during her childhood, the slowdown in the aging process does not "kick in" until the person has reached full adulthood - roughly the mid- to late twenties. Essence does not stop growth, but the decay caused by age. Also, the slowed aging does not occur until the character has accumulated the requisite Essence. For example, a character who grew in power and reached 75 points of Essence at age forty would start aging at one third the normal rate from that point on; at age seventy he would look like he was fifty years old.

How the Essence is accumulated is usually not relevant. Magicians, martial artists, necromancers and practitioners of any of the Gifted Arts can increase their Essence Pool through experience. By focusing and refining their powers, the characters strengthen their souls and begin to transcend the limits of age.

Note that these "immortals" are not the True Immortals described on p. 199. While extremely long-lived, Gifted characters are still mortal in most ways, no less susceptible to malice or accident than any other human being.

Magic: The Wise Craft

Magic involves the channeling of Essence to affect the real world. Essence, a primordial element of reality, is the unifying link between matter and energy, life and spirit. By manipulating Essence, the sorcerer can make and unmake things, can release energy and affect matter, can cause wounds with a touch or heal the injured. To work the magic, the Gifted must use Invocations - ritual actions and words that help focus the magician's will and imagination to produce the desired effects.

The Essence used in magic can come from a number of sources. It can come from the magician herself. Additionally, it can be taken from the currents of Essence that flow invisibly through the world, although this take a great deal of time and effort. It can be taken from other living things, but most forms of magic that use the life force of others are tainted with evil, unless the Essence is freely given.

All Magic requires three steps in its performance. First, the Essence needed to create the effect are called forth - the Summoning. The Essence is then woven into a matrix (provided by the Invocation) designed to produce the desired effect - the Focus. After the effect is finished, the Forces invoked must be vanished, or there is risk that they will run rampant, turning on innocent people or even on the magician herself: this is the Dismissal.

Essence and Magic

Essence is pure potentiality, a chaotic force that can spawn matter and energy in violation of all known physical laws. It is the stuff of our souls, and it is a force of emotion as much as it is of reason. To work magic, one must be able to weave Essence into the right matrix. Invocations and rituals provide the basic mold into which Essence is poured; if enough Essence is summoned and used, and if no outside force is interfering with the invocation, the desired effect will take place.

Successfully using an invocation does not end the process, however. Essence does not disappear once it is used; unless it is released from the matrix, it will continue to repeat the effect - but it will do it randomly, chaotically, out of the control of the caster. In some cases, this may be only a minor annoyance; in others - especially magicks that were geared to cause harm - unbound Essence can kill. To be on the safe side, most magicians are taught to Dismiss the Essence they gathered on the magical effect. A suc-

cessful Dismissal will "unweave" the Essence, letting it rejoin the natural flows.

Sources of Essence

Essence is the fuel of magic; the more available Essence there is, the more powerful and spectacular an effect will be. Unfortunately, tapping into the primal forces of Creation is not easy, and the sources are limited.

TheSelf: As previously stated, the closest source of Essence is the magician herself. All living things have an Essence pool. Most magicians have large Essence pools; as Essence is channeled in and out of the sorcerer's body, their total capacity increases, much like a muscle that grows in size as it is exercised. To be able to use his own Essence easily, however, the magician must be able to Channel (see below).

Ambient Essence: Essence in pure form flows freely in Nature, unimpeded by most physical barriers. To tap into ambient Essence, the magician must use symbols, ritual actions and other activities that act as "magnets" for ambient Essence, trapping it and storing it for use in an incantation. These rituals and symbols are usually lengthy (taking at least several minutes, with some taking days or months) and cumbersome, making them impossible to use on short notice.

Times and Places of Power: Although Essence flows everywhere, there are areas where its currents run deeper and stronger. These places of power are natural accumulation points of Essence, which can be more easily tapped than ambient Essence. These places have the obvious limitation of requiring one's presence there to get the power. Furthermore, the best known and most powerful ones are claimed by a Covenant or other mystical organization. Additionally, certain times of the day, month and year seem to increase the amount of available Essence (see Times of Power, p. 165).

Storage Devices: Some invocations can "fix" some amount of Essence to a specially prepared object or place. The Essence can then be stored indefinitely for future use. After the stored Essence is used up, however, it must be replenished once again. Many magicians take the time to create several of these storage devices, which are then carried on their persons for ready use.

Group Magic. Several magicians can pool their resources to perform an incantation. Furthermore, groups of a certain size seem to have more Essence available to them (see the Group Magic section below).

Essence Channeling

Some among the Gifted have the power to tap into Essence at will, without needing to rely on complex rit-



uals and ceremony. People with that power are known as Channelers. Channelers can release Essence very quickly, in a matter of seconds in some cases, which allows them to use magic without bothering to use the lengthy rituals needed to call forth ambient Essence. Some Channelers are more powerful than others; in game terms, your level in Essence Channeling determines how much Essence you can bring forth from your inner reserve in one game turn (one to five seconds). The most powerful Channelers can Summon enough Essence to fuel a powerful incantation as fast or faster than a Mundane can fire a gun or strike a blow.

Invocations

Having the ability to manipulate Essence is not enough. The raw energies of Creation need focus, or their potential will remain unrealized or, worse, it will produce effects at random. Invocations are the tools used to weave Essence into the desired shape. As the magician learns her art, she acquires a transcendental understanding of how Essence is used to Create specific things. One can think of Essence as a fine thread,

a thread that can be used to weave anything. The pattern of the weave determines what the final result will be. Each Invocation helps the magician to understand one specific pattern or matrix.

To imprint that understanding in her memory, the magician uses a "code" of words and signs that will, when properly spoken or gestured, "remind" her of the pattern she wishes to weave. So, for example, the Elemental Fire Invocation is learned to weave Essence into fire. The amount of Essence available limits how large or destructive the fire is, but the same invocation will serve to light a match or to turn a building into a blazing inferno; both effects are part and parcel of the same Invocation.

Learning Invocations

Each Invocation is learned as a separate skill. Due to complex nature of Invocations (you are not just memorizing a way of doing things, but you are also achieving a fundamental understanding of a part of Reality), Invocations cost 2 character points per level up to level 5, and 5 character points per level thereafter. Learning a new Invocation after character creation costs 10 character points for the first level; the rest are

learned normally.

Casting Invocations

Using an invocation requires three steps. First, the required amount of Essence must be gathered together. The second step is the Focus. Again, a roll is necessary, using the invocation level and the Willpower attribute. The more powerful the magical effect desired is, the more difficult it is to focus the power. Finally, the powers the witch has called forth must be dismissed, lest they run rampant and without control.

The Summoning

During this step, the magician visualizes the desired effect while gathering the Essence he needs to make it happen. The Summoning may be a matter of seconds if the character has Essence Channeling, or may take hours or days if ambient Essence is gathered through rituals and ceremonies.

The Summoning is always an intoxicating moment for a magician. The gathered Essence fills the sorcerer with contentment and a feeling of almost sexual pleasure. The Gifted will see the sparkling energies around her, and will feel all-powerful and god-like. Some magicians become addicted to that feeling. "Power tripping," the Summoning of Essence for no reason other than to get a "high" is a common vice among some of the younger and more inexperienced magicians.

While the Summoning is taking place, other Gifted characters may notice the "glow" of Essence around the magician; this requires a Simple Perception Test, at +1 for every 5 Essence points gathered around the caster. A success on the test will tell the observer how powerful the magical aura is (i.e., how much Essence is being gathered). If a lot of Essence is being Summoned, the magical activity may be detected by other Gifted characters. If 20 Essence points are Summoned, magicians within half a mile of the caster may sense the mystical disturbance by passing a Difficult Perception Test. Add another half a mile to the radius for every additional 20 Essence being gathered. The Gifted will not know exactly where the power is being summoned, only the general direction and how much power is being used. The Shielding Invocation (see p. 124) can be used to avoid detection.

It is theoretically possible to Summon enough energy for an Invocation and then "hold" it indefinitely or until needed. Holding Summoned Essence for long periods of time is not advisable, however. For one, the longer one holds pure Essence in, the more it affects your senses and stability. Holding Essence for a few minutes is like drinking a shot of hard liquor; as you hold it longer, it is as if you are drinking more consecutive shots. In game terms, a character can hold

Summoned Essence safely for 10 minutes plus an additional minute for each level in the Willpower attribute. Every five minutes after that, the feeling of hubris will cause the magician to temporarily lower one of his mental attributes by 1 (Chronicle's choice); the second time, another mental attribute is affected, and so on, going up and down all three attributes. When any one mental attribute is reduced to 0, the magician collapses in an orgiastic stupor, and the Essence is released randomly (see Random Essence Effects on p. 113).

The Summoning requires no Task rolls, unless rituals are being used to accumulate ambient Essence or tap into a Place of Power (see the Rituals section for more information).

The Focus

Once all the needed energy has been Summoned, the magician uses the Incantation to weave it in the desired pattern. This is the actual "spell-casting" task. The amount of energy being manipulated may give penalties to the task (see the table on p. 254). The Focus roll is treated as a Task, involving the Incantation level and the appropriate attribute (usually Willpower, although some Incantations rely on Perception or Intelligence instead). Some Incantations can be resisted by the target or victim; treat those as Resisted Tasks.

The Dismissal

The Dismissal is performed after the effects desired have occurred - or after the incantation has failed. Use Willpower and the Incantation level to perform the Dismissal. The more Essence used in the Incantation, the more difficult the Dismissal becomes (see the Essence Control Table on p. 245). If the Dismissal is unsuccessful, the magic will continue to affect the world, in unpredictable and often dangerous ways (see the Random Essence Effect section for some possibilities).

Group Magic

Sorcery is more effective when performed by a group. One of the obvious reasons is that all the participants can infuse their Essence into the Incantation, speeding up the magic and allowing more powerful effects to take place. Additionally, certain numbers of participants actually draw ambient Essence towards the group, increasing the available energy beyond the sum of the Essence pools of the participants.

The Power of Numbers

Certain numbers and combinations of numbers seem to have a degree of intrinsic power (see

Numbers and Magic on the next page). By working as a group, the magicians can gain great amounts of Essence. Even three relatively weak magicians working together can create powerful effects by tapping on this additional energy. Of course, when manipulating such amounts of Essence, the problem of controlling, focusing and then dismissing the power remains. More than one over-ambitious group of Gifted has been obliterated by trying to play with far too much power.

Why are certain numbers of participants more powerful than others? Students of magic have come up with a number of possible theories, many of them contradictory. Possible explanations include the theory that some numbers act as keys that unlock hidden power reservoirs in the universe; that certain repetitions and rhythms (which by their very nature have numerical natures) somehow generate reverberations in the flows of Essence, which in turn release energy from it; or that numbers are symbols of Nature which can be used to manipulate Reality itself. Or, in the words of a cynical Wicce magician: "Nobody is sure."

Whatever the explanation may be, groups of the specific size attract a great deal of power. The most powerful magic groups are those numbering three, five, seven and thirteen individuals. Groups of nine and eleven also grant extra Essence, but less on a person-by-person basis than the previous ones.

Conducting Group Magic

Working as a group requires coordination and skill as well as power. Most group magic is conducted by forming a circle, facing inward. As closed form, the Circle is useful in focusing the power of the gathering on the task at hand without letting it escape through any corners or gaps. Sometimes, the members of the group hold hands, although this is not necessary. A member of the group, usually the most skilled magician at the Invocation or Invocations to be attempted, becomes the Leader of the Circle.

The basic steps to cast Invocations are the same: Summoning, Focus and Dismissal. The only changes are on the contributions of the group to the process. Only characters with the Essence Channeling quality (see p. 46) can participate in a Circle.

The Summoning: During the Summoning, the members of the Circle all contribute Essence to the process. The participants can contribute as much Essence as they wish, limited only by how long the Circle wishes to way. Circle members who do not know the Invocation being attempted are less effective, however; every two Essence points they contribute only count as one Essence point. This is due to their inability to visualize the specific effect of the Invocation.

Like individual Summoning, the process can take as

few as a handful or seconds or as long as the members can stand in a circle. The process ends when all the available Essence has been absorbed by the Leader, or when the Leader decides she has gathered enough power. The Leader takes all the combined energy unto herself; this includes any "free" Essence generated because of the number of participants present (see the Group Magic Essence table on p. 254). In some cases, the Leader will be holding hundreds of Essence points; the experience is intense, a feeling of power and exaltation pervading the Leader until the Essence is released.

The Focus: The Leader performs all the Tasks involved in the Incantation, including the Focus (see p. 151). Each member of the Circle gives the Leader a bonus of +1, for the purposes of eliminating the penalties of the Essence Control Table (see p. 254); the bonuses do not count towards the actual use of the Invocation. Everything else works just the same as normal Invocations.

The Dismissal: This process also gains a +1 bonus per member of the Circle, which helps the Leader dismiss the often enormous energies gathered by the group's efforts.

Example: A group of five Rosicrucians gather together to attack a farmhouse where a Black Magic cult is holed up. To flush up their enemies, the Rosicrucians have planned to create a devastating tornado and send it against the cultists' home. The Rosicrucians are Nathaniel, who will be leader (his Willpower is 4, his Elemental Air Invocation is at level 7, and he has Essence Channeling 6); Audrey (Essence Channeling 4); John (Essence Channeling 6); and Kate and Ben (both with Essence Channeling 4). Kate and Ben do not know the Elemental Air Invocation; everyone else does.

The group gathers together and starts the summoning. The group does not have a long time to prepare, so Nathaniel wants to cast the Invocation instantly (in game terms in a single turn). Everybody contributes as much Essence as they can to add it to the free Essence generated by the group (60 Essence Points). Since the characters only have one turn, they are limited to their Essence Channeling level. Thus, Nathaniel and John each contribute 6 points, Audrey contributes 4 and Kate and Ben spend 4 each, but their value is halved because they do not know the particular invocation. The total gathered Essence is 60 plus the 20 from the magicians themselves, for a total of 80 points. Nathaniel glows with mystical energy as he takes all that power unto himself and prepares to use it.

Next comes the Focus roll. Nathaniel is going to use 30 Essence Points to create a tornado with a radius of 30 feet (see the Elemental Air invocation for more information). Controlling 30 Essence points is very dif-



ficult, with a penalty of -8! The other Circle members reduce this penalty to -3 (each Circle Members reduces the Focus Penalties by 1, and there are five of them). Nathaniel's player rolls a D10, adds Nathaniel's Willpower of 4 and Elemental Air Invocation of 7 to the roll, and then subtracts 3 from the total. The total result is a 14; the Invocation is successful, and a tornado takes shape in front of the Circle in a matter of seconds.

Intent and Magic

Unlike mindless natural forces, magic is a function of the will of the magician, and it is colored by the emotions and intentions of the magician. The forces that the witch invokes will reflect her inner desires and her intentions. If one uses magic with evil in her heart, the magic itself will be evil and treacherous, and will seek to turn against its wielder at the first opportunity.

This is the origin of the old Wicce saying "What you bring unto others, you get back three times." Using magic for revenge or to abuse the weak is a risky proposition. The Wicce claim that the spirit forces summoned in such undertakings are the most twisted and malign ones, as good and neutral spirits would

not lend their strength in such undertakings. Rosicrucians hold a more pragmatic view: the mental state of the magician is seen as the determinant, not the nature of the spirit forces summoned. In either case, the result is the same: magic used for malicious purposes tends to fail and backfire more often than the rest.

In game terms, the intent of the magician must be taken into account by the Chronicler. Using magic to defend oneself, to gain some measure of good fortune and similar purposes will not have unusual consequences. Using magic to harm people who cannot defend themselves, especially for frivolous and petty purposes, will have additional penalties. As a rule of thumb, the Dismissal of such invocations will have an additional penalty of -1 to -5. The same will happen to invocations that, although not meant to harm the innocent, do so because of carelessness. A magician who unleashes a tornado in a busy street to destroy an enemy will pay dearly for any innocent bystanders who are hurt.

The Crowd Effect

"Fear the multitude, the angry crowd, the audience of unbelievers, for they are the bane of all magic."

— Horace Brown, Rosicrucian Equestrian

On of the reasons the Gifted seldom operate openly is the fact that, when confronted in great numbers, Mundanes and their emotions can overcome or dim the powers of magic through the unwitting focus of their Essence. The two dangerous emotions the magician faces are disbelief and hatred.

Disbelief used to be the most common obstacle, but the events of the early 21st Century have changed that. There always are skeptics even in the face of uncontrovertible proof, however. Once magic is used successfully in front of a crowd of skeptics, however, the disbelief of Mundanes no longer restrains the magician. No matter what they tell themselves later on, the Mundanes will, even if only momentarily, become believers and thus their defenses will be shattered.

Rage and hatred are more difficult to overcome. The most direct way to overcome such emotions is to instill fear in the heart of the crowd. In the past, many a witch has had to start a panic among her pursuers by graphic demonstration of power, sometimes killing one or more members of a mob. Fear has no negative effects on the use of magic. Terror contains an implicit acceptance of the magician's power within itself; in effect, it is a surrender to the will of the sorcerer. Only another Gifted One can face a magician with fear in her heart.

The truly fanatical are the most difficult to overcome. In many cases, their hatred or dedication deflect all attempts at instilling fear. The only defense against their like is a quick retreat -- or to use up enough Essence to overcome their defenses and then destroy them.

The Crowd Effect in Game Terms: By unwittingly spending Essence, the members of a crowd "jam" the flow of Essence around the magician. This occurs only during very specific circumstances. First, there must be a crowd of at least ten people present; only groups of Mundanes can generate enough power to seriously hinder a magician. Secondly, the crowd must be aware that the Gifted is trying to perform magic, unless the magician is trying to affect members of the crowd with the magical effect, in which case the resistance is automatic. So, a Gifted casting an Invocation without drawing attention to herself would be spared unless she was targeting the crowd itself.

When those conditions are met, the crowd "neutralizes" several Essence Points, which will either ruin the Invocation, force the magician to settle for a lesser effect, or require the magician to spend extra Essence

to overcome this resistance. The amount of Essence neutralized varies by the size of the crowd. See the table below for more details.

Random Essence Effects

If Summoned Essence is released through an Invocation, it must be Dismissed or it will produce a random magical effect sometime in the near future. The effect will occur in the vicinity of the magician who summoned it. The Chronicler can pick one of the following examples, roll randomly among them (to determine it randomly, roll a D6 and count down the list; a roll of 1 and 6 mean the first mishap occurs), or make up her own. The occurrence will take place sometime in the next twenty-four hours.

The original Invocation effect manifests itself once again somewhere around the magician. This could be beneficial, harmful or merely disturbing or startling.

An Invocation that the magician knows will suddenly activate itself, fueled by the un-Dismissed Essence. The magical effect will appear suddenly and without apparent cause.

The magician is suddenly affected by a fever-like state. He feels extremely hot while cold sweat starts running down his face and body. He loses 1 Endurance point for every un-Dismissed Essence point; if reduced below 0 Endurance, he collapses, unconscious.

The Essence "grounds" itself on the magician, who suddenly convulses once and then goes rigid. After a few seconds, the convulsions occur once for every 5 points of undismissed Essence available. This costs the magician 1D6(3) Life Points, 1D10(5) Endurance Points, and the magician is helpless during the duration of the alternating episodes of convulsion and paralysis (usually 2-5 seconds).

The magician's senses are plagued by hallucinatory lights and sounds. Mundanes cannot see the lights, but other Gifted will sense the Essence flaring up around him. This effect lasts one minute for every 10 un-Dismissed Essence points (round up). During that time all Perception and Intelligence-based Tasks are at a -5 penalty.

Common Invocations

Invocations have a brief description of their characteristics, followed by a list of possible effects and their Essence cost. The list for each Invocation covers some basic examples. Creative players will probably come up with other effects; the Chronicler can use the examples provided to figure out their Essence cost.

The enchantments listed below are some of the

most common Basic Invocations. Basic Invocations cover most of aspects of magic, including the four classical elements and the powers over spirits, emotions and chance. Most Gifted sorcerers never advance past this level. These are the only magicks that can be learned by beginning characters. The more powerful Greater Invocations are listed on p. 128.

Affect Psyche

This Invocation uses Essence's emotional nature to change the feelings of a person. It can be used to impress, charm or scare the targets. The Chronicler decides whether or not the emotional state of the people affected changes their behavior in the way the magician intended: a scared would-be attacker might flee, surrender, or attack like a cornered animal, for example.

Effects:

Influence a person's emotional state: 1 Essence if the person was leaning towards that emotion, 2 to inspire a different emotion, 5 for an utterly opposed emotion (i.e., anger if the person was happy, fear if the person was calm). This ability is resisted by a Difficult Willpower Test.

Aura of Confidence: Creates an impression of power and control around the magician, making others unwilling to oppose her. The caster gains a bonus of +2 on most social interaction Tasks, with an additional bonus equal to the Success Level of the Focus roll. People who have a reason to dislike or hate the magician resist with a Simple willpower Test. This effect costs 2 Essence and lasts 5 minutes per success levels; at the end of that period, the Incantation must be repeated.

Blessing

Essence can be used to alter probability, increasing the chances that one specific outcome will take place. Blessings alter probability in favor of the subject of the Incantation, making the person luckier and more successful.

Effects:

Good Luck Blessing: This effect gives the recipient Luck Point (see p. 47), at the rate of 1 Luck Point for every 3 Essence spent. Once the Luck Points are spent, the effects of the Blessing stop.

Success Blessing: Guarantees success in some small task involving Mundane affairs, such as a business deal, school examination or sporting event, providing the recipient had a chance to succeed anyway. This effect costs 5 Essence.

Blessing of Protection: Protects the subject from magical harm. Each 4 Essence points spent give the subject

a bonus of +1 to resist one magical attack of any kind. This protection is activated whenever a host Incantation is used against the recipient. The protection is only good against one such attack; after helping defend against one attack, the protection ends.

The Cleansing

Negative Essence, colored by bad emotions or evil intent can "pollute" places, things and people. Areas where violence, abuse and other ugliness occurred often retain the taint of the Essence that was released during those incidents. In some cases, they can make people uncomfortable, especially the Gifted, who can sense the great evil. Nightmares are often experienced there. The Cleansing Incantation is used to remove this negative taint from areas. The process can also be used to help against harmful magicks, especially those that linger around the victim.

Failing to Dismiss a Cleansing invocation means the negative Essence you removed from an area or person follows you around instead. It may require a new Cleansing Incantation to remove such effects.

Effect:

Remove Emotional Debris: When Mundanes are extremely angry or are suffering other strong emotions, their Essence is inadvertently "spilled" onto objects and areas. These negative emotions can affect the well-being of people, making them short-tempered, prone to nightmares, and even unlucky. Cleaning a room on an object of such negative "vibes" costs 3 Essence. Cleansing an entire house costs 6 Essence. Failure to Dismiss the power causes the negative emotions to become attached to the cleanser.

Remove Curses and Harmful Magic: Costs the same amount of Essence as the harmful invocation, and is resisted by the Willpower of the magician.

Consecration

This Invocation creates a Vessel that can be imbued with Essence. The Vessel can be a small article; most Invocations of this type are cast on rings, necklace and other articles of jewelry. Vessels must be in contact with the skin of the user to work. The Consecration "attaches" some quantity of Essence on the object, at a high energy cost (only one-third of the Essence used is actually imbued into the object). Additionally, each Vessel created drains 2 Essence points from the creator; this Essence cannot be recovered until after the Vessel is emptied. This energy drain is caused by the magical link between the mag

ician and the Vessel it has created.

The benefits of owning one or more Consecrated objects is worth the price, however, because a magician can use some or all the power in the Vessel for any Invocation or defensive magic. The energy in a Vessel can be used instantly; a character with Essence Channeling of 3 and a Vessel with 5 Essence points could release 8 Essence points in one **turn**. Once the Essence in the Vessel is gone, a new Consecration is necessary to empower the object once again. Anybody can use the Vessel and its energies, unless the magician wills the Vessel to work only for him, or for whomever he designates. This restriction costs extra energy.

Effects:

Create Vessel: Imbues Essence into the object, at the cost of 3 Essence points for every Essence point held by the Vessel. Each Consecrated object created also drains 2 Essence points **from** the magician; these points cannot be recovered until the Vessel is used up. So, for example, a character with an Essence Pool of 40 who created a 10-point Vessel would regain all but two points back; his Essence Pool would be reduced 38 points until the Vessel's energy was exhausted. If the Vessel was created through group magic, everyone in the group will be drained of 2 Essence points until the Vessel is exhausted.

Restricted Vessels: Most Consecrated objects can be used by whomever is holding them. By attuning the Vessel to the Essence "signature" of specific people, the magician can ensure that only those he wants to use the Vessel can have access to it. This adds 5 Essence points to the cost, and all the people he wants to be exempt from the restriction must be touching the Vessel during its creation.

Communion

Every living thing is usually trapped inside its skull, relying only on its senses to perceive the world around it. The Communion puts the magician in direct contact with an area and every living thing and spirit within it. Through this Invocation, the magician achieves a powerful connection with the land, and is aware of everything in it, from the plight of the smallest ant to the intentions of the most powerful nature spirit. Such a connection is full of dangers, however; when achieved in a place of evil or negative emotions, the backlash can harm the magician's body and sanity-

Communion invocations are usually conducted in forests, gardens or other places of Nature, where the majority of the spiritual forces are benevolent and friendly. Using the Invocation in a city will fill the magician with the cries of dying trees, the cold calculation of rats and other vermin, and the petty mali-





ciousness, bitterness and anguish of most humans living there. Magicians who make that mistake often find their sanity permanently impaired as a result of the experience.

Effects:

Become One With the Land: The magician enters a trance state in which she is aware of everything occurring in the area. This costs 2 Essence points. The area affected by this Invocation has a radius of 10 yards for every level of Willpower of the caster. This can be increased at additional Essence cost.

Once Communion is established, the caster can sense the whereabouts and emotions of every living things in the area, including spirits and supernatural beings. The magician will be able to pinpoint the location of anybody entering the area, even those who are shielded or hidden by illusions. Attempts to communicate, invoke or awaken any spirits in the area

have a bonus of +5 as long as the Communion is active. While the Communion is active, the magician can also cast any Invocation (positive or negative) on everybody or anything in the area as if she was in direct contact or line of sight of them.

The main drawback is that the connection works both ways. The magician is exposed to any pain and suffering, anger, or other negative feelings of every living thing in the area. The more intense the negative emotions, the greater the danger of a psychic backlash. When performing the Communion in an area plagued by suffering or anger, the magician must pass a Difficult Willpower Test to avoid being harmed by the experience. Note that the entire area must be permeated with negative emotions to pose a danger. If a group of men with murder in their minds entered an otherwise tranquil forest, for example, the magician would know of the men and their emotions but would not be affected by them. If the magician cast the Communion in the middle of a burning forest, a city slum or a concentration camp, the concentrated misery and agony in such places would sear her.

Penalties to the Willpower Test are determined by the Chronicler. Places of some misery and pain (a dirty park, a lightly polluted forest) have no penalty to the Test. A city slum is at -2 (more for really bad areas where everybody is suffering). A burning forest or a concentration camp is at -4 to -6. A serial killer's torture dungeon would be at -8 or worse! If the Willpower Test is failed, the magician loses 1D4 x 10 Essence points; if brought below 0, she may suffer physical or mental harm.

Elemental Air

One of the classic elements, Air or Wind gives the magician control over all forces associated with it. Most effects involve changing wind direction and speed, but the magician can also create air where none existed before.

Creating and maintaining steady winds for long periods of time has been discovered to have severe effects on weather. Even a relatively small wind, especially if not Dismissed, can trigger storms, tornadoes and worse hundreds of miles away. Most magicians

(especially the Wicce) are advised to always be careful about the use of wind and weather effects.

Effects:

Create a brief stirring in the air (roughly equivalent to a low-powered electric fan): 1 Essence point per turn.

Start or stop a gust of wind: 1 Essence four every 5 mph of the wind gust. The wind only affects a small area (about two to three yards in radius), and will only last for a couple of seconds). Very strong winds (over 50 mph) will knock people over, throw objects around, and will inflict 1D4(2) points of damage on people for every 10 miles of speed over 50 mph. So, a 60 mph wind will do 1D4(2) points of damage; a 100 mph gust will inflict 1D4 x 5 (10) points.

Create or Stop a Steady Wind: This creates a continuous wind rather than a gust. This costs 1 Essence point for every mile per hour of speed, plus 1 Essence point for every minute the wind last, and 1 Essence for every 10 yards of width of the wind. So, for example creating a steady wind with a speed of 10 miles per hour that lasts 15 minutes and affects an area 10 yards wide would cost 35 Essence points (10 for the wind speed, 15 for the duration).

Create a Whirlwind or Tornado: 1 Essence points for every foot of radius of the whirlwind (a tornado will have at least 15 feet of radius). The same cost must be paid every minute to maintain the effect.

A tornado can lift objects of up to 10 pounds per foot of radius. It can be used to carry a person or passengers, but piloting it requires a Focus roll every minute if traveling in a straight line, or one every turn (3-5 seconds) if attempting complex maneuvers. A whirlwind or tornado will obscure vision, break and toss around objects, and can inflict damage on buildings, trees and other fixed structures. Damage is equal to 1D4 (2) times the radius in feet of the twister. People and small objects take no direct damage from tornadoes, but are lifted up and eventually hurled away, taking damage from the fall (see the rules for falling damage on p. 83).

Cleanse and Create Air: The magician can transform pure Essence into normal air, and to remove any impurities and poisons in a volume of air. This allows the magician to avoid the effects of smoke, poison gas and other hazards, and avoid suffocation even if locked in a small air-tight room by renewing the oxygen content of the air. This costs 2 Essence points for enough air for a person to breathe for a minute. By spending 1 Essence points per turn, the magician can also create a "bubble" of clean air at a higher pressure than the surrounding area; this bubble allows the magician to walk through areas filled with toxic gases as well protected as if he was wearing a gas mask.

Elemental Earth

This Invocation gives the magician total control over all minerals and inanimate objects made with those minerals. Given enough Essence, a magician can cause avalanches and Earthquakes.

Effects:

Cause a small volume of earth to move: 1 Essence point per pound of earth, up to 5 pounds.

Cause stone to crumble: 1 Essence point per 5 pounds of stone up to 100 pounds, and 1 point per 100 pounds after that.

Cause metal to weaken or break: 1 Essence points per pound up to 50 pounds, and 1 point per 50 pounds after that.

Move large quantities of Earth: 5 Essence plus 2 Essence per cubic foot of earth. Moving six cubic feet of earth can engulf a human sized target by making a pit appear beneath him. A wave of earth can knock down targets and has an equivalent Strength of 1 for every 2 cubic feet of earth being moved. The impact does 1D4 (2) points of damage for every four cubic feet being used.

Dust Devil: 5 Essence to create a cloud of swirling dust that will block vision and blind people within it. The cloud affects a radius of 1 yard. Each additional yard of radius costs 1 Essence point. The swirling dust can be moved up to 1 yard away for every level of Willpower, plus an additional yard for each Essence point spent.

Stone Attacks: Causes any stone within 10 yards of the magician to fly out against a target. Stones must be available (even brick or concrete will do, as long as it is loose, or has been previously broken by using the incantation). Damage is 1D6 x 2(6) points and the range is equal to the double the Willpower of the magician in yards. This costs 4 Essence points. You can raise the multiplier or range of the attack by 1 for every additional Essence point spent. Multiple targets can be hit by spending 1 Essence per additional target within range.

Trigger Earth Tremor. This powerful effect causes the earth to shake in a specific area. Magicians are advised to take care with this power, as it may trigger earthquakes if performed in unstable areas such as near fault lines. The base area affected has a radius of 10 yards times the magician's Willpower; this can be increased by spending additional Essence. A slight tremor (enough to be noticed but little else) costs 10 Essence points. A strong tremor (enough to knock small objects off their shelves, make people stagger, experiencing a -2 penalty to any task involving moving or similar activities) costs 20 Essence points. A strong tremor (which may initiate avalanches on rocky or snowy slopes, knock people down unless



they pass a Simple Dexterity Test, cause large objects to topple and fall, etc.) costs 40 Essence. An earthquake that will cause structures to collapse unless especially designed costs 100 Essence. Increasing the area affected costs 1 Essence point per additional 5-yard radius. An incantation that spends over 100 Essence to perform this effect will trigger a real earthquake if any fault line is within 10 miles of the effect.

Elemental Fire

This powerful Incantation gives the magician control over combustion and fire. Many magicians favor Elemental Fire, for it is a powerful weapon. As a weapon, however, it is a two-edged sword, for it will as happily consume the caster and his friends as it will his enemies. Failure to dismiss a Fire Invocation will almost always end up with the caster feeling the agonies he inflicted on others. Many "fire magicians" (known by the Rosicrucians as "pyromancers") have nasty scars on their hands, body, and (sometimes) face as a result of their dangerous games.

Effects:

Produce a weak light, or cause existing light to flicker. 1 Essence point per turn.

Reduce the impact of fire, heat and flames on the Subject: Reduce damage by one level per Essence

point spent, for 1 turn.

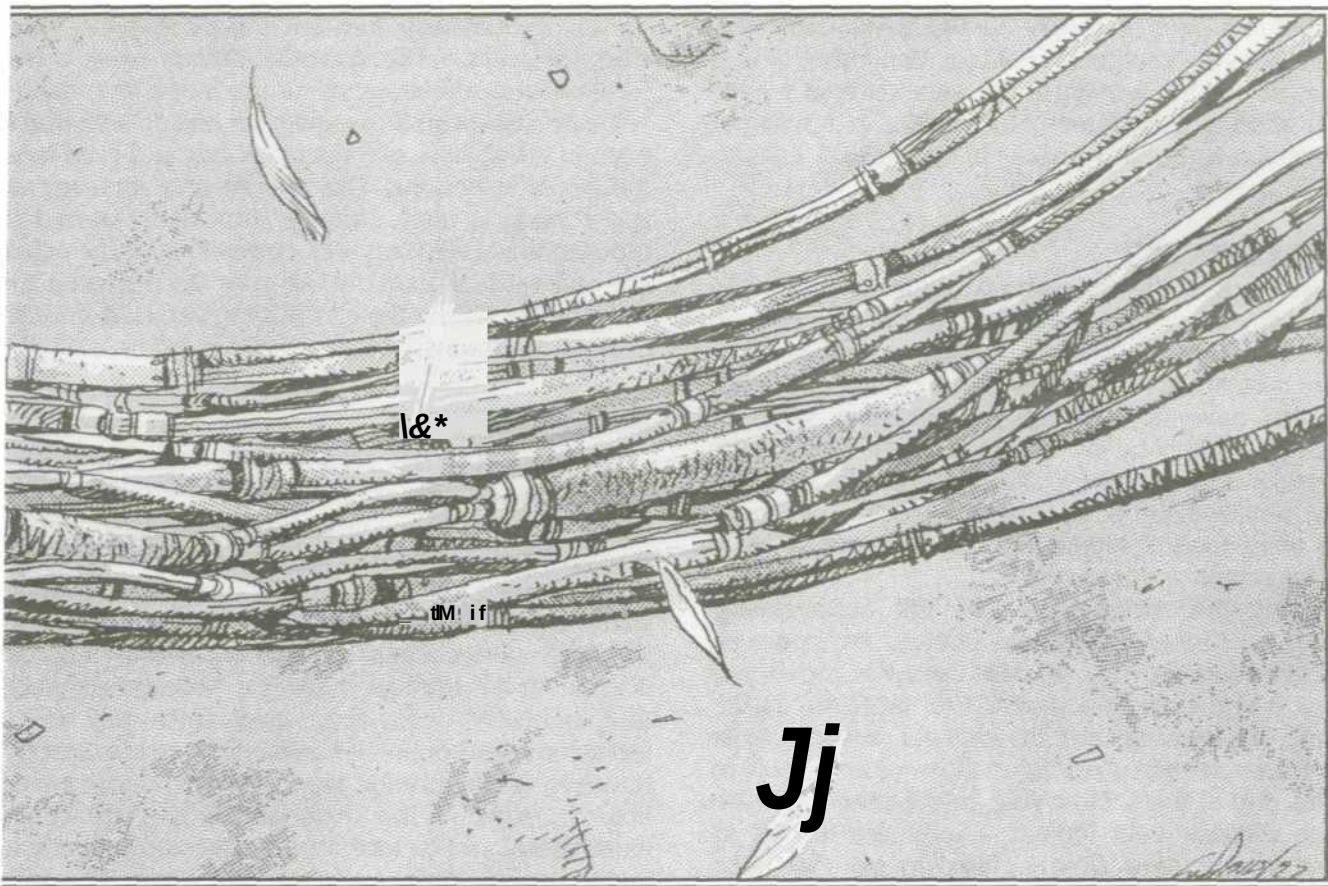
Produce strong light; cause flammable objects to ignite; produce a brief flame (equivalent to a cigarette lighter's flash): 3 Essence points per turn.

Extinguish a fire: 3 Essence for a 1-yard radius, plus 1 Essence per additional yard radius.

Create a jet or wave of flame: 1 Essence point for a jet inflicting 1D6 (3) x 2 points of damage that has a range of 1 yard. 1 Essence for each additional damage multiplier or yard of range. So, for example, a jet of flame inflicting 1D6 (3) x 5 points of damage with a range of 15 yards could cost 18 Essence points (1 for the base, an additional 3 for the extra damage, and 14 for the additional range). A jet of flame can be Dodged (see the Combat Section, p. 113). A wave of flame will be 1 yard wide for every 4 additional Essence points spent on it. Dodging a wave of flame will have a penalty equal to the width of the wave in yards.

Elemental Water

This Invocation controls water in all its forms, be it liquid, gaseous or frozen. It is often used to increase the chance of rain, although careless use of this powerful effect will produce droughts in other areas.



Effects:

Slow or speed up the flow of water: 1 Essence points per gallon per minute; halves or doubles the speed of water. It can cause pipes to burst by increasing water pressure.

Create an area of fog or mist: 1 Essence point per cubic yard for a thin mist that will reduce Perception-based rolls by 1; triple for a thick fog that will block visibility to a couple of yards and will make most Perception rolls based on vision almost impossible.

Create Ice or Freeze Water. This costs 1 Essence point for each pound of ice created. Ice can be used to cause the ground to become slippery, to seal doors by freezing them over, and anything the player's imagination can devise (except materializing ice inside a living person and similar abominations).

Cause rain: Causes rainfall over a small area. 5 Essence for 1 minute of light rain over a radius of 10 feet for every level of Willpower and Intelligence combined. Add one Essence point for each additional 10 foot radius. Add 4 Essence for hard rain or sleet, or 6 Essence for light hail, or add 10 Essence for heavy hail (enough to inflict 1D4 (2) points of damage on unprotected humans every minute or so). If the day was sunny, double all the above costs. During a dry spell, on a desert, or similar area where rain is unlikely, triple all the costs.

Farsight

This is the power to see into other places and to search areas by projecting a fraction of one's Essence beyond one's body. The principles of magic of Farsight are similar to those of Soul Projection (see below), but are more limited and do not require the magician to relinquish control of his body.

Effects: Failure to Dismiss the Invocation often causes inconvenient visions and flashbacks to bother the magician for 1D4 (2) hours.

Look into another area: 5 Essence points allows you to look into any area within range; you must be aware of the general location of the area, however. The base range is 100 yards times the Perception attribute. This can be raised to 1 mile times the Perception Attribute for another 5 Essence, and an additional mile per Essence point spent.

Search for an individual: The more powerful the person being searched, the easier it is, as his Essence acts like a beacon for those with the right senses. 10 points for a mundane, 5 points for a Gifted person with less than 30 Essence, 2 points for a Gifted person with more than 30 Essence points. If the person being sought has used magic during the past few hours, all Focus rolls are at +1 for every 5 Essence points used by the target. If the Gifted character is Shielded (see the Shielding Invocation), then his Essence is kept hid-

den and he must be sought out like a Mundane. This effect uses Perception instead of Willpower, and it searches for the person in the area covered by the Invocation. The base area has a radius of 1 mile per Perception level. Each additional mile costs 1 Essence point.

Gateway

The ways to the Otherworlds are few and hard to find.. Only a few among the Gifted know how to open and close them. Perhaps it is for the best, because there are beings in some of the Otherworlds that humans have no business encountering; some of them would only be too delighted for the opportunity to render an unwanted visitor limb by limb. The danger is not always enough to deter the Gifted, of course, and many have ventured into the Otherworlds, looking for power or adventure.

Having this Incantation does not automatically allow you to travel across the dimensions, however, just like learning how to walk does not mean you know where every road leads. The "locations" of different Otherworlds are closely-held secrets. Most Covens, even entire Covenants, may not know how to access any of them. Most visits to the Otherworld are made through Soul Projection, and are limited to those Realms most closely linked to our own. The Death Realms are the most commonly visited ones.

Effects:

Activate an Existing Gateway: Most Gateways were created centuries (some say eons) ago, by long-lost cultures. Even when not activated, their location often has a reputation as a "haunted" area, because it is easier for beings from the Otherworlds to slip through there. If the magician find a Gateway, he can activate it by spending 25 Essence; this energy fuels the long-lasting magicks used to create the doorway between universes, allowing it to open for short periods of time (typically one minute per success level in the Focus result).

Travel to Another World: This effect allows the magician to travel body and soul to one of the Otherworlds. Only the magician herself, and about fifty pounds of equipment or clothing will be transported by this effect, and the magician must have previously visited that dimension through a Gateway.

Close an Open or Opening Gateway: This power allows the magician to shut down a Gateway by neutralizing the Essence used in powering it. The energy spent is always very high, as the magician or forces opening the Gateway will resist this. Treat closing a Gateway as a Resisted Task; both sides use their Willpower and Gateway Incantation; the side that used the most Essence in the Incantation adds a +1 bonus for every 10 Essence points of difference.

Closing the Gateway does not make it go away, however; the walls between worlds remain weak at that location, and somebody might use it at a later date.

Create a Gateway: This expensive and difficult task is beyond the abilities of most magicians and even most groups of magicians. The energy cost for such an undertaking is huge, ranging from five hundred to thousands of Essence points, depending on the actual size and destination of the Gateway. Once created, the rip in reality will be there, if not forever, long enough to seem so to most beings.

Hideaway

Magicians with this invocation can hide their presence or that of other people or objects, effectively rendering them invisible. The Hideaway invocation works on many different levels. Some of the Essence weaving twists light in such a way as to obscure the magician's presence. Even cameras and infrared sensors will only register a faint glimmer where the magician is (spotting the glimmer requires a Difficult Perception test; characters with occult experience can use Notice and Perception task instead). More importantly however, the invocation works on the minds of any body in sight of the magician. People are subtly manipulated not to look in the magician's direction and to unconsciously avoid the spot where the caste stands. Crowds will part away from the magician as he walks through them, unnoticed and unmolested. Objects and areas protected in this manner similarly avoid the interest of those who pass near them.

If the Invocation is cast while the magician is in plain sight of others, there is a chance that some people will be unaffected. Make an Invocation task for the Magician; the result is resisted by a Perception and Notice Task or a Difficult Perception Test by anybody who could see the magician at the time of the Invocation. Gifted characters get a +2 bonus to resist the illusion, and supernatural beings who can see through illusions have a +3 bonus to their Task or Test. Anybody who successfully resists will see the character's shape become blurry and semi-transparent, but the character will still be visible, especially in good light (shadows and darkness may allow the semi-invisible character to hide from even those who resisted the magic).

Attacking or otherwise attracting the attention of people will reduce the effectiveness of the magic. The mental component of the Hideaway will fail, and people may be able to spot the magician's glimmering outline. Even so, attacking the invisible character is a difficult undertaking; hand to hand attacks are at a -1 penalty; ranged attacks are at -4.

Places can also be made invisible with Hideaway. The effect basically hides the location from anybody

who might be searching for it; only the caster can find it without problems. The Invocation can only be cast in places that do not get a lot of traffic; if enough people are passing by the area, somebody will accidentally enter the hidden location, dispelling the illusion. Once the Hideaway is in place, Mundanes will not get a chance to see the hidden place; it will be as if it wasn't there. The Gifted may sense the magic on a Difficult Perception Test with a -3 penalty, but even they will not see the location unless they spend a great deal of time and effort searching for it. The Sidhe, Ghosts and other supernatural beings who can see Essence constructs will be able to locate the place on a Difficult Perception Test with no modifiers.

Effects:

Invisibility: The magician can make herself and others invisible, as described above. The Essence cost varies with the size of the spell's subject. A man-sized or smaller item or person costs 6 Essence points per ten minute period; the sorcerer can spend additional Essence to increase this period during the initial Invocation, or may recast the Invocation before its duration is over, but the latter will require a new set of Focus and Dismissal Tasks. Larger objects (up to the size of a car) cost 8 Essence points per 10 minutes. Anything larger (a bus, an airplane) cost 24 Essence points per 10 minutes.

Hideaway: A location can be made invisible. People passing by will never "see" the hidden place and anybody within it; it will be as if the location blends perfectly into the surrounding landscape. An entire house could be hidden in this way; to outsiders, the place may look like a vacant lot, a lot that their eyes will slide over and then forget without much thought. The cost of this Invocation depends on the size of the place and the length of time. Since the place is not moving, it costs less Essence to hide it than to make a person or moving object invisible. The base cost is 1 Essence point per yard/meter of radius. This will last for one hour; the same base cost must be paid per additional hour.

Permanent Hideaway: This Invocation effect can be attempted after a successful Hideaway has been cast on a place to keep it hidden for 5 hours; this is how long the Permanent Hideaway takes to cast. At the end of the ritual, a total of 120 Essence will hide the location for one month per success level in the Invocation Task. If 240 Essence points are spent, the location will be hidden for *one year per* success level in the Invocation Task. Even if the illusion is broken by attracting attention to the location (see above), the Hideaway will reassert itself in 1D4(2) hours; those who saw the location will know that something is going on, however, and will have a much greater chance of breaking the illusion again.

Insight

All the Gifted are sensitive to the supernatural, magical activity, and other psychic phenomena. Insight allows the magician to go even further and truly understand another being's true nature, and even uncover its deepest secrets.

Effects:

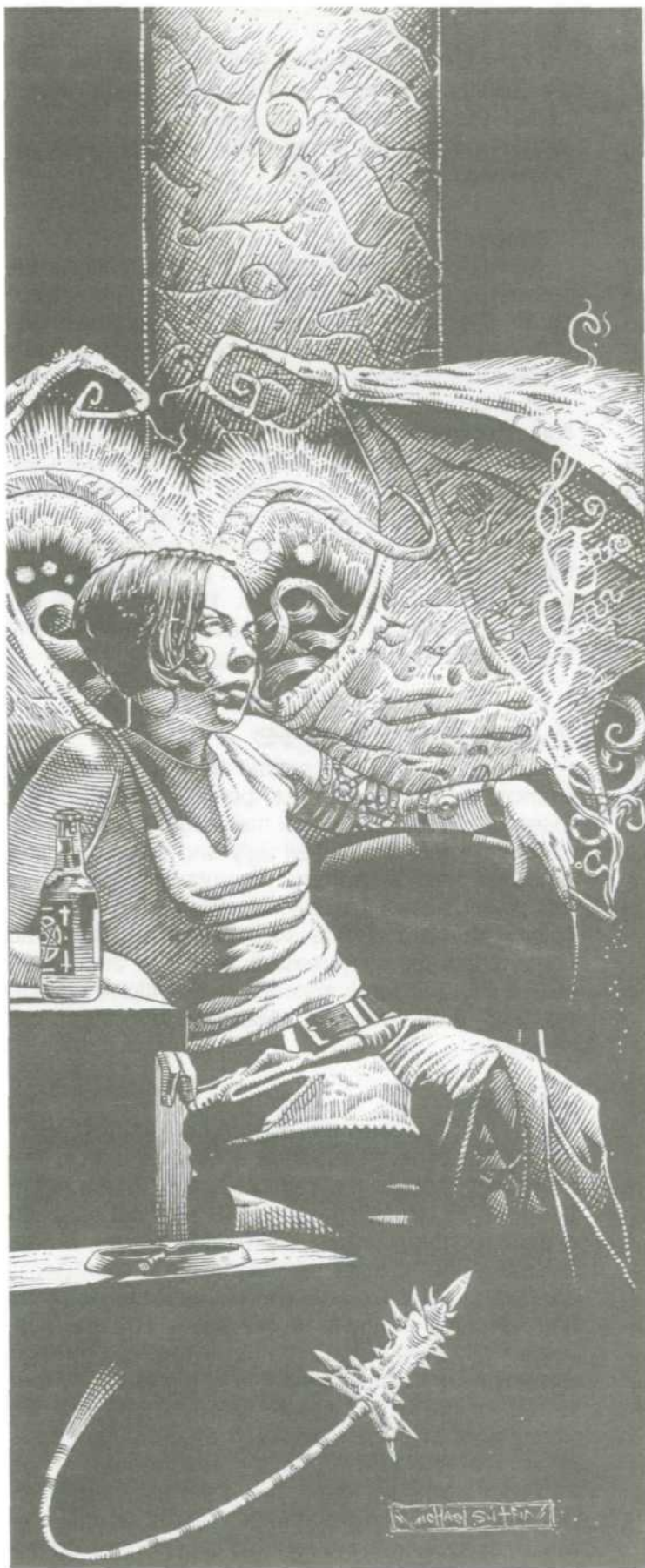
Perceive a being's true nature: This Effect allows the sorcerer to see the person's true self. Humans subjected to this ability resist with their Intelligence and Willpower; if the Invocation works, the magician gains a degree of understanding about the person's wants, fears and flaws. Basically, the magician knows all the character's mental Qualities and Drawbacks, as well as his main goals and fears. On supernatural creatures, this effect (also resisted by the creature's Intelligence and Willpower) will reveal the being's species in addition to his goals and personality. This effect costs 6 Essence points. An Essence Shield (see the Shielding Invocation on p. 161) will block this power; the Insight will only show the presence and strength of the shield, but nothing else.

Lesser Curse

Essence is the force behind all things, including chance. By surrounding a person with negative Essence, a vengeful sorcerer may cause the person to experience misfortune, feel ugly and unwanted, and otherwise have a bad time. The unwarranted use of this power often turns back on the caster, however. Even if the Dismissal is successful, magicians who curse others for petty reasons may find themselves visited with the same maladies they inflicted on others, and then only the Cleansing Invocation will remove it.

Effects:

Bad Luck: This gives the character a bad luck "pool;" each point of Bad Luck costs 3 Essence points. The Chronicler controls the Bad Luck pool. When something can be wrong, the Chronicler may opt to spend a point of Bad Luck to make sure it goes wrong. Spending one point of bad luck when a character is attempting a Task or Test works as if the character had rolled a 1 or drawn an ace (see p. 107 and 123, respectively). When the situation is resolved through roleplaying or Chronicler's decision, things simply turn wrong for the victim; people take what he says the wrong way, or some unforeseen circumstances turns his success into ashes. This lasts until the last of the Bad Luck points are spent, the victim finds the magician who cursed him and forces him to remove the magic, or a Cleansing Invocation is performed on the



character (this last is treated as a Resisted Task using the magician's Willpower and respective Invocation levels.

Lesser Healing

This Invocation can restore minor wounds, reduce the severity of major wounds and cure minor diseases or maladies. It requires the magician to lay hands on the wounded or sick person. During the Invocation, the magician will feel the pain and problem of the victim. Severe wounds and painful ailments require the magician to pass a Simple Willpower Test to endure the second-hand pain and discomfort. If the test is passed, the magician can continue unimpeded. Otherwise, the Focus task is at -5. If the first attempt does not completely cure the wound or disease, any further attempts are at a -2 penalty on both the Focus and Dismissal tasks. A failed Dismissal means the magician is affected by the wound or disease he cured!

Effects:

Heal Wounds: This restores 1 Life point for every Essence Point spent. The victim will lose 1 Endurance Point for each Life Point restored; this accounts for blood loss and the energy cost of the accelerated healing process. This effect will close cuts and puncture wounds, mend broken bones and even re-attach any fresh body part back on the body (provided the Invocation heals the entire damage inflicted); it will not restore missing limbs or organs, especially long-gone ones. A severed finger can be grafted on if the finger is fresh and available; a ruined eye cannot be fixed by this Invocation.

Cure Disease: Only any minor, non-terminal disease can be cured; anything that can be treated with antibiotics or no more severe than a cold or the flu can be cured with this magic. This costs 10 Essence points.

Lesser Illusions

Essence can be used to fool the senses, creating a simulacrum that may appear, sound and even smell like the real thing. Such illusions are not solid, however, nor do they cast a shadow (although the illusion of a shadow can be created to get around that). Sometimes, illusions do not look quite right, allowing people to realize that what they are watching is not real. Most Illusions work as a Resisted Task, pitting the caster's Focus result against the Perception and Intelligence of those who see the Illusion. Illusions are not selective - the effect can be perceived by everyone.

Effects:

Create a visual illusion: This illusion can look like anything the character can picture, but it will not make any sound. This costs 1 Essence per cubic foot of the illusion. The illusion lasts for 5 minutes.

Create an auditory illusion: As above, but creating only sounds. The loudest sound possible will be strong enough to be uncomfortable, but not enough to actually damage or stun people. The cost in Essence is for each sound made. 1 Essence for a soft noise (equivalent to a whisper); 2 for the equivalent of normal speech, 3 for a shout or scream, 5 for a loud (but not deafening) sound. To have an extended sound illusion, pay triple the cost (i.e., 6 Essence for the sounds of a conversation); this will last 5 minutes.

Create a realistic illusion: Creates an illusion that will fool most senses except touch. 5 Essence per cubic foot of the illusion.

Levitate

This Invocation allows the magician to float or slide over a cushion of Essence. The easiest methods of movement include a sliding motion a few inches off the ground. Movement is usually limited to a walking speed; faster speeds are possible, but at a great Essence cost. Floating over a crowd or populated area is very risky, because if a lot of people see the magician, the character will have to overcome their disbelief (see p. 00), or the Invocation will fail - not a good thing while floating in the air.

Effects:

Float: The magician can make himself hover and float at a slow pace, in the direction he wants. This has a base speed of five miles an hour, which allows the magician to move up or down some 5-10 yards per game turn (note that most people can run much faster than that). Once the magician is up in the air, wind currents may propel him at greater speeds (but not necessarily in the direction he wants, unless he is controlling the wind somehow). In fact, the magician may need to fight or maneuver against the wind to get to where he wants to go, especially in open areas.

This effect costs 10 Essence points and lasts 1 minute per success level in the Focus Task. Making somebody else float costs 15 Essence points, and the target's movement will be controlled by the magician. Unwilling targets resist this with a Simple Willpower Test.

Increasing the speed of the Levitation is possible, but very costly. Each additional mile per hour of base speed costs 3 Essence points.

Locate

Magicians with this Invocation can try to find anything or anybody, by zeroing in on the Essence "signature" of an object, person or creature. The process is time consuming and expensive, however, and it can be blocked in a variety of ways by other magicians. If the caster does not care about the expense, he will eventually be able to find almost anybody, anywhere in the world. Only the barriers separating Earth from the Otherworlds can protect somebody from the reach of this Invocation.

Effects:

The Search: The magician can look for anybody or anything that he has seen at least once before. The Invocation works as a "spiral search," with the magician spending more and more Essence as he widens his search radius. The basic Invocation takes one hour to perform, during which the magician visualizes the target. At the end of the hour, the magician must perform the first Focus roll and spend 20 Essence points. This will attempt to find the target within 100 yards of the magician. If the subject is not in the area, the magician must spend another hour of concentration, and spend an additional 25 Essence, which will widen the radius to one mile. The next increase (which will take an additional hour) will cost 30 more Essence points, and increases the radius to 5 miles. Each additional increase costs the previous amount of Essence spent, plus 5 (i.e., 35 Essence, 40 Essence, 45 Essence, and so on), and doubles the radius from the previous level (i.e., 10, 20, and 40 miles). Each new increment requires separate Focus and Dismissal Tasks; if a Focus Task fails, the Invocation must be started from scratch.

Mundanes cannot help being located in this manner, unless they are in a protected location. Wards, Shielding and any Essence barrier will foil the Search, but the magician will know that the target is in the area, although not his exact location.

Sending

Sendings are magical communications, Essence projections that convey information and images. Only Gifted characters can see them. The magician sends an image of his/her head or face (for more Essence, the image can look like anything the magician wishes).

Although a Sending will reach the intended target anywhere in the world, the Invocation does nothing to locate the subject of the message. The message works much like a radio signal tuned into a unique frequency, the "frequency" being the individual's Essence matrix. Therefore, the Invocation only works on people the magician has seen before; the visualization needed for the magic to work requires some memory

of the target.

The Sending usually consists of a visual and auditive component, which only the target can see. Most sorcerers send a visual recreation of their face or head, and their words, although others disguise their features or make themselves look like strange creatures; such changes require successful Intelligence and Disguise Tasks. Once contact is established, the magician can speak with the target and "hear" his responses for the duration of the Invocation.

Effects:

Sending: If successful, the magician will make contact with the target anywhere in the planet. This contact allows for conversation but very little else; magic cannot be cast by or against either the magician or the subject. An accomplished Seer might be able to use the connection to establish a telepathic link between the two with Mindtalk or Mindsight (see p. 00), but it will be very difficult, with a penalty of -6 to all related Tasks.

This effect costs 15 Essence points, regardless of range. Contact will take between ten minutes and two hours, depending on how far away the target is (this will give the magician an indication of the distance between them, but there is no hard-and-fast ratio between the distance and time).

Shielding

Most magicians who put themselves in harm's way know this invocation. Shielding weaves pure Essence around the magician, protecting her from harm. Most Shields work only against hostile Essence effects; at great cost, magicians can also weave shields that will protect against physical harm. A truly powerful magician may be virtually bullet-proof thanks to the Shielding.

In addition to protecting the victim from harm, the Shielding also hides the person's emotions and thoughts. Shields deny other Gifted the ability to see anything behind them. By spending more Essence, the Shielding can be made invisible, hiding its very existence. With such a shield, a powerful magician could pass himself off as a mundane, fooling even the senses of other Gifted.

The main drawback of shields is that they must be "fed" by a continuous stream of Essence. This means that the energy used on a shield cannot be used for anything else until the shield is Dismissed. Unlike most other Incantations, shields do not require Dismissal rolls right away; instead, the character can keep the shield around him indefinitely, or until an outside force destroys or neutralizes it, or he himself switches it off. A failed Dismissal at that point may cause the shield to flare on and off at inconvenient moments, draining the character of Essence without his consent.

Effects: Essence and Physical Shields can be combined; the magician must pay the Essence cost for both. To the Gifted, Shields can become visible with a Simple Perception Test. Their actual appearance is up to the character. Some shields are simple spheres or light, while others appear like suits of armor, complex crystalline structures, organic-looking shells or exoskeletons, or anything envisioned by the character.

Create an Essence Shield: This is the simplest shield available; it blocks Essence-based attacks. For 3 Essence points, the character gets a shield with a Protection Level of 10 plus the Success Level of the Focus task; each additional Essence spent adds 1 to that Protection Level. Any hostile magic aimed at the protected character must have a Focus result higher than the Protection Level of the shield, or the magic will not work at all. Example: Lisa has a shield with Protection Level of 18, at the cost of 11 Essence. An enemy magician tries to inflict a Lesser Curse on her. Her Focus roll is 6, and her combined Willpower and Lesser Curse levels are 8, for a total result of 14. This is less than the Protection Level, so the Invocation fails. Attacks that drain Essence (like Soulfire, and the powers of some spirits) can damage the Shield, however. Any such attack reduces the Shield's Protection Level by 1 for every 3 points of Essence damage inflicted.

In addition to this protection, the Essence Shield blocks any attempts to sense anything about the magician (other than the fact that she is surrounded by a shield).

Create a Physical Shield: This is a powerful but expensive effect. The shield becomes clearly visible to Mundanes as a swirling sphere or network of light (the actual appearance of the shield, is, as always, determined by the character's conception). Being an over display of magic, the character must overcome the disbelief or hatred of any crowds present (see the Crowd Effect on p. 153). There are three types of shield that can be created with this invocation: the shielding can be Hard, Soft, or Layered. A magician can have an Essence Shield and a Physical Shield at the same time but no more than one of each type.

"Hard" shielding acts as a thin but solid barrier; if the attacks are not strong enough to penetrate it, they bounce off harmlessly, but if they are too powerful they will smash the shield as if it was made of glass. Hard shields have an Armor Value (see p. 80 for more information) of 1 D6(3) per level. If any one attack strong enough to overcome the defense, the shield shatters; any remaining damage affects the magician and any further attacks will not be hindered by the shield. Hard shields cost 8 Essence Points per level.

"Soft" shields absorb damage more as a "foam" depth, slowing down the attack until it loses energy

Instead of an Armor Value, soft shields have a number of Damage Points; the shield will absorb that many points of damage before being brought down. In game terms, the shield has 30 Damage Points per level. They cost 10 Essence Points per level.

"Layered" shields combine aspects of both Hard and Soft shields, an energy field with a hard exterior shell backed by a pliable interior. Layered shields have both an Armor Value and Damage Points; any attack that inflicts more damage than the armor value is then absorbed by the Damage Points. The shield is not destroyed until all the Damage Points are exhausted. Layered shields have an Armor Value of 1D4 (2) per level, and 20 Damage Points per level. They cost 12 Essence points per level.

All Physical Shields have a major drawback; they will not stop any movement or action taken by the magician. What this means is that the magician can walk without bouncing off walls or people, and he can shoot or attack without interference from the shield. However, it also means that the magician could run into a spike and impale himself, and the shield would offer no protection. For the same reason, shields are no use against falls.

Making a Shield Invisible: Either type of Shield can be made invisible at the cost of 15 Essence Points. Nobody will be able to see or sense the Shield until it flares up to stop an attack. Sensory Invocations and abilities will not sense neither the shield nor any special powers of the character. Insistent mental probing may finally pierce the invisibility; this is a Resisted Task, pitting the character's Willpower and Shielding Invocation levels against the Gifted or entity's abilities or Invocations.

Soul Projection

This is the ability popularly known as 'astral projection' or 'astral travel.' The magician releases his soul from his body, leaving enough Essence behind to anchor him there. While in this state, the magician is a being of pure Essence, unconstrained by physical barriers, but unable to affect the physical world except through the use of magic and Gifted powers. Through the use of Soul Projection, the magician can travel anywhere not protected by magical barriers, see and interact with other spirit entities, and travel to other parts of the Otherworlds.

Effects:

Soul Projection: Project's the magician's Essence and his consciousness out of his body. A minimum of 5 Essence must be left in the body to act as an "anchor" between the magician and his physical self. The transformation costs 3 Essence points. Additionally, 1

Essence point is drained after every hour in the immaterial state. This Essence cannot be regained before the magician returns to his body. While in spirit form, the magician can use any of the common abilities of Phantasms, and they can travel through walls and other obstacles.

Soulfire

Pure Essence can be used as a weapon. This Invocation fire bolts of pure Essence; to the Mundane, the bolts are invisible; the Gifted see them as swirling streams of blue-white energy. Soulfire is extremely lethal when used against supernatural beings; against Humans, it causes Essence loss, which may be dangerous (see p. 85).

Effects: Soulfire inflicts 1D6 (3) x Essence points of damage. Human beings struck by Soulfire lose 1 Essence point for every 3 points of damage inflicted by the attack. Corporeal supernatural entities (like Vampyres and manifested spirits) take Life Point and Essence Point damage at the same time. Soulfire can strike any target within line of sight. Mundanes cannot Dodge the attack, because the Soulfire is invisible; Gifted and supernatural beings can see Soulfire, and Dodge normally.

Spirit limbs

This incantation allows the magician to manipulate objects at a distance. It is similar to the Sight power Mindhands, but not quite as versatile or powerful. The range and strength of the Spirit Limbs are determined by the Essence spent by the magician, and the power cannot be used defensively like the Seer power; in all other regards, the power works much like the Mindhands ability (see p. 140).

Effects:

Spirit Limbs: This effect costs 2 Essence points per Strength level of the limbs, and 1 Essence point for every 5 yards of range (this is the maximum distance from the magician that the power can be used, unlike Mindhands, which has a range of line of sight). Each successful Focus Task will empower the Spirit Limbs for 1 turn plus 1 turn per success level; at the end of that period, the Invocation must be recast and more Essence spent to keep it going.

Spirit Mastery (Type)

Calling on spirits is a fundamental part of magic. The Spirit Mastery invocation allows the magician to summon, bind and dismiss spirits. Many sorcerers prefer to use the powers and abilities of spirits rather than their own; these specialists in the arts of summoning



often have meager magical talents in other areas, but their mastery over a host of different spirits make them tremendously powerful. There are many kind of spirits, from the ghosts of the dead to nature spirits, elementals, Fiends and many others. Each type of spirit requires a different type of Invocation; thus, a magician might have Spirit Mastery (Elementals) and Spirit Mastery (Fiends), or only one of the two. The same Invocation can be used to banish a spirit from an area, or to exorcise it from a human body it is possessing.

After a spirit is summoned, or if the spirit was already present, the magician must secure its aid. Some Covenants (the Wicce among them) prefer to work an informal agreement, in which the spirit agrees to help the magician in return for a future favor. This is little more than a verbal promise; most of the spirits summoned by the Wicce are nature spirits, who resent being bound into doing anything (see p. 188). The Rosicrucians and other ceremonial magicians like to have a very detailed and "legal" relationship with their spirits. This is known as a Compact (if the spirit goes along willingly) or a Bond (if the spirit is coerced by main force). Compacts and Bonds have very specific language, and the spirits will live to the agreements to the letter - and often will interpret them in unexpected or malicious ways.

When a spirit is invoked and it is convinced or coerced to aid the magician, any of its powers can be used by the summoned (see Spirit descriptions for more information).

Effects:

Summoning a Spirit: This effect has a +4 bonus if the magician is summoning a specific spirit and knows True Name. Summoning a spirit costs 5 Essence plus 1/5 of the spirit's Essence Pool, rounded up. If the spirit is being unwillingly summoned, this is a Resisted Task, using the Spirit's Willpower doubled against the Focus result.

Spirit Bond: When a magician wants to totally control the actions of a spirit, he must either Bind it to his bidding, or he must enter into a Compact (see below).. Binding a spirit is both difficult and dangerous; spirits do not like to be bound. First, the spirit must be subdued or restrained (a Ward will usually keep the spirit in one place; see the Warding Invocation for more information). Binding the spirit costs 1 Essence Points for every 10 Essence points the spirit's Pool (the maximum points, not the current amount). The magician must state exactly what the service is, the length of the service, and the condition of the service.

Spirit Compact: A Compact is a formal agreement

between the magician and a spirit. It only costs 2 Essence Points to create a Compact, but the spirit must be willing to enter into the agreement. As the Compact is formulated, the magician specifies what the conditions and term of service are, and the payment for those services. Then, both the magician and the spirit swear on their True Name and Power. This oath is binding; breaking it will not only break the contract, but it will automatically drain the guilty party off all their Essence (this is a temporary loss, regained normally), plus it will permanently reduce his Essence pool by 2 points.

Dismiss Spirit: Dismissing a spirit if the spirit is willing costs 5 Essence points. If it does not wish to go, it costs 10 Essence plus 1/5 of the spirit's Essence Pool, and the effect is a Resisted Task, using the spirit's Willpower Doubled against the character's Dismissal task. This effect replaces the normal Dismissal task for the Summoning, Bond and Compact effects.

Remove Malicious Spirits and Phantasms: This effect forces a spirit out of an area it has claimed as its own. This requires an expenditure equal to one third of the Spirit's own Essence (rounded down) and is resisted by the Willpower and Intelligence of the Spirit.

Symbols of Protection

This Invocation imbues Essence into an amulet that can be used to protect against magical or supernatural attacks. The amulet must be hand-made by the magician or magicians imbuing it with Essence (unless the character is a competent craftsman or artist, the amulet will not look very nice). As long as the amulet is worn close to the skin, the character can use its protection.

Effects: Each symbol or amulet created reduces the magician's Essence pool by 1 point until the amulet's Essence is depleted (which makes it difficult for magicians to mass-produce symbols).

Protection from Magic: the Essence stored in the symbol will oppose any hostile magic used against the wielder. This works like any Essence-based defense (see Using Essence Defensively on p. 152). The Essence in the amulet can be brought forth instantly to block any magical effect; up to 5 Essence points can be used in this way. Creating this amulet costs 3 times the amount of Essence stored in it.

Protection Against Supernatural: This amulet will help the wearer against any supernatural ability that can be resisted. The amulet, alas, will provide no protection against physical attacks. This effect costs 3 Essence points per +1 bonus on resistance rolls against a particular type of being or power (such as Vampyres, or all mind control effects), or 6 Essence points per +1 bonus on resistance rolls against any

and all supernatural attacks. Every time the amulet is used, its strength is reduced by one (i.e., an amulet that originally conferred a +5 bonus against the supernatural will be reduced to +4 after the first use, and so on, losing all power after 5 uses).

Warding

This Invocation creates a Ward, a field of Essence that blocks magical senses and the passage of supernatural beings. Most Wards are drawn, painted or sketched on the ground. Often, a Symbol of Power (see p. 165) is used in the design to add to the available Essence. Common symbols include Circles, Pentagrams and Hexagrams (also known as the Seal of Solomon). The Warding acts as an invisible barrier against most otherworldly beings, ghosts, characters using Soul Projection (see p. 162), and similar beings. Most spirit summoning is arranged so the spirit appears within the Warded area.

Once created, a Ward remains in place until dismissed by its creator(s) or until the drawing on the ground is erased or destroyed. As long as the Ward is in place, the magician must keep it fueled by temporarily reducing his Essence pool by 5 points. These 5 points cannot be regained until the Ward has been dismissed or destroyed.

Effects:

Create Ward: This effect creates a Ward with a Strength rating: the Strength of the Ward represents its power and the amount of Essence spent in it. Spirits or supernatural beings trying to cross the Ward (either to leave or enter it) must win a Resisted Task, using their Strength and Willpower against the Strength of the Ward. If the supernatural being loses the contest, it suffers 1D4(2) points of Essence damage and is wracked by pain (-4 on all tasks for the next turn or two). The Strength will also interfere against any location or sensory spell trying to peer into it, but will not affect other magical powers and abilities. The base Strength of a Ward is 5; this costs 10 Essence points. The Strength is increased by 1 for every additional 4 Essence points spent.

The base Ward fills an area with a radius equal to the magician's Willpower in yards (the creator of the Ward can always opt to make it smaller than this). Larger Wards (sometimes used to protect buildings or houses from supernatural intrusion) cost 1 additional Essence point per extra yard of radius.

Greater Invocations

Some of the more powerful magical effects require the mastery of one or more other Invocations. These Greater Invocations are harder to learn and develop; in many cases, it is hard to find a teacher who knows more than one or two of them. Learning these Invocations may be a quest unto itself.

Bilocation

Prerequisites: Gateway, Soul Projection

Many legends speak of powerful magicians that could be in more than one place at the same time. While some were simply the result of clever tricks or lesser magical effects, some of the Gifted can and do possess the power to bilocate, to be in two places at the same time. The basic mechanism of this power involves dimension shifting and (some believe) breaking down the laws of time and space. The magician apparently splits his soul in two (the Essence Pool of the character is evenly divided among the two bodies) and recreates his body in a new location. The energy cost for this feat is considerable, however.

This Invocation causes the magician to duplicate herself, with the "double" appearing on any location within fifty miles of the caster. The magician can then operate on both places, while being aware of what occurs at either location. Being in two places at once can be very disorienting and confusing, especially if the magician is asked to do two things at the same time. Most of the time, the magician puts most of his concentration on one of the two bodies, with the counterpart remaining at rest. Normal tasks (walking or listening to two conversations at the same time) require the character to pass a Difficult Intelligence Test at -3. Fighting two fights (or performing two tasks that require concentration and precision) at the same time is nearly impossible; all actions have a -5 penalty; additionally, in combat, each attack by either incarnation counts as a multiple action (see p. 73) with even more penalties.

If one of the two duplicates is killed, the other will die at the exact same time. Any injuries or fatigue experienced by each form is transmitted to the other. Essence expenditures, on the other hand, are not shared. If the two forms ever touch one another, they recombine into one and the Invocation ends.

Effects:

Bilocate: This effect costs 25 Essence points and lasts

one hour per success level in the Focus Task. The Essence Pool of the magician is evenly divided among the two bodies (rounded up). The new physical body which will appear in any location known to the character within a fifty mile radius, will be identical to the original, and will be wearing the exact same clothing and any equipment the character was holding. The second form is essentially the same: it is believed that there is no actual duplication, but that the character is simply existing in two separate points in space at the same time.

Death Curse

Prerequisites: Healing, Lesser Curse

This Invocation is never used lightly, for it often attracts the attention of the Grim Reapers, the spirits of Death; Inheritors and Avatars with the Death Aspect (see p. 00) also frown upon its use by mortals. When successfully cast on a victim, the Death Curse will slowly but surely doom him. A succession of health problems will weaken and ultimately kill the target of this Invocation. Only powerful magic, necromancy or the removal of the curse will save the victim; any other measures will only postpone the inevitable for a brief time. Even killing the magician responsible will not do the trick; the sorcerer must be convinced or coerced into removing the curse.

Effects:

Curse of Death: The cost of this effect is equal to the Essence Pool of the victim: this makes cursing Gifted characters much harder than cursing the Mundane. This Invocation requires a lengthy ritual that lasts ten minutes per Essence point spent. When the ritual is finished, the Focus Task is performed, and the Essence of the Invocation is wrapped around the caster (in the case of a group Invocation, the leader of the Circle takes the Essence of the Curse); Gifted characters will sense the malevolent energies coursing through the curse-carrier. Then, the magician must go to the victim, and be within sight of him, to release the curse. The target can resist with a Willpower and Constitution Test against the Focus Task. If the magician wins, the victim will be struck by the curse.

The Death Curse starts to immediately weaken the victim, who loses 1D10(6) Life Points and 1D10(5) Endurance Points. This damage and fatigue cannot be healed up normally. Even magic and other Gifted powers will not work as usual; every 5 Life Points healed through magic or other healing powers only restore 1 Life Point to the victim of the Death Curse. Things soon get worse; every 2 hours, the victim loses a like amount of Life and Endurance points, and the process goes on until death or the lifting or dispelling of the curse.

Removing the curse without having the original caster lift it from the victim is not easy or cheap. Divinely Inspired characters can attempt to remove the curse; they must spend twice as much Essence as used in the Invocation, and they have to win a Resisted Task, using a Simple Willpower Test against the sorcerer's Willpower and Death Curse Skill. Magicians can use the Cleansing Invocation (see above), but they must spend three times the original Essence used in the curse, and they are at a -3 penalty in the Resisted Task.

On a failed Dismissal Task, the Death Curse will strike the magician or somebody close to him. The magician can remove the curse, but only after it has affected him and reduced his Life and Endurance points as mentioned above.

Empowerment

Prerequisites: Consecration

Empowerment allows the magician to create magical items, objects that hold within their Essence matrix the ability to release specific Invocations. These magical items are also Consecrated (see p. 00) with enough Essence to activate the Invocations a given number of times. Creating an Empowered object is a costly and time-consuming operation, best done in a group or at times or places of power.

To create the object, the magician (and any assistants) must know the Empowerment and Consecration Invocations as well as the Invocation to be imbued in the object. Only a specific Invocation effect is "imprinted" unto the object. A ring empowered with the Elemental Fire Invocation could select one of the effects listed on p. 118, at a set Essence cost, and nothing else. The ring could, for example, extinguish a pre-determined area of fire, or produce a jet of flame inflicting a pre-set amount of damage. The power level of the Invocation (i.e., how much Essence it spends) is also pre-determined during the Empowerment ceremony, and it cannot be altered by the wielder. So, if the ring is designed to extinguish a 3-yard radius of flames (at the cost of 9 Essence points), it cannot be made to increase or decrease that radius.

As the object is created, the magician determines what action will trigger the Invocation. This "trigger" has to be as vague or specific as the magician wishes, but very commonplace events may result in the object being activated by accident. Common triggers include words (typically some obscure phrase or sentence, not likely to be used in a conversation), or actions (like pressing a button or moving a lever). Others can be highly specific, like "Usable only by me or my direct blood descendants by reciting the word 'Jonah' three times, during a night of a full moon."

The great amounts of Essence required for this Invocation make it almost impossible for magicians to quickly create these objects. Even creating a relatively weak magical item would cost 50 or more Essence points; more powerful ones might require ten times as much. Clearly, it would be impossible for most mortals to control such vast amounts of Essence at once. Instead, the process must be conducted over several days or even weeks. The creator decides how much of the total Essence points needed will be imbued on the object that day; this total cannot be less than the amount to cast the Invocation being placed into the object (so, if the Invocation requires an Essence expenditure of 12 points, a minimum of 12 points must be placed into the object each day).

The magical effect will use the Invocation and controlling Attribute levels of the original creator for its Focus and Dismissal tasks; this is commonly known as the Strength of the Empowered object. So, for example, if the creator of the object had a level of 5 in the Invocation and his Willpower (or other appropriate attribute) was a 4, the object would have a Strength of 9; this 9 would be used in all Focus and Dismissal tasks.

Once Empowered, the enchanted object can be used by anybody who knows how to activate it, except as restricted above. Even a Mundane wielder can make use of the Empowered item, but he is restricted to the Essence contained within the object. The item can use the Essence imbued into it through Consecration; if the wielder has Essence Channeling, he may choose to use his own energy to activate the Incantations contained in the item. Once the Consecrated Essence in the object is gone, it can be re-Consecrated or activated through the wielder's personal Essence, as above. If permanently enchanted object (described below), however, the object will recharge itself.

An Empowered item, like a Consecrated one, will drain the magician of a set amount of Essence which cannot be regained until the object is destroyed. The creator of the object may choose to permanently sacrifice that Essence. This sacrifice will give the object a life of its own: its magic will continue to exist even after its creator's death. Furthermore, it will regain Essence on its own, at a rate equal to their creators Willpower every hour.

Effects:

Create Enchanted Item: This costs 20 Essence points, in addition to enough Energy to activate the specific Invocation Effect desired, and, finally, enough Consecrated Essence to activate the item at least once. Additionally, an Empowered item drains the creator(s) of 5 Essence points, that cannot be regained until the object is destroyed or depleted.

Permanent Enchantment: Some magicians choose to permanently sacrifice their power into the object. The Essence cost is the same as above, but the magician permanently loses 7 Essence points. The object, however, can be used indefinitely, and its Essence pool replenishes itself at the rate of 1 point per Willpower level of the magician.

Special: No Dismissal tasks are needed when creating an Enchanted object; the Essence is focused into the object, and thus does not have to be neutralized. When using the magical object, however, normal Focus and Dismissal tasks are required.

Using Items of Power: Using any material with affinity to magic, like crystals (see p. 00) or silver (see below) will add their power to the Essence Pool of the magical object.

Example: Georgia, a Wiccan magician, wants to create a ring that can extinguish fire in a 3-yard radius, which can be used three times before its Essence is depleted. Such an item would cost a minimum of 56 Essence points to produce: the base 20, the 9 Essence for the Invocation effect, and 27 points to activate the item three times. This total of 56 Essence can be cast over as many as six days (a minimum of 9 Essence points must be imbued into the Enchanted object each day); each day requires a separate Focus and Dismissal Task, and if any Focus task is failed, the process must be started from scratch.

Essence Mastery

Prerequisites: Blessing and Insight

Most powerful magicians will know Essence Mastery, the key to controlling great amounts of power. Like its name indicates, this Invocation is designed to control and focus large amounts of Essence, such as what is available during Group Magic. The Essence used by this Invocation helps "bind" the power used in other Invocations, greatly reducing the difficulties in controlling powerful magicks. It works like a set of channels or funnels that make it easier to shape the flows of Essence. To a Gifted magician who can see magical energies, the use of this Invocation will be obvious, and will look like highly complex geometrical shapes surrounding the normally swirling and chaotic energies of magic.

Essence Mastery will reduce or even eliminate the penalties to Focus and Dismissal Tasks incurred by using large amounts of power at once. Magicians with this Invocation can safely perform Invocations that would doom most lesser sorcerers. Most Covenants of magic will only pass this knowledge to veteran and loyal members, while keeping it from the hands of neophytes until they have proven themselves.

Effects:

Control Essence: Every Essence point spent in the Incantation reduces the penalties for Focus and Dismissal Tasks (see the table on p. 00) by two levels. So, for example, a magician who spent 4 Essence points with this Invocation would reduce the penalties for Focus and Dismissal Tasks by 8; this would allow the magician to control up to 20 Essence points without any penalties. One cannot use Control Essence on another Control Essence invocation, however, so magicians are limited as to how much power they can put into this Invocation.

On a failed Dismissal Task, the Essence used in the Invocation will, sometime over the next twenty four hours, cancel out any Essence put into another magical effect, effectively neutralizing the magic. This event occurs randomly, but appears to be triggered by any feeling of urgency on the part of the magician, so casually-cast Invocation will not cause it to happen.

Greater Healing

Prerequisites: Lesser Healing

This more advanced healing Invocation can be used to cure crippling wounds, terminal diseases, and mortal injuries. The magician can re-weave a person's Essence entirely, and can restore lost limbs, although at great energy cost. It is even possible to resuscitate the recently dead with this Invocation.

Effects:

Cure a Deadly Disease: 20 Essence Points must be spent in each of three castings (using Willpower and Greater Healing), conducted over a period of no more than two weeks. At the end of the process, the patient must make a Complex Constitution roll or draw; add a bonus of +1 for each level of success accumulated during the three invocations. If the roll is successful the patient is healed. Example: Roger is dying of cancer; his friend Louis performs the three ceremonies accumulating one, two and one levels of success respectively, for a total bonus of +4. Roger has Constitution of 2; with the bonus, he gets to add total of 6 to his recovery roll; the dice roll is a 5, for total of 11. Roger will recover; the cancer goes into an unexplained remission, and a couple of weeks later he can leave the hospital!

Restore Missing Limb: A missing limb or organ (like an eye, for example) can be restored. This effect requires the expenditure of Essence equal to the character's base Life Points, plus an additional 10 Essence points. The regrowth process is very painful and exhausting, the patient may need to be held down (a Difficult Willpower Test will allow the subject to bear the pain without resisting), and he will lose 1D10 x 4 (20) Endurance points and 1D6 x 4 (16) Essence points as his body's energy reserves are channeled into regrowing the missing limb or body part.

Resuscitate the Dying: A character whose heart has stopped can be resuscitated if attended quickly enough; resuscitation can be attempted up to One hour per Constitution point of the victim after the heart stopped. Enough Essence must be spent to heal all the wounds or damage suffered (as per the Lesser Healing invocation), plus an additional 15 Essence points. If the Invocation is successful, the subject needs to pass a Survival Test, with a +1 bonus for every success level in the Invocation task. If the Test is passed, the subject is revived; otherwise, the victim remains dead, and no further attempts to resuscitate will work.

Greater Illusion

Prerequisite: Lesser Illusion

Some occultists refer to this Invocation as "Lesser Creation," and that name may be more appropriate. Unlike the Lesser Illusion, which only affects the senses (except touch), this Invocation creates things that can be felt, touched, or tasted - but which are not "real" in any lasting sense. An illusory hamburger will taste as good as the real thing, but will provide no nourishment, nor will it assuage hunger past the duration of **the** Invocation. An illusory knife can produce painful slashes, but it can neither kill nor disable.

The biggest limitation of this Invocation is the fact that most Gifted characters will be able to identify illusions as creations of Essence. On a successful Simple Perception Test, any character with the Gift will notice a faint supernatural glow around the illusory object or panorama, while masters of the unreal like the Sidhe will automatically identify the illusions as what they are.

Illusory Wounds: Once illusions are engaged in combat, their unreality is very likely to be realized. Wounds will hurt, but they will not impair the character beyond the momentary shock. Regardless of how deep the wound looks, they only inflict 1 point of "damage" on the target. The wounded victim may need to pass a Simple Willpower Test to keep his cool (see p. 76), or may be temporarily out of the fight. For one turn - a couple of seconds - the character is unable to attack, but may defend normally; a new Test is required every turn until the character passes it, with a cumulative +1 bonus. After two or three such incidents, the targets will realize that the illusory bullets or blades or claws just do not seem to be very effective. This allows them a new Perception Test to see through the illusion.

Effects:

All illusion effects last 5 minutes, plus one minute



for each success level in the Focus Task. At the end of that time period, a new Focus and Dismissal Tasks are required, plus an additional expenditure of Essence. On a failed Dismissal Task, illusory images of the

appropriate size (see below) will haunt the magician one to four times (the Chronicler can roll a D4 or determine the number of apparitions arbitrarily).

Create an Illusion: This creates an illusionary object or person. Any creature or item that the character knows well can be recreated exactly as the character remembers. For highly complex or detailed objects, or to create an illusion of a person, the magician needs to pass a simple Intelligence Test; the higher the success level, the closer to reality the illusion is (even one success level will fool most people, but to fully convince those who are very familiar with the real thing may require three or more success levels). The Essence cost of these illusions is determined by their size: 3 Essence point per cubic foot of size. Add 5 Essence points to the total cost if the illusion can be moved around (this effect has a line of sight range).

Illusionary Disguise: "The magician can create an illusion around himself or others. This illusion will feel as solid as the real thing, and can transform the person's size (although it cannot be smaller than they are), gender and appearance. The illusion's movements will follow the subject's perfectly. This effect costs 5 points

plus the size of the illusion, as above (a human-size disguise costs 6 Essence points).

Panorama: This is an entire illusionary landscape, the environment that will fool all the senses. The illusion will not support any weight, however, so illusionary ladders or staircases will feel deceptively solid - until somebody steps right through them. Magicians will usually organize their illusions so that they match the contours of the real surroundings, saving a few spots as traps for the unwary. The cost of these complex illusions is high: 6 Essence points per cubic foot per size

Tap Emotions

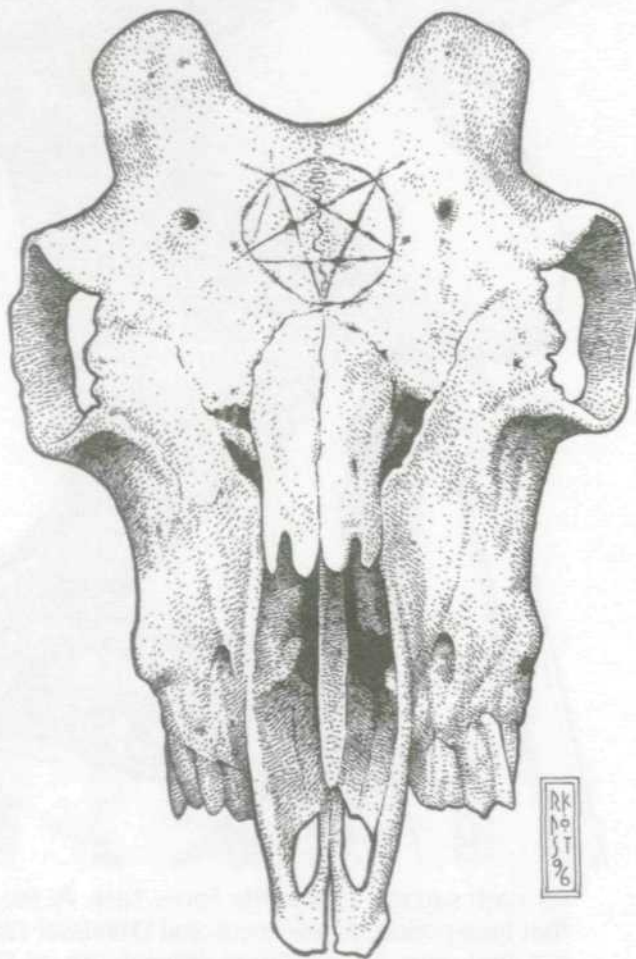
Prerequisites: Affect the Psyche

Magicians with this invocation can actually absorb the Essence of those around them, provided the people involved are experiencing strong positive emotions; Black Magic practitioners have a version that allows them to tap into negative emotions. This vampire-like ability can be used by unscrupulous sorcerers to prey on the Mundane, and those who abuse it will earn the disapproval (or even outright hostility) of most Gifted Covenants. Some Wicce and Rosicrucian performers use this invocation to tap into the power of their audience much like Vampyres with the Bard power (see p. 00); as long as nobody is being hurt (the Essence taken was released naturally the emotions the crowd feels), then the use of this Invocation is condoned by the Covenants. Groups like the Sentinels, however, find it objectionable under any circumstances.

Normal Gifted magicians can only tap out positive emotions like love, glee or excitement. Black Magic practitioners (see p.00) have an equivalent Incantation (not taught by the Wicce or the Rosicrucians) that allows them to absorb Essence released by any emotion, including anger, hatred or terror. Some of these sorcerers become hatemongers, inciting crowds into a frenzy to feed off their dark emotions. The main drawback in this dark version of the magic is that the relative emotions affect the magician's *personality*, turning him into a bitter creature unable to experience happiness

Effects:

Absorb Power: This effect requires that the magician is surrounded by a crowd, and that its attention is wholly focused on him. Most magicians "hide" their invocation as part of the performance itself, thus avoiding



problems of having to overcome the unbelief of the crowd (see p. 00). The people in the crowd must be feeling positive emotions towards the magician; this is usually achieved through mundane means, using their performing skills. If the crowd is not pleased by the performance, this Invocation cannot be used.

To tap into the Essence of the crowd, the magician must first spend her own Essence, however. The larger the crowd, the more expensive the process is. Use the Crowd Effect Table on p. 00, and divide the Essence cost by 5 (rounded up). So, for example, tapping into the energy of a crowd of 60 people would cost 7 Essence points (the normal 31 points, divided by 5, rounded up). The number of people involved also makes the invocation more difficult. Every additional 20 people above 40 (rounded up) requires the task to achieve an additional level of success. In the example above, the Invocation task attempt must achieve two success levels to work. Most magical performers prefer to work for crowds of under a hundred, or focus the Invocation only on a portion of the audience.

If the Invocation is successful, however, the magician will be able to get 1 Essence point per person in the affected crowd. This Essence can be used to power other rituals, replenish the magician's Essence Pool, or held for some time until needed (although holding onto a lot of Essence can be dangerous, see p. 00 for more information). Most of the time, the magician will only be able to tap into a fraction of the Essence released by the performance.

Walkgate

Prerequisites: Gateway, Levitate, Locate.

Some of the more powerful magicians can travel from place to another without needing to move, and in little or no time. Unlike the teleportation of comic books and science fiction stories, however, Walkgates are more like doorways that connect two separate points in space, doorways that the magician steps through. The actual mechanics of the power have baffled magical theorists. Some believe that the magician somehow "bends" or "wrinkles" space between two points through the power of his will. Others think that the invocation opens two doorways in and out a separate dimension; one takes the traveler out of our world, the other returns him to a different place on Earth.

When the invocation is successful cast, a glowing circle appears right next to the magician and he is "sucked" into it. The process happens so quickly that to most onlookers it appears as if the magician has vanished in a flash of light. The flash of light always accompanies the Walkgate invocation, unless hidden through illusions or the Hideaway invocation (see p.

118).

Effects:

A failure to Dismiss a Walkgate will trigger this effect at random at a later date, teleporting the magician in a random direction and distance (not to exceed the original range of the Invocation). The magician can resist this with a Difficult Willpower Test, and the sudden strain will drain the character of 1D8 x 2(8) Essence points regardless of the outcome.

Teleport: The more Essence available, the further away the magician can transport herself. To travel great distances, massive amounts of power are needed. To teleport up to 5 yards/meters costs 5 Essence points. To teleport up to 25 yards/meters costs 10 Essence points. For 15 Essence points, the magician can "jump" up to 100 yards/meters. Teleporting over a distance of up to one miles/three kilometers costs 25 Essence; each additional two kilometers (a mile and a third) costs and additional 5 Essence points. Teleporting more than one person costs an additional 10 Essence points per person.

Walkgate can be used on people against their will, but only if the magician physically drags them through the "doorway;" this requires that the sorcerer also arrives to wherever he is sending his victim. Thus, trying to teleport somebody a mile below the ocean requires the magician to go there as well, with fatal consequences. Also, if the victim grabs ahold of the magician and does not let go, the magician cannot use the Walkgate to leave without also carrying the person along. These situations should be resolved as Resisted Tests using the Strength and Dexterity of the magician and the victim.

Weather Lordship

Prerequisites: All the four Elemental Invocations.

Through this Invocation, the magician can control and manipulate the weather. Upsetting the balance of the weather is often tricky, however, leading to unexpected consequences. Even minor changes in one place may lead to major upheavals somewhere else, and a magician's rain making in Arizona could create a devastating hurricane in Florida, for example. The karma cost of such upheavals will eventually come back upon the magician. Failing to Dismiss this invocation will certainly cause a great deal of chaos and anguish: many freak storms, tornadoes and worse have been triggered by careless magicians - and they have been tracked down and punished accordingly.

A sorcerer can minimize the effects of his power by a careful balancing act, restoring conditions to their previous state after he no longer needs the weather effect he created. This is costly and time-consuming, but the price of not doing it is often catastrophically

high.

Effects:

Affect Weather: The Essence cost of this power depends on the area affected by the weather change and how extreme the change is. Causing a tiny downpour to drench a victim in the middle of a cloudy, overcast afternoon is a lot cheaper than causing a monsoon in the middle of Death Valley. Affecting anything larger than a few hundred feet of area costs so much Essence that only a large group of sorcerers can hope to do so.

An area with a radius of 1 yard per level of Willpower of the sorcerer can be affected for a base cost of 4 Essence points (modified by the extremity of the weather change). A larger area (10 yards per level of Willpower) has a base cost of 8 Essence points. A significantly-large locale (100 yards per level of Willpower) has a base cost of 16 Essence Points. A huge area (one mile per level of Willpower) cost 32 Essence points as a base; each additional mile adds 8 Essence points to the base cost.

The more extreme the weather change, the higher the base cost becomes. Small, imperceptible changes (causing a cloud to temporarily cover the sun) cost half the base cost given above, rounded down. A small but definite change (causing a light drizzle to stop, starting a light rain in the middle of an overcast day, or reduce the intensity of rain or a storm by one level) uses the base cost given above. A significant change (starting a good hard rain during a clear day, changing a storm into a mild rain) costs double the base cost. A great change (starting rain during dry season in a normal temperate climate, stopping or starting a thunderstorm from scratch) costs triple the base cost. An extraordinary change (starting a downpour in an arid desert, stopping a hurricane on its tracks) costs quadruple the base cost. The effects will be directly felt only in the area affected; outside that area, weather conditions will continue to operate normally.

This Invocation will last 5 minutes per success level or until Dismissed, whichever comes first. Before Dismissing the Invocation, the magician has the choice of trying to restore the natural weather he has disrupted; this requires an Essence expenditure equal to one third the cost of the initial upheaval, rounded down (i.e., if the magician spent 60 Essence points altering the weather, it will take 20 points to bring it back to normal); this Essence expenditure does not count for Focus or Dismissal penalties. If the magician will not or cannot restore the situation to normal, the Dismissal penalties will be increased by -1 to -4, depending on how extreme the change in the normal weather was (the larger the area affected and the deeper the effect, the harder the Dismissal will be). Messing with the weather of a large area will be

noticed: any magician within ten miles of the affected area who knows any Elemental Invocation or Weather Lordship will sense the disturbance on a Perception and Invocation Task. The source of the disturbance can be tracked down by a series of these Tasks, and careless or destructive mages will be challenged by their peers (or their superiors).

Sources of Power

Magic does not always depend on the magician's own Essence and skill. A number of items, places and times have power on their own right, power that can be tapped by those who know how. These things' power can add to the available Essence of the magician.

Places of Power

Certain areas have a greater flow of Essence than normal. Most of them are places where the barrier between Earth and the Otherworlds are thin, allowing for energies from other places to enter into our world. Others are places where ancient magical cults conducted their magical ceremonies. Any Incantation performed there will be able to tap onto this extra power. The extra power can also be tapped by supernatural beings, some of which use it to manifest themselves in the area. Places of Power are often plagued by phantasms, evil spirits and strange occurrences.

Most such places have often become shrines, temples, haunted houses, or other remarkable areas often the theme of local legends. Many have been claimed by groups of magicians, and they will not look kindly on intruders. Finding a place of power nobody has laid a claim on can be an adventure in itself. Keeping it once it has been found may also be harder than it sounds.

All places of power have an "overflow" of Essence that can be tapped by anybody performing Incantations in the area. This overflow renews itself every twenty-four hours, and it works on a "first come first served" basis - after somebody exhausts the overflow, no extra Essence is available for the rest of the day. A minor place of power will have an overflow of 10 to 50 Essence points. Most places of power will have 50 to 100 Essence points, and the most powerful ones will have hundreds or even thousands available Essence points.

Times of Power

Essence flows from many things. The Sun, the Moon, the planets and the stars emit Essence as well as gravity, light and other forms of energy. Their influ

ence does have an impact on this world; Astrology is correct (although often misused and misunderstood), and the movements of the stars and planets do influence what happens to people. The influence of those external powers contribute to some times of the day, dates of the year and special events having a special significance. During these times of power, extra Essence can be tapped by the Gifted to perform Invocations. The same is true for supernatural beings, which means that those times of power are also more dangerous than usual. Some of the most common times of power are listed below. The extra Essence available can be tapped by any magician once during that period, and not again until the next such time. In general, the extra Essence available is cumulative; for example, a ritual conducted during the Vernal Equinox at Midnight would get a total of 25 extra Essence points.

Noon and Midnight Midnight is known as "the Witching hour" and is a traditional time of magic and the supernatural. Less well known is the fact that noon is a similar time of power. These two times see a "peak" in the flows of Essence energies. Any Incantation or supernatural ability performed during these hours (the benefits last for the entire hour) will gain an additional 5 Essence points.

Full Moon: The moon emits great quantities of Essence, perhaps as a result of its proximity to Earth; during the full moon, lunar energies bathe the area at peak strength. Rituals conducted at night during a full moon can tap on an additional 5 Essence points, or a total of 10 points when conducted at midnight.

The Solstices and Equinoxes: These solar dates mark the beginning of the seasons, and are important times of change and transition, which provide great power. The summer and winter solstices are approximately June 21 and December 22, respectively; the vernal (spring) and autumnal Equinoxes are approximately March 21 and September 23. During these days, magicians can tap on an additional 20 Essence points.

The Four Days of Power. These four dates are traditional pagan holidays, and times of great magical power. One of them, not surprisingly, is the date commonly celebrated as Halloween, the time of haunts and spirits. The four dates are, in chronological order: **Imbolc** (February 2nd), **Beltane** (April 30th), **Lughnasadh** (August 1st) and **Samhain** (October 31st - Halloween). During these four days, 30 extra Essence points are available to magicians.

Symbols of Power

Many symbols have a great deal of power. It appears that some geometrical configurations attract power naturally, acting like magical magnets or lightning rods. By taking the time to use these symbols while casting an Invocation, the magician can tap on



their power. The most common symbols of configurations of power are listed below.

The Circle The circle represents infinity, as it is a line without ending or beginning. It can be used for protection against hostile magicks, or to tap into the flows of Essence. The Circle must be drawn or carved on the floor. Although a perfect circle is best, a not-quite exact drawing will often do the job. When used for protection, those being protected must stand or sit within the circle; used in this manner, the Circle attracts an additional 10 Essence points, usable on defensive Invocations only. To use the Circle as a source of power, the magician or magicians stand outside the drawing. Used to gain power thus, the Circle grants 5 Extra Essence to those standing outside the Circle; this Essence can be used for any Invocation.

The Pentagram: The five-pointed star has long been a symbol of magic. Popular culture wrongly believes that pentagrams are Satanic symbols. They were in use long before Christianity ever existed, and have come to represent many different things (pentagrams were actually used in some old Churches to represent Christ's five wounds). In the practice of magic, it often represents the four cardinal points, which also coincide with the Four Classical Elements. The fifth point is said to represent the Fifth Element, Spirit. Drawing a pentagram requires a Rituals and Intelligence Task (the Wicce and the Rosicrucians both use pentagrams).

A drawn pentagram will contribute 5 Essence points to any Invocation cast within it. A pentagram inside a circle will contribute a total of 7 Essence points, or 15 to any defensive Invocation.

Items of Power

Certain common objects and articles have inherent power, either because they can hold Essence more easily, or because they interfere with the flow of Essence. These items and materials are very useful in both the pursuit of magic and the fight against the supernatural.

Crystals: Crystalline formations have special shapes that seem to interact with Essence in a manner similar to that of symbols of power. Even carrying a crystal on a chain is helpful in preventing Essence loss due to stress of highly emotional situations (a crystal worn against the skin will reduce such accidental losses by half). Using a crystal as the basis for a magical symbol, amulet or Essence Vessel will provide 1 to 4 extra Essence points (roll 1D4 or determined by the Chronicler). Also see *Salt*, below.

Salt Common table salt is made up of crystalline particles, and is a powerful weapon against spirit entities and other incorporeal beings. Salt somehow interferes with the essence pattern of those creatures! Actually tossing a handful of salt at a phantasm, ghost or immaterial spirit will inflict 1D4(2) points of damage. Making a circle of salt around yourself will prevent such spirit beings from reaching you. Using salt in protection Invocations (such as the Warding) add 5 Extra Essence to the process.

Silver: Silver appears to be "attractive" to pure Essence. Silver objects and weapons can be charged by both Gifted and Mundane owners. This can be good or bad, depending about the type of Essence that is absorbed by the silver object. Negative emotions and the tainted Essence they release can, if imprinted on an object, bring bad luck to its owner.

A silver item that is Consecrated (see p. 114) will hold 10% more Essence points than a normal item (a minimum of 10 points of Essence must be infused into the object to gain this benefit, of course). This makes silver the most favored material for magical items.

If a silver item is held by somebody experiencing strong emotions, the item will absorb 1D4(2) to 1D12(6) Essence points. This Essence may be tapped by anybody with Essence Channeling. If the emotions are negative, however, anybody who uses the object risks bad luck: this works as a Lesser Curse (see p. 121), with each point of Essence counting as one point of bad luck.

Holy symbols made out silver, especially those used in devotional acts for several years, can be extremely powerful in the hands of a faithful person. The Essence contained in the object can be focused by the

faithful against any supernatural being who bears will against the wielder. The wielder must pass Simple Willpower Test; each success level in the test releases 1 Essence point (up to the amount of Essence contained in the item), which in turn inflicts 1D8(4) points of damage to the Life Points or Vital Essence Points of the supernatural being. These holy relics will hold as little as 1 (for a hastily blessed chalice or blade) to over 100 (for ancient relics that have been consecrated over and over for a period of centuries).

Star Metal: Star metal is typically iron that came to Earth from an asteroid. It is the bane of the Sidhe races, and it can also be more easily enchanted than common metals. It is believed the special properties of Star Metal come from their travels through space exposed to flows of Essence that are unlike those of our world. Besides its special properties against the Sidhe peoples, Star Metal can be Consecrated (see pg 00), gaining a benefit of 20% additional Essence: basically, for every 5 Essence points imbued into a Star Metal object, an additional 1 Essence point will be spontaneously generated.

The Sight

Since Humankind gained the gift of self-awareness (and perhaps before then), some people have been blessed with senses and abilities beyond our physical abilities. A select few have always been able to see into the minds of others, to catch glimpses of the past and future, and even to affect the world directly with no tools but their strength of will.

These powers have long been known as "the Sight" or "the Second Sight," since many such abilities involve sensing or seeing things beyond the scope of the five senses. Science has also labeled those powers calling them ESP (short for Extra-Sensory Perception) and Psychic or Psionic abilities. Of all the powers of the Gifted, the Sight is the most widely accepted by the general public. Its existence is no longer doubted among most people, although the scientific community still strongly denies it. Most people have not been exposed to those powers, however, and they are likely to react to such displays with fear or hatred.

The Sight does not require rituals or incantations although some Seers have received magical training to help focus their powers and they can use both Magic and the Sight. Unlike magic, the Sight does not involve invoking outside forces to perform tasks; the power is entirely internal. Also unlike magic, neither unbelievers nor the Inspired can neutralize the use of these abilities.

Seer Powers

Each Seer power is a branch of the same tree. All powers are related, and all Seers have the potential to develop all such abilities. They include telepathic (the power to directly communicate with and control other minds) abilities (Mindsight, Mindtalk and Mindrule), psychokinetic (the power of the mind over matter and energy) powers (such as Mindhands and Mindfire), and the ability to see into places and times where the normal senses cannot reach (Mindtime, Mindview).

All Seer abilities have two "attributes:" **Strength** and **Art**. The Strength of the ability represents the raw power the psychic has. This includes such elements as how far away can the Seer can reach others with his abilities, the amount of damage he can inflict, and how lasting the effects he creates are. The Art represents the degree of expertise a psychic has in using her abilities.

In game terms, the Strength of all Seer Powers costs 3 points per level until level 5, and 6 points per level thereafter. The Art of all Seer powers is treated as a Special Skill, and costs 2 points per level until level 5, and 5 points per level thereafter.

The Effects of Strength

All Seer Powers have a table that shows the limits of the power at each Strength levels. The higher the Strength level of the power, the more far-reaching and impressive those abilities are. Each power listing has a table showing the effects of each Strength level of the power.

The Effects of Art

The Art of a power determines how skilled the Seer is at manipulating his powers. Most tasks will use the Art level of the power added to the appropriate Attribute (typically a mental attribute). Each Art is learned as a Special skill, costing 2 points per level until reaching level 5, and 5 points per level thereafter.

Defenses Against Seer Powers

Mundanes can resist some Seer powers like Mindrule by using their Willpower. The effect of other powers like Mindsight and Mindtalk can be felt by a Perception roll (with at least three success levels), but normal humans cannot resist the use of such powers. Other Gifted may use their Magic or Seer powers to resist intrusion. Essence channelers can project Essence to interfere against psychic attacks; the process works in the same way against



Seer powers). A magical shield (see p. 124) will also interfere with Seer powers. Most Seer powers can be used defensively against mental intrusions or attempt at mind control. Each entry has a description on how to use that power defensively.

The Gestalt Effect

A Gestalt is a group of psychics using their powers together to increase their overall strength. If the Seers involved know the power being used, the group adds their combined Strengths together. Seers who do not have the power being used only add half of the Strength of their *weakest* power (rounded up) to the total. The Seer with the highest Skill level in the power being used will become the "leader" of the Gestalt, and all tasks will use the leader's Art and attribute.

Example: *Julienne*, Doug, Mark and Perin are locked up in a basement, slated to be the next sacrificial victims of a satanic cult. Before trying to escape, the group decides to try to communicate with a coven of witches that lives in the city. The four characters all have Seer abilities; *Julienne*, Doug and Perin all have the power of Mindtalk with a Strength of 4, 3 and 6, respectively. Mark does not have Mindtalk but is a powerful Seer with Mindsight 8 and Mindhands 4. Perin has the highest Skill in Mindtalk (level 6), so she is the "leader" of the Gestalt. The combined powers total 13 for those with Mindtalk, plus 2 levels from Mark (who adds in only half of his weakest power) - a total Strength of 15. The range of Mindtalk at level 15 is equal to twenty miles for every level of Strength plus Willpower (the leader's Willpower is used: in this case, Perin's Willpower is a 4). As long as the group remains connected, they can communicate the coven if it is within 380 miles of their location!

Essence and Seers

Most Seers do not use Essence directly, but their powers have the side effect of strengthening their spiritual energy. A Seer's Essence is equal to the normal base plus 1 for every level of Strength and Skill in any and all powers. For example, a Seer with a Mindsight Strength 4 and Art 3, and Mindrule Strength 3, Art 6, would add a total of 16 Essence points to her pool. For the most part, however, a Seer's enhanced Essence is more of a curse than a blessing, for it makes her more easily detected by other Gifted, and a more desirable prey for supernatural predators.

Some Seers also learn the magical arts,

and are greatly feared for the combination of those powers. Others have the ability to channel Essence and it gives them a huge edge, as they can strengthen their natural powers with it. Characters with Essence Channeling can temporarily raise the Strength of any of their Seer powers by spending Essence points. Each two Essence points spent will raise the Strength of a power by 1 for the next use of the power,

The following list has the most common Seer powers, their Strength and limitations, and some of the things a skilled user can do with them. A couple of powers also have an Art table, to determine the results of successful tasks involving the power,

appropriate Mindsight

Thought is an expression of Essence; basically "thought waves" are on the same wavelength as the flow of Essence. This means that any Seer power that works on the minds of others will have similar effects on creatures and constructs of Essence, including magical effects. Characters with Mindsight have the ability to see the thoughts of others; they can also see the normally invisible flows of Essence and beings like spirits and ghosts. Even 1 Strength level of Mindsight is enough for the character to see any spirit entity that comes within 10 yards of the character, unless the entity is trying to remain hidden.

Mindsight Art Table

Level of Success	Result
1	Can sense emotions only.
2	Can sense surface thoughts (whatever the subject is thinking at the moment).
3	Can delve deeper into the mind of the target. Any one simple question (i.e., anything that can be answered in one sentence or less can be "asked" from the subject, and the information plucked from his mind. Each additional success level adds one more answer.
4+	Can get a clear picture of the subject's personality, find memories and get an information the target has, provided the Seer specifically asks for it.

Hindsight Strength Table

Strength	Abilities
1	Must touch a person to sense his thoughts; can see large concentrations of Essence and spirit beings within 10 yards.
2	Can reach the minds of others, up to 1 yard for every level of Willpower plus Mindsight Strength level.
3	Range increases to 5 yards for every level of Willpower plus Mindsight Strength level.
5	Range increases to 50 yards for every level of Willpower plus Mindsight Strength level. Line of sight is no longer necessary; the Seer can "scan" an area looking for a particular mind, as long as she has telepathically contacted that mind in the past.
6	Range increases to 100 yards for every level of Willpower plus Mindsight Strength level.
10	Range increases to 1 mile for every level of Willpower plus Mindsight Strength level.
15+	Range increases to 20 miles for every level of Willpower plus Mindsight Strength level.

Using Mindsight

The most common use of Mindsight is to peer into the minds of others. The target of the mind probe must be in range (which determined by the Mindsight Strength of the psychic) and within sight of the Seer, unless previously contacted. This Task uses the Seer's Perception and Mindsight Art level. The success level of the task will determine how deep the psychic sees into the target's mind. Mundanes who pass a Difficult Perception test will sense something strange, a feeling of being watched or a disturbance at the back of their minds, but unless they are experienced on the area of psychic phenomena, they will not know what is happening. Gifted characters may resist the intrusion in a number of ways; in that case, this would be treated as a Resisted Task, with the Gifted using their own Seer powers, magic or other abilities to fight off the mind probe.

Most of the time, Mindsight produces short-lived flashes of information. A successful attempt will reveal images and words from the subject's mind. Prolonged

contact can be attempted, but it is fatiguing and difficult. To maintain mind-to-mind contact, the Seer must succeed at a new Art and Willpower task; each success level will allow for one minute of constant supervision. Each minute of mind contact will drain the subject of 1D4 (2) Endurance points, and will require a great deal of concentration; should the Seer be attacked or disturbed, the contact will be lost. During that time, the psychic can peruse the target's thoughts and memories at will.

Hindsight Defenses

Characters with Mindsight can try resist mental attacks. Any magic, Seer power or ability that controls, probes or influences the mind is resisted by using Willpower and the Strength Level of the Mindsight power. This works as a Resisted Task (see p. 00).

Mindtalk

Seers with this power can project their thoughts towards others, letting them "hear" them as words inside their heads. Once contact has been established, the Seer can also hear any mental reply of their target (only thoughts deliberately "sent" to the Seer can be perceived; to delve into another person's mind requires Mindsight and a different set of task attempts).

Using Mindtalk

Sending a mental message uses the character's Intelligence plus Mindtalk Art level. The psychic can converse mentally with the target for one minute per success level. The range of this power is determined by the Strength level. Mindtalk uses the same table used by Mindsight (see p. 167).

Mindtalk can be used for more than simple communication. By making the mental "voice" sound strange or unearthly, the Seer can scare Mundanes who do not know about psychic abilities. Some evil Seers have also manipulated disturbed and weak-willed humans by telling them to commit crimes repeatedly, until the victim finally decides to do what the "voices" tell him.

At a Strength of 4 or higher, the Seer can use Mindtalk to send a deafening psychic "scream" that inflicts some damage and overloads the victim's mind. Psychic "screams" are treated as a Resisted Task, using the Willpower and Art of the psychic against the Willpower (not doubled) of Mundanes; Gifted characters can resist this power in a variety of ways. This attack will drain the psychic of 1 Essence point every time it is used. A successful attack inflicts 1D4(2) points of damage for every four levels of Mindtalk Strength (rounded down), and the victim is will lost all

Mindrul Strength Table

Strength	Abilities
1	Can cause a person to hesitate for a few seconds before doing something, or to follow a fairly reasonable suggestion.
3	Can stop the person from doing something, or obey a one phrase command like "Freeze!" "Run away" or "Don't bother me."
5	The victim will follow a one sentence command to the letter.
8	The victim can be made to follow detailed instructions.
10+	The Seer can replace the victim's mind with his own, taking total control.

actions for one turn, and will be at a penalty of -4 on all tasks and tests for one additional turn per success level of the attack. The range for the scream is limited to two yards per Strength level.

Using Mindtalk Defensively

Mindtalk can be used to block any attempts to communicate with or probe the Seer's mind. The character is basically throwing up a wall of "noise" around him, disrupting any communications. When using Mindtalk in this way, the psychic will resist such powers as Mindsight and Mindrule, as well as magical Invocations as Affect the Psyche (see p. 114). The Seer uses his Willpower and his Mindtalk Strength (not Art) in such Resistance Tasks. While the power is being used in this way, other uses of Mindtalk are impossible.

Mindrul

This is the power to control the minds of others. Seers with Mindrule can command others to do their bidding, and even force people to do things they would never normally do. Making people do something that goes completely against their personality (making somebody murder a loved one, for example) is much more difficult to accomplish than "pushing" somebody into doing something they were consider-

ing doing anyway (like convincing an already-scared attacker to run away). At the higher Strength levels Mindrule allows the Seer to completely take control over the target, controlling him like a puppet on strings.

Using Mindrule

Seers using Mindrule must be within line of sight of the target. The victim must be able to look into the psychic's eyes or hear their voice. If eye contact is used, the psychic must Mindtalk to communicate his desires telepathically; otherwise, the orders or suggestions must be spoken out loud. Mindrule is a Resisted task, using the Seer's Willpower and Mindrule Art against a Difficult Willpower Test on the part of the victim; Gifted characters may be able to replace the Test with a magical or psychic defense. If the orders are totally contrary to what the victim would normally do, the victim gets a bonus of +3 to +7 to the Willpower Test. This is left to the Chronicler's discretion: keep in mind that it is much easier to suggest that "These are not the androids you're looking for" than to order "Turn your gun against your partner, then kill yourself."

The Strength of the power determines how powerful the commands can be, and how extensive the control achieved is. See the Mindrule Strength Table below.

Using Mindrule Defensively

The same power that lets you control others allow you to maintain control over yourself. When attacked by any form of mind control (including an enemy's attempt to use Mindrule on you), you resist with your Willpower and Mindrule Strength level.

Mindhands

This is the power to move objects with the mind alone, often called telekinesis or psychokinesis by psychic researchers. A character with Mindhands can move objects, throw them and even manipulate them. A highly skilled psychic can play the piano at a distance, or use a typewriter without having to touch it physically. The most powerful psychics can casually toss cars around, crush objects and people with "invisible hands" and bring down houses. Fortunately, such powerhouses are still very rare.

Using Mindhands

Moving an object in a relatively straight line use Intelligence and the Mindhands Art. Any object with line of sight can be grabbed by Mindhands. The maximum weight that can be lifted and moved (slowly)

determined by the Strength of the power. In this case, the Strength of the ability works just like the Strength attribute. See the table on p. 141 to determine how much the character can lift with his mind. To determine the speed of the object being moved, subtract the Strength level needed to lift the object from the total Mindhands Strength. Take the difference and multiply it by 10; that is the Speed of the object. For example, a character with a Mindhands Strength of 5 can lift up to 500 pounds. A 10-pound object requires less than Strength of 1, so the psychic gets to use his full Strength of 5, multiplied by 10 - he can move the object at up 50 miles per hour. Using the same method, the psychic can levitate himself; if the character above weighed 200 lbs (which requires a Strength of 4), the character could fly (or rather, float) around at a speed of 10 miles per hour.

Tossing objects uses Dexterity and the Mindhands Art. Thrown objects can be dodged normally. Most small objects (hand-sized or smaller) will inflict 1D4 (2) x Mindhands Strength points of damage. Long distance throwing is subject to range penalties (use the penalties for handguns on the table on p. 115). Massive objects (which require a large Strength level to throw around) may do 1 D6(3) to 1D12(6) points of damage multiplied by the Strength of the Mindhands power.

The Seer can also toss invisible "punches" by projecting hard streams of telekinetic energy. These blows use Brawling and Mindhands Art to hit. Mundanes cannot see the blows coming, and cannot defend against them except by jumping around and hoping to make the psychic miss (their only defense becomes a Difficult Dexterity Test, and that only after/if they realize what is happening). Gifted characters can see the Essence energy in such attacks, and can Dodge or defend normally. Telekinetic punches inflict 1 point of damage per Mindhands Strength level.

It is possible to use Mindhands to use weapons and machinery at a distance, but it requires a high degree of concentration and skill. The Chronicler determines what skill is necessary; this works like a Task, but instead of a Skill and Attribute, the character uses the Mindhands Art (replacing the normal attribute) and a Skill. Such uses have a penalty of -1 to -6, depending on how complex the task is. Using a weapon, for example would require the Weapon Skill and the Mindhands Art, at a penalty of at least -2 (for a hand weapon like a sword) to -4 (for a gun or similar firearm). Lock picking might have penalties of -4 to -5 if performed at a distance.

Alternatively, the Seer may want to use Mindhands to supplement his own physical abilities. A character trying to lift something with his

hands can add his Mindhands Strength to his physical Strength, for example.

Using Mindhands Defensively

Mindhands can be used to deflect physical attacks. A telekinetic "parry" will use the Mindhands and Dexterity of the character, and can deflect any attack the Seer can see (arrows can be seen, but bullets are too fast to be parried). Alternatively, the psychic can concentrate on projecting his telekinetic power around him like a "bubble" of power that will act like invisible armor. This is a Task involving Mindhands and Intelligence; each success level lets the field last for one minute. The energy bubble has an Armor Value of 1D4(2) times one half of the Mindhands Strength; it will slow down and interfere with any physical attacks.

Mindheal

Healers who can undo wounds, make the crippled whole again and cure terrible diseases have been the subject of countless legends among every culture.

Mindheal Strength Table

Strength	Ability
1	Wounds are healed at the rate of 1 Life Point per Mindheal level. Minor diseases can be healed.
4	Wounds are healed at the rate of 1 D6(3) Life Points per Mindheal level. Moderate diseases can be treated and cured. Recently crippled or lamed limbs (as the result of a recent injury) can be healed.
8	Wounds are healed at the rate of 1 D8(4) Life Points per Mindheal level.
10+	Complete cellular reconstruction is possible. Crippled limbs can be brought back to full activity, although missing ones will not magically reappear. A recently dead body can be resuscitated (see p. 00).

Note: Past the tenth level, the character can actually stop the aging process, making herself effectively immortal, remaining forever young.

Some such healers use magic, while others use the strength of their Faith. Some have the inborn ability to take the pain and suffering of others and absorb it themselves. Mindheal is extremely powerful, and at its highest levels it can make the psychic nearly immortal. Healing the wounded is always a very draining process; even healing oneself is exhausting, both physically and emotionally.

Using Mindheal

When curing a wound or disease, the psychic must be in physical contact with the patient. Healing somebody is a Task using Mindheal and Willpower. The degree of healing possible is determined by the Strength of the power (see the table below). The healing process is extremely painful, however, because the healer must feel the agonies and suffering of the victim; even if the patient is sedated, the healer will feel the full torment that the anesthetics have masked. Although psychics soon learn to detach themselves from the pain, doing so is a draining experience. After the Mindheal Task is concluded, the character must make a Difficult Willpower Test or lose 1 Essence and 1 Endurance point for each 2 points of damage she healed (round down). Curing a disease has the same risk of draining if the Willpower test is failed; a Mild disease (a cold, the flu) will drain 2 points from both Essence and Endurance; a Moderate disease (smallpox, simple pneumonia) drains 5 points from each; Serious diseases (tuberculosis, malaria) drain 10 points from each pool; Terminal diseases (cancer, AIDS) can drain 20 points from each.

These losses can be recovered normally. Healing oneself is also possible, but the Willpower Test to resist draining is at a -2 penalty.

A character with Mindheal and other medical skills can also use her powers in more subtle and indirect ways. A Perception and Mindheal task will add a +1 to any medical skill task for every success level achieved; this is done by using the psychic power as a diagnostic tool.

Using Mindheal Defensively

Mindheal can counter any supernatural power or attack that directly attacks the psychic's body and

Mindfire Strength Table

Strength	Abilities
1	A small flame, about the size of a match being struck, or can ignite highly flammable substances. Inflicts 1 point of damage if used on a person.
2	A flame the size of a torch, inflicting 1D4 (2) points of damage, or can ignite flammable substances (oily rags, dry leaves, anything that a lit match would ignite).
3	Can ignite clothing, wood, or anything that continuous contact with an open flame would ignite.
4	Can project a jet of flame doing 1D6 (3) points of damage for every two levels of Mindfire Strength. Range is equal to Willpower and Mindfire Strength, in yards.
5	Can toss a ball of fire doing 1 D4(2) points of damage for every two levels of Mindfire Strength. Range is equal to (Willpower + Mindfire Strength) x 10, in yards. Range modifiers are as per hand guns (see the table on p. 00).
6	Can extinguish up to 1 square yard of flames per Strength level.
7	Can cause a person to be engulfed in flames, doing 1D6 (3) points of damage times the Seer's Willpower attribute.
9	Can ignite anything even vaguely flammable (wet wood, flame-retardant fabrics), and melt metal.
10+	Can ignite fires over an area with a radius of 1 yard per Willpower level. Anybody in the area is engulfed, taking the damage listed above.

health. Curses that afflict the body, the Mindkill power and certain harmful Necromantic powers can all be resisted by the psychic's Mindheal Strength and his Willpower.

While in combat, a psychic can try to regenerate damage as quickly as it is inflicted. This counts as an action, and usually is the only action possible unless the character wishes to divide his concentration.

Mindfire

This power (also known as Pyrokinesis) converts the inner strength of the subject into pure energy. Fire is the most common manifestation of this power. Cases of spontaneous combustion have been the result of malicious psychics using this power on their enemies, or Seers who misjudged their powers and accidentally set themselves on fire. Mindfire is a dangerous power, for all Essence that is transformed into fire acquires a mischievous, destructive character. The psychic must learn to keep his power on a tight leash, lest it turn on the innocent - or on himself.

Using Mindfire

Mindfire tasks use Willpower and the Mindfire Art. If the task is successful, flame will manifest itself somewhere within line of sight of the psychic. If the Seer uses the power extensively over a short period of time (continually over a minute or so, for example), the character must pass a Simple Willpower Test to make sure the fire does not run rampant; add the success level of the last Mindfire task to the test. On a failure, a random flame effect occurs, with a Strength level of 1-4 (roll a die or the Chronicler determines it). If the failure occurred as the result of a roll of 1 or drawing an ace, the random effect will affect the psychic directly!

The psychic can make the fire he manifests appear right on top of a victim. No Dodge is possible, but targets of such an attack can use a Difficult Willpower Test to resist the effects; if the victim wins the Resisted Task, the fire power fails, pushed away by the latent psychic powers that exist in every human. Igniting something near a target cannot be resisted, but the victim may try to Dodge away. Dodges are also possible against jets or balls of flame.

Using Mindfire Defensively

The character can surrender herself with an aura of incredibly hot air that will melt bullets, burn anybody trying to touch the psychic, and will deflect other flame or energy attacks. While this ability is activated, no other uses of Mindfire are possible. This fire "shield" reduces the Damage Multiplier from any flame or energy attack by 1 (if reduced to 0, no damage is

Mindtime Strength Table

Strength	Abilities
1	Has vague premonitions about important events or gets vague feelings about objects and places where memorable events took place.
3	Sees short flashes of future events or see flashbacks about the recent past (one week per Perception level).
5	The visions are more detailed and last longer; the images make more sense and are easier to interpret. Visions of the past reach back one month per Mindtime Strength plus Perception level).
7	Visions of the past reach back one year per Mindtime Strength plus Perception level.
9	Sees clear visions that replay past or future events with crystalline detail.
10+	Visions of the past reach back up to one century per Mindtime Strength plus Perception level.

inflicted) for every level of Mindfire Strength. It also has an Armor Value of 1D4 (2) times the Mindfire Strength level. Finally anybody coming within two to five feet of the character will suffer 1D6 (3) times the Mindfire Strength level of the psychic.

Mindtime

Seers were particularly valued in the past for their ability to peer into the past or future. The Mindtime power lets the psychic see past the curtains of time. Characters with this power are prone to flashes of insight and visions of doom. Also, experience has shown that the future is not immune to change; pre-cognitive flashes only show the most likely future (which is also the hardest to change), and enough determination is often enough to alter the course of events to come. In general events involving Mundanes are harder to change than those involving the Gifted; Mundanes tend to be more vulnerable to the decrees of Fate, while the Gifted, while often pulled along by the vagaries of Fate, are more capable to define their final destiny.

Using Mindtime

Many uses of Mindtime are spontaneous and not under the control of the psychic: Chroniclers are advised to make a special note of any characters with this ability, as psychic flashes and premonitions have

an important part in most **Armageddon** campaigns.

Typically, the Chronicler tells the player to use the character's Perception and Mindtime Art in a task. The level of success of the task and the Strength of the power determines how much detail is made available to the player. If the task fails, the Chronicler simply says that the character feels a vague uneasiness, as if he had something important on the tip of his tongue but he cannot quite remember it...

Sometimes, the character will try to make an active use of the power, trying to force a vision about the past or future. Those attempts use the same rules above, with the power's Strength and level of success determining the outcome. Looking in the past is easier than looking into the future; the Chronicler may impose penalties to attempts to see the future, depending on how inevitable the future is; if the issue hangs on the balance, the future vision might only reveal uncertainty.

they get started! If the attempt fails, however, the character is overwhelmed by the possibilities flashing through his head, and he is at -4 to all task attempts during the next two turns.

Mindkill

This deadly power is the reverse of Mindheal - psychic powers that can break down the body of the victim, causing lethal effects ranging from triggering heart attacks to making the victim's head explode. This power can also be used against supernatural creatures by targeting their Essence directly or simply by breaking down their material bodies. The main drawbacks of this powerful ability is that it requires intense concentration, and, like Mindheal, it drains the psychic physically and emotionally. Although the connection between psychic and target is not as intense with Mindkill as with Mindheal, enough of the pain agony the psychic inflicts reflects back on him to exact a toll.

Mindkillers are often feared and distrusted even by other Gifted. The Cabal of Psyche (see p. 248) discourages the training and practice of this power, considered to have no redeeming qualities whatsoever.

Using Mindkill

The target must be within view of the psychic. Mindkill attacks are resolved as a Resisted task, using the psychic's Mindkill Art and Willpower attribute against the victim's Willpower and Constitution. Mindkill can also be resisted by any power or invocation that heals damage, obstructs mental probes or restricts the flow of Essence. The psychic can opt to inflict Life point, Endurance point or Essence point damage; the degree of damage is determined by the Mindkill Strength level (see

the table below).

Using Mindkill Defensively

Mindkill is primarily an aggressive power; it can help resist an enemy's Mindkill attack (use Willpower and the Mindkill Strength level), but otherwise it is useless as a defense.

Mindkill Effect Table

Strength	Abilities
1	Inflicts 1 point of Life, Endurance or Essence damage (pick one or share among the three) per level of Strength.
3	Can also inflict pure pain; this drains Endurance and gives a penalty of -1 per point of Endurance damage.
5	Damage is raised to 1 D4(2) times the Mindkill Strength level, which can be allocated among any of the three secondary attributes (Life, Essence or Endurance points).
8	Can cause the victim's heart to stop; this does no actual Life Point damage, but the victim will die in (1D10(5) + Constitution) minutes unless CPR (First Aid) is administered in that time.
10+	Life point damage will manifest in burst blood vessels, torn flesh and even exploding heads if enough damage is inflicted to kill the victim!

Using Mindtime Defensively

Characters with a high Mindtime Art skill can try to use their power in combat; by knowing what their opponents may do beforehand, the psychics can sidestep or avoid the attack. Treat this as a Difficult Attribute Test, using Mindtime Art as an attribute. This counts as one action in a combat turn. If successful, each success level of the Test adds a +2 bonus to the psychic's attack and defense rolls for the next two turns, representing the ability to react to attacks before

Mindview

This is another power that allows the psychic to transcend the limits of the senses. Characters with Mindview can "see" things unimpeded by distance or barriers. Usually, these visions are triggered by intense emotions or releases of Essence. The psychic will often see crimes being committed, supernatural beings preying on helpless humans, and other disturbing events and incidents. Generally, these visions also have a purpose; a great deal of the time, the psychic is in a position to do something about the situation he sees. Gifted of a religious bend see Mindview as messages from Gods or orders from Fate. More cynical ones consider this to be a curse where the victim has two choices - be forced to get involved in dangerous and horrifying situations, or live with the terrible images of the things you let happen.

Mindview can also be used actively by character; these clairvoyant effects allow the psychic to see through walls or containers. The ability is thus very useful for spies and investigators - provided they accept the terrible price for these powers.

Using Mindview

All characters with Mindview are subject to random visions of danger and horror; this power works in many ways like Mindtime (see p. 143), and Chronicler should make use of it. Mindview is a powerful Chronicler tool in guiding the characters; visions may alert the Cast Members to possible threats and enemies, and, if interpreted correctly, they may provide valuable clues and information. Random Mindview flashes are also a burden, as the character is often plagued by visions of vicious crimes and disasters, and sometimes he may not be able to do anything to prevent them.

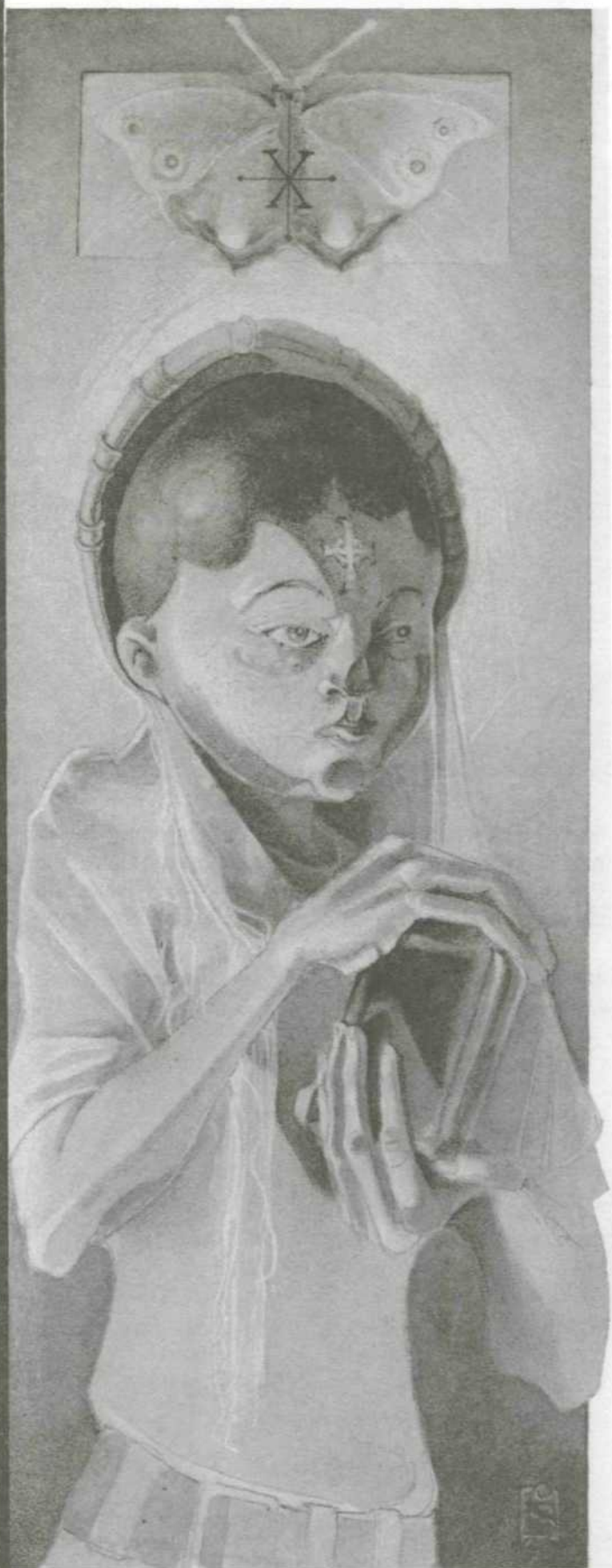
Mindview tasks use Perception and Mindview Art. There are two types of activities possible. Visions are flashes of insight about ongoing events. Often, the character sees through the eyes of a victim or perpetrator, or from a worm or bird's eye view; each vision works differently, but the point of view is often confusing, and most visions are short. Typically, the character will get multiple related visions each adding a little more informa-



tion to the overall puzzle. Viewings are attempts to see past barriers or beyond the range of the normal sense - looking inside a safe, for example or a place the character has never seen but knows about. The range

Mindview Strength Table

Strength	Abilities
1	Only brief glimpses of events are seen, equivalent of the blink of an eye. The range of a viewing is 1 yard per level of Perception plus Mindview Strength.
3	A few seconds (about a turn in game term) are seen of the scene or vision. The viewing range is 10 yards per level of Perception and Mindview Strength.
6	A whole scene, lasting a few minutes, can be seen in a vision.
8	Viewing range is equal to 100 yards per level of Perception and Mindview Strength.
10	Detailed, extended visions are possible. Viewing range is equal to 1 mile per level of Perception and Mindview Strength.



of the visions is irrelevant; if the Chronicler believes the character is in a position to be involved in the related events, the vision could be of events occurring halfway across the world. The range of viewings are based on the Strength of the power.

Using Mindview Defensively

Characters with Mindview often get flashes of near by danger or threats. A sniper on a roof, a group of assassins waiting for the character to get out, a speeding car just turning the corner - the Chronicler may warn the psychic of any such danger by requiring a Mindview task; even if the task is failed, the psychic should have the impression that something is going on (just as his player will have, having just been required to perform a Task).

Inspired Miracles

This is the least understood Gift, believed to be granted by a Greater Power, possibly the Creator itself. While scientists scoff at such notions and occultists theorize that these powers are not things but misguided magical abilities with a psychological dependence on Faith, the effectiveness of Divine Inspiration is without question. Those whose faith is strong enough can indeed perform miracles, heal the sick, and smite the unrighteous.

The Inspired have access to an assortment of abilities allegedly derived from the connection of the character to the Creating Agency. Some occultists claim that these powers come from the inside of the Inspired, and is nothing more than the channeling of their own Essence to fuel their religious fanaticism. Whoever is right, without their Faith the Inspired would not be able to perform their incredible feats, or use a Miracle, the character must firmly believe that he is fighting the forces of evil in the name of his God. Otherwise, he will be left without anything but his own meager strength.

Acquiring Miracles

Miracles are not skills; they are known through mystical revelation to the Inspired. To get Miracles during character creation, the character must first buy the Divine Inspiration quality (see p. 46). Miracles cost character points each. Additionally, the Inspired often have a large Essence pool as a result of their connection to the Creator. The Inspired may have Seer powers, although such combinations are rare. No Inspired

(at least among the known Covenants in this book) can acquire or learn Necromantic or Magical abilities. Even when such powers are not considered to be tools of Satan (as many Inspired believe), they are seen contemptuously as distractions from the righteous service to the Deity.

Using Miracles

The Inspired use Miracles in a manner similar to magic, by channeling Essence into the effects they desire to get. Unlike magicians, however, the Inspired have no limits as to how much Essence they can use; the Inspired can use up their entire Essence pool in one Miracle if it seems necessary. Also unlike magic, however, Miracles cannot be used at the whim of their wielder. Only extreme situations, where lives are at stake or supernatural powers have manifested openly, will warrant the use of Miracles. A Sentinel who tries to call upon the Strength of Ten to win a bar fight will fail; even worse, the blasphemy of trying to use God's powers to do profane work may cost the Sentinel his Inspired powers, perhaps permanently! In most cases, the Inspired must try to solve their problems through Mundane means. Only when confronting beings who are clearly agents of an unnatural powers will using ones abilities be justified. Even trying to fight Mundane evil may not warrant using Miracles.

Within those parameters, the use of Miracles is relatively easy; if enough Essence is available to power the Miracle, it automatically manifests itself. Some Miracles may need additional Attribute Tests or Tasks to fulfill the intended goal, but there are no Miracle-related skills. If enough Essence is available, it is spent, and the Miracle works. Essence is regained at the rate of 1 per Willpower level every five minutes.

The Denial

In addition to their repertoire of Miracles, all the Inspired can use their Essence to neutralize Magic. The Denial (as this power is called) consists of projecting Essence against the magician as he is using an Invocation. If the Inspired used up more Essence than the magician did, the Invocation will fail.

When Miracles Clash

What happens when the Inspired of two different religions run against each other? In the past, such individuals might face off against each other, each confident of being the servant of the one True God. Even then, however, more often than not, Miracles of either side would not work against another Inspired, regardless of their religious persuasion. In recent times, this is almost always the case. It may appear (and many Inspired believe this) that the members of every monotheistic religion are worshipping the same

Deity, and that their differences are meaningless in His/Her/Its Eyes. Inspired who have publicly said such things have often found themselves excommunicated or shunned as a result...

Tests of Faith

Unlike other Gifted powers, Inspired Miracles can be lost at any moment. Should the character lose his Faith, his powers will be nothing but memories. Falling from Grace is a terrible tragedy for the Inspired, and in the strange and vicious world of **Armageddon**, it is easy to do so. Pride (which "Goeth before the Fall"), temptation, greed, lust and cynicism are among the many pitfalls that await the Inspired in their war against the forces of darkness. Some beings, Demons and Fiends in particular take a perverse delight in tricking the Inspired into making that fatal mistake that will cost them their state of Grace.

Sometimes the moral dilemmas will be truly harrowing. Should the inspired save an innocent or take the opportunity to destroy a being that, left to its own devices, will surely kill again? Should the character break his word if given to a supernatural monster, even if the monster seeks to twist the meaning of the promise? Is accepting a reward for one's actions a sign of greed, or turning it down haughtily one of pride? The Inspired will have to come up with the right answer or risk losing it all.

Chroniclers should throw these and similar quandaries in the path of Inspired characters, although they should take care not to purposefully trip up the characters. The temptation of the Inspired can make for powerful Story devices; try not to be too cruel implementing them. Touching up on a few books on philosophy and morality might not be a bad idea to prepare interesting and devious tricks...

Miracle list

These are some of the most common Miracles among the Inspired. More Miracles will appear in future **Witchcraft** and **Armageddon** sourcebooks.

The Binding

This is the power to restrain supernatural beings, at least temporarily, by using Essence. The Inspired orders the creature to halt in the name of his God. This power is used to prevent monsters from attacking or fleeing while the Inspired mete out justice. The Binding only works against supernatural creatures, not the Gifted.

This Miracle costs 2 Essence Points per level of Strength and Willpower of the supernatural creature; the Inspired may not know how much Essence is necessary: if he does not have enough, his Essence Pool

will be drained and the Miracle will not take place. In addition to the Essence cost, the Inspired must win a Resisted Test involving Simple Willpower rolls from both the Inspired and the supernatural creature. If the being is not truly evil (as determined by the Chronicler), it will have a bonus of +2 to +5 in the Resisted Test. If the Inspired wins, the creature is bound; in place for one turn per success level on the Willpower test; during that time, the creature may not attack or defend itself, and is rooted in place.

The Touch of Healing

This is the ability to cure wounds, disease and disabilities. In the past, most Divinely Inspired people were healers; now far too many are warriors. The Miracle costs 1 Essence point to heal 1D4(2) points damage. Diseases cost 2 points for a mild illness (a bad cold), 5 points for a moderate disease (pneumonia, chickenpox), 15 points for a serious disease (a tumor) and 25 points for a terminal diseases (advanced cancer, AIDS). The Touch of Healing may only be used under extraordinary circumstances, and usually limited to the faithful, although the Inspired may elect to make exceptions for non-believers who are nonetheless fighting the good faith (interestingly enough, some among the Inspired are actually a lot more tolerant than the Mundane leaders of many Churches).

Exorcism

This Miracle banishes spirit entities and demons from both places and people. Exorcisms often take a long time, and are risky undertakings. To conduct an Exorcism, the Inspired must stand next to the possessed person or place. A series of Simple Willpower Tests follow. The first Test costs 5 Essence points and forces the possessing creature to reveal its identity. Some are Fiends, malevolent spirits who are said to serve the Adversary, while others are malevolent ghosts, hostile spirits and, sometimes, creatures so strange and alien that they defy explanation.

The second Willpower test is the first effort to push the offending spirit out of its current dwelling. The Inspired has to accumulate a total of 10 success levels to remove the possessing entity. Since one Test is unlikely to ever accumulate that much, the Inspired must keep making them until the necessary number of success levels is accumulated. Each such Test costs an additional 5 Essence points and takes 1D10(5) minutes of preparation.

In the meanwhile, the possessing spirit is rarely a passive spectator. Most of the time, the Exorcism process protects the Inspired from direct attack; the

creature must pass a Difficult Willpower Test (at a -< penalty) to even consider attacking the Inspired once the Exorcism has begun. However, the creature may try to intimidate, cajole or seduce the character away from his labor. Fiends and ghosts are the best at these tactics; their abilities allow them to see into the Inspired's mind and soul, and they can bring painful or shameful aspects of the character's personality to light. Insults and threats are often offered; the Inspired may need to pass Willpower Tests to see if he can continue the Exorcism without losing his temper.

If the Exorcism is successful, the spirit is removed from the body. If it lingers and the Inspired can see it, he can attack it with other Miracles or drive it away through the use of prayer and holy symbols. Most of the time, however, the entity will flee to the Otherworlds where it was spawned - bearing a dead ly grudge against the human who thwarted it.

Divine Sight

This Miracle allows the Inspired to find the Truth in everything he sees. Although this ability is very useful in uncovering the presence of the supernatural, the Divine Sight sometimes shines a light on some unwanted truths as well. While the Miracle is activated, the Inspired can not only see invisible spiritual entities and the strange auras of supernatural beings but it also shows the true nature of human beings. In a world of hypocrisy and lies, this ability often shows taint among pillars of the community, respected leaders of Church and State, and other seemingly benign and honest people. Inspired with the ability to invoke the Divine Sight often remove themselves from the original Church, unable to deal with the complacency and greed that often mars such institutions. Many start to develop a cynicism that clashes badly with the Faith necessary to carry on the good fight.

Activating this Miracle costs 5 Essence points, and lasts 10 minutes. Unless the creature or person is protected from scrying or mental probing (and such protection will be perceived by the Divine Sight), his nature, personality and goals will be clearly seen by the Inspired.

Holy Fire

This powerful miracle that calls down divine retribution upon the forces of evil. This retribution comes in the form of a blast of blinding white flames, or a bolt of lightning striking from above. This attack can only be attempted on supernatural beings; some times, if the being in question is not truly evil or somehow part of the mysterious ways of the Deity the blast will not inflict full damage, or will inflict no damage at all. Such an event clearly demonstrates that the Inspired is not meant to destroy the creature

- for the time being, at least.

This power costs 20 Essence points and inflicts 1 D8(4) points of damage times twice the Willpower of the Inspired (so, for example an Inspired with a Willpower of 4 will inflict 1D8(4) x 8 points of damage). Any being within line of sight can be targeted. Dodging is possible, but it has a -4 penalty. No attack roll is necessary; the power zeroes in on the selected target.

Strength of Ten

This is ability, when confronted with evil, to summon the strength of the righteous, temporarily transforming the Inspired into a nearly unstoppable warrior of vengeance. The Inspired becomes inured to pain and fatigue, gains inhuman levels of strength, and can fight until killed. This display of power is only possible under the most extreme situations, however. To try to invoke it when there are any other options is considered sinful. Only when facing overwhelming odds should the Strength of Ten be summoned.

This Miracle costs 15 Essence points; the Inspired gains +5 to Strength (which also raises his Life Points by 20 points), and is immune to shock and pain until the battle is over. This means the character can keep fighting even when reduced to 0 points or below (he still needs to pass Survival Tests after reaching -10 Life Points to stay alive, however). Once invoked, the power lasts until the threat is gone or until the Inspired succeeds in martyring himself.

Visions

Through this Miracle, the Inspired opens himself to the Deity for guidance and advice. The Inspired is often visited by flashes of insight about places and people; these insights may come in the form of dreams or sudden visions that may strike at any time or without warning. Sometimes, the Inspired will pray for guidance and be awarded with a Sign of some kind. Most of the time, the visions are ambiguous and need interpretation. For example, the Inspired might see the face of a man, a famous politician. Is the man a tool of evil, or is he being threatened by the forces of evil? The Inspired would have to find out somehow.

This ability costs 5 Essence points when the Inspired actively seeks guidance. The Inspired's prayers may or may not be answered, depending on what the Chronicler feels is appropriate to the moment, although such attempts should usually be successful - provided the Inspired is appropriately humble in his petitions. When the Chronicler sees fit to visit an spontaneous Vision upon a character, however, this should cost no Essence points. The actual details of the visions will vary widely. Some may be a single image, while others may give more clues as to places, people,

and circumstances. The nature of visions should always be determined by the needs of the Story.

Prayers

In the world of *Armageddon*, a simple prayer has more power than most scoffers could imagine. As a focus of the belief, faith and willpower of a person, prayers can be as effective as a magical incantation during the right circumstances. The Inspired can use prayer to increase their ability to convert their Essence into miracles, and even to gather more Essence. Mundanes with enough piety and strength of will (one will not work without the other) can also make use of prayers to focus some of their Essence into actual defenses or even attacks against the supernatural.

Prayers will only have effect if the character's life shows enough devotion and respect to her religion. Most people only pay lip service to their beliefs; that will not do at all. In the course of a game, however, a character might 'discover religion' in the course of the often traumatic events that are part of most Stories. A character undergoing such a revelation might be able to make use of prayers.

Note to Players and Chroniclers: Some gamers may



find the use this section to be controversial. As with any and all material in this game, feel free to disallow this entire section if it will upset or offend any of your players. **Armageddon** is a game, and it is meant to be fun, not to annoy or disturb anybody.

The Inspired and Prayers

The Inspired may find additional strength through prayers. If the character spends at least an hour in deep prayer and meditation, he may find himself replenishing Essence at double the normal rate. The use of prayers in the course of a Miracle is considered to be part and parcel of such Miracle. A Christian Inspired would be expected to quote from the Bible, just as Muslim one might recite a line from the Quorum. This conveys no special bonuses or penalties, beyond the increased Essence recovery.

Mundanes and Prayers

The Mundanes may be the main beneficiaries of the power of prayer. The ancient chants of religious scriptures hold a great deal of power for those who truly Believe. A faithful character who prays may gain unexpected strength in his time of need. In game terms, treat this as a Task using Theology and Willpower. Modifiers for the character's piety will range from -10 (for a foxhole convert who is just trying to call on God to save his skin and who seldom paid any attention to his religion) to +10 (for a truly saintly individual, very rare in today's world). Each level of success in the Task releases a point of Essence from the character's Essence pool. This Essence can be used as a defense against any Supernatural attack, including magic. Each Essence point released confers a +2 bonus on any Resistance Task against a supernatural ability of any kind, including all Gifted powers and the inherent powers of supernatural beings.

Holy Symbols and the Mundane

From the legends of antiquity to Hollywood movies, the power of holy symbols is part and parcel of many stories about the supernatural. The myth goes that anybody with a Cross has nothing to fear from a vampire, or that by wielding the right holy symbol a righteous man can banish demons and scare off spirits. There is a grain of truth in such tales, but only a grain. The power lies not in the symbol, but within its wielder. A character using a holy symbol (be it a Cross, and Ahnk or any similar object) to protect himself must pass a simple Willpower Test, with the same modifiers used in Prayer tasks (see above). Each success level allows the character to focus one Essence point through the holy symbol. Supernatural beings con-

fronting the charged holy symbol must make a Difficult Willpower Test, at -1 per Essence point focuses through the symbol, or feel pain and fear where faced with it. The creatures will hesitate to come near the wielder, let alone attack him; even if the monster does not flee and tries to attack the wielder of the symbol, all its actions will be at a -4 penalty

The Heavenly Host

The band was particularly lively tonight, Amadeus noticed.

The rhythms were simple, the lyrics downright stupid, but there was an energy, a furious excitement that reminded him of happier times. The lead singer was a thin pale girl with a good voice and a sharp attitude. She tossed her head back, sending a thin spray of sweat towards the crowd. They shouted their appreciation. The two guitars and the percussion player behind her redoubled their efforts, and the music became an irresistible force, a sweeping tidal wave, a tornado.

Unnoticed by the crowd, a tall man entered the club. Like Amadeus, the man wore a dark trenchcoat and had long curly hair. There the similarities ended. While Amadeus was a short and slender man, the newcomer was well over six feet tall, with broad shoulders, built like a Greek statue, he made straight for Amadeus, shouldering aside spectators often earning a curse and a dirty look but little more.

Amadeus grimaced. "Hello, Galael," he said with no warmth.

"It is time," Galael said in a harsh whisper that somehow carried through the noise of the band and the crowd. "You know the Taint is here."

Reluctantly, Amadeus nodded. He had sensed it from the moment the band had begun its first set. Underneath the sounds and the lyrics, he could feel - taste - the dark undertones, the rich, seductive voice that promised Power in return for Loyalty. The thin pale girl wore heavy makeup to cover it, but his eyes saw farther than the crowd. Prominent in the middle of her forehead, glowing dark through the makeup, was the Mark of the Beast. She had talent and inner strength; Amadeus could also see that, as well as the inner demons that had made talent and strength worse than useless. She had been hurt young, betrayed and broken, and the broken edges were jagged and sharp and they would cut others, if she was left alone





For two weeks, Amadeus had tried to reach her, to make her change her path. Three days ago, she had her first nightmare. Amadeus had hoped she might be one of the few who could resist the lure of Leviathan, who could deny It and Its works despite the Gifts offered. Now Galael had arrived, and time had run out.

"It must be done tonight," Galael insisted. "Now. Orders you know."

"My father would have approved of you, I think" Amadeus said casually, his nonchalant manner a mask for the pain. "He was a pious, faithful man who never understood that while the road to Hell is paved with good intentions, the road to Heaven is paved with the corpses of a thousand holy wars. Orders," he spat, his mask slipping. "Have you ever thought about your orders, or are you like a good faithful dog, biting whomever the Master indicates?"

Galael's beautiful features became terrible with rage. "You refuse to obey orders, Kerubim?"

Amadeus smiled. "You would like that, wouldn't you? That would give you a chance to earn some more brownie points." He giggled, a ghastly sound that he hated and the set Galael's teeth on edge. The good humor vanished a second later, replaced by a slow-burning, intense anger that matched the Seraphim's. "No, my Angelic superior. I will obey my orders. I was born an Austrian, but I will be a good German for you, *nein?*"

Galael nodded. "Good." He reached under his coat, grabbed the handle of the sawed-off shotgun hidden underneath. "It must be done Mundanely. Use your gun."

Amadeus grabbed him by the wrist. "What about them?" He gestured to indicate the crowd. "They are just children, few are Tainted, but the rest just came to enjoy some music and some company."

"Drug fiends," Galael retorted. "Drug fiends and harlots and fornicators. And if a few are innocent, what of it? The Lord shall take them into His fold."

"Kill them all, let God sort 'em out, is that it?" Amadeus said sardonically. "No, Galael. You are good enough, shoot only the Tainted. So am I. And if an innocent is much as grazed by a straight pellet, I will kill you. Do you understand?"

The Seraphim was a full head and shoulders taller than Amadeus. He could wield the Celestial Fire, and had lived for thirty millennia to Amadeus' two and a half centuries. But it was him who cast his eyes downward. "No innocents. Only the Tainted. Those were the orders, anyway."

Amadeus nodded as his concentration focused on the band, the roadies, and the other Tainted. The same creativity he'd once used only frivolously, to entertain Emperors and, above all, himself now started working a symphony of battle, a death march. He took his own sawed-off shotgun from beneath his coat.

With a shout, Galael nimbly leaped over the bar. His first shot erased the face of the lead guitar. His instrument made a hideous screech as he convulsed and fell. Amadeus' eyes

met the pale thin girl's. "God have mercy on your soul, "he whispered as he fired.

Then it was all chaos and pandemonium, as, side by side, the two angels strode forward, guns blazing, and made their own hideous kind of music.

The former messengers and enforcers of the Creator, the Angels are beings of tremendous power and influence. Most of them consider themselves to be humankind's guardians and caretakers. Some see this duty as an honor, and love and cherish humans as a parent does a child. A growing number tend to be more patronizing and even contemptuous toward their charges, and a large minority has grown an outright dislike for humans. For millennia, most angels remained removed from the affairs of humankind, coming to Earth only in small numbers, and leaving the business of helping people in the hands of the lesser-ranking Kerubim, the angels who once were human themselves. The coming of the Dark Apostle and the War has forced angels to come to Earth in unprecedented numbers, to fight and to die in the name of the Creator.

The Angels — Seraphim and Kerubim

The name "angel" comes from the Greek word *angelos*, meaning "messenger." The Seraphim are the descendants of an order of Sephyr (see p. 94) who carried out the will of the Creator during the birth of the Universe. They were the Deity's messengers and agents, and they carried the Word of God, the Metatron. Initially, they were beings of energy and potentiality, whose actions and thought processes moved at "cosmic" speeds - that is, so slow that the birth of a galaxy was to them a matter of mere "days." These Messenger directed other Sephyr during the process of Creation, and also helped guard Reality from intrusions from Beyond, the alien dimensions of the Mad Gods. They also helped curve the Naturas, living forces of reality who were created as the Universe was born.

The Sephyr started changing when life evolved in the first planets. Their perspective shrunk to perceive and understand this new order of being. The orders from the Creator became less frequent and more ambiguous even as the Sephyr became more like living beings, with individuality, cohesion, and free will. Some believe this was (and still is) some sort of test prepared by the Creator for His/Her/Its closest servants. Their ultimate mission remained clear, however: the evolution of life was part of the process of Creation - it was indeed, its ultimate goal - and the Seraphim, as the evolved Messengers called themselves, were to help protect it. How they did this was

up to them, and this free will has been their heaviest burden.

The evolved Sephyr were still beings of energy, but they had become very similar to the humans they were charged to protect. Where once they were little more than complex energy patterns, now they have humanoid bodies and minds. They were now individuals, with their own personalities. Although incredibly strong-willed, the Seraphim could fall prey to the same flaws that affect people - pride, fear, and boundless ambition. Most of them are primarily concerned with their duty, although in their hearts many resent humans for their role in Creation.

Many of the stories about angels have a basis in truth. They are beings of great power, and in ages past they sometimes swept down from the skies and destroyed armies or decimated entire kingdoms to punish evildoers - or, some of the more cynic would say, to make sure humans stayed in their place. They have human shapes, usually shining with a bright inner light. Some of them sport wings on their backs, the more so after that shape captured human imagination and became an attractive "badge of office." They can be helpful guides or terrible avengers.

In addition to the Seraphim, a different, more recent order of angels has come into existence. These are the Kerubim, the Lesser Angels. The Kerubim are not descendants of the Sephyr. They are instead the souls of human beings, "recruited" after death and given a human body and a number of angelic powers. The Kerubim came into being when the Archangels decided that continued contact with humans was detrimental for the Seraphim, as well as dangerous for Humankind. Rather than continue sending their brethren down to Earth, they sought out the souls of humans who were righteous, dedicated and brave, and offered them a chance to continue doing good works. After a while, they also started recruiting former sinners who wanted to atone for their misdeeds.

The Kerubim's mission is to go to Earth and help and protect humans. Their usual charges are humans who show some potential for greatness, or those who risk utter damnation at the hands of the Fallen Seraphim. Their powers are more subtle and limited than their Seraphim superiors, but their knowledge of human nature makes them far more effective.

Binah — The Abode of the Angels

The Seraphim make their homes in the Sephiroth of Binah, one of the higher planes of existence (for more information about the Sephiroths, see p. 209). A world of light and white flames, Binah's natural state is one of fluctuating Essence energies. Only the Seraphim, the Titans and similar order of beings can survive

there for long. Unprotected humans who somehow stumbled into this realm would be blinded in a few seconds and would be drained of Essence in a matter of minutes, even as their minds were overwhelmed by the psychic feedback produced by the intense energies coursing through this dimension.

In their natural state, the angels are energy beings who exist in a state of *Ecstasis*, a blissful trance in which time passes extremely slowly, and the angel is only marginally aware of any existence outside his Self. Until recently, the majority of the members of the Celestial Host remained in Ecstasis, waiting as a dormant reserve for the time in which the Host would march again. For the most part, the Seraphim prefer this world of light and purity to the damp, dirty and cold physical realm. Those who visit the physical world often find Ecstasis lacking in meaning and purpose, however.

Many angels remain awake, abandoning their natural energy state and assuming humanoid forms while at the same time imposing order onto a portion of the realm, forging colossal, surreal palaces and other buildings from which they can draft plans, study the physical world, and think, unencumbered by Ecstasis. Many of these solid constructs resembles the shapes of human versions of Heaven; whether human thinkers somehow sensed these shapes through dreams or visions, or the Seraphim simply chose to ape the conceptions of humans is unknown. Seraphim and Kerubim summoned to the presence of the archangels often find themselves in a cloudy hall, surrounded by white pillars of light, where they are addressed by a gigantic or shadowy figure. This is the same setting in which angels are tried and sometimes punished.

Binah is isolated from the rest of Reality by a number of metaphysical barriers, making travel in and out of it very difficult. At first, the barriers were imposed by the Seraphim themselves, in an effort to control the interaction between angels and humans, which they considered detrimental to both sides. Viewing Earth is relatively easy by those of Archangel level or higher, but actually influencing events on Earth requires the angels to assume a physical form, a lengthy process (see Common Seraphim Powers, below). An even stronger barrier separates Binah from Geburah, the Lands of the Dead, wherein lies Abaddon, the fiery realm where Lucifer and his fallen angels have been trapped. Every once in a while, demons try to storm the Pearly Gates that are the only connection between the two world; every time, such assaults fail miserably. Guard duty at the Pearly Gates is a dangerous but

prestigious post among the Seraphim.

When Leviathan's cult rose on Earth, the angels tried to remove the barriers between the realms to better fight the enemy - and found they could not. The separation has either become permanent, or has been strengthened by Leviathan or its servants. This means angels have to pick their battles carefully. The fate of the Ten Thousand at Rome is stark proof that Leviathan is not to be underestimated.

Celestial Ranks

The Heavenly Host has seven ranks of authority, from the lowly once-mortal Kerubim to the Council of Four that rules the angelic Phalanxes. Advancement through the ranks has been very slow until the coming of the war. Many angels spent hundreds of years in Ecstasis (see above) and gained precious little experience or wisdom in that time. Now, they are being sent to Earth in increasing numbers, and leaders found lacking are often replaced.

Human writers have often speculated about the organization of the Seraphim. Some of their guesses have been wildly imaginative, but for the most part wrong.

These mistaken impressions were actually encouraged by the Seraphim's agents to help keep humans in the dark. Some fanciful stories describe the total number of angels in the millions, and were equally wrong. The Heavenly Host numbered a bit over one hundred thousand members, some 40,000 of which are Kerubim. Of these, nearly ten thousand Seraphim have been permanently destroyed, most of them during the Battle of Rome.

Kerubim: The lowest-ranked angels are the Kerubim, who once were human and who now labor to help and guide their former brethren.

Greater Kerubim: The more experienced and capable Kerubim are given the task of command and supervise their fellow Lesser Angels. Their authority can only be ordinarily challenged by the Greater Seraphim or Archangels, although technically a Seraphim are their superiors.

Seraphim: These are the rank-and-file of the Celestial Host. The conflicts with the Elder Kingdom: the Titans and the Infernal Legion have turned almost every angel into a soldier, and they are organized along military lines, in squadrons (formations of three to ten angels), companies (ten squadrons, totaling up to a hundred angels), phalanxes (ten companies) and armies (ten phalanxes).

Greater Seraphim: These are experienced and power



ful Seraphim, who are in command of companies or phalanxes. They are also detailed as troubleshooters and enforcers for the Archangels.

Archangels: Archangels are a sub-order of Seraphim with a great deal more raw power. They are closer to the original Sephyr than most Seraphim. The Archangels command the Armies of the Celestial Host, and each is in charge of almost ten thousand Seraphim. Their great power has a major limitation, however; they lose most of their greater abilities if they leave the dimension of Binah, becoming only slightly more powerful than the Seraphim.

High Archangels: The High Archangels are the most powerful and ancient members of the Heavenly Host. There are only about a hundred of these beings, and their voice and opinions carry a great deal of weight.

The Council of Four: These four High Archangels rule the Heavenly Host. Their office grants them near omnipotence, although their influence on Earth has been weakened due to the barriers separating Malkuth (the physical realm) from Binah (the angelic dimension). Until recently, the four members of the Council were Gabriel, Michele, Uriel and Raphael. After Michele's sudden desertion and the Great Schism, Sophia, the Archangel of wisdom, was elected to the post.

Although officially the Four are equals in all ways, in reality Gabriel is the *defacto* leader of the Host. A persuasive (some might say manipulative) Archangel, Gabriel has shaped the policies of the Host since the Fall of Lucifer.

Purpose and Laws

The purpose of the Seraphim remains the same: to protect Creation, Life and Humankind. Left to their own devices, the Seraphim have carried out their mission with varying levels of success. Lucifer at first favored a free hand for humans, then reversed himself, caused the Flood and the destruction of all the advanced civilizations of the time, and then considered the utter extermination of humans before being dethroned and thrown into the Pits of Abaddon. Gabriel has instead tried to keep humans ignorant and helpless, a plan that ultimately failed but left humans in a precarious position to deal with the supernatural powers of the Church of Revelations.

The Seraphim send agents to Earth only for three types of mission: to gather information, to randomly help humans, and to locate and destroy major supernatural infestations or dangerous humans. Scouting and espionage missions are conducted by Kerubim and the occasional Seraphim agent. The Heavenly Host has a number of "safe houses" scattered throughout the world, with agents, both human and divine, charged with intelligence-gathering. The Kerubim also

come to Earth to help humans; unlike the Seraphim, the Kerubim can sometimes sense a human's distress, and feel obligated to respond to such calls. Unfortunately, only a relative handful of suffering humans ever manage to reach the Kerubim with their pleas, and only a few of those are helped. The most important missions involve destroying humans and creatures that threaten Creation. Supernatural predators, cults of the Mad Gods and the more extravagant Demonic schemes are the primary targets. Again, only a fraction of the potential enemies are ever confronted; most of these threats were dealt with by human secret societies, like the Sentinels, the Wicce and the Rosicrucians (see p. 248).

Overall, however, the Heavenly Host had an official policy of non-interference. Contact with humans was kept to a minimum, and of the hundred thousand or so angels, less than five hundreds were on Earth at any given time. The War changed all of that. Most safe houses in the Conquered Territories were destroyed, and hundreds of Seraphim, Kerubim and human agents in them were captured or slain. The urgency of the situation has forced the angels to take unprecedented action (see The Effects of the War, below).

Gabriel's Secret Plan and the Second Schism

Even though he helped orchestrate Lucifer's Fall, Gabriel shared some of the Lord Archangel's fears of Humankind. The Elder Kingdoms had threatened the destruction of all reality, and the Archangel tried to make sure humans did not enjoy such a rapid rise ever again. While the Seraphim were away in the Diaspora, humans were kept ignorant and primitive by the Old Gods, who enjoyed being worshipped and helped ensure that development in either the sciences or the arcane arts was kept hidden from the masses. After the Angels returned and wrestled control over humans from the Old Gods, Gabriel decided to continue their work. Knowing that most Seraphim would object to this, he kept his plan from all but a handful of faithful allies, and used humans for the most part. These human agents were rewarded with prolonged longevity and great financial and political power. They helped persecute those who sought to improve the lot of humans, and in doing so corrupted several organized religions and governments.

Humans make for poor puppets, however. In a few centuries, Gabriel lost control of the organization he had helped create. This shadowy society, known as the Conspiracy or the Combine by outsiders, has pursued its own goals for many years. At the same time,

the pace of progress could not stopped. At a breaking point, sometime between the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries, the world changed. The Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment battered through the restraints of human creativity. The Combine managed to restrain the *spiritual* growth of Humankind, however; even as humans learned the secrets of Science, they actually lost ground in the fields of Faith and Magick. Technology without morality eventually led to the horrors of the twentieth century. The Secret Plan had failed; humans, while still not having reached the level of power of the Atlanteans, had unleashed all manner of technological wonders and threats. The Combine was so powerful Gabriel could not destroy it without revealing his part in its creation; worse, he continued to assist its works.

This situation led to the events of the Great Schism. The Archangel Michele, the Warrior Angel, discovered evidence of the Secret Plan sometime during the 1990s. After a number of plots and assassination attempts, Michele and several thousand Kerubim and Seraphim abandoned the Heavenly Host and exiled themselves to Earth. Thus, it was a divided and conflicted Host which greeted the New Millennium and the rise of the Church of the Revelations.

The Effects of the War

The Angels were caught completely unprepared by the Dark Apostle and the Cult of Leviathan. Somehow, the Revelationists infiltrated the Combine and took over most of its assets and influence in Europe and South America (see Chapter Four for more details about the Church of Revelations). The Seraphim had sensed some major disturbance in the flows of Essence as early as 1980, when the Dark Apostle was born, but they could not pinpoint its cause. The Host had also become concerned with the increased birth of Gifted humans, from magicians to the Divinely Inspired. Something big was afoot, they could sense, but they did not know what.

They managed to get close to the truth, but by then it was too late. Fifteen Seraphim and twenty Kerubim were in Munich on April 30, 2008, and perished in the same holocaust that gave birth to the Dark Apostle. Binah itself was invaded by monstrosities from Leviathan's home universe, keeping the angels distracted long enough for the Church to make its move. The Council of Four decided not to confront the Dark Apostle directly. Doing so risked a metaphysical "action-reaction" cycle: it seemed that the more power was brought against the Dark Apostle, the more power he was able to gain from Leviathan. A war of

escalation could lead to Leviathan being able to manifest itself in reality even before it managed to convert all living humans.

The Seraphim for now are waging a form of limited warfare, helping the Underground movements in the Conquered territories, finding and destroying Revelationists operating in the Free World, and sending a few thousand Seraphim to the battlefields of the world, to confront the Shaitan and Sheol monster that assist the True Believers. The Council is afraid of committing great numbers of angels to any one battle; when Uriel impulsively sent an entire army to defend Rome, thousands of Seraphim were destroyed shot down with weapon powered by Taint (see p. 232), or torn apart by hordes of monsters. While many angels were able to recuperate from their injuries in Binah, many were destroyed for what might be hundreds, maybe thousands of years, or perhaps permanently. Not since the First Celestial War had the Host suffered such casualties. It has made its leaders careful, even timid in some ways.

Roleplaying Heavenly Host Characters

The Heavenly Host has a very well-defined hierarchy. Angel characters will be expected to follow order and make any assigned missions their first priority. On the other hand, the angels are expected to exercise their own discretion, and sometimes can interpret orders for their own benefit. For example, the Seraphim and Kerubim are not generally allowed to work with Gifted humans (not even the Inspired), let alone other supernatural creatures, unless absolutely necessary. In practice, the angels on the front lines often end up identifying with those fighting alongside them (or even against them) more closely than with their superiors in Binah. Alliances of convenience often become friendships or bonds of trusts that the angels will not betray even to their superiors.

There is no one model or "archetype" for angels. You can roleplay them as straitlaced, self-righteous and even pompous warriors of God, or kind and generous spirits, with a sense of humor and even an appreciation of the irony of it all. Although they are effectively immortal, an angels' age is not always an accurate measure of his maturity and experience. Those who spent most of their existence in Ecstasis (see above) have literally wasted thousands of years doing absolutely nothing; some Kerubim who have been active in the physical world for a century or two would be far more experienced. So, a Seraphim character can be a jaded warrior, or a naive ingenue who last saw Earth when stirrups were the cutting edge of vehicle technology. There is room for both in the Holy

Celestial Seraphim

The original angels of religious belief, the Seraphim are beings of great power, although they are neither the unstoppable avengers of myth nor the utterly benevolent pseudo-humans or recent folklore. During ancient times, when their enemies carried swords and spears, the Seraphim were indeed invincible, a single one of them being able to kill dozens or even hundreds of mortals with relative ease. Faced against guns, jet aircraft and tanks, angels have been taught a harsh lesson in humility. By the same token, while some angels have been soothing, kind figures, most of those have been the weaker, gentler Kerubim; most Seraphim are warriors and avengers, and many do not even like humans much.

Common Seraphim Powers

These are abilities that all Seraphim share.

Essence Recovery and Manipulation

Seraphim recover 1 point of Essence per level of Constitution and Willpower every minute. They can use Essence with no restrictions; in other words, they can channel any or all of their Essence reservoir to heal themselves, inflict damage, or activate any of their powers.

Supernatural Senses

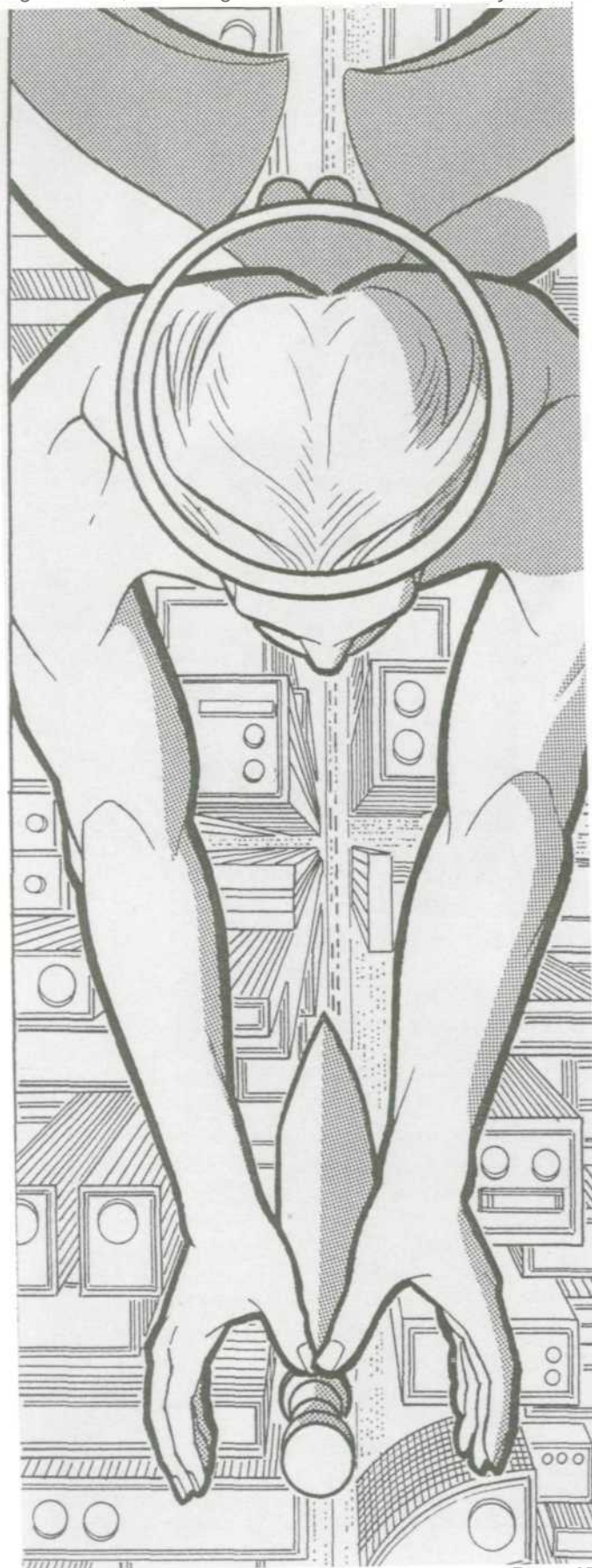
Angels are primarily creatures of Essence, and their senses are more attuned to its flow than those of humans. The Seraphim cannot be fooled by illusions or facades of any kind. These senses also allow them to detect the presence of magic, and of humans with a great deal of personal power. They are also able to see straight into the soul of most people, getting a sense of the person's personality, goals, shortcomings and virtues; they cannot read minds, however, just get a clear impression of what kind of people faces them. Only barriers that block the flow Essence (like the Shielding Invocation) can block these senses.

The Seraphim can also see into much higher and lower spectrums of light and energy than humans, having the equivalent of infrared vision, which lets them see heat, allowing them to see living beings even in complete darkness.

Spirit Travel

The Seraphim can travel to Earth in spirit form. This form of travel has many advantages and disadvan-

tages. First, the angel is invisible to the eyes of





Mundanes (although the Gifted, several animals, and highly creative people have a chance to sense his presence), and is unencumbered by physical limitations; he can fly through walls and any physical obstacles, and do so at tremendous speeds. Spirit travel does not take the lengthy preparations required by Incarnation (see below). By the same token, however the angel cannot affect the physical world in any ways, except than by sending telepathic messages to humans. They can be approached and attacked by other spirit entities (including humans using Soul Projection), although against those beings they can defend themselves and use the Celestial Fire (see below). Even worse, they can be summoned and even bound by human magicians. Due to these shortcomings, angels rarely use this form of travel. Spirit travel costs no Essence to use; the angel can enter the Earth from Binah at any location he chooses. While in spirit form, the Seraphim has no Life Points; they instead become Vital Essence (see p. 00).

Incarnation

If they wish to manifest physically on Earth, the Seraphim must fashion a physical body for themselves. Every Incarnation has two manifestation between which the angel can switch back and forth at will: Divine and Profane. The Divine Incarnation is flashy and portentous, the "classical" shape of an angel, a form that can be molded to suit its creators' needs. Profane Incarnations are human shapes assumed by the angels when trying to pass unnoticed by unaware mortals.

The Profane Incarnation of an angel is a unique creation, an embodiment of that Seraphim's Essence matrix. Thus, the actual shape and features of the body cannot be altered, and it is not even under the control of the angel. A Seraphim does not know what her Profane Incarnation will look like until she performs it for the first time, and that form is as permanent as a mortal's hair or eye color. A curly-haired blonde angel will always Incarnate in that shape and hair color, and only disguises and make-up will be able to alter that (plastic surgery does not work on the Seraphim; their bodies always end up reverting back to their true form). The Profane Incarnation of an angel will always be extremely attractive in a slender but athletic way.

The Divine Incarnation of an angel is far more malleable; although a basic humanoid shape is preferred it can have wings, horns, brilliant halos and robes or body armor that are nothing but an extension of the angel's flesh. Most members of the Heavenly Host prefer the "traditional" form, that of a winged human clad in robes or golden armor. A few are more "original" in their depictions, often devising elaborate tattoos and decorations, or fearsome features like claws

or oversized fangs, or even horns (although such manifestations are frowned upon among the Host). Of late, some Seraphim have started to adopt a more "techno" look, often sporting neon symbols carved into their flesh, or bio-mechanical attachments. For the most part, all these enhancements are cosmetic, although Seraphim with claws or sharp teeth can use them to inflict slashing wounds (see the Combat section for more information). Some Phalanxes (see above) mandate uniformity among their members; all the Seraphim in those units have similar (sometimes even identical) Divine Incarnations. Others tend to be looser or freer about such things. The final decision is in the hands of the Archangel in charge of the Phalanx.

Both forms have the same attributes, Life Points and Essence Pool. While in the Profane Incarnation, however, many of the flashier powers available to the Seraphim cannot be accessed; the angel must be in her Divine form to use them. To travel back to Binah, the Seraphim must also be in his Divine Incarnation. As a punishment, some angels have been forced to wander the Earth while trapped in their Profane Incarnation; these Exiles are shunned by other angels.

Incarnating is a lengthy process for the Seraphim, taking about a month (the base time is 45 days minus the Seraphim's Willpower and Intelligence attributes), during which the angel enters a trance and is largely unaware of his surroundings. At the end of the process, the Seraphim, in his new body, will appear somewhere on Earth. The destination is typically the nearest holy site (often, but not always a temple or church or some sort) in the desired location. The angel can switch back and forth between the Profane and Divine forms at will; the transformation will take only a few seconds (in game terms, a combat turn).

Resistant to Injury and Death

By becoming creatures of Flesh, the Seraphim are vulnerable to damage and even death, although to a much lesser degree than mere mortals. The bodies of the Seraphim are very hard to destroy by physical means, and even if their bodies are destroyed, most Seraphim are able to return to the Halls of Binah (or, in the case of Demonic Seraphim, the Pits of Geburah), where they can recuperate and create new bodies. Only a combination of physical and Essence attacks can kill an angel.

While incarnated in the physical world, Seraphim are capable of withstanding massive amounts of damage. They can heal that damage almost instantly, healing 1D10 (5) points per Essence point spent in that purpose. They do not have to make Survival Tests (see p. 00) until reduced to -30 points. Even if the angelic being is "killed," the consequences are usually not as serious as for normal humans. If their physical body is destroyed, Seraphim must pass a Simple Willpower

Test. If the test is passed, the Seraphim's Essence matrix will appear in Elysium or Hell in 5 hours (reduce this time by one hour per success level in the Simple Willpower test, to a minimum time of one hour), at which time the Seraphim can start rebuilding a new body. If the Test is failed, that means that the Seraphim's Essence has been temporarily scattered by the shock of disruption. This effect will last 1D10 x 4 (20) days, at the end of which the Seraphim will be able to reconstitute his soul and reappear in Binah or Geburah. Only if an angel's Essence and Life Point pools are both reduced to -30 will be Seraphim be truly destroyed. Some occultists believe that even in that event a Seraphim's death is not permanent, and that the angel will eventually re-knit his shattered Essence matrix: since such process is believed to take centuries or even millennia, however, the Seraphim would be as good as dead for game purposes.

The once exception to this are Taint-based attacks (see p. 228). The anti-Essence generated by the Adepts of Leviathan can kill a Seraphim if the damage inflicted reduces him to -30 Life Points; use the Survival Test rules normally, and if the angel is killed, he is dead for at least centuries if not millennia.

Angelic Wings

The Divine Incarnation of an angel (see above) can sprout wings at will and use them to steer its wearer in flight. The Seraphim can fly at tremendous speeds in this state, matching all but the fastest jet planes. After being forbidden to display this power for centuries, the Seraphim now once again soar through skies of Earth, causing awe and wonderment - and all-too-often attracting anti-aircraft fire. Flying drains the Angel of 1 Essence point per minute when traveling at speeds of up to 300 mph (almost 500 kph), or 12 Essence points per minute when traveling at supersonic speeds (the Seraphim can travel at speeds of up to Mach Two - twice the speed of sound). See the *Angels in Combat* section on p. 00 for more information about how angels rate against modern aircraft.

Celestial Fire

All the Seraphim wield the Celestial Flames, pure Essence that can be used to destroy physical targets or shred spiritual energies, or as a defensive aura of power. It most often manifests itself as a burning blade in the hands of the Seraphim (when used offensively) or as an energy aura, flaming shield, or golden body armor. For additional Essence cost, the Celestial Fire can also be projected in the form of blasts or beams. Physical barriers barely slow down this powerful energy; tank armor can be slashed open with a few swipes of these flaming brands. Essence barriers, such as the Shielding Invocation, are slightly more effective, but not much. These weapons can cause

burns like normal fire, or they can kill humans without leaving a mark on them (although psychics and other sensitives will sense their work). They can melt metal, or slay a target without singeing the clothes he was wearing.

In game terms, Celestial Flames inflict 1D8 (4) points of damage per level of the Seraphim's Willpower. This damage is applied to Life Points if the target is a corporeal being, Essence Points if a spirit, and Damage Points against inanimate objects. Armor is little help against this flame. Any Armor Value is treated like Damage Points; instead of subtracting damage each time it is hit, the Armor Value is rolled once, and the result counts as Damage Points which are taken off first. Any remaining damage goes on to affect whatever is behind the armor.

Celestial Fire is also selective in its effects. Wielded by a skilled Angel, it could burn a villain to a cinder without even singeing the skin of an innocent he was using as a living shield. More importantly, the flames cannot harm the truly innocent, and the Divinely Inspired; most humans over the age of ten do not qualify as truly innocent, unfortunately. The more merciful Seraphim have been known to carve jet aircraft while leaving their pilots alive and able to trust themselves to the mercies of their ejection seat. In game terms, characters can determine who gets burned by the fire, even when firing upon a group of people.

Creating a Celestial Fire blade costs 3 points; once the weapon is activated, it can be used for five minutes before more Essence is needed. Using it as a projectile blast or bolt costs 1 Essence per 50 yards/meters of range, every time the blast is used. Firing the blast uses the Seraphim's Dexterity and Perception; using the flaming brand uses the character's appropriate Weapon skill. Using Celestial Fire defensively creates an aura, shield or suit of armor has an Armor Value of 1D6 x 2 at the cost of 3 Essence points; add one additional Armor Value level for every additional point of Essence spent. This armor protects both against all forms of mundane attack and any Essence or magical energies, such as the Soulfire Invocation (see p. 125). The defensive field lasts for five minutes before more Essence is needed.

The Celestial Fire can only be wielded by the angel while in his Divine Form.

Divine Providence

The Seraphim can manipulate the laws of chance and causality, although for the most part disdain to do so (the Kerubim, on the other hand, use this power very often). Through an expenditure of Essence, the Seraphim can make improbable events happen by merely wishing so. The more improbably the event is, the more Essence it costs to cause it to occur. The

impossible cannot be made to happen with this power, however; the event must have a chance, no matter how slim, of happening naturally. Making a gun jam, a car break down, or a dice roll come out as desired, is easy. Making every gun in an area jam at the same time, or determining the result of a hundred dice rolls in a row, is almost impossible, and costs a lot of Essence.

In game terms, the player announces what event his character is trying to influence, and the Chronicler must decide what is the base chance of it happening normally. Minor events, like a gun misfiring, winning a couple of bucks on a lotto ticket, or causing somebody to trip and fall, cost 2 Essence to cause. A more complex event, or causing more than two minor events to occur in row, costs 4 Essence; some examples include causing a car to malfunction, a slot machine to pay out a couple of hundred dollars, winning several hands of a card game. Larger events cost 8 Essence, and the nearly impossible, like winning the grand prize in a lottery, or causing every car in a crowded street to break down at the same time, costs 20 Essence points.

This ability can also be used to help or hinder Tasks; each 2 Essence points spent will grant a +1 bonus or -1 penalty to any mundane Task occurring in the presence of the Angel. This will not help or hinder supernatural Tasks, including the use of any Gifted powers or supernatural ability, however. This effect occurs automatically, simply by spending Essence. Humans who are aware of what is happening can resist if the event would affect them directly; this is resolved as a Resisted Test (see p. 66), using Simple Willpower Tests on both sides.

Theophanies — Divine Powers

Theophanies are special abilities that the Seraphim learn to carry out their missions on Earth or in the Otherworld. These powers are half learned skill, and half natural avocation. Some angels developed a knack for certain things during the period of transition between being Sephyr and becoming Seraphim. All angels have at least one Seraphim; most have two and a few three or more. These abilities also define the angel's area of specialty while conducting a mission. Thus, Binders are those angels who have the power to capture their targets, while Finders are the trackers and searchers. Most Squadrons (set Organization, above) have at least one angel with each of the most common Theophanies, which are listed below.

The Seraphim have access to the Theophanies described below; this list includes the more common Theophanies, although a few angels learn others



often taught by specific archangels. The Kerubim have their own repertoire, some of which cannot be learned by no other angel, not even the Archangels. Greater Archangels know the High Theophanies, incredibly powerful abilities that can affect entire continents at a time. Unfortunately, the barriers separating Binah from Earth also prevent the Archangels from using those powers effectively, leaving the job of fighting the war to the Seraphim and their lesser Theophanies.

Using Theophanies

The Seraphim all have a Theophany Skill. This is the ability used to activate any Theophany that the character has. It works like any other skill, using it in conjunction with the character's attributes (usually Willpower or Perception). Theophany is a Special Skill (see p. 48), and it can be purchased during character creation.

Binder **6-point Power**

Those in charge of capturing and banishing prey are known as the Binders. Most Finders (see below) are also Binders, or at least travel with another angel with this ability. While destroying one's quarry is always an option, the Seraphim often opt for capturing their prey alive, and then either carry it back with them or banish it to whatever world it calls home.

Binders have the ability to capture both mundane and supernatural targets, and bind them with chains of Essence. Those captured in this manner can be dragged into other dimensions, or expelled back to their realm of origin. The power manifests itself as glowing bonds, usually chains or straps that appear out of nowhere and surround the target. The strength of the bonds depends on the amount of Essence spent in creating them. The target must be clearly visible for the power to work, but it can be used on anybody within line of sight.

This power uses the Theophany skill and Dexterity; the target can try to evade, using either a Difficult Dexterity Test or a Dexterity and Dodge Task. The bonds have a base Strength of 2 at the cost of 2 Essence points. Each additionally 2 Essence points increase the Strength of the bonds by 1 level. The chains will imprison both physical and ethereal beings (such as ghosts and spirits). Once a victim is bound, he can break free in only two ways, either through brute force (treat it as a resisted Strength Test), or finesse (using a Difficult Dexterity Test or a Dexterity and Escape Artist Task, with a penalty equal to the Theophany skill of the angel). The glowing chains remain in existence for an hour, at which point another expenditure of Essence is needed.

Binders can also banish their captives back to their plane of origin. Demons, for examples, are thrown back into the Pit of Abaddon, while ghosts would be forced into other areas of the Death Realms and Elemental beings would be cast into their alien dimensions. This costs 10 Essence points. The victim gets one chance to break free or escape the bonds; otherwise, he is banished.

Destroyer **8-point Power**

The most feared among the Seraphim are the Destroyers; their is the power to eradicate things - or people - whose existence is considered to be a threat to Humankind or even to Reality itself. The Dreaded Angel of Death, the archangel Azrael, has a more powerful version of this ability. The "common" Destroyers can kill easily enough, but their power is such that they can actually make it so a target never existed! The Oblivion, as this version of the Destroyer power is called, is extremely expensive and dangerous, but if successful, the target will never bother the Seraphim again. Such victims are expunged from reality; all memory and record of its existence disappear altogether. Before the Flood, this was done to the ancient civilizations of Atlantis, Mu and Ultima Thule erasing most traces of their existence. What happens to the soul of a human victim remains in question; it is possible that only the memories and components of the soul's current existence are destroyed, but the soul can then reincarnate under a new personality, but any relations or "karma" tied to the obliterated existence are lost forever.

Destroyers can fire destructive bolts that resemble blue-white lightning. They are more destructive than the Celestial Fire used by all angels (see above), and their range is nearly unlimited (effectively a line of sight weapon). These bolts inflict 1D10 (5) points of damage per level of Strength of the Seraphim; the base damage can be increased with Essence. The Essence cost of these bolts is 1 Essence for the base damage; extra Damage Levels cost 2 Essence points per level per blast.

The Oblivion is far more costly and tricky. This ability will completely eradicate the target from existence, the victim, be it an object or a person, will leave no physical traces, and most Mundanes will simply forget it ever existed! Gifted humans and supernatural beings will remember, but even then the memories will feel strangely hollow and meaningless, almost like remembering a character from an old, half-forgotten movie. The target must be in sight of the Destroyer. The Essence cost of the Oblivion is equal to the Damage Points of the target (if it is an object, double that for magical or enchanted objects), or the Life Essence and Endurance Points of a living person (if the

target is a spirit, then use the spirit's Vital and Energy Essence Pools, *doubled*). In addition to this Essence cost, the Seraphim permanently sacrifices 1D8(4) points of Essence; this Essence loss can only be regained through experience points. Living beings can resist this effect; pitting a Simple Willpower Test against the angel's Willpower and Theophany Skill. If the angel is successful, the target is struck by a bolt of pseudo-lightning, and simply disappears. If the angel fails in the attempt, the permanent Essence loss is doubled! Generally, only a Lesser Archangel or higher-ranked Seraphim can authorize the use of the Oblivion on a human being; using it casually is a serious crime among the Celestial Host.

Finder

5-point Power

The hunters and trackers among the Seraphim are the Finders. They are mystic bloodhounds, able to attune themselves to the Essence Matrix of an object or person and then follow any traces left behind by that target, while at the same time getting a rough estimate of the direction and distance between them and the quarry. Once a Finder is on your trail, you may slow her down, but there is no way of stopping one short of killing them. To start the hunt, a Finder needs to get a psychic impression of the target. This is best accomplished by seeing and touching the target, of course, but since that is rarely the case, the second best way to acquire the 'scent,' the angel must touch some objects or people associated with the target, especially those with a strong emotional connection. A Perception and Theophany Task is needed to acquire the scent of the prey, be it an object or person. This Task has modifiers based on how much access the angel has to personal effects or people involved with the target. These modifiers range from +5 (the angel has actually seen or touched the target once before, or spends several hours in a house in which the target spent many years), to -5 (the angel only has access to a piece of clothing worn over a year ago).

If the Task is successful, the Seraphim will have general idea of where the target is located. Given a map, for example, the angel can point to the country where the target is, and will have a sense of the direction he needs to go to get closer. If the angel and the quarry are in the same country, the angel can detect the city the target is in, and if in the same city, the location of the target down to the street level. Without a map, the angel needs to travel physically towards the target. The closer the Seraphim gets to the target, the better a "fix" he will get on his or its exact location. This process is automatic, although if the target is moving, reaching it will depend on the relative speeds of the quarry and the hunter.

Gifted humans and supernatural beings who know

they are being pursued and wish to avoid discovery can resist attempts to Find them, using a Simple Willpower Test against the Finder's Perception and Theophany Skill.

Eraser

5-point Power

The Seraphim laws before the War called for minimal contact with humans. As a result, most Seraphim groups that visited Earth had an Eraser with them. Erasers are angels with the ability to hide any traces of intervention. They can wipe out or (more commonly) muddle the memories of human witnesses, and leave behind equivocal evidence of the angels' actions. For example, if an angel was shot in front of a crowd, and then got up and walked, an Eraser could "reweave" the memories of the onlookers so they would "remember" that the angel was wearing a flak jacket. The human mind is always suggestible to a reasonable explanation, so it is easy to convince people that what they saw was not truly what they saw. Using this power subtly is more difficult after the War, since supernatural occurrences are far common. In this time period, Erases usually excise entire chunks of memory from those who have seen something that might compromise or endanger the Seraphim. Angels working in the Conquered Territories often use this ability to hide their tracks from the Soul Police and the Knights of Leviathan.

Using this power costs 2 Essence points per person affected; erasing the memories of a crowd of thirty would cost 60 Essence points, for example. The angel must pass a Willpower and Theophany Skill Task, with a modifier based on how much he is trying to alter the memories of the targets. Making onlookers make a tiny leap of logic they might be willing to make on their own ("Yeah, he shrugged off that bullet 'cause he must wearing a Kevlar vest") would have a +3 bonus. Making the witnesses' minds "swallow" a near-impossibility ("But he was shot in the head... well, he must have been wearing a Kevlar hat, or maybe the bullet glanced off...") would have a -1 penalty. Completely retailoring a memory ("Hey, that guy was hit by a rocket launcher! Blew up half the store, and he walked out, not a scratch on him... um, was there a guy? No, that was a store dummy, I'm just imagining things.") would have a -4 penalty.

Erasers can also change or twist physical traces of angelic activity. Footprints can be erased, and photographs and video tapes can be altered. The Essence cost of this physical alteration is 3 Essence points per set of footprints or tracks, or per piece of recording equipment. If an actor being followed by paparazzi suddenly sprouted wings and flew, an Eraser would have to affect at least half a dozen cameras, costing 18 Essence points or more. What the changes are

determines how easy or difficult the Willpower and Theophany Skill Task will be. Just erasing or ruining negatives or tapes has no bonus or penalty. Leaving the photographs or tapes intact, but making them too blurry to see what is going on would also have no penalties. Changing the images to show no supernatural activity would be at -2 and the most artistic Erasing, leaving the images relatively intact but *adding* "proof that they used special effects and alterations to simulate a supernatural activity, would be at -4. The last is a favorite Erasing, since after an initial furor, an investigation always reveals the pictures to be fakes, thus making all claims suspect.

Healer

4-point Power

The equivalent of 'medics' in the ranks of the Seraphim, Healers can treat both humans and supernatural beings. They can heal wounds very rapidly, faster even than most Seraphim can regenerate damage. Healers can also provide the Cure, a complete treatment that can remove all traces of disease or injury to disappear. The Cure can regrow lost limbs, or make old, crippling injuries to disappear. The same process also removes scars and tattoos, reverse balding, and eliminate cancer or persistent viral agents like AIDS. Healing wounds costs 1 Essence points, and heals 3 Life Points per Willpower level of the angels. The Cure costs 50 Essence points; it will undo any condition short of death, and will even revive people who have been clinically dead for less than thirty minutes.

Traveler

7-point Power

While all angels can materialize on Earth and travel back to their plane of origin, the light-filled realm of Binah (see above), only Travelers can bend space and the barriers between dimensions to enter the Otherworlds. Travelers can manipulate Essence to teleport themselves and others from place to place on Earth, and they can also open gateways to other realms of existence. Angels sometimes have to venture into such planes of existence as the Death Realms or the Abode of the Old Gods to track down or spy on their enemies. Squadrons sent on such missions almost always have two or more Travelers in the group (one makes it risky, since if that particular angel is destroyed, the rest of the team would be stranded on an alien world).

While on Earth, Travelers can effectively teleport from place to place. The power requires several seconds (one game turn) of concentration, a Willpower and Theophany Task, and the expenditure of Essence. How much Essence depends on the distance traveled and how many "passengers" the Traveler is taking along. For up to one mile of travel, the power costs 5

Essence, plus 1 Essence point per additional person transported. For up to ten miles, the power costs 10 Essence, plus 3 Essence per additional person transported. For up to 100 miles, this goes up to 25 Essence plus 5 per passenger, and for anywhere on Earth, regardless of distance, the cost is 50 Essence plus 7 points per passenger. The Travel's destination must be known to the angel; he must have seen it, if only on live television (pictures and maps don't count). Most Travelers spend their first mission on Earth visiting numerous locations around the world to "imprint" enough destinations to quickly reach any country and most major cities.

The Kerubim

After the Fall of Lucifer and the Celestial Wars, the Heavenly Host found itself at a quandary. Prolonged contact with humans seemed to have a negative effect on many Seraphim. After a few years on Earth, many Seraphim stopped paying attention to their missions, often acquiring human vices or following the Watchers' Folly and fathering Nephelim children. Humans, due to their chaotic, unpredictable and creative natures, seemed to change the personality of the Seraphim in chaotic and unpredictable ways. Many Archangels blamed Lucifer's murderous actions and Shemizael's betrayal to too much contact with humans. On the other hand, it was impossible to protect Humankind without having agents among them. Humans were often used, but they were not trustworthy; they often tended to follow their idea of what was right or wrong rather than the instructions of angels.

Then, sometime after the First Celestial War, something strange started to happen. The souls of dead humans started appearing in the Elyssian Fields. These newcomers were men and women of diverse backgrounds and histories. Some were downright saintly, while others had been sinners of all kinds who seemed to seek nothing more than redemption. They were able to survive in Binah unaided (see above) and had a number of minor Seraphim powers. Furthermore, they could learn some Theophanies. The Council of Four determined that the presence of these newcomers was the work of the Creator. What their purpose was remained unknown.

It was the Archangel Raphael, the Healer, who proposed sending them to Earth to help (and watch over) humankind. The solution seemed to work out very well. The Kerubim walked among humans, better able to deal with humans without losing track of their purpose. Their only shortcoming was that they would never do anything that might endanger or harm people. The Archangels soon learned that any mission in which humans could be harmed, even if it was for the

"greater good," could not be entrusted to the Kerubim. Another, bigger problem was that the Seraphim also held their once-mortal brethren in thinly disguised contempt. The fact that the Kerubim had a much higher success rate than their more powerful but less subtle brethren did not help matters.

Gabriel wisely kept all Kerubims from the Secret Plan. Most of the angels who followed Michele during the Schism and joined the Alliance are Kerubim. The ones that remain are closely monitored and often treated with disdain and suspicion by the Seraphim. Ironically enough, the War has made it necessary for Seraphim and Kerubim to work together in many missions, something that was avoided in the past.

Common Kerubim Powers

Some of the abilities of the Kerubim are identical to those of their Seraphim "colleagues." They are fully described in the Seraphim sections.

Essence Recovery and Manipulation

The Kerubim recover Essence at the same rate as the Seraphim: 1 point of Essence per level of Constitution and Willpower every minute. They can use Essence with no restrictions; they can channel any or all of their Essence reservoir to heal themselves, inflict damage, or activate any of their powers.

Supernatural Senses

The Kerubim can see into the souls of people. Their senses can detect the flow of Essence, which they can see as auras around people and objects. With but a glance, the Kerubim can tell the emotional state of a person, and get a clear picture of that person's personality, character, and flaws. The Kerubim also have very sharp physical senses, able to see in very low light. Unlike the Seraphim, however, they cannot see into the infrared spectrum.

Incarnation

The Kerubim once were human, and when they appear on Earth they assume the form they had while alive. This human body will appear in the prime of life (about twenty-five years of age), regardless of when the Kerubim's human existence ended. Interestingly enough, former associates of the Kerubim will not recognize him or her, although they will sense some familiarity with the angel. Although the shape looks completely human, the Kerubim do not need to eat or breathe to survive, and they are far stronger and tougher than normally humans.

Incarnating on Earth from Binah takes some time and effort for the Kerubim, but less so than for the Seraphim. It takes under two weeks (15 days minus the Kerubim's Willpower level) for the Kerubim to cre-

ate a human body for himself on Earth. The body will appear on Earth at the location desired by the character, although usually near a place of worship or other holy site.

Resistant to Injury and Death

The Kerubim can heal any injury by spending Essence, at the rate of 1 D8(4) Life Points per Essence point spent. If they are "killed," their souls are catapulted back to the Sphere of Binah, from which they can build a new body (a process which will take time, however). Only if their Life Point and Essence Point are both reduced to -30 or worse is there any danger of permanent destruction. At that point, the Kerubim must pass a Simple Willpower Test, or his soul matrix will become "unraveled" and his nature will be scattered and lost. This may or may not be permanent, but it will at the very least take centuries for the damage to be undone.

Divine Providence

The Kerubim can manipulate chance and probability even better than the Seraphim (see above). This ability works just like the Seraphim power of the same name, but for a smaller Essence cost.

In game terms, the player announces what event his character is trying to influence, and the Chronicler must decide what is the base chance of it happening normally. Minor events, like a gun misfiring, winning a couple of bucks on a lotto ticket, or causing somebody to trip and fall, cost 1 Essence to cause. A more complex event, or causing more than two minor events to occur in row, costs 2 Essence; some examples include causing a car to malfunction, a slot machine to pay out a couple of hundred dollars, winning several hands of a card game. Larger events costs 4 Essence, and the nearly impossible, like winning the grand prize in a lottery, or causing every car in a crowded street to break down at the same time, costs 12 Essence points.

This ability can also be used to help or hinder Tasks; each Essence point spent will grant a +1 bonus or -1 penalty to any mundane Task occurring in the presence of the Angel. This will not help or hinder supernatural Tasks, including the use of any Gifted powers or supernatural ability, however. This effect occurs automatically, simply by spending Essence. Humans who are aware of what is happening can resist if the event would affect them directly; this is resolved as a Resisted Test (see p. 00), using Simple Willpower Tests on both sides.

Theophanies

The Kerubim can learn Theophanies; some of them are the same as the ones acquired by the Seraphim,



while others are unique to their kind. By the same token, the Kerubim cannot learn some of the less subtle Theophanies, like Destroyer or Binder.

Battler

7-Point Power

Although the Kerubim tend to be gentler and less combative than the Seraphim, a few "holy warrior" types do exist among their ranks. Many of these Battlers were soldiers in life, typically crusaders or some other type of zealot; others were actually relatively mild-mannered during their Earthly existence, but have now become lethal warrior angels. Battlers are foes to be reckoned with; even the Seraphim do not casually pick a fight with them.

Battlers can enter a Warrior Trance, a state in which their physical strength, reflexes and combat skills are greatly enhanced. Entering the Trance requires a turn of concentration, a successful Theophany and Willpower Task, and the expenditure of 8 Essence points. The Trance lasts for up to an hour per success level in the Task, or until the Kerubim decides to return to normal. Battlers in this state narrow their focus only to possible threats and ways to deal with those threats; they gain a +2 to all Perception tasks to detect movement or noises that might be dangerous (it is not a good idea to try to sneak up to a Battler, even if you are his friend). Furthermore, they temporarily gain a +2 to Strength, +1 to Dexterity, and +3 to any combat skills they know (this Strength increase does not affect the Kerubim's Life Points pool, however). They can even channel Essence into any weapon they are holding in their hands (or to their bare hands if they prefer), at the cost of 1 Essence point per minute; these weapons can affect incorporeal beings, or be made to inflict Essence damage in addition to their physical damage (in effect any damage totals are taken from the Life and Essence pools of the target).

The down side to the Trance is that the total concentration into combat and danger makes it difficult for the Battler to deal with anything else. People are grouped into allies and possible or definite enemies; the first group is ignored (unless they move threateningly) and the second is watched or even dealt with summarily. All Tasks and Test not directly related with combat or detecting enemies have a -3 penalty. Also, the Battler risks lashing out at innocents who happen to make an ill-advised sudden move. If somebody makes a sudden move within ten feet of the Battler, the character must pass a Willpower and Perception (unmodified by the Battler bonuses) Test, or he will attack that person. The Battler will realize what happened right away, and the sudden shock will cut short the Trance and drain the character of $1D10 \times 2$ (10) Essence points.

Concealer

5-point Power

Sometimes people get caught talking to thin air, or claiming they hear voices from nowhere. While Seraphim using their Spirit Travel ability (see p. 00) have something to do with this, and a good share of these people are truly deluded, Kerubim with this Theophany are often to blame for these situations. Concealers can hide their presence from humans, becoming invisible and undetectable by most means. This invisibility can be selective; the angel can choose to be seen by one or more members of a group, while concealing his existence from the rest. The Theophany allows the character to walk through crowds without bumping into people, by psychically prompting people to get out of his way without knowing why. Using this power costs 5 Essence points (add 2 Essence points per additional person Concealed) and requires a Theophany and Willpower Task. The Concealment lasts for one hour, at the end of which a new Task and Essence expenditure are required.

While Mundanes cannot see Concealers, science and the supernatural beings can circumvent this ability in a number of ways. The Gifted and most beings able to sense Essence flows will sense the presence of a Concealer, and can pinpoint his location on a Difficult Perception Test. While cameras and motion sensors are also fooled by this Theophany, infrared goggles will pick a faint shimmering outline; not enough to detect the angel if standing still (unless the observer is actually looking for him, and passes a Difficult Perception Test at -3).

Dreamer

4-point Power

The Kerubim can weave powerful Dreams meant to educate, punish or give hope to humans. These Dreams are more than mere visions or illusions, however. They transport the Dreamer and as many as ten other people to a place of "what-ifs" and "might-have-beens." How they work remains a mystery even to the angels themselves, but they appear to create a temporary "bubble" of reality, a place of no permanent effects but many insights. The Kerubim has no control over what happens when he uses the Dream; the events that transpire there are determined by Fate, by the flows of Essence that determine causality.

For example, to punish a murderer, the Dreamer could drag him into a world in which his victims lived, to show him the effect his crimes had in the lives of others. The criminal could interact with those people, could even harm or be harmed by them, but at the end of the vision he would be returned to the real world, unharmed but (hopefully) enlightened by the experience.

A side effect of this power is that the Dreamer and

anybody else taken into the vision disappear from the real world for several hours, during which time they cannot be found anywhere. Using the power without a clear purpose (trying to escape an enemy in the real world is not a real purpose) sends the Dreamer and his fellow travelers into a random hypothetical universe, and there, any injury acquired will be 'carried over' when the Dream ends.

Creating a Dream costs 15 Essence points. The Kerubim has some control over the basic outline of the Dream (showing a criminal the consequences of his actions, for example), but the actual elements of the vision are determined by the Chronicler. The Dream can be a mundane, short-lived experience, although creative Chroniclers can develop complex and entertaining scenarios.

Eraser

5-point Power

This is identical to the Seraphim power described on p. 00. Erasers are fairly common among the Kerubim.

Healer

3-point Power

The same as the Seraphim power on p. 00. Kerubim healers are far more likely than the Seraphim to heal humans and other outsiders.

Revealer

4-point Power

Some Kerubim have the power to Reveal any secrets, hiding places or deceitful facades. Revealers can ferret out all manner of hidden information, from the location of traps and concealed doorways to the darker side of any living being, mundane or supernatural. Illusions and lies are next to useless against these Kerubim. Unfortunately, seeing the Truth in all its brutal nakedness is a trying ordeal, and Revealers are very choosy about when and where to use their Theophany. Most angels do not like to be scrutinized by a Revealer; the Seraphim are particularly touchy about this. Also, many Revealers have discovered things about their friends and allies that should have best kept hidden. Despite their usefulness, Kerubim with this Theophany are often treated with suspicion or even hostility by their peers.

Using Reveal requires a Willpower and Theophany Task and costs 5 Essence. The Revealer can now uncover the truth for up to an hour before more Essence and a new Task are needed. Once the Theophany is activated, the Revealer can detect lies, find hidden places, and detect the true nature of people or objects. A general impression is automatically obtained. To find all the truth requires a Theophany and Perception Task; each success level uncovers another layer of truth. Finding out if somebody is lying

only requires one success level, while discovering what the person is hiding would require four levels of success, and uncovering why the person is lying would require five success levels, for example. Hidden Believers, or supernatural predators masquerading as human beings can be uncovered on two success levels on the Perception Task.

While this ability is activated, the Revealer risks discovering unwelcome truths among those around her. Petty jealousies, resentment or envy among friends or close ones might be revealed, or hidden traumas that should not be forcibly uncovered. For that reason, Revealers tend to activate their power only at times of need, and use them only for as long as necessary.

The Infernal Legion

The ceiling fan did little to dispel either the noontime heat or the cloud of opium smoke that gave the room a misty, dreamlike quality. Neither the heat nor the drugs bothered Mercer very much. He'd been in far hotter places.

Ho entered the room, the twin bandoleers of AK-47 bullets crossed over his chest jingling rhythmically which step. His forehead, below the red bandanna he wore as a badge of office, was stained with sweat. Mercer knew Ho well enough to realize that the sweat had little to do with the heat. Ho was afraid of something.

"Two men are here to see you," he said in flawless British-accented English. Ho's parents had been raised in Hong Kong before chance and circumstances had turned him into a bandit chieftain. People like Ho were Mercer's first choice for assistants; those who had lost it all were quite willing to do anything to regain it. Ho's soul had been blackened beyond redemption by a series of brutal crimes that had made even Mercer quail. If the bandit had any qualities, it was loyalty and courage. To see him covered in cold sweat concerned Mercer.

Then Ho explained it all in one word. "Churchies."

That was the American term. The Chinese had their own word for the Revelationists - **Consorts of the Maggot** with "consort" implying a more than Platonic relationship with the Maggot, the current name for Leviathan. Either way, not guests one would expect here. Southern Thailand had been left alone by the local Revelationists, who had spent most of their energy moving North and East into China.

"Show the Consorts to the Hall of Jade," he said in Mandarin. Ho nodded with a grin; if the Master was not afraid, then neither should he.

After his assistant had left, Mercer left the bed and took out a silk robe from the gold-inlay closet. As he got dressed, the Thai girl he'd been with muttered something and tried to reach for him. He pushed her back gently. Pathetic and human though she was, Mercer had actually grown somewhat fond of her. That, of course he would not admit under torture; his Superiors might frown on it, and a frown from them was worth a hundred years of torment.

On his way to the Jade room, Mercer took the time to observe the newcomers through the two-way mirror he'd had installed for just that purpose. Two men and a woman. One man and a woman were Vietnamese, dressed in black in a manner American soldiers would have found familiar fifty years ago. The other was Caucasian, German perhaps, wearing civilian clothing. All had the Mark, the black spiked circle, covering most of their hands and sneaking under their shirt sleeves to continue up their forearms. The three were examining the exquisite jade and ivory carvings of the room with some appreciation and even a touch of envy. The Revelationists placed no stock on chastity or poverty, and their leaders were rewarded quite well. That explained some of their popularity. The way to a man's soul, Mercer had discovered, was often through his pocket-book.

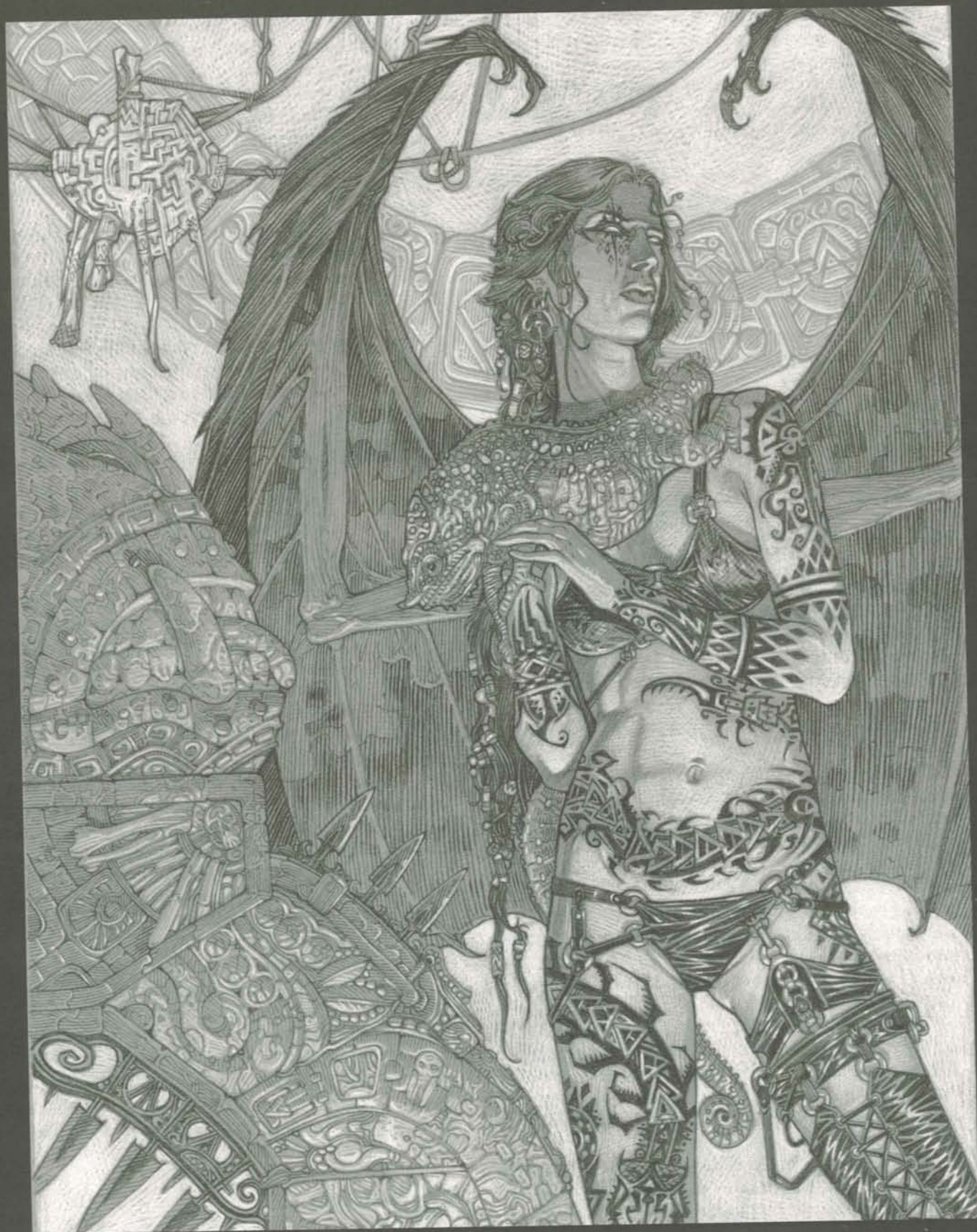
Mercer conferred with Ho for a few minutes, and then entered the room. The two Vietnamese gave no signs of discomfort at being made to wait, but the German - it had to be a German, Mercer decided - was frowning. "Gentlemen," Mercer said in English. "And lady. Welcome to my humble abode."

Neither of the three offered an introduction. Instead, the Viet woman spoke. "We are here to extend you an offer for your business establishment and attached network. You will accept this offer and leave Thailand within twenty-four hours. If you refuse us now, you will be killed. If you do not leave Thailand within the day, you will be killed." She grinned fiercely. "If you try to bargain for more, you will be killed."

The German then made the offer. "Thirty million dollars, payable in gold or the currency of your choice. We need the names of your connections and a thorough description of your operations, with special attention paid to the arms-trafficking operation you have here. And all contacts with the Americans operating here."

Mercer's smile widened. The offer was nothing short of armed robbery - his operation cleared close to thirty million dollars a day - but not unexpected. They knew he was funneling arms to rebel groups throughout Southeast Asia.

The CIA were among his clients, and he knew enough to severely endanger its operations in the region. The drugs and the girls Mercer also dealt in were of no particular interest to the Church, of course, except as a little sideline that could be used for its own purposes. Mercer had little



doubts as to their ability to carry out the threat. He could sense the gathering of the Taint, the anti-Essence, in the quiet Vietnamese man. Hovering in the space within worlds were a dozen hideous, gibbering creatures. If the man spoke a Word or made a gesture, they would appear in this room and shred every non-Believer in the house within minutes. It would have been a perfect plan if Mercer had been human.

"I have no choice, then," Mercer said, and the Revelationists relaxed minutely. That's when he struck.

As he lunged forward, Mercer **changed**. His skin became leathery, darkened to an angry crimson tone. His hair became long and jet-black. The beard disappeared, leaving behind the face of a wrathful Adonis with fangs and glowing black eyes, surrounded by a halo of flames. His hand grew inch-long talons as it continued its thrust towards the Vietnamese man's mid-section. The terrible blow transfixed the Believer right through the diaphragm, paralyzing and muting him. No Word was spoken, no gesture made, and Mercer sensed the troop of Shaitan squealing in frustrated anger. They were trapped between dimensions, unable to join the fight.

Even before blood could flow from the mortal wound, Mercer had flung the Vietnamese against the woman, knocking them both to the floor. He kicked out with a clawed foot, and the woman's head flew across the room.

A piercing shriek behind him made him turn around.

The German was glowing with the purplish-black energies of the Taint. The Thai girl had jumped on the Believer's back, and was making a good attempt of clawing his eyes out, while shrieking a stream of obscenities. Before Mercer could read, the German unleashed the Taint.

It was mercifully quick. The girl's youthful body collapsed into a decaying mass, flesh and bones coalescing into the same semi-liquid mess. Her last scream - no, it might have been quick, but it was not merciful. Not even in the darkest Pit of Abaddon had Mercer heard such a scream.

Mercer unleashed a blast of Hell fire. From the hidden firing port on the wall, Ho opened up with his Kalashnikov.

The combined impacts of bullets and dark Essence did the trick. The German crashed against a stand, knocking over a priceless Ming artifact, and bled and died, looking in death much like any other human.

For a long instant, he stood over the grisly remains of his lover. Ho entered the room. The bandit was not shocked about the display; he had long learned that the "foreign devil" he served was a true devil in every sense of the word. "She jumped on him before I could shoot," he explained,

while he coolly awaited his punishment. Ho was mostly worried that, because he had not opened fire regardless of the girl's presence, he might have endangered the Master.

Mercer shook his head. "You did well. He changed back to his Profane form. Stupid girl," he said calmly.

"We need to change headquarters. The Churchies are not going to be happy with us, and we'll need to be more careful. Find out who revealed our location to the Churchies, and bring him to me. I'll have to make an example of him.

Ho left, and, after a second, so did Mercer, sparing one last glance at the dead girl.

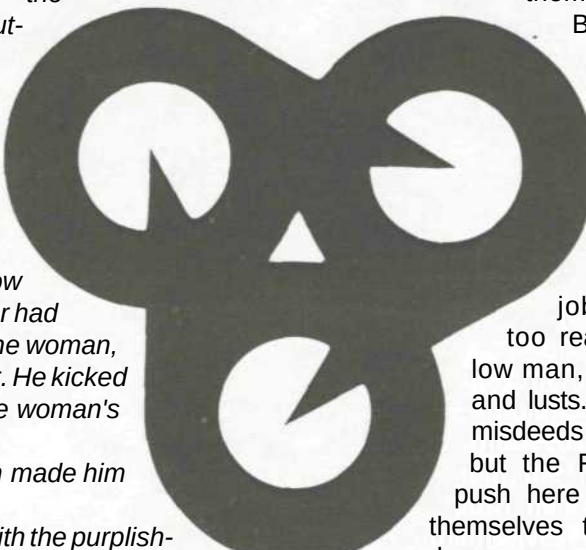
Funny, he'd never thought there could be more pain after Abaddon.

The Fallen Seraphim were those who most resented Humankind, or whose misplaced loyalty to Lucifer led them astray. Exiled from the Realm of Binah, trapped in the world of the dead, the Infernal Legion is dedicated to tempting and deceiving humans. While forbidden from harming humans directly (a rule that is often ignored or twisted), the Fallen prefer to fool humans into harming each other. They claim that most people make their job almost too easy; mortals are all too ready to take advantage of their fellow man, or to give in to ill-advised impulses and lusts. Since humans have free will, their misdeeds are ultimately their responsibility, but the Fallen delight in providing a little push here or there. These demons consider themselves to be the mystical equivalent of undercover cops or confidential informants, weeding out evil humans who, after death, are dragged into the Pits of Abaddon to be punished for their crimes.

The War took the Infernal Legions by surprise. Like their angelic counterparts, the demons had thought that the final conflict would be between Heaven and Hell. Instead, another force has entered the fray, an enemy that is both new and ancient, and which, if victorious, will destroy both Heaven and Hell. This has forced the Fallen into the dubious role of defenders. With the danger, however, also lies an opportunity. The Fallen Seraphim see the War as a chance to reclaim their position, and to punish Humankind for its sins. If Leviathan wins the War, the universe as we know it will cease to exist. If Lucifer wins the War, there will be Hell to pay.

Origins

The stories are correct in one thing: it was Lucifer's pride that caused his downfall. When some of the



Elder Kingdoms became a threat, his reaction was to destroy them all. Then, he sought to assume the prerogatives of the Creator, and tried to destroy all of Humankind. The other angels overthrew him for it.

Lucifer and his followers were cast out of Binah. From the Death Realms, Lucifer continued his war against the Host, however, and the conflict dragged out for centuries before an agreement ended the hostilities. Lucifer and his minions would serve a purpose: to punish those humans whose crimes demanded retribution. The Fallen Seraphim, who now were called simply demons, were allowed to venture into Earth in small numbers, provided that they did not attack humans directly, and that they did not attempt to control or otherwise destroy the free will of humans. Demons could tempt, but not force. They could punish, but not attack without provocation.

Along the way, the demons started recruiting new members from among the Dead. Since their numbers were smaller than those of the Host (only about a quarter of the Seraphim chose to follow Lucifer into exile), the Fallen increased their ranks with malignant spirits, and the souls of evil humans, which became their own version of the Kerubim. By the time of the War, the Infernal Legion was almost as numerous as their Host rivals, although not its match in raw power.

Abaddon, The Pit of Despair

The Fallen Angels were trapped in the fiery realm of Abaddon. This place is wracked by burning, angry Essence flares. These Essence explosions cause any anger, envy, hatred or other negative emotions a person is feeling to turn against him, causing him physical and psychic pain. Those who dwell in Abaddon can only blame themselves for their suffering. The souls of sinners who feel they deserve punishment find themselves in Abaddon; there they are herded by demons into mines or pits where they dig and work and suffer. The process is neither eternal nor meaningless, however. Some people are actually purified by the experience and transcend Abaddon, moving on to other planes of existence, their sins expiated. Many others just sink lower into their vices or hatred, only prolonging their agonies.

Although demons can leave the realm, they are eventually and inevitably dragged back after some time. The longest a demon can remain outside Abaddon is one year per Willpower level. At the end of that period, he is mystically transported back, to endure no less than a month of suffering there. Humans have the chance to escape, but demons are trapped there, seemingly for an eternity. It is perhaps no wonder that their resentment towards Humankind

has only been exacerbated by the centuries. Some magicians have the means to prevent demons from having to return to Abaddon, but they usually charge highly for such services, often requiring servitude or worse from the demons.

Abaddon is in the same dimension as other Death Realms, such as Tartarus, Hades and the Norse Hel. In times past, the Death Gods and the Infernal Legion have been in conflict, although for the most part each Realm leaves its neighbors alone. The strange beings known as the Grim Reapers patrol the borders between the Realms, and not even the Seraphim challenge those entities without good reason, as they seem to be living extensions of the Death entity, a being whose power dwarfs that of the Archangels.

Infernal Ranks

The Legion's organization apes that of the Heavenly Host in many ways. Seraphim, be they Infernal or Celestial, are very rank-conscious beings; demons tend to be servile towards their superior, and bullying towards those below them.

Fiends: These beings, also known as Imps, are elemental or nature spirits bound into the service of the demons. Most of them are beings who delight in the suffering of others, and tend to be stupid brutes, used as cannon fodder or minor servants.

Qliphonim: The demonic equivalent of the Kerubim, the Qliphonim are humans given a choice between Damnation and service. Those who choose the latter find themselves only worsening the state of their souls. Although less powerful than the Fallen, Qliphonim are master manipulators, quite adept at exploiting human weaknesses. Some Qliphonim eventually develop a conscience and start disobeying orders, however - once again, free will makes all humans or former humans unpredictable creatures.

Greater Qliphonim: Those among the Damned who prove themselves valuable servants are raised to this rank. These Qliphonim are among the most devious and powerful of their kind, and some actually aspire to one day dethrone the Seraphim and rule Abaddon in their stead.

We Fallen: These are the Seraphim who backed Lucifer during the First Celestial War. They have the same powers and natural abilities of their Celestial counterparts, although their Essence is colored by negative emotions, and many prefer bizarre or repulsive shapes to the typically beautiful shapes chosen by the Seraphim. The Fallen are organized into the same squadrons, companies and phalanxes used by the Celestial Host.

The Lords: The more powerful among the Fallen become leaders. The Lords control companies and squadrons of the Fallen, or are talented troubleshoot-

ers sent in special missions for the Dark Archangels.

The Dark Archangels: Ironically, a higher percentage of Archangels than common Seraphim backed Lucifer during the Celestial War; the old adage that power corrupts seems to apply to angels as much as to humans. These Archangels fulfill the same purposes as their Celestial counterparts.

The Hierophants: The most powerful of the Dark Archangel are the co-rulers of Abaddon. They each rule a province of the Realm as his personal fiefdom, and answer to none other than Lucifer. Some prominent Hierophants are the so-called Demon Princes, such as Asmodeus and Belial.

Lucifer: The Lord Archangel continues to be the sole ruler of his domain, unencumbered by Councils or commonarchs. The purposes and motivations of Lucifer are a mystery even to the Hierophants. Some rumors assert that Lucifer has repented from his evil ways, while others claim that he is as proud and full of hatred as he was millennia ago.

Purpose and Laws

The Fallen's avowed purpose is to "prove" that Humankind is unworthy of its role in the scheme of Creation. Every time a mortal harms somebody to get what he wants, or betrays a principle in the name of self-interest or lust, the demons feel they have won a small victory. They are, in effect, bigots pointing at people and events that seem to confirm their prejudices. They like to set people up to take the fall, like informants prodding their victims to commit crimes which they can then report to the authorities. The Infernal Legion is populated by supernatural con-men, tricking their marks into knowingly doing evil, and then gleefully punishing them. The one thing that confounds and angers them is encountering people who refuse temptation and do what they feel is right. Even those people can be tricked into replacing morality with self-righteousness, and discipline with fanaticism, however. Demons are the ultimate cynics.

Being exiles and the losers of a civil war, many of the members of the Legion have geared up for a rematch. The prophecies of a Final Battle seemed to indicate a conflict between them and the Heavenly Host, an ultimate war with Earth and Binah as the prize. The standard interpretations indicated that the Heavenly Host would win, but, as many a demon has pointed out, the winners of such a conflict would become the Heavenly Host. Some demons waited for Armageddon with anticipation, hoping to get their revenge; others simply dreaded it, fearing they would experience the ultimate defeat.

Beyond these goal are a number of other agendas. Some Fallen Seraphim just take out their frustrations on humans, for no defined purpose beyond mere sat-

isfaction. Some demons concentrate in foiling the plans of the Heavenly Host, for good or ill. And a growing number simply rebel against everything, including the goals of the Legion, and simply do what they want, with consideration for none and with malice to all. A small minority even rebel against the idea of tempting humans and doing evil, and instead help humans a perform good works.

The Effects of the War

Ever since the Fall, the Infernal Legion had expected an apocalyptic conflict with their natural enemies. The Hierophants were shocked to discover that the true enemy was Leviathan, a being whose name evoked dread even before Lucifer's defeat. It had been the specter of Leviathan, in fact, that had prompted Lucifer to unleash the Flood and destroy all the Elder Kingdoms. The conflict with the One Who Taints pre-dates the Celestial War, and gives the Legion and the Host a common enemy. Sadly, this has not been enough to end the old hatreds and disputes.

Demons on Earth were always alert for new cults, secret societies and other possible "scams." The Fallen quickly tried to infiltrate and subvert the Church of Revelations, hoping to use it for their own purposes: humans are so capable of committing horrible crimes when they think they've got God on their side, after all. These efforts failed, however; dozens of Seraphim and Qliphonim disappeared with no explanation. The Hierophants suspected Celestial activity (ironically enough, the High Archangels suspected Infernal involvement with the CoR), and restricted their investigations. When the Church went public, Leviathan's relationship to the cult was revealed. By then it was too late. The demons lacked the resources to seek out and destroy the Revelationists. Furthermore, they feared (rightly) that to unleash their demon hordes on Earth would only provoke the angels to attack them. For once, the Hierophants hoped that the Celestial Seraphim would take care of the problem.

Their hopes were in vain. As the Army of Revelations swept through Europe and three other continents, many demons were discovered and destroyed. Even worse, a number of demons actually went over the enemy! The final betrayal came when it was revealed that Lord Asmodeus, one of the top-ranked Hierophants, had left Abaddon and now stood by the side of the Dark Apostle, along with several hundred Seraphim and Qliphonim, all branded with the Mark of Leviathan. These betrayals also made the Heavenly Host even more suspicious of the demon; some angels came to believe that the entire Infernal Legion had joined the ultimate enemy.

For the most part, however, the Fallen want to destroy the Church of Revelations as much as their

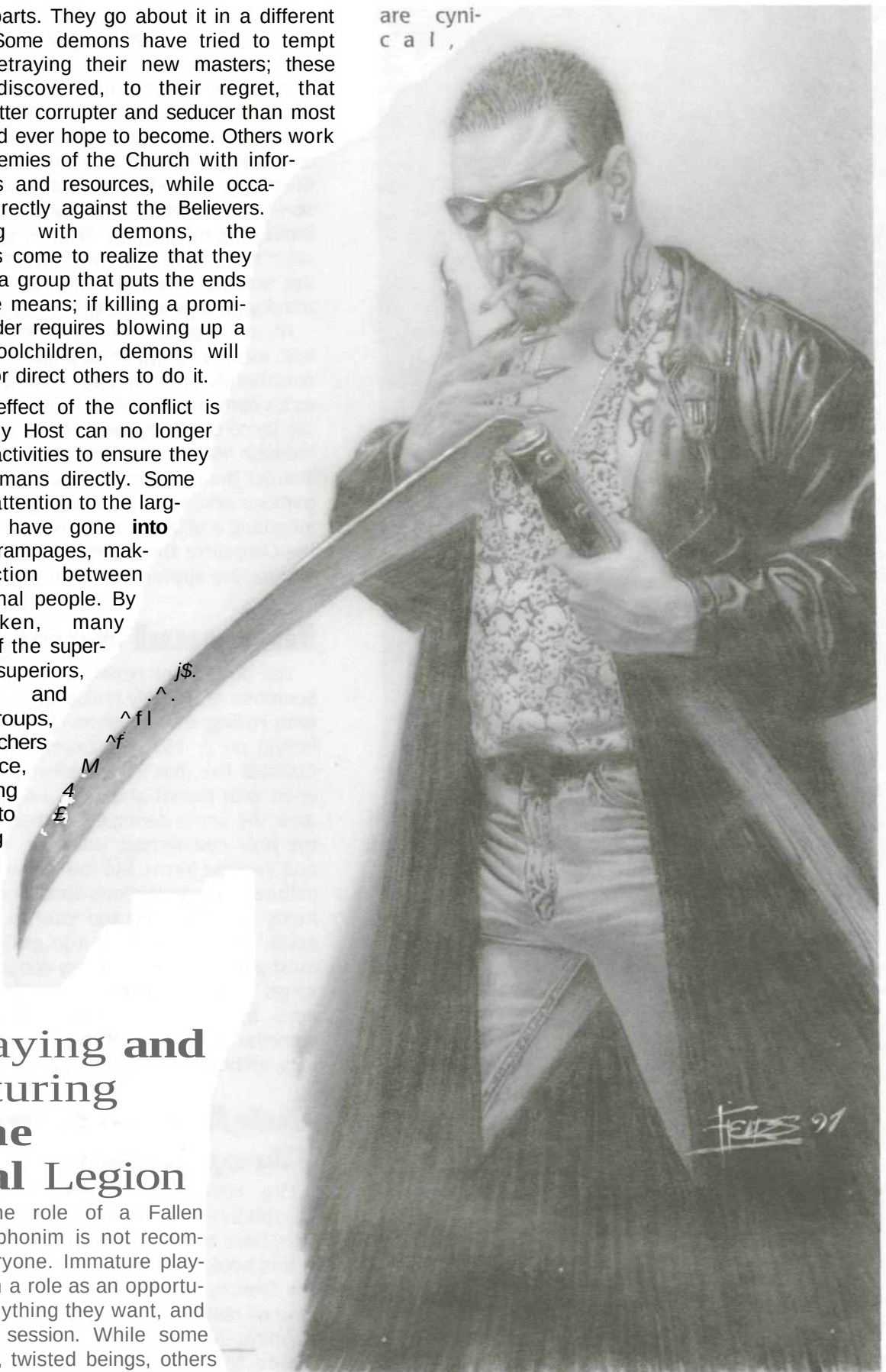
Celestial counterparts. They go about it in a different way, however. Some demons have tried to tempt Believers into betraying their new masters; these demons have discovered, to their regret, that Leviathan is a better corrupter and seducer than most of the Fallen could ever hope to become. Others work supplying the enemies of the Church with information, weapons and resources, while occasionally acting directly against the Believers. When working with demons, the Underground has come to realize that they are dealing with a group that puts the ends well ahead of the means; if killing a prominent Church leader requires blowing up a bus full of schoolchildren, demons will cheerfully do it, or direct others to do it.

Another side effect of the conflict is that the Heavenly Host can no longer monitor demon activities to ensure they do not harm humans directly. Some demons pay no attention to the larger conflict and have gone into mindless killing rampages, making no distinction between Believers or normal people. By the same token, many demons, freed of the supervision of their superiors, have rebelled and joined other groups, such as the Watchers and the Alliance, sometimes using mystical means to avoid returning to Abaddon (see above).

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Roleplaying and Adventuring with the Infernal Legion

Taking on the role of a Fallen Seraphim or Qliphonim is not recommended for everyone. Immature players may see such a role as an opportunity to just do anything they want, and disrupt a game session. While some demons are evil, twisted beings, others





embittered anti-heroes who might even do the right thing while loudly denying it. Some demons just hate humans, and claim to have good reasons for that hatred. Others just made the mistake of being loyal to Lucifer, not realizing their mistake until it was too late. The Qliphonim, on the other hand, were once human, and like all humans they are capable of redemption. Creating a character who was a sinner but who now is seeking salvation could make for some intense and interesting roleplaying. Another possible demon character is the false cynic, who claims to have no faith in the good of humankind while secretly hoping and praying that he is wrong.

As an organization, the Infernal Legion does not lend itself to heterogeneous games; most demons will consistently try to betray or cheat any allies as soon as it's convenient to do so. The best demon characters are those operating alone or in small groups, if possible with little contact with their superiors, who would instruct them to turn against their friends and companions when the opportunity presents itself. While infighting and deceit can have a place in some games, the Chronicler should decide whether or not such situations are appropriate for his group.

Infernal Seraphim

The differences between the Infernal and Celestial Seraphim are largely philosophical and cosmetic. Even after Falling, the Seraphim retain all the powers mentioned on p. 157. For example, they can wield the Celestial Fire, but its energies are twisted and blackened with hatred and rage, turning it into Hellfire; it does the same damage and has the same effects as the holy counterpart, however. They have a Divine and Profane forms, but the former is often monstrous (although the exceptions almost outnumber the rule - many Seraphim are too vain to adopt hideous visages). Their Divine form can grow wings, but for the most part these are leathery constructs, more like bat-wings than bird wings, although again, with exceptions. Many demons now favor Incarnations which combine flesh with leather, plastic and metal piercings, imitating human culture.

Maleficia — Corrupted Theophanies

The Fallen have their own version of the Theophanies (see p. 160), which they call Maleficia. They have Maleficia equivalent to all the Theophanies in this book, with the exception of Destroyer; only a few Destroyers followed Lucifer, and those who did were all obliterated during the Celestial War. Common Maleficia include Binders, who often used barbed chains to drag the Damned to Abaddon, and

Travelers, to spread mischief throughout the world. Other Maleficia will appear in future **Armageddon** books.

Qliphonim

Some of the Dammed get a chance to avoid the torments of the Pit, if only they go to Earth to corrupt others to take their place. While many of them become even more black-hearted than the worse Infernal Seraphim, others find that their crimes are too much to bear, and end up rejecting their evil ways. Even before the War, some Qliphonim had established a lively network of rebels, which conspired against their masters for diverse reasons, ranging from the quest for redemption to the hunger for power. Although these rebels are often betrayed by informants, they continue to plot, despite the horrible tortures that await those who are discovered. They all are dangerous and unpredictable, both for good and ill. Even those who claim to have loftier purposes often resort to the bases means to see them fulfilled.

The Qliphonim have the same powers of their Kerubim counterpart. Like them, they only have one humanoid form, and they have similar senses and recuperative abilities. The Qliphonim can sense the evil in people, and any weaknesses they can exploit.

Available Maleficia

All the Theophanies available to Kerubims have malevolent equivalents, with the exception of Dreamer, which no Qliphonim has ever developed. This may be because the Dreamer power allows for the contemplation of the consequences of one's actions, something that demons studiously avoid

The Watchers

They struck in the night sneaking like thieves in the darkness. It wasn't very dignified, at least not to Guy Lowell, a two-year graduate from Police Academy who still believed cops should order perpetrators out of their houses with loudspeakers, not effect surprise attacks like a bunch of ninjas crawling in to steal the shogun's silverware. On the other hand, one of the other officers detailed to SWAT duty (many of the former SWAT members were now in Mexico, fighting the real war) had mentioned that this drug ring might have some Churchies among them. Churchies

made Guy nervous, although there was no way he'd believe the weird-ass tales people told about them. Parading a bunch of guys in Halloween costumes in front of the Eurowimps the Churchies had conquered was easy to do, and the War Department had issued a statement saying there was no proof that those monsters were in the field. Guy, who had celebrated his twenty-first year a few months ago, felt nothing short of invincible, with his hardened Kevlar armor, full riot helmet with low-light capability, and, best of all, a brand-spanking-new HAR-18, a rifle-grenade launcher combo good enough to shoot down an elephant.

Guy was young enough not to wonder why the Department would issue elephant guns to their officers.

The order was given. Guy and the two guys with him, two tall and quiet mugs who went by the name August Hiram and Desmond Marcus, positioned themselves so they covered the back entrance of the building. The larger team would have the unenviable job of knocking the reinforced door of the building down and going in. The SWAT team had not been told to shoot first and ask questions later, but it had been understood that there would be minimal hassles if that happened. The building was in a Safety Zone, which for all practical purposes made it a lawless land where the people with the biggest guns made the rules.

Guy waited. Then, he heard it, the pounding of the battering ram against the door, the shouts of "Police!"

The gunshots. The long, unending chatter of automatic fire.

"Jesus, they've got a machinegun in there," whispered Guy. Neither Hiram nor Marcus said anything. Their eyes were intent on the back door.

The shooting continued. Guy could now hear screaming, and with a cold shudder he recognized Johnny Wang's voice. Johnny had been a year ahead in the Academy. Now he was screaming in what had to be unendurable agony.

The back door slammed open.

"Police! Freeze!" Guy said - screeched, rather; his voice seemed to have gotten seven years younger all of a sudden - but he was already squeezing the trigger even as he said it. As it turned out, that had been the right reaction. The first three men out the door came out shooting. They had Uzis or MAC-70s or some sort of compact submachineguns. Guy's first three shots went wide. While he corrected, Hiram cut all three men down with a long burst of his M-16.

That's when the monster came out.

It was no Halloween costume. This thing was all tentacles and slime, and it sang, God it sang and made Guy's blood run cold and made him drop the gun and moan in helpless terror-

*Marcus leaped forward, dropping the useless gun. While Guy watched in total disbelief, his fellow police **grappled** with the monster. Marcus pulled, and two of the tentacles came off, a jet of ichor streaming out of the wound. Then Hiram stood up, and changed into a half-naked, golden*



man, a metal statue that had no business moving or existing. A blast of pure light exploded from his hands, and the monster collapsed into a burning, trashing heap, shrinking into nothing after a few seconds.

Hiram leaned over Guy, and changed back to normal. "Whuh, whuh..?" Guy started to say.

"It's all over, Guy. We shot the three perps. You did okay, kid."

"I did?" Guy felt there was something else, something **important** it was on the tip of his tongue, but he couldn't remember. He saw the three men on the ground, and the flaming puddle nearby. A patch of grease, ignited by a stray round, probably, but something about it made him feel uneasy so he stopped looking at it. "Jeez," he said. "So we shot them all?"

Marcus nodded. He was favoring a leg. "You hit?" Guy asked. He vaguely remembered being worried about Marcus for a moment. Marcus smiled embarrassedly. "I tripped and sprained a leg. Should be fine."

"Well, it's all over, then," Guy said. "This is good. My first shoot-out, you know. I wonder if this is what war feels like? No, probably worse, isn't it?" He wandered off, still babbling to himself.

"Will he be okay?" Marcus asked Hiram.

"Yes. He wanted to forget it all, anyway. That was a nasty one. You did good, Marcus."

"Thanks, Dad."

Father and son, they walked to rejoin the rest of the SWAT team.

The Watchers were Seraphim who grew to like humans too much. They lived among them, married them, and begot children with them. When they were discovered, they were persecuted by their fellow Seraphim, and went into hiding. They remained on Earth ever since, forever barred from Heaven or Hell, watching and waiting for the time in which they would step forward to protect Humankind.

Although only a relative handful of Seraphim became the Watchers, they made up for this by raising several generations of Nephelim, the result of the union between an angel and a mortal. These hybrids combine the superhuman physiques of the Seraphim with the boundless potentiality of humans. Their greatest power is that they are immune to all aggressive manipulations of Essence; the Nephelim cannot be controlled, fooled or damaged by Magic, Theophanies or any supernatural ability. Not even the Taint generated by the Adepts of Leviathan have much effect on them. Feared by Angels and Demons, Mortals and Pagan Gods, the Nephelim can find sanctuary only among the Watchers (and more recently, the Alliance; see p. 248). Those who grow up ignorant of their nature are too often found and killed by those who consider them to be aberrations or too dangerous to be allowed to exist.

This band of outlaw angels and their progeny have operated for millennia in the world. Some of them became legendary heroes and martyrs, while others have operated in such secrecy that no knowledge of their activities survives in official records. While trying to restrict their activities to a minimum, the Watchers have often interfered with the plans of the Combine, the Host, and the Infernal Legion. The return of the Cult of Leviathan has forced the Watchers to take action on a wider front than any time since their origins.

Origins

The Watchers appeared some time after the Flood and the Fall of Lucifer (see p. 98). They were the creation of two Archangels: Shemizael (who at the time was a member of the Council of Four) and Azazel. They, together with the Titan Prometheus, established a secret network of angels and gods on Earth, in open defiance to the decision to limit contact between humans and the Celestial beings. These rebels were acting out of a mixture of altruism and selfishness. On the one hand, they thought they could help humans rebuild some of their lost glory; most Watchers had been opposed to Lucifer's decision to unleash the Flood. On the other, many had grown enamored of humans, either physically (most Watchers were romantically involved with one or more mortals) or intellectually (the human capacity to create anything from new philosophies to new tools was endlessly fascinating to the angels, who for the most part lack the inclination or capacity to create or build anything on their own).

When their actions were discovered, the Watchers were attacked and persecuted. Many were killed, many others recanted and were admitted to the fold, and a minority was able to elude pursuit and go into hiding. Since then, and throughout history, the Watchers have remained an active presence in human affairs. Although they avoided direct action most of the time, the Watchers would step in and either nudge events in the "right" direction or destroy supernatural intrusions in the world.

Organization

Unlike the two other old Seraphim bands, the Watchers have a great number of human and half-human members among their ranks. And, although the Seraphim dominate the highest ranks, this is an organization where humans can rise to high positions of power and responsibility. The "ranks" of the Watchers are not made up depending on species or sub-order of being. Instead, they are meant to represent experience and dedication. This is not to say that

favoritism or even nepotism (many a Seraphim has favored his or her progeny over other candidates) do not exist, but overall, those who achieve success are noticed and rewarded with higher rank (and incidentally, with more responsibilities and worries).

Novice: This rank includes Nephelim who have just discovered their abilities and who need to be trained and educated in their use, and humans who show promise and interest in joining the organization. Novices are given few responsibilities and fewer information.

Observer: These are beginning members who know some of the basic secrets, and are given positions of some importance. Local safehouse keepers, guards and bodyguards, and special agents and informants are all considered to be Observers. Nephelim who have been prepared but who still lack experience are also grouped into this category. Observers rarely operate on their own, but instead act under the guidance of a Watcher.

Watcher: This is the basic rank of the organization. Watchers are full-fledged members, who know most of the secrets of the organization and who are expected to defend the interests of the organization to the full extent of their capabilities. Many human Watchers are Gifted, including psychics, magicians and even a number of Inspired. Others are Mundane scholars, researchers, spies and soldiers.

Advocates: The Advocates are experienced members who are in charge of supervising the actions of other Watchers. Advocates are appointed by the Judges (see below), and serve for periods of six years before their performance is reviewed and their appointment is renewed or revoked. Some Advocates travel around, and act as troubleshooters and inspectors, while others oversee activities over a specific area (usually a city, although some are in charge of an entire country). About half of them are human, many of them Gifted; the rest are Nephelim and the odd Seraphim.

Judges: The Judges are old members (most of them are at least one hundred years of age; many are several times older), renowned for their wisdom and experience, who perform most of the leadership functions of the Watchers. The Judges appoint (and, if necessary, dismiss) Advocates, and also make most of the important decisions about intervening or taking action in major matters. The Judges have been discredited by their hesitation just before the War started (see below). Most Judges are Nephelim or Seraphim; a few humans whose Gifted abilities have extended their lives (see p. 00) are also among their ranks.

Archangels: These are the original Watchers, including Shemizael (Azazel disappeared after the original persecution and has not been heard of since). They are all true Archangels or Greater Seraphim, and they

form the ultimate council and court of appeals in the organization.

Purpose and Laws

The Watchers have almost the same goals of the Heavenly Host. It is in their implementation that the conflicts and persecutions arise. Before becoming the Guardians of Humankind, before daring to judge it, the Watchers claim, the angels must grow to understand it. Only by living among humans, by observing their spiritual and technical evolution, can angels truly become their protectors.

The main goals of the Watchers are helping and protecting humans while they evolve towards their ultimate role as the Creator's heirs, destroying all major supernatural infestations in the world, and studying and learning about humans without disturbing them. Most Seraphim among the Watchers have adopted mundane identities and interacted with humans in their jobs and daily lives in ways unimagined by both the members of the Heavenly Host and the Infernal Legion. Some have amassed considerable financial and social influence, although for the most part they use it to further the goals of their secret society. In the course of their history, the Watchers have interacted with almost every major conspiracy on Earth, from the Combine to the Knights Templar to the Boxers. Sometimes they have worked alongside those groups, more often (especially where the Combine is involved), they have tried to oppose them.

In their effort to minimize the impact on humans, the Watchers prefer to work in the strictest of secrecy. Shemizael fervently believes that if humans truly accepted that angels walked among them, they might stop striving towards better things on their own, hoping that those "superior beings" would take care of them. This would be a tragedy, and would affect Humankind's destiny. Thus, the Watchers hide their actions as best they can, using their powers to alter events and memories, and acting in subtle ways, preferably without witnesses, to avoid detection and discovery.

A secondary, but fundamental goal of the society is the protection and welfare of its members. For many centuries, many Watchers did little more than observe and report, in return for which their careers, living arrangements and general welfare were taken care of. The Watchers have a well-established network of money and influence, which allowed the Seraphim and their children, as well as human allies, to go to the best schools, get prestigious jobs or appointments, and overall lead lives of luxury or at least comfort. While there are dangers and hardships involved, life among the Watchers can be far from unpleasant - or it

used to be before the War.

The Effects of the War

The rise of the Church of Revelations was a major defeat for the Watchers. The cult escaped detection until its power was so great that the Watchers could not challenge it directly. The organization's obsession with secrecy also proved its undoing; until the very end, the Watchers hesitated before taking direct action against the Church of Revelations, and when they finally acted, the Munich Massacre had occurred and the Dark Apostle walked the Earth as a living embodiment of Leviathan.

This tragedy has made many Watchers angry at their own inaction. These members are now far more likely to break the vows of secrecy of the organization and directly attack the enemy. For the most part, however, the group prefers to work in relative secrecy. They are the Alliance's biggest supporters, and the two groups are on the verge of combining into a single society (the Alliance is fully described on Chapter Five, p. 00).

Another event that caught the Watchers by surprise was the birth of an unprecedented number of Nephelim among the Magic Generation (see p. 00). Apparently, many people had been born human, but with a latent Nephelim gene, and the same phenomenon that increased the birth of Gifted humans also awakened that potential, resulting in thousands of Nephelim being born without the knowledge of the Watchers. Many of these Lost Children have been killed by the many enemies of the organization, while others have developed their supernatural abilities without the proper preparation. Some of these Lost Children have become criminals and, worst of all, a few have even joined the ranks of the Church of Leviathan. The Watchers are now on a constant lookout for these Lost Children, either to take them back into the fold or, if they prove to have turned out wrong, to destroy them.

Roleplaying and Adventuring with the Watchers

While the Watchers are as close to the "good guys" in *Armageddon* as any other group with the exception of the Alliance, the group is far from perfect. Its secretive and conspiratorial nature often prevent valuable information from reaching the people who



could make best use of it. Overall, however, a group of Watchers has the advantage of variety (this is one of the few organizations in which a team that included a sorcerer, two psychics, a Mundane Nephelim and a Seraphim would raise no eyebrows) and flexibility (missions can range from tense espionage or intrigue-laden undertakings to savage slugfests).

The typical Watcher is fairly privileged (either he grew up in a wealthy human, Seraphim or Nephelim family, or his membership to the Watchers opened the doors to prosperity), well educated, and somewhat spoiled (although tempered with the sense of duty that is supposed to come with high station). They are expected to earn their keep, however, either by excelling in a profession of choice, or by devoting themselves to the service of the Watchers. There are many exceptions, however. Lost Children, for example, can come from all walks of life, and their only commonality is their supernatural natures.

The Nephelim

They were among the heroes and giants of legend. Nearly immortal and very powerful, they were deemed Abominations by the Heavenly Host, and hunted down and murdered by the thousands. Their dual nature gives them a life of power and contradictions. The nature of the Nephelim is essentially human - they are as capable of selfishness and generosity, or kindness and cruelty, as any other person. On the other hand, their abilities open them to the temptation of abusing their power. Many of the tales of mythological heroes speak of men and women who did as they wished, often doing more harm than good. The worst extremes committed by these early Nephelim led to their persecution and near extinction. The Watchers have done their best to inculcate among their progeny the understanding that with great power comes great responsibility. Overall, they have been successful, although there have been many tragic exceptions. Some rumors point to the crimes of Jack the Ripper and Springheel Jack as the actions of deranged Nephelim, actions that the Watchers covered up.

The Nephelim are born from the union of a human and a Seraphim parent. Two Nephelim have a small chance (about one in eight) of conceiving a Nephelim

child; all other progeny will be human, although a very high percentage of them (almost fifty percent) will develop Gifted abilities. And, it has recently been discovered, some children of Nephelim and humans, or of humans who descend from Nephelim develop the latent potential of becoming Nephelim themselves, a potential that was realized with the Magic Generation (see p. 240).

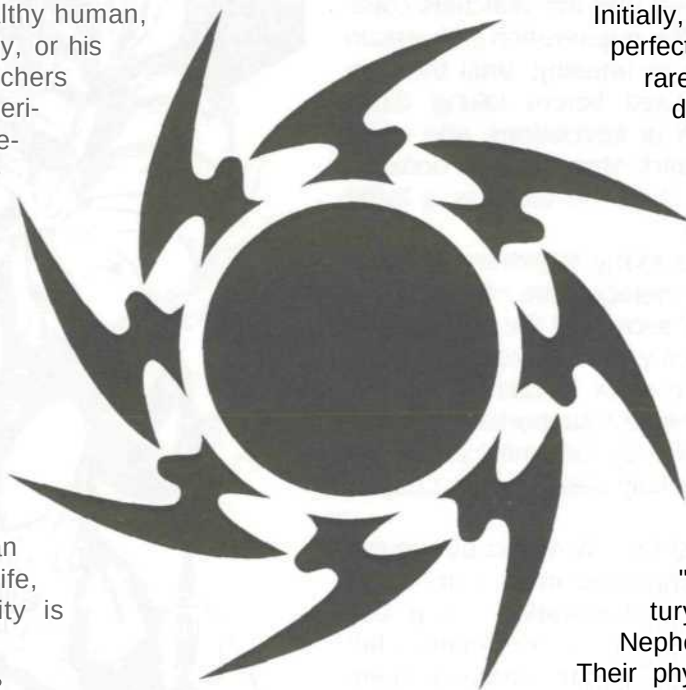
Initially, the Seraphim appear to be perfectly normal humans. They rarely contract any childhood diseases, however, and sometime between the ages of twelve and eighteen they experience an amazing growth spur. Rare is the Nephelim who stands less than six feet of height by the time he reaches adulthood. In ancient times, when the average stature of men was much lower than it is today, the Nephelim's size led to their being called "the Giants." In the 21st century, on the other hand, the Nephelim's size is rarely noticed.

Their physical appearance tends to favor the human parent; some say this is Nature's way of giving those parents a measure of the immortality that their children will experience.

By the time they reach maturity, the Nephelim's dual nature becomes evident. Their strength and other physical attributes become superhuman, and they recover from injuries at an amazing rate; even lost limbs can be regrown very quickly unless their bodies are severely burned. Although they can be killed through Mundane means, it is very difficult to do so. Furthermore, their aging process stops sometime after their early twenties, and from then on the Nephelim may continue to live forever (the oldest known Nephelim are over ten thousand years old).

The Nephelim have some limitations humans do not have, however. They cannot perform magic (not even the ritual magic that is available to Mundanes), nor do they ever exhibit any of the Gifted abilities that all humans have the potential to develop. Neither can they learn any of the Theophanies (see p. 160) the Seraphim and Kerubim use. In fact, other than their basic senses, which are attuned to the flows of Essence, the Nephelim cannot manipulate Essence for any purpose, except for the normal Essence loss that occurs during strong emotional episodes.

This is more than compensated by the fact that the



Nephelim are virtually invulnerable to magic and most supernatural powers. Something in the Nephelim's Essence matrix counteracts all effects that depend on the manipulation of Essence, and even the abilities like Taint and Dissolution, which are empowered by the alien energies of the Worlds Beyond.

Nephelim Powers

The Nephelim only have a few inherent powers. They cannot learn magic nor any other Gifted or supernatural ability. Their natural abilities are quite impressive on their own, however.

Supernatural Senses

The Nephelim can see the flows of Essence, although they cannot manipulate them. These senses allow them to sense the presence of spirits and soul-projecting astral travelers, as well as detect the use of magic. If the character passes an Easy Perception Test, he can uncover supernatural beings posing as humans. Their unique powers also render them immune to all forms of illusion and magical or psychic concealment.

Fast Recovery from Injury

The Nephelim can heal injuries almost as fast as they are inflicted, and they can fully recover from all but the worst trauma. Life Points lost through any means are recovered at the rate of 5 Life Points per turn, or 60 points per minute. If a limb is severed, a replacement will slowly grow out within an hour. Even beheading is not final, unless the Nephelim is otherwise crippled or restrained; if the character passes a Survival Test (see p. 82), and he can reattach the head within ten minutes of the beheading (finding one's head requires one or more Difficult Perception Tests, at the Chronicler's discretion and depending on the circumstances), the head will reconnect and all will be well (although the sight of a headless Nephelim looking for the lost body part is enough for a Fear Test at -5 for more people). If enough damage is inflicted to require a Survival Test, the Nephelim is at the same risk as a normal human (although if he passes the Test, the regeneration process will take care of the injuries).

Fire inflicts longer-lasting injuries, although even then the recovery will eventually be complete. Fire-induced scarring or lost limbs will take several days to heal. Keep track of fire damage separately; it regenerates at the rate of 1 Life Points per hour. Lost limbs will regrow over a period of a week. Thus, it is easier to kill a Nephelim by completely consuming him with fire.

Immunity to Essence-based Attacks

The souls of the Nephelim act as a repelling force

against all forms of Essence-based attacks. Magical Invocations, psychic powers and even the Celestial Fire (see p. 00) cannot affect the Nephelim; such attacks will simply fail. When the Seraphim went after the first generation of Nephelim, they were forced to use crude weapons of iron and bronze to fight and kill them; their Celestial Fire blades were worse than useless against the demi-angels. Not even illusions, spells of mind control, and the Essence-draining abilities of supernatural beings will work against the Nephelim. Creatures of spirit like ghosts can only affect the Nephelim if they have materialized on Earth, or if the Nephelim has been somehow transported to another realm of the Otherworlds (for example, if a Nephelim stepped through a Gateway leading to the Death Realms, the spirits of the dead would be able to strike at him physically).

The Old Gods

"Surf's up, as you Yanks say," Henry said with a grimace.

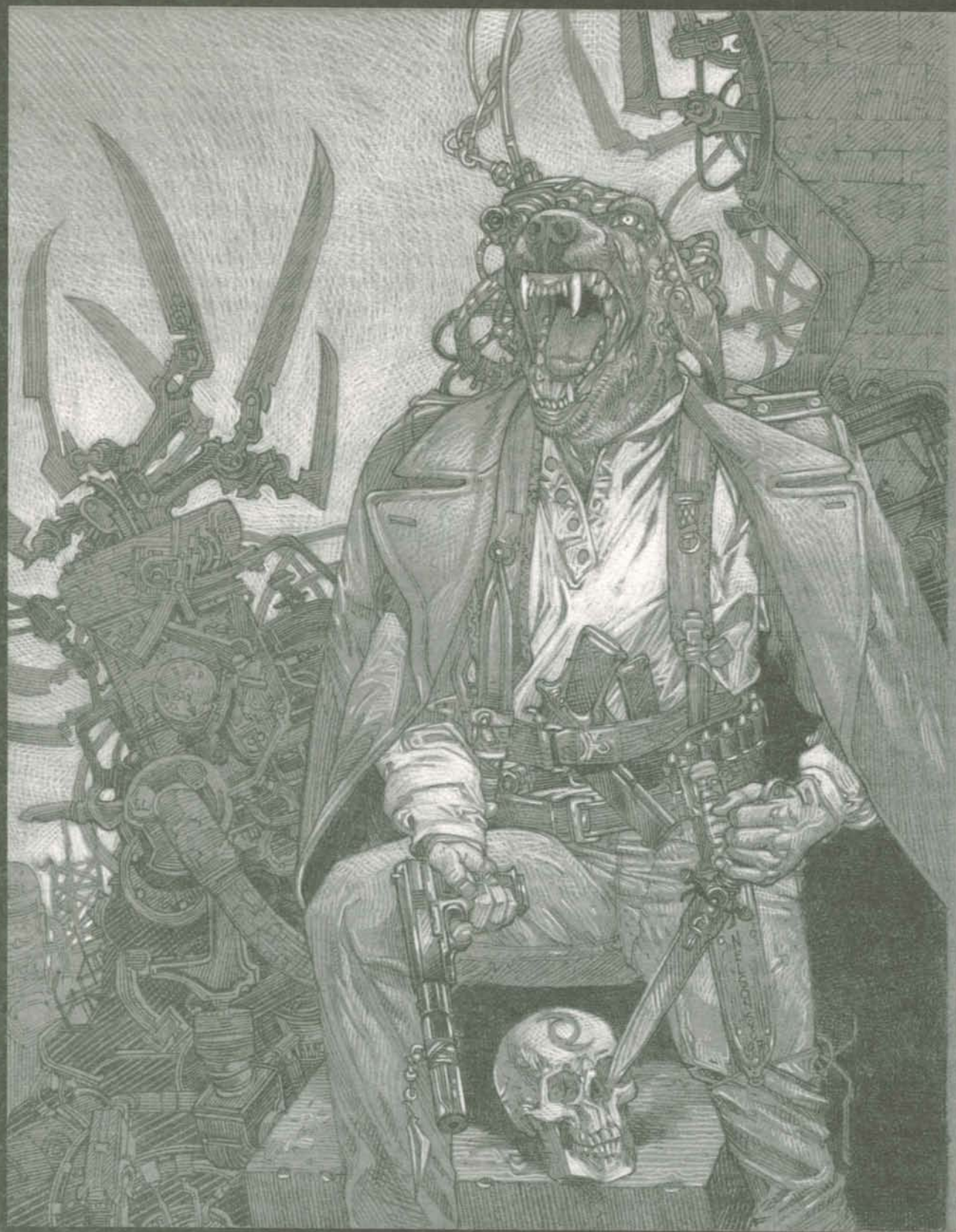
The North Atlantic was freezing cold this time of year, and the harsh waves had nearly smashed all three of them against the rocky beach. Only Helena's efforts had allowed them to reach the shore safely.

The two men and the woman took off their wetsuits quickly, sneaking glances in every direction. All their training notwithstanding, they were in enemy territory, and it was not a pleasant experience. Only Henry had been in combat for real, and back then he'd commanded a Challenger 2 tank. Riding a sixty-ton iron horse and trading shots with an enemy located two thousand meters or more away did not compare with crawling on a muddy beach late at night, armed only with a machine pistol, some grenades and the little "gifties" he and his team mates had brought along.

And, of course, the glorified flashlight he was carrying on his back, at grave risk and expense. It would not do to forget that, considering it was more important to the mission than any of their lives.

After hiding their equipment, they set off, single file. Normally, an operation such as this would require at least a dozen men to have any chance of success. Not even the chaps at SAS had the special qualities of the trio climbing the steep hill, however. Royal Marines would have drowned before reaching this miserable beach; the sea currents were treacherous, and using a powered boat would have alerted the Churchmen, and that would just not do, would it?

Henry had thought he was a normal, if rather talented



tank driver, until one of the Church's damnable Holy Fist **panzers** had put a sabot round right through the front armor of his Challenger. He had emerged from the conflagration alive, if the burned husk they had dragged out could be called that. The medics had all but given up on him; one of them came by his bed to turn the morphine drip all the way up and give him the mercy of a quick death. At that point, the medic had noticed that the burned skin and flesh had peeled off, and perfectly good tissue was showing underneath; the dying man was now almost completely healed. **That** had attracted the attention of the Chief of Staff, and later of the Special Directorate. Henry had been removed from his beloved tank service, and put among all these James Bond impersonators. It hardly seemed fair, but he had accepted the king's shilling, and it was not for the likes of him to wonder why, and all that.

They reached the target area, the small hillock overlooking the naval installation. Seamus, the quiet Irishman of the team, immediately started setting up the device Henry had been carrying on his back. The laser beam was an aiming device, once thought to be obsolete, now made necessary by yet another invention. Cruise missiles could navigate for themselves, but the Churchmen had invented some sort of bloody jammer that confused the guided missiles and made them crash or even turn around. Now it was back to the tried and true laser guided missiles. This installation was building submarines and missile boats that might further isolate the Home Islands. The three of them on the hill, with a little help from the shipyard thirty miles off the coast, were to see to it that the shipyard ceased production altogether. Henry felt some pity for the hapless Frenchmen who worked there, most of whom were no more Believers than Henry was a Muslim, but war is a rough business.

"All ready" Seamus said. He sent the signal. All matter of minutes, now.

"Men are coming," Helena whispered.

"Bloody Hell," Henry whispered harshly. "Til deal with them." He looked down. True enough, a platoon of Churchmen. The moon was not out, but even in the weak starlight he could make out the uniforms. Soul Police, armed thugs, but over twenty of them, spread out, sweeping the hills. They would reach Seamus' position before the two dozen cruise missiles reached the target. The missiles had to move slowly to avoid detection, and a bullet through the device would render them as useless as if they had never been fired.

One man against twenty. All modesty aside, not just any one man.

It had been a bit of a shock, really, when the Special Directorate man had explained things to him. It appeared that his Mum had had carnal knowledge with someone other than his father, and that he was the result of that unhallowed union. Stranger still, whoever that chap was (his mother, dead all of three years ago, could not be asked, alas), he had not been your regular milkman. Indeed, his genes had made Henry into somebody able to survive a

tank explosion, to master all the weapons the Special Directorate men had seen fit to train him in, and to feel confident climbing down a hill to confront twenty armed men.

The boffins in Research called it by some fancy name - "Psychic Manifestation of Jungian Archetypes" or something in that vein. Whatever it was, when he called upon it, he changed. Now, hidden behind some bushes, he waited until the first squad got closer, and then called upon it.

The world became a place of sharp colors and shapes. Henry could see every man in the squad, note their weapons, the way they carried them. In a second, he knew who was a veteran, who was a swaggering bully, who was a scared child. He rose from a crouch and fired a long burst, ten bullets in not much more than a second. Each man was struck at least once; all the hits were head wounds.

To the other two squads, it was as if all seven men had been cut down by a bolt of lightning. Some of the smarter ones fired into the area where they had seen the one-second burst, but by then Henry had moved. Down by the facility, the alarm had already been sounded, but that didn't matter, they could not make a difference in the time that was left. It was the remaining fourteen men, two squads, that would decide the issue, one way or another.

Henry emerged from the new hiding place, fired again.

The gun jammed after only two shots. The point man of the squad dropped, but the other six men turned towards him, started raising their weapons.

He rushed them, covering ten yards in a second or less. A bullet hit him in the chest; he ignored the pain. Another round hit him on the kneecap; he stumbled, but was running an instant later. His outstretched hand reached the face of the closest man in the squad. His scream of pain was drowned into a dying squeal. Henry shoved the dead man into another and used the push as leverage for a leaping side kick from one of the foolish Hong Kong action movies he had watched as a child. Except this kick crushed the skull of a man despite his helmet.

More shots were hitting him. The last squad opened up on him, ignoring the fact that the other survivors were in the way. The last four members of the second squad were mowed down by their own mates. Henry fell to one knee, grabbed the assault rifle of one of the dead men, and rose and fired on the same motion.

Then it all became quiet

And as he stood despite having been shot over ten times, as the wounds healed themselves, as he saw the shipyard below come alive - too late, he could see the first cruise missile now - he understood what he truly was.

Helena was like him; she had led them through the treacherous currents, forced the seas to do her bidding.

His was not the realm of the seas, however. His was the domain of War.

And as the missiles fell and the explosions shook the inlet, Henry rose his hands towards the skies and laughed in delight.

In the world of **Armageddon**, the Pagan Gods were not made-up entities, or mere ghosts in the collective unconscious. Instead, they were all too real and powerful beings, as likely to be cruel as charitable, often causing more harm than good. The Old Gods, Odin and Zeus and their ilk, share a common origin with the angels. They also descend from the Sephyr, although their ancestors were earthier elemental beings, the living tools used to fashion the universe, whereas the Seraphim's progenitors were messengers and observers. When the Seraphim abandoned Earth on a desperate quest for the Creator (see p. 00), the Titans, as the entities called themselves, set themselves up as the rulers of the fledgling human civilizations growing after the Flood and the last stage of the Ice Age. The impact of the Titans on human culture survives to this day; their immense power awed humans, and their occasional gifts gained their adoration and worship. Given their poverty and ignorance, it was easy for those cultures to believe that they could not control their destiny, and that they were helpless pawns in the hands of the gods. This idea survives to this day.

The process was not one-sided, however. The human worshippers of the Old Gods affected the flows of Essence. Even the Mundanes can affect the world, if enough of them believe strongly enough in one thing. The gods were altered by the very worship they demanded. Some acquired new powers to better enable them to fit in the roles they had assumed. Others found their very personalities and memories being altered over time to satisfy the preconceptions of the mortals they thought they ruled. The collective Essence of the human race was more powerful than the will of the gods; in the end, humans reshaped them as much or more as the gods affected their perception of the world.

When the Seraphim returned, they went to war against the Titans, and helped unseat them. Losing battles and worshippers at the same time, many of the Old Gods retreated from human affairs, and escaped into their fabulous Realms in the dimension of Netzach (see below). For the most part, the dethroned deities were content in their exile, although some would plot to defeat the angels and return to their past glories. None of those plots succeeded, and except for a few pantheons, most of them lost all but a handful of followers, and became the stuff of myths, their names remembered only by scholars or young children.

Like the angels, the Old Gods had visions of a final conflict, a Ragnarok which would forever change the world. The prophecies were never clear, and many of the Titans thought that the war would be waged between two pantheons, or between an alliance of gods and the hated Seraphim. The rise of the Dark

Apostle revealed the truth; the enemy was Leviathan, represented in Norse myth by the dragon Nidhor, the Dread Biter, who gnaws the World Tree that represents Reality. With the angels distracted and in disarray, the Old Gods could slip in and out of their prison. Many entered Earth in person, while others seeded the world with their Avatars, and engendered a new generation of Inheritors, humans who descended from the union of gods and mortals - demigods who could serve in this time of need.

Netzach — Land of the Pantheons

The Old Gods reside primarily in the Sephiroth of Netzach. It is here that most of the fabulous pantheons erected their kingdoms and palaces, built as larger-than-life imitations of human buildings and cities. Unlike Binah, Netzach is a place not unlike Earth in many ways, with a sun and sky, seasons, and lands that teem with life. Everything in this dimension is of epic proportions. Here trees are the size of small buildings, and bears can grow to be as large as elephants. The wilderness areas of Netzach are very dangerous to the unwary, and even the gods do not venture there lightly. Each pantheon controls an area of the world, sometimes in an arrangement similar to the geographical distribution of the followers of that pantheon. The lands of these pantheons have their own denizens, and even their own natural laws, which vary from kingdom to kingdom.

The dwellers of Netzach include the gods themselves, who spend the centuries by engaging in pleasant pastimes, from hunting the fabulous beasts of the wilderness to engaging in mock battles and titanic feasts. Many Inheritors (see below) who followed their parents to the Otherworlds also live here, acting as agents and servants. Even some human beings live there, the descendants of worshippers who chose to join their deities in exile; their descendants often live in the manner of their long-dead ancestors, and know nothing about the modern world.

Netzach is connected to two other major Sephiroth in addition to Earth (which the Norse call Midgard, and the Quabbalists Malkuth; the p. 209)). The Death Gods of most pantheons reside not in Netzach but in Geburah, the lands of the Dead where Lucifer's Abaddon is also located. The Kingdoms of the Death Gods are usually dark, cold places, where human souls endure centuries as mere shades, or are tormented much as they are in Abaddon. The other realm connected to Netzach is Yesod, the Moon-lit lands also known as Alfheim, where the Sidhe and the Fey and Sylvan races dwell. Traffic between the three realms is light, but it exists.



The Effects of the War

The pagan pantheons have returned to Earth due in part to the rise of the Church of Revelations. The danger Leviathan poses for all reality makes it impossible for the Old Gods to idly watch by the sidelines. Instead, they have sent a myriad of agents into the world. Some deities have even materialized physically on the world, despite the grave dangers involved. This migration was also helped by the subtle change in the world that started with the birth of the Magic Generation (see p. 240). As magic and the flows of Essence became stronger in the world, it became easier for the gods to break through the barriers separating their reality from Earth. Unlike the Seraphim, who now have great difficulty in traveling back and forth from their Realm, the Old Gods have a level of access greater than anything since the start of the Christian era.

The gods sensed the upcoming upheaval, although they were no wiser than the angels about its causes. Most pantheons had legends of an upcoming War, and the omens seemed to indicate that the New Millennium would be the time of that conflict. To prepare for that day, the gods set to prepare an entire brood of warriors. They fathered Inheritors, or mixed their Essence with the souls of newborn to create Avatars, living embodiments of their power. These Inheritors and Avatars have become valuable assets to the Free World and the Underground; some, however, have joined forces with the Dark Apostle.

Since they share no common culture or language, let alone a common leader, each pantheon has its own agenda to deal with Leviathan, the Seraphim, and each other. Some pantheons are discussed below.

Some Pantheons of Sate

Described below are a few pantheons who have



been especially active in the war against the Church of Revelations. Unfortunately, there is not enough room in this book to do even one pantheon justice. Several pantheons will be described in upcoming Armageddon sourcebooks.

The Norse Gods

These were the deities worshipped by the Vikings and, before them, by the diverse Germanic peoples of Europe and Eurasia. These gods were worshipped by large numbers of people until as late as 900 AD, when a combination of Christian missionaries (and Christian persecution) and the Seraphim's attack on the Realm of Asgard ended their existence as an active pantheon. Among their chief deities Odin (also known as Woden or Wothan), Thor, Loki, Tyr and Heimdall. Some of the children of the gods became powerful heroes, and gave rise to the legends of the dreaded berserkers, who would turn into brutal killing machines that made little distinction between friend and foe.

The Norse gods made a stand against Leviathan on 2013, when they sunk the fleet the Army of Revelations was preparing to use against the Nordic countries. Odin himself is said to be in the United States, helping coordinate the moves of the Alliance (see p. 248), while Thor is somewhere in Russia, making occasional appearances to destroy entire tank columns, often accompanied by a number of steppe deities. Loki, the trickster god, is a master spy, weaving complex patterns of lies and half-truths that confound the most adept members of the Soul Police. And several Inheritors and Avatars (see below) of this pantheon now serve in England and Northern Europe in diverse capacities.

The Aztec and Mayan Gods

The deities of Central America were a complex lot. The Mayan deities, beings like Kinebahan (the all-father), Ixazaluoh (goddess of water), and Kukulcan (the winged serpent, known by the Aztecs as Quetzacoatl), were more benevolent than the blood-thirsty Aztec pantheon, dominated by Huitzilopochtli, who demanded constant human sacrifices, or Xipetotec, the 'Flayed Lord' whose victims were horrible tortured before being offered to him. Kukulcan/Quetzacoatl was banished by these brutal deities, and for several centuries the Aztecs dominated the area, until the Spaniards brought their own version of mass murder and, on the metaphysical plane, the Seraphim assaulted the gods' homeland of Aztlan and brought their deities down.

In the twenty-first century, Mexico and Central America have become a giant battleground between the forces of the United Nations (headed by the US) and the Third Army of Revelations. While aircraft and artillery destroy what little remains of half a dozen

countries, and tanks and infantry race back and forth, monsters summoned by the Adepts of Leviathan scour the countryside, seeking the few brave enough to resist the invaders. Amidst the chaos, the Old Gods of the Mexica and the Maya have returned. Kukulcan the dragon-god is said to have appeared in the midst of great battles to strike down the largest Shaitan monsters summoned by the Believers. Inheritors of Huitzilopochtli have become important leaders of the Underground movements in Mexico and Central America. Unfortunately, it is rumored that at least some of the Aztec gods have actually turned coat and joined the ranks of the Church of Revelations, their powers augmented and twisted by the Mark of Leviathan.

The Egyptian Pantheon

One of the most ancient pantheons, the deities of Khem, as the Egyptian Pantheon calls itself, were among the first Titans to manifest on Earth to demand the worship of humans. Overall they were benevolent, helping the culture of the Nile to develop and regain some of the arts and sciences lost during the Flood. Their gods included Ra (the sun god), Isis (the Mother Goddess, identified with Gaea/Gaia), Rah the god of Essence and wisdom, Bast, the cat-headed goddess, and Set, once the overlord of Khem, who upon being overthrown became the enemy of the gods. The Egyptian pantheon was first weakened by wars with other deities (among them the Olympians who backed both Alexander the Great's conquests and later the Roman Empire) and then overcome by the Seraphim and the monotheistic movements (first by Christians, and later by Muslims).

The Middle East and North Africa are now places of contention in the War, and the gods of Khem have returned to make a stand. Veiled in secrecy, and persecuted by the local Muslim authorities, a Cult of Khem, dominated by Avatars and Inheritors of the Old Gods, has spread through Egypt and other parts of North Africa. They are dedicated to finding and hunting down any cell of the Church of Revelations in the area.

Roleplaying the Gods

This book has no rules for creating Old God characters. Such beings would be beyond the Legendary Character Type (see p. 00); they would be Mythical Characters, a class usable only in "cosmic" superhero games where Mundanes would be little more than nuisances. Mythical games are not for everybody so that information will be saved for a future book. Players can assume the role of Inheritors (demigods) and Avatars (human manifestations of a god's power).

Chroniclers who introduce a god to a game should do so sparingly. For one, most of those beings do not come to Earth often, for fear of being destroyed. Also, they are powerful beings who have little patience with mortals, or even their immortal progeny. Gods should appear mainly through omens, visions and rumors, providing hints and important information without making a direct appearance. The few exceptions (Odin, for example) are described on Chapter Five.

The Inheritors — Demigods

Much like the Watchers (see p. 175), many of the Old Gods became attracted to mortal humans, and had children with them. These hybrids were the inherited some of the basic abilities of their Titan forebears. Among their legacy were some of the powers of their forefathers. There have been Inheritors living among humans for millennia, but only a relative handful; most of them were either killed during the Second Celestial War, or fled to the Otherworlds with their pagan parents.

In the years approaching the Millennium, the Old Gods returned to Earth, warned by the signs of the approaching Doomsday. In an effort to raise a new generation of warriors, many gods (mostly but not exclusively male) traveled throughout the world incognito, fathering or giving birth to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Inheritors. In some cases, the gods also left behind a small network of faithful humans to watch over the children. Sometimes, the network was made of fanatical cultists; in other cases, the humans were trustees charged with revealing the truth to the children when the time came. In many instances, however, the children were left to their own devices, either out of sheer callousness (some gods believed that if the child was fit to survive, then he would endure the shock of discovering his nature) or mere carelessness. Some gods are even worse than humans when it comes to thinking things through.

These children grew up with no awareness of their true natures, although their instincts and personalities often reflected their divine halves. Sometime between adolescence and adulthood, however, their powers were awakened. The Inheritors' bodies became stronger and more powerful; some survived severe injuries that would have killed a normal human beings, while others broke athletic records. More important (and shocking, both to the Inheritors and those around them) was the manifestation of Aspects, special powers and abilities that their godly parent embodied. Children of a war god, for example, developed an innate familiarity with all weapons, as well as amazing combat instincts that matched those of hard-

ened veterans. The progeny of gods of fire often set their houses ablaze by accident. And many tragedies occurred when Inheritors whose legacy included the Aspect of Death became angered at somebody.

The fates of these children often depended on the arrangements their divine progenitors had left behind. The young demigods were often inducted into (or occasionally even kidnapped by) whatever local network or cult the god had set up for his or her child. In some cases, the revelation that their parent was a god was met with denial and disbelief, and even resentment or hatred. Some Inheritors will have nothing to do with their divine parents, while others become loyal sons. Those Inheritors left to their own devices faced many problems, however. During the pogroms that followed the New Age, many Inheritors were killed by angry mobs, or murdered by other supernatural beings who wished to avoid competitors or who found the idea of preying on a demigod too tempting to pass up. The lucky ones were discovered by a friendly organization (the Watchers sometime adopted Inheritors, according them the same respect they had for the Nephelim; some True Immortals also sensed in these demigods kindred souls, and took them under their wing). The unlucky ones were found by the Seraphim, the Combine, or the Church of Revelations, which at best meant a quick death for them.

As a result of this haphazard 'breeding program,' the Inheritors are a mixed lot. Some have learned a great deal of the secrets of their pantheon and the universe, while others don't have the faintest idea of who and what they truly are. A few have been raised in the lap of luxury, much like their Nephelim counterparts, while others grew up in abject poverty. The only thing they as a group have in common are their powers, and the dangers inherent in being a powerful force in a world at war.

Ancient Inheritors

Not all the Inheritors were born recently, however. Some have lived on Earth since antiquity, escaping both the wrath of the Seraphim and the fear of the Mundane through cunning and caution. Most of these Inheritors had little interest in their pantheons of origin, and chose to pursue their own destiny. A few of these old and powerful demigods became involved in world-spanning conspiracies and the dealings of the Combine and the Watchers, but most of the rest lived as long as they did by avoiding such involvement. Unfortunately, the War allows for no indifference or neutrality, and these ancient beings, wiser in many ways than the gods who spawned them, have had to enter the fray, sometimes helping their younger siblings, or secretly aiding them.

Common Inheritor Powers and Limitation*

All Inheritors share these special abilities. In addition to these powers, all Inheritors possess at least one Aspect of their parent deity (see below); some have as many as three different Aspects. Unlike many supernatural beings, most Inheritors, unless they embody certain Aspects, lack the ability to "see" Essence; neither can they sense the presence of spirit entities, except those that their Aspects are attuned to. In this way, at least, they are more human than divine.

Rapid Healing

Inheritors recover very rapidly from injury. Any damage inflicted on them is regained at the rate of 1 point for each level in their Constitution and Willpower attributes, every minute (so, for example, an Inheritor with a Constitution of 4 and a Willpower of 5 would regain 9 Life Points per minute).

Essence Manipulation and Recovery

The Inheritors use Essence to activate their Aspects; this Essence is recovered at the rate of 1 Essence point per minute. Inheritors can use as much Essence as they need, without the limitations normal humans have (see p. 00).

Unaging

Inheritors do not grow old; the aging process stops shortly after reaching full adulthood (sometimes after their mid-twenties). It is unknown whether or not they are truly immortal, or whether their life spans are so long that they seem so. Some known Inheritors are over five millennia old.

Restricted Supernatural Abilities

Besides the Aspects described below, Inheritors never demonstrate other supernatural abilities. Unless they have the right Aspect, they cannot use magic, for example; neither can an Inheritor acquire psychic abilities or become Inspired. Such powers are the province of pure humans. In a way, their godly half imposes limits on them that do not exist in humans, all whom have at least the potential to work magic and other powers.

Avatars — Pantheistic Beings

Avatars are, to some degree, children of the gods

like the Inheritors, but in a completely different way. Some gods prefer not to beget children the old fashioned way, while others create both Inheritors and Avatars. An Avatar is a spiritual offspring of a god, a human being whose soul is modified into a closer resemblance to the Essence matrix of a deity. The result is a being who shares many traits with his spiritual "parent," from powers to personality, but who is an independent creature with his own free will and destiny. The link between Avatars and the gods who changed their natures is very strong; the gods can sometimes try to see through their eyes, or even attempt to seize control over them. Some Avatars become resentful of this connection, and even rebel against it, while others establish a close relationship between their patron god.

The process of creating an Avatar occurs shortly before his birth. The god performs a ceremony which puts him into contact with the soul of a human about to be born. During the ceremony, the god imprints a portion of his own soul on the human's, modifying to some degree. These modifications will affect the newborn's appearance, personality and inherent powers, although the child's original soul (including any karma or other baggage from previous existence) and his rearing and environment will also have an impact. The result of this process is a strange mixture of human and divine, one that is less clearly defined than those that occur when an Inheritor is born. One major difference between the two god-offspring is that Avatars, while more powerful in some ways than Inheritors, are not unaging, although their life span is greater than a normal human's. Also, an Avatar's personality is usually very similar to that of the "parent" deity, while Inheritors are no more likely to think like the gods who spawned them than any children of an absentee parent.

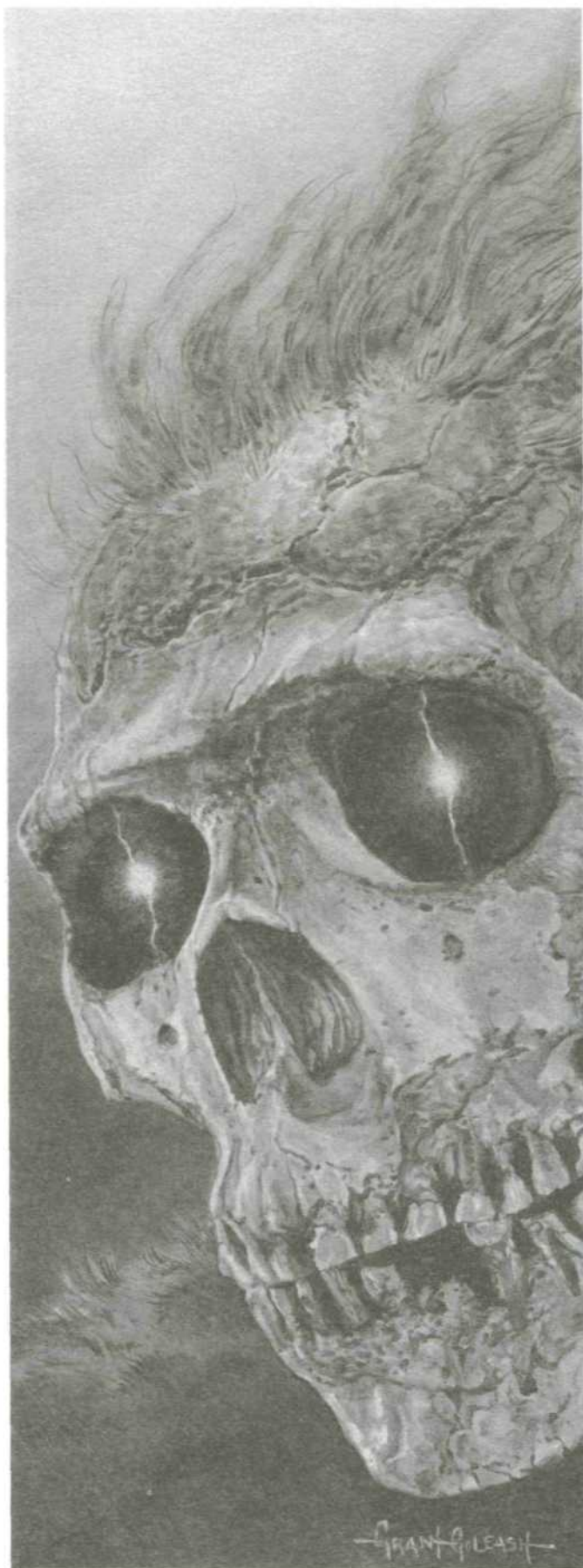
Avatars were not widely used by most deities until very recently. Prompted by the signs that presaged the War, many Old Gods created several Avatars apiece to use them as agents and servants in the conflict. Even when not directly connected to their Avatars, the gods could sense what was happening around them, making those men and women ideal sources of information. Unfortunately, their supernatural nature made them easy to find and destroy; when the Church of Revelations overran Europe, many Avatars were killed.

Common Avatar Powers and Limitations

Supernatural Senses

Avatars can see the flows of Essence in both living and unliving things. They can sense the presence of





magic and other supernatural energies and creatures, including those invisible to the naked eye.

Essence Manipulation and Recovery

Avatars use Essence to activate their Aspects (see below). They can channel as much Essence as they need, without the limitations most humans, even most Gifted face when controlling this powerful force. They also recover Essence more rapidly, at the rate of 2 Essence points per Willpower level, every minute.

Rapid Healing and Recovery

The strengthened bodies of Avatars are highly resilient, and can recover from all but the deadliest of wounds. Any damage inflicted on Avatars is regained at the rate of 1 Life Point per Willpower Level every 5 seconds (the equivalent of a game turn).

Extended Life Span

Although not truly immortal, Avatars can live almost three times as long as most humans. Upon reaching their mid-thirties, Avatars seem to age not at all for between one hundred and fifty and two hundred years. At some point after that, they start aging at a rough rate of one year per five years lived, eventually reaching a time of decline and eventual death sometime after their three hundredth birthday.

Beholden

Avatars have a connection to the deity that transformed them. This can have some positive effects (the deity can communicate with the Avatar), but for the most part it is a burden, having a god sometimes eavesdrop on your conversations or even try to take control over one. All Avatar characters have the 3-point version of the Beholden Drawback (see p. 46). And many have the stronger, 5-point one. Players who want their characters to have the 5-point version of this Drawback only get 2 extra character points (the 3 points of the less severe version are already figured in the Avatar racial cost).

Aspects — Pantheistic Powers

The Titans who came to Earth to be worshipped as gods eventually developed their own areas of specialty. A god might rule over the waters of the ocean, for example, while another would take over the job of overseeing the welfare of the crops of his worshippers. As humans associated each deity to one or more areas of the world around them, their own faith some-

how shaped the deities, giving them the appropriate powers to carry out their appointed task.

Each Aspect has two categories, Minor and Major Powers. Some demigods or Avatars only have the Minor Powers of an Aspect, representing less advanced mastery over this area of reality. Purchasing an Aspect's Major Powers automatically grants knowledge of the Minor Powers as well. For example, if a player spends 16 points to acquire Death's Major Powers, he will have access to both the two Major Powers (Death Gaze and Domain of the Dead) and the two Minor Powers (Death Senses and Stay the Hand of Death). If he only spends 8 points, he will only acquire the two Minor Powers.

The list of Aspects below covers some of the basics. More Aspects will become available in future Armageddon products.

Death

16/8 Points

Almost every pantheon has one or more Death deities, the keepers and lords of the Dead. Theirs is the job to collect the souls of the deceased, and often to judge or punish them. In some mythologies, their very presence can bring death and destruction. Death gods are among the most feared and hated of the Titans. This Aspect is not necessarily malevolent. Death, after all, is part of the natural order of things. Many Death gods are simply players in the cycle of life and the changing seasons; they represent Winter, the time during which things die and descend to the ground, to be reborn in Spring.

Major Powers:

Death Gaze: You can kill most people with but a glance. All the Death Gaze requires is eye contact for a few seconds. This ability does not work past 30 yards/meters. Using this power is resolved as a Resisted Task, using the Character's Willpower and Aspect against a Simple Willpower Test by the victim. If the victim loses, he needs to pass a Survival Test (see p. 82) or he drops dead of an appropriate natural cause! Even if the victim passes the Survival Test, the attack on his life causes him to lose 1D6 x 4 (12) Life Points and stuns him for a several seconds (all actions are at -2 for the next turn). This power costs 18 Essence points. Targets with a Constitution of 5 or higher, the Gifted, and all supernatural beings cannot be killed with this power; if they fail to resist, they take damage as above, and if they resist, they are completely unaffected.

Domain of the Dead: You have some measure of control over the spirits of the dead, and can also enter the dark Sephiroth of Geburah, the Death Realms. You can cause ghosts and other spirits of the dead to recoil from you by spending 1 Essence point; spirits affected

thus have to pass a Simple Willpower Test to do anything against your wishes, and will be at -2 to any actions that will affect you. Furthermore, by spending 15 Essence points and concentrating for one turn, you can transport yourself to the Realm of the Dead of your pantheon, or its closest approximation.

Minor Powers:

Death Senses: You are uniquely attuned to the approach of death. You can sense terminal disease and imminent death among those around you, by sensing the presence of the Grim Reapers, the spirits who come to collect the souls of dying humans. Through the same senses, you can also see ghosts and other errant spirits wandering the Earth.

Stay the Hand of Death: You can interfere with the process of death. If someone dies in your presence, you will sense the approach of a Grim Reaper, to take the soul towards its destiny. Stopping the Reaper will give the dead a new chance at survival. This process costs 30 Essence points, and requires a Difficult Willpower Test to stare Death down. If the Willpower Test is successful, the victim can attempt an unmodified Survival Test (see p. 82) to revive. If that Test is passed, the victim will revive, and all the wounds or other cause of death will be removed.

There is a risk involved, however. If the initial Willpower Test fails, you have not only failed to stare Death down, you have angered It. The character immediately loses 1D6 x 4(12) Essence points, and permanently loses 1 Essence point, as he feels Death's icy touch on his soul and is forcibly reminded, that even the Gods of Death are not immune to Its cold caress.

Roleplaying Notes:

Most Death deities are cold and solemn. Theirs is a sad world, a place that nobody wants to visit. They are the bringers of unwanted news, the deliverers of unpleasant facts. People are generally afraid of them. As a result, most people will react to them negatively. Even when not actively using their Aspect, those associated with Death will have a -2 penalty to most social Tasks where the goal is to ingratiate oneself to others. Any Task that depends on intimidation, however, has a +2 bonus.

Many characters with the Death Aspect will act in ways befitting an undertaker: sad and serious, showing perhaps a hint of sympathy. There are exceptions to this, of course. Some Death deities are downright sadistic, while others see themselves as judges over the Dead (many of those also embody the Aspect of Justice; see below).

Fertility

10/5 Points

The gods and goddesses of fertility were among the

most popular in ancient cultures. Every civilization that settled down and developed agriculture put fertility goddess in a respected place. Their favor meant good harvests and full bellies; their anger could bring about famine and death. Fertility deities were also linked to the simple lusts of life; many goddesses of Love started out as Fertility deities whose passions were refined into more complex emotions. Most fertility deities had reputations as promiscuous lovers.

Major Powers:

Nurture Growth: The deity can accelerate the growth of any plant, even in places where a plant should be unable to survive, let alone thrive. A seed can be turned into a full-fledge plant in a matter of seconds. This Aspect Task requires an expenditure of Essence based on the size of the plant in question. A dozen blades of grass or a small flower costs 1 Essence, a foot-tall plant costs 2 Essence, a shrub or small tree costs 4 Essence, a medium sized tree costs 8 Essence, and a large tree costs 15 Essence. Giant trees like sequoias or baobabs cost 30 Essence points to force-grow. Growing trees can tear through concrete and cement.

Strength of the Earth: While standing on earth or dirt (but not concrete or any man-made structure where plants do not grow), this Aspect can call upon the power of life within the Earth for strength and vitality. Activating this ability uses an Aspect Task and costs 1 Essence point per minute. During this time, the character gains +4 to Str and +20 Life Points. Furthermore, as long as his feet are in direct contact with the earth, the character regenerates damage at twice the normal rate.

Minor Powers:

Lust The gods of fertility can awaken the same hungers their powers satisfy. This Aspect can also be used to stir all the carnal desires - hunger, thirst, and lust. These desires become so strong that they interfere with the victim's thinking and attention. The Aspect has no control over what the target does, only what he or she feels, however. Using this power uses Willpower and the Aspect skill, and is resisted by a Difficult Willpower Test. If the Aspect works, the target is affected by the desire of the character's choice; an additional target can be affected by the same desire per level of success beyond the first. This power costs 5 Essence points.

Life from the Earth: The Aspect can draw on the life-giving qualities of the Earth and the plants that grow upon it, and use it for healing purposes. When performed near an area of cultivated ground, the Aspect can be used to heal people. This healing requires an Aspect Task and costs 2 Essence points; each Success Level in the task heals 1D10(5) points of damage.

Roleplaying Notes:

Fertility deities tend to be, well, earthy. They openly

revel in the pleasures of the senses, and know how to savor good food, good company, and good times. They also revere all living things, especially plants, the source of life and nourishment. A few are very ecologically correct, although calling them "eco-freaks" to their faces is not a smart idea.

Fire

20/10 Points

Of all the Elements, Fire was the one most likely to have a ruling. Primitive humans saw fire as a life-saving tool and a great destroyer. Fire could provide warmth and cook one's food, or it could be made a tool of war or simply an unrestrained agent of destruction. Fire was also known to be a glutton, always hungry for more fuel, always willing to run rampant if not carefully controlled. Fire gods came to embody those qualities.

Major Powers:

Flames Incarnate: By calling the Essential power of Fire upon itself, you become a being of pure fire, a human-sized fire elemental, able to unleash terrible conflagrations. This requires a Simple Willpower Test and the expenditure of 20 Essence points. The character turns into a humanoid figure of fire, surrounded by flames. These flames inflict 1D4 x 6 (12) points of damage to anything or anybody within three yards/meters away. Anything that can be ignited by an open flame will be lit up if it comes in contact with the flames. While in this shape, the character can fire flame bolts at no Essence cost; they inflict 1D6(3) points of damage for every level of his Willpower attribute.

The flame body takes minimal damage from bullets or other physical attacks; they only inflict one point per dice (so, for example, a rifle doing 1D8 x 4 points of damage would only inflict 4 points to the fire creature). A fire hose or a fire extinguisher, on the other hand, inflicts 1D10 x 3(15) points of damage per "shot." The character can remain in this flaming state for up to ten minutes before a new Willpower Test and Essence expenditure are needed.

Wave of Fire: You can create a rolling wall of flame, about nine feet (3 yards/meters) tall, and use it as a weapon. The size of the Wave of Fire, and the intensity of the heat depend on how much Essence you spend on it. The base damage is 1D4 (2) points of damage and 1 yard of width, at the cost of 2 Essence points. Damage can be increased at the rate of and additional die per 2 Essence points spent, and 1 yard or length per Essence point spent. Creating a Flame Wave that inflicts 1D4 x 10 points of damage and is 10 yards/meters wide would cost a total of 29 Essence points (2 plus 18 for the extra damage and 9 for the extra width). The Wave moves at a speed of 20 miles

and hour (10 yards/meter per second), and can be controlled by the character as long as it is within his sight. Once created, the Wave lasts for 2 minutes or until dispersed by its creator. It can also be extinguished or put out; for extinguishing purposes, the Wave has 10 "Damage Points" plus 10 Life Points per additional yard of width and 5 points per Damage Multiplier level. In the example above, the Wave would have a total of 150 points. A fire hose or a large fire extinguisher, would inflict $1D10 \times 3(15)$ points of damage per "shot" on the Wave; a garden hose or a bucket of water would do a mere $1D4 \times 2(4)$ points per "shot." Large explosions may also blow out the fires; their inflict "damage" equivalent to one fifth their normal blast damage (see p. 80).

Minor Powers:

Resistant to Fire: This Aspect renders the character highly resistant to fire. Furthermore, by spending Essence the character can become truly immune to all but the hottest flames. Normally, any fire damage inflicted to the character is divided by 5 before applying it to his Life Points. Burns heal twice as rapidly as other burns. And, by spending 2 Essence points per minute, the character can become invulnerable to normal fire; he could be bathed in flaming napalm and suffer no ill effects from it. If exposed to a blast furnace or similar source of great heat, he will suffer some damage, but at one twentieth the normal rate.

Fire Magicks: This power is a godly version of the Elemental Fire Invocation (see p. 118); the character has an effective Invocation level equal to his Willpower (this can be improved later on with experience as per the chart on p. 90). The character also has an effective Essence Channeling level of Willpower +1 when it comes to using this Invocations. All other effects and costs are as per the normal magic rules, except that the Aspected character never has to worry about Dismissal Tasks.

Roleplaying Notes:

Think about the qualities of fire: easy to lose control of, angry at times, but also warm and comforting under the right circumstances. Most characters with the Fire Aspect tend to be short-tempered with those who anger them, and effusive towards they consider their friends. They also tend to have problems restraining themselves, be they passion, virtue, or vice.

Magic

30/15 Points

The Old Gods found magic to be unsettling and dangerous, and avoided dabbling in it. Others sought to master its knowledge, and in doing so assumed the mantle of gods of magic and shamanism. They had to sacrifice much to gain that knowledge. Odin's ordeal at the Tree of Life is as much a recollection of true



events as an allegory of the arduous path towards arcane wisdom.

Major Powers:

Master Magic: Your knowledge of magic is so great that you are unbound by many of the limitations afflicting mortal magicians. The character reduces all Focus and Dismissal penalties affecting the working of magic (see p. 254) by half.

Dissolve Magic With knowledge comes understanding and ultimately power. You can undo the works of magic by unweaving the Essence patterns others have created. In game terms, the character can neutralize any ongoing magical effect, or prevent an Invocation from being cast, simply by spending more Essence than the amount used to empower the Invocation.

Minor Powers:

Work Magics: You are among the few who can work magic. The character can learn and cast Invocations normally. The character can use rituals and take advantage of the times and places of power (see p. 134).

Channel Essence: Characters with this Aspect can channel 1 point of Essence per level of Willpower when using Essence to fuel magic. Additional levels of Essence Channeling can be acquired normally.

Roleplaying Notes:

Mystery and secrecy often surrounds the deities of Magic. The word "hermetic" (now meaning tightly sealed) comes from the god Hermes, who in his aspect of Hermes Trismegistus represented arcane knowledge, which must be sealed behind a veil of secrecy and obscure initiations. The typical magically-Aspected character will not reveal any knowledge unless he has a good reason to do so, and will always make sure that those he speaks to are ready to handle the dangerous secrets he can reveal.

Might **18/9 points**

Brute strength has often been prized by ancient cultures. The strongest gods were often credited with incredible feats, and the faith of mortals in some cases strengthened the gods so they could in fact perform those feats. The gods of Might also were living examples of the dangers of too much power without enough wisdom. They often killed people on a whim or impulse, and lived to regret it later.

Major Powers:

Titanic Strength: You are mighty enough to challenge the Titans themselves. The character gains a permanent bonus of 5 to his Strength (this is not cumulative with the bonus from the Minor Power of this Aspect, however), and the character can exceed

his racial Strength limits (see p. 32) by up to 4 levels (i.e., if the character is an Avatar, with a normal Strength maximum of 10, the character can have up to a Strength 14). This bonus will affect the character's Life Points normally (see p. 33).

Lifting the World: By channeling Essence into a task involving brute strength, like lifting a heavy object or uprooting a tree (but not combat), you can increase your strength beyond even your already great levels. This increase costs 4 Essence points per +1 bonus, raising the character's lifting capacity (see the table on p. 254).

Minor Powers:

Herculean Strength: The character gains a +2 bonus to Strength, above and beyond any racial bonuses already present. The character's overall Strength can even exceed racial limits by one level.

Muscles of Iron: The character is covered by a layer of muscle that is so thick it acts as body armor against most forms of attack (fire will still burn the character, however). This layer of muscle has an Armor Value of 1D4 per level of Constitution.

Roleplaying Notes:

Characters with this Aspect tend to be muscle-bound, sometimes hideously so (this is particularly true of those with the Major Powers of this Aspect; they tend to be gigantic, inhuman-looking people). They often are overconfident and impulsive, trusting their strength to get them out of any situation they get into. Some are not the brightest people in the world, but this is not always or even often the case.

Thunder and Lightning **20/10 Points**

Primitive peoples were terrified of lightning bolts and their accompanying thunder. They were and irresistible force of the skies, random and terrible. It is no wonder that they tried to placate that force by making gifts and offerings to the entities that were believed to control it. To other people, the bolts from the skies were the ultimate weapon, and the gods who wielded them were master warriors and destroyers, just the kind of deities you wanted by your side when making war on your neighbors. Thunder gods were loved by warrior cultures (the Vikings worshipped Thor above all other deities), and feared by the rest.

Major Powers:

Thunderbolt: You can call a lightning strike from the skies against your enemies. Each thunderbolt costs 12 Essence points to summon, and it will strike any target within line of sight. The damage inflicted is 1D10 x 2 (10) points per level of Willpower. Unless the target is running around or zigzagging, the bolt strikes automatically; if they are moving around, they can attempt to dodge, with a -3 penalty.

Lightning Storm: You can stir an electric storm in the skies. This is particularly deadly against aircraft or flying creatures, who will find themselves caught in a maze of lightning bolts jumping from cloud to cloud. Assembling the necessary clouds takes from one minute to one hour, depending on current weather conditions (i.e., one minute in the middle of a rain-storm, one hour on a cloudless day), and the character must pass a Difficult Willpower Test and spend 20 Essence points. The area affected can be as large as one mile per level of Willpower; any flyers in the area have a 1 in 10 chance of being struck by a bolt of lightning, doing damage as per the Thunderbolt, above.

Minor Powers:

Unleash Minor Bolt: You can fire bolts of lightning from your fingertips. The closer the target is to you, the more damage he will take. The bolts inflict 1D6 x 2 (6) points of damage per Willpower level of the character at point-blank range (within 5 yards/meters); this damage drops by 1 level for every 5 yards/meters of distance (so, if the bolt inflicts 1D6 x 10 (30) points at point-blank range, it will only inflict 1D6 (3) points at a distance of 50 yards. The character targets the bolt with a Perception and Dexterity Test. Victims can try to dodge the lightning like any other ranged attack, and Kevlar (but not metal) or other composite armor protects normally.

Call the Thunder: You can cause deafening blast of thunder over an area, stunning and staggering anybody within it. The power can be used anywhere in line of sight, and the blast can affect an area as small as one square yard or as large as 2 square yards per level of Willpower. The Shockwave will knock down anybody with a Strength of 2 or less, will inflict 1 D6(3) points of damage on every living being in the area (and will also shatter most glass objects), and will stun people for one turn (during that time all actions are at -4); the victims need to pass a Difficult Constitution Test to recover. After the first time, the blast of thunder will still knock people down and injure them, but no longer stun them - the initial blast has temporarily deafened them. Also, if used in the middle of a modern battle, especially during or after an artillery barrage, the stun effect will not work - the noise of the explosions will have already deafened the targets.

Roleplaying Notes:

Thunderers tend to be terrible in their wrath. Like the skies, they can have pleasantly, sunny dispositions when things are fine, but anger them and their faces will cloud over and their rage will be explosive and destructive. They do not necessarily have short tempers, but when they lose their cool they can be extremely dangerous. Generally, they also are loud and boisterous, often speaking in loud, thunderous tones; even their whispers have a deep, rolling quali-

ty.

Trickster 12/6 points

Loki, Coyote, Hermes: many cultures have had a special fondness for the Trickster gods, the ones who achieve their goals using their wit and cunning rather than brute force. Using subtle "magical" abilities like shapeshifting and invisibility, these Tricksters often got the better of more powerful gods and other entities. Although they could be mischievous and even evil, they were still given a measure of affection, for they were the underdog, and for mortals easier to identify with.

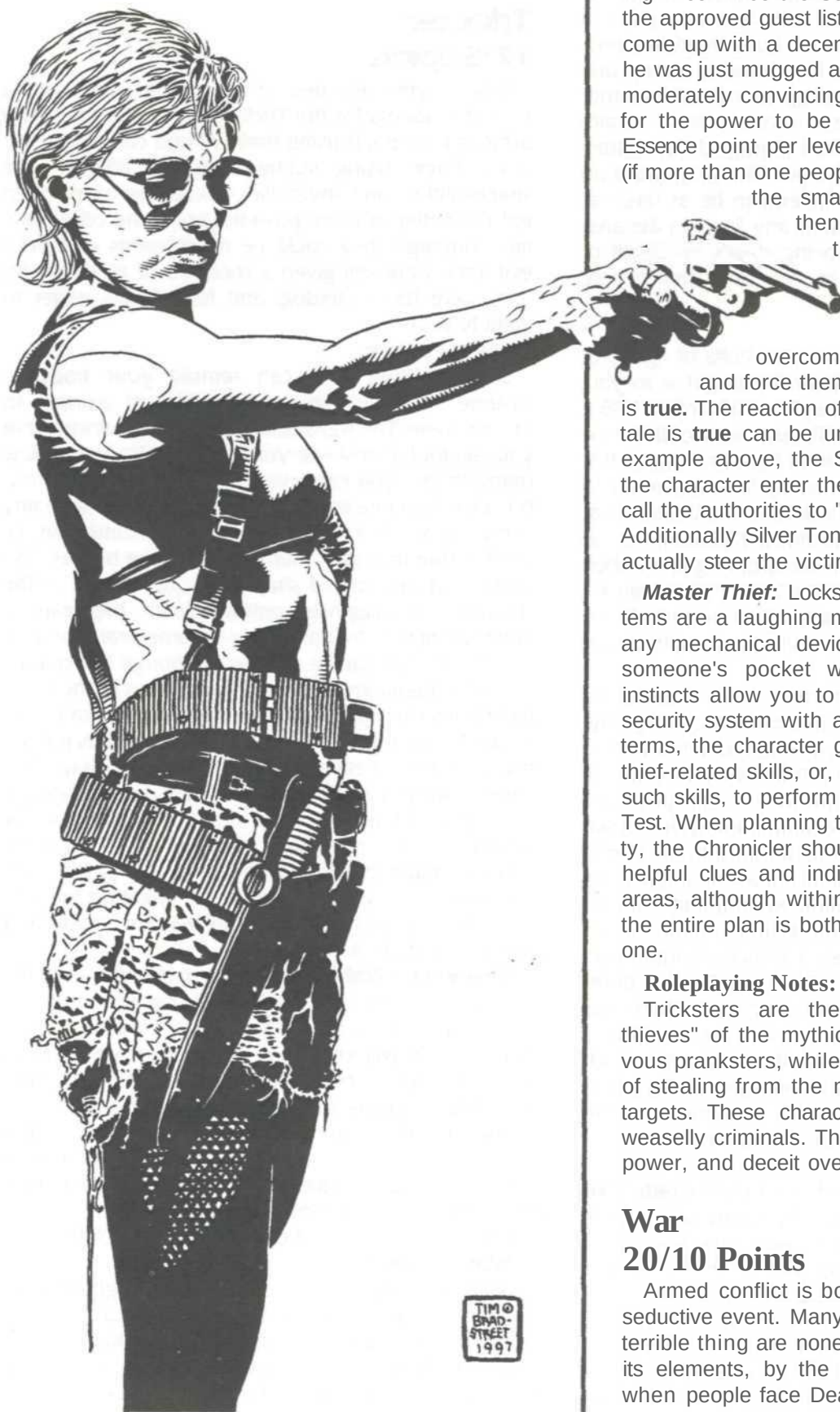
Major Powers:

Shapeshifting: You can remold your body to assume any living shape, from that of animals to other people. The transformation is so convincing that you can fool almost everyone. You are limited to how many shapes you know well enough to use instantly, however. In game terms, the character can imitate any living shape after a few hours of concentration, or quickly shift into any "memorized" shape he has. The number of memorized shapes is equal to half of the character's Intelligence, rounded down; they can be either animal or human; even supernatural monsters like the Shaitan can be imitated, although the character will not gain any supernatural abilities of the form, just things like natural qualities (claws and fangs and wings, for examples). The character's attributes remain the same regardless of the size of the new shape, but small forms (like birds or rats) will take double damage from physical attacks, and tiny forms (insects, for example) take quadruple damage from physical attacks. Imitating a human being results in a perfect facsimile in body shape and voice. Imitating the person's mannerisms and character requires study and practice, and the Acting Skill.

Unseen and Unknown: You can become invisible and skulk around with nobody being the wiser. As long as you move quietly and avoid attracting attention, nobody will know you are there. Even cameras and other recording equipment will not detect you. This power seems to work by partially shifting the character's body into a separate area of reality; the moment the character does something that affects the physical world, like grabbing an object or opening a door, the invisibility stops, and cannot be re-created until the character is out of everyone's eyesight.

Minor Powers:

Silver Tongue: You have the uncanny gift of convincing people of almost anything. If you put your mind to it and spin a convincing yarn, you can have sell ice to the Inuit, or con people into giving up their life savings. Use of this ability requires good roleplay-



ing, however; it should not be a matter of announcing "I convince the Secret Service agent that I'm on the approved guest list." Instead, the player needs to come up with a decent story (maybe he is claiming he was just mugged and lost his ID) and be at least moderately convincing before the Chronicler allows for the power to be used. Then, by spending 1 Essence point per level of Intelligence of the victim (if more than one people need to be convinced, use the smartest one's Intelligence and then add 1 Essence point per additional person), and by passing

an Intelligence and Willpower Test, the character can make the victims overcome all traces of good judgment and force them to believe that what he says is **true**. The reaction of the victim upon believing the tale is **true** can be unpredictable, however. In the example above, the Secret Service agent might let the character enter the restricted area, or he might call the authorities to "helpfully" report the mugging. Additionally Silver Tongue uses might be needed to actually steer the victim into the "right path."

Master Thief: Locks, padlocks and security systems are a laughing matter to you. **You** can unlock any mechanical device with a hairpin, and pick someone's pocket with the utmost ease. Your instincts allow you to "see" the weak points of any security system with a quick examination. In game terms, the character gets an automatic +5 on any thief-related skills, or, if the character does not have such skills, to perform them on a Simple Intelligence Test. When planning to break in into a secure facility, the Chronicler should provide the character with helpful clues and indications to the least protected areas, although within reason; giving the character the entire plan is both unfair and less fun for everyone.

Roleplaying Notes:

Tricksters are the con-men and "gentlemen thieves" of the mythical world. Some are mischievous pranksters, while others thrive on the challenge of stealing from the most powerful and dangerous targets. These characters can be master spies or weaselly criminals. They all prefer subtlety over raw power, and deceit over honesty.

War 20/10 Points

Armed conflict is both a horrible and a strangely seductive event. Many men who agree that war is a terrible thing are nonetheless entranced by some of its elements, by the camaraderie that only occurs when people face Death together, while being sick-

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ened by the pointless slaughter and destruction that arises from it. The deities of War were rarely popular; in Greek culture, there were only a few temples dedicated to Ares, their local warrior god. These deities were often cruel and erratic, much like the fortunes of war they embodied. Soldiers invoked them to gain more strength and skill in battle, or to demand the defeat of their enemies. Civilians preferred to avoid mentioning their names altogether.

Major Powers:

Battle Rage: You can call upon the wrath of the berserker, and become the ultimate killing machine, able to endure mortal wounds without being slowed down, and delivering destruction by all means possible. While in the Rage, it is very difficult to distinguish between friend and foe, however, and when it is over, all your energy will be depleted and you will be nearly comatose with exhaustion. In game terms, calling upon the Battle Rage requires a Difficult Willpower Test and the expenditure of 25 Essence points. The character's Strength and Constitution are increased by 3 each (this increase can exceed the character's normal racial limits), his Life Points are doubled, and his healing or regeneration rate triples. The character must attack or rush to attack somebody, anybody, every turn. No actions not directly linked to combat are allowed: a character in this state might attack enemies threatening an ally, but he could not pause afterwards to apply first aid to that ally. Even worse, if no enemies are left standing, the character needs to pass a Difficult Willpower Test at -2 or he will continue to attack anybody still alive, be they friends or innocent bystanders. If he manages to shut down the Battle Rage (by passing the aforementioned Test), or after a period of fifteen minutes, the power ends and the character collapses; his Essence and Life Pools are both reduced to 0 (or less if the character's injuries reduced him below 0 Life Points), and he falls into a coma-like state, unable to move or perform any actions for at least an hour.

Feat of Gory: You can perform impossible combat actions by using Essence to bend probability to the breaking point. You might be able to shoot down a jet aircraft with an assault rifle, or kill ten men with ten shots from an automatic fire burst. The more unlikely the event is, the more Essence you will need. The action attempted must be (at least barely) within the realm of the possible. The target must be within the weapon's theoretical range (even if it is the extreme range). You could shoot two or three people with one bullet if they were close together or standing behind each other; the bullet might theoretically bounce from head to head, inflicting less damage on the second and third targets, for example. The Essence cost depends on the likelihood of the event and the number of people or vehicles affected. A reasonably possi-

ble action (hitting a target in the head at one thousand yards with a rifle) would cost 3 Essence points; something highly unlikely (hitting a target in the head at one hundred yards with a pistol) requires 5 Essence points; and something wildly unlikely (bringing down an attack jet with a burst of machine-gun fire) would cost 10 Essence points. Affecting multiple targets with the action (spreading a burst so several people are hit, for example) costs an additional 3 Essence per person affected over the first. The character needs to make two rolls/draws. The first is a Difficult Willpower Test to determine if he managed to bend probability; the other is a Skill Task using the appropriate weapon skill. Use the Success Level Table to determine how close the character's action got to the desired effect. One level would indicate a partial success (the character damaged the jet plane, for example), while three or more would indicate a total or even spectacular feat (the burst hit the cockpit and killed the pilot, causing the jet to crash).

Minor Powers:

The Ways of War: Weapons and tactics come naturally to you. If it can be used to kill people, you can use it. The character instinctively knows how to use and care for any weapon imaginable. In game terms, he has an effective skill of 3 with any and all weapons, from knives to artillery pieces.

Weapon Mastery: You have a weapon of choice, which you know above all others, and with which you are supernaturally deadly. This weapon must be a hand weapon (nothing requiring a crew of two or more will do; this disqualifies all machine-guns, most anti-tank weapons larger than a LAW, and all vehicle weapons). The weapon must be of a specific type and make (a katana, for example, or a Colt .45). The character has a bonus of +3 on all Tasks involving that weapon, and furthermore, the weapon's Damage Multiplier (see p. 00) is raised by one level for every two levels of skill (rounded up, not counting the bonus above) in the weapon. So, for example, if your character specializes in a Colt .45 and has a skill of 5 on it, he will get a +3 bonus on most tasks using the weapon, and the gun will inflict 1D10 x 7 (35) (three extra damage levels).

Roleplaying Notes:

Warriors may be bloodthirsty people who revel in combat or slaughter. More often than not, however, they are tormented souls, haunted by their memories, and ashamed that they never feel so alive than when they are using a weapon. They tend to be very cynical, disregarding all concepts of glory as a fantasy people use to forget the true horrors of war. Some find it impossible to adapt to the "normal" world; their violent instincts make them too unpredictable and dangerous for polite company.

Wisdom

12/6 points

Some deities were considered to be founts of knowledge and good advice. They had a better understanding of things than most mortals or even other gods. Their wisdom included both common sense and arcane knowledge. Their qualities were appreciated, even if, like most gods, sometimes they failed to use them for themselves.

Major Powers:

Combat Wisdom: By observing an enemy with a critical eye, you can discover weaknesses in his defenses that you can exploit for your own. This ability works best in hand to hand combat. In game terms, after two turns of combat, the character can try to gauge the enemy's strengths and shortcomings by passing a Perception and Intelligence Test. Each success level will give the character a +2 to all attack and defense Tasks against that particular enemy.

Magic Wisdom: You understand the workings of Magic; this allows you to learn magic Invocations normally. For spell-using purposes, you have an effective Channeling level equal to your Intelligence.

Minor Powers:

Wise Choice: Sometimes, when you or somebody in your company are about to make a mistake, an inner voice warns you just in time. It may take you a while to figure out what your instincts were telling you, but once you do you rarely fault their judgment. In game terms, the Chronicler takes on the role of the character's instincts, warning him of a possible error or dangerous choice. The player then needs to figure out what the problem is, although the Chronicler might add a few hints (extra experience should be awarded to players who can figure things out with no help, though).

Oft of Tongues: You can understand every language ever spoken on Earth, from English to High Atlantean. This knowledge comes unbidden to you whenever somebody uses that particular language in your presence. In game terms, you have an effective skill of 3 on any and all languages.

Roleplaying Notes:

All Wise characters should have a high Intelligence and Perception; they are alert to what is going on around them, and they can see patterns where others only see random events. They tend to be honest and fair. Sometimes, however, they can be somewhat overbearing, and often like to have the last word, or never miss a chance to point out a mistake in others.

A Brief List of Deities and their

Aspects

Listed below are some gods from four major pantheons, and their most common Aspects. The list is far from exhaustive, both in terms of the deities involved and the Aspects they embodied. The can serve as a basis for players to design their characters, however. Players and Chroniclers are encouraged to do check out any of the numerous books on mythology; the tales of these cultures can be a great source for character ideas and adventure plots and scenarios. Future **Armageddon** books will provide more detail on the ancient gods.

Greek Gods

Zeus

Strength
Thunder and Lightning
Weather

Ares

War

Athena

Wisdom
War

Hermes

Magic
Speed
Trickster

Caea

Fertility
Life

Hades

Death

Hephaestus

Fire
Forge

Norse Gods

Odin

Magic
War
Wisdom

Thor

Strength
Thunder and Lightning
War

Tyr

Justice
War

Freya

Fertility

Loki

Trickster

Hel

Death

Egyptian Gods

Ra

Justice

Sun

Wisdom

Isis

Fertility

Magic

Anubis

Death

Ptah

Life

Wisdom

Toth

Justice

Magic

Wisdom

Aztec/Mayan Gods

Kukulcan/Quetzacoatl

Life

Sun

Wisdom

Tezcatlipoca

Trickster

Magic

War

Huitzilopochtli

War

Coatllicue

Fertility

Hunhau

Death

True Immortals

The plaza was utterly deserted at 3:00 a.m. Even the local criminals, either tipped off or following the same instincts that instruct rats to abandon a sinking ship, had apparently decided to avoid the entire area. This suited Rosalyn just fine. She adjusted her trenchcoat slightly, and waited. He should be here soon. He'd better be here soon.

He was. Only seven minutes late, she realized. Not bad

for a guy who had been around when clocks were an amusing curiosity only the rich could afford. He swaggered forward, all decked in black, from the trenchcoat to the wide-brimmed hat. He looked not a day older than twenty, the lucky bastard. Rosalyn had celebrated her thirtieth birthday when the Change came over her, and although she was by no means unattractive, a part of her yearned for that lost youth with a frightening intensity.

"Hello, Edmund," she called out

Edmund smiled and stopped some ten feet away. For a long moment, they stood there, looking at each other, their trenchcoats open.

"Long time, Rosalyn," Edmund finally said.

"Long time," she replied. "Are you ready?"

Edmund nodded. He reached under his trenchcoat and pulled out a sword. "Yes, I'm ready."

Rosalyn's eyes narrowed. "A sword? You are watching too many stupid movies."

Edmund chuckled. "I thought you'd get a kick out of it. If I'm not mistaken, swords were quite *de rigour* in your time."

"And in your time, I believe it was fire-hardened sticks. So what?"

"Oh, but this is not an ordinary blade, my dear." To prove his point, he lowered the point to the concrete floor and gently cut across it. The blade scored into the concrete as if the material was no more than soft cheese.

For once, Rosalyn **was** impressed. "Adamant?" Edmund nodded, his grin wider now. "Where did you get it?"

"Made it myself," Edmund replied, sounding quite full of himself. Well, he was even entitled, this time.

"You are a Maker now? Since when?"

"Since, oh, about ten years ago. Give it time, Rosalyn. All of us have that knowledge running through our veins. If you live long enough, you will become a Maker as well."

"If I live long enough." Rosalyn showed him the toy she had brought to this party. "Not as good as an Adamant blade, but pretty good, if I say so myself."

"An Avenger-7? That's an Army of Revelations rifle. Don't tell me you went to the Conquered Territories just to steal a rifle."

"No. But an old friend needed help, and I had to answer his call. Even if he's one of the wings-and-halo types."

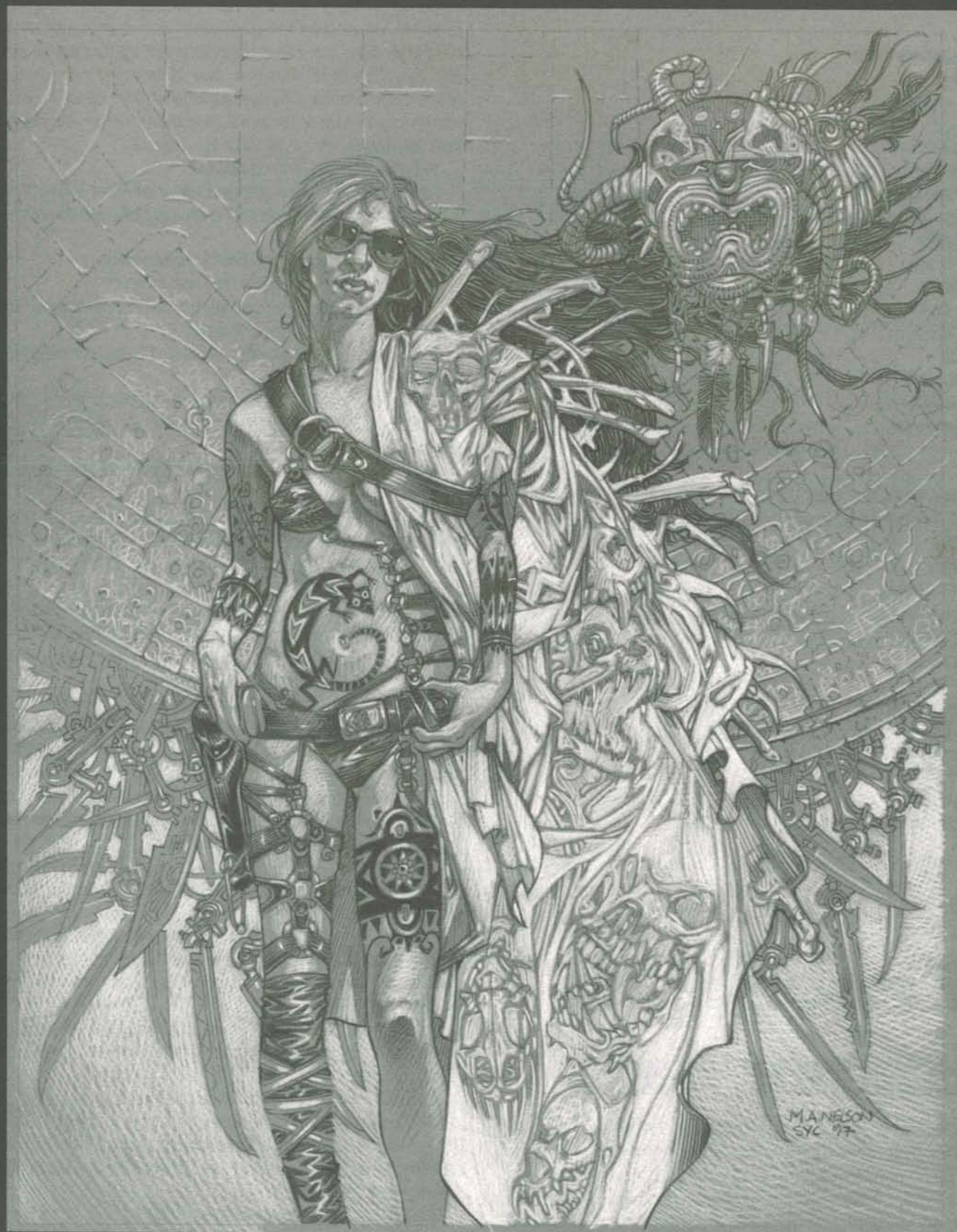
Edmund made a face. "Ugh. They sank Atlantis, you know."

"I heard. And probably your grandfather assaulted my great-great grandmother ten times removed during the Sack of Rome."

"Can I say I'd fault the old bastard's taste?"

"The point is, it's all old news. The angels might be one of the few things standing between us and Leviathan. If you and the other Undying don't get off your butts, you'll have to kiss them good-bye."

"Terrible mixture of metaphors, but correct sentiment," Edmund said reasonably. "After all, I'm here, aren't I? And not to take your head, either."



"Will you quit your dumb..?"

"Sorry. Like you say, I watch too many stupid movies. So I suppose this location has some meaning."

"Down in the sewers. A small cell of Revelationists. Five or six of them, plus an Adept."

"An Adept," Edmund said, looking more serious. Adepts were no joke. "Any idea what Circle?"

"No, but from the things going on in the city, I'd say at least a Fourth, maybe Fifth-Circle Adept"

"Sounds like fun. At least our ancestors would approve. They did plenty of Adept-hunting in their time. "Even in the face of death, Edmund could not stop himself from bragging about how good his ancestral memories were.

"So let's go."

Side by side, the two Immortals descended into the dark.

The so-called True Immortals first appeared in the fabulous realm of Atlantis, one of the antediluvian Elder Kingdoms. The Atlanteans were masters of the Arcana, a mixture of magic and science that is almost unimaginable even in the twenty-first century. To them, there was no distinction between electro-magnetism and Essence; they understood how to combine physical and supernatural laws (only to them, no law was "supernatural"), and they created devices and disciplines as far beyond magic and technology as a twentieth century factory was above flint-knapping cavemen. Most of that knowledge is forever lost, unfortunately. Some of the Watchers claim that Lucifer unleashed the Flood as much to destroy Atlantis before its power reached its zenith as to prevent the dark priests of Ultima Thule from summoning Leviathan to our world. At its height, Atlanteans treated with the Seraphim as equals; towards the end, centuries of war with Ultima Thule had weakened and debased their culture.

Among the Atlanteans' achievements was the modification of their own bodies. Scientists might call it genetic engineering, while mystics would name it magical enhancement, and both would be equally right - and wrong. The Atlanteans had long discovered that the genetic code was nothing but a physical manifestation of the Essence Matrix every human being had, what mystics refer to as the soul, the seat of intelligence and self-awareness that no neurologists will ever find among brain cells. The more evolved a being is, the more differentiated the Essence Matrix becomes; in the lower animals they tend to be almost identical, resulting in a collective totemic spirit - there is only one Spider Soul, for example. In humans, it is more unique than fingerprints or the DNA code, and it determines the uniqueness of both of those. To alter their race, the Atlanteans worked directly on the Essence Matrix. They not only short-circuited the elements that reduced and cut short the life span of humans, but they also enhanced the natural healing

process. Furthermore, they "hardwired" their knowledge and language into the souls of the new race, to be awakened by the right procedures. By the time the newborns learned to talk, they were initiated through a ceremony, at the end of which they would have all the knowledge of an adult.

These Lords of Atlantis were never many to begin with; the Atlanteans were a highly elitist society. The Flood destroyed most of them: although they called themselves "Immortal," the Lords of Atlantis could be killed easily enough, and even their Arcana failed them when the Seraphim and the Titans unleashed their collective might against them (although, to be fair, the Atlanteans had been already decimated and weakened by their war with Ultima Thule). Virtually none of them escaped the deluge, with a few possible but unproved exceptions (see the Atlantean Masters, below).

That was not the end of the Blood of Atlantis, however. Over the ages, the souls of those who perished in the flood returned to Earth through the cycle of reincarnation. The souls reshaped the bodies, and the newborn were Immortal. They still had the knowledge of Atlantis implanted in their minds, but this time there were no rituals to awaken those memories. The result was that all True Immortals are plagued by maddening dreams and half-remembered memories of a primeval past. Some can eventually gain fragments of those lost secrets, and can re-create some of the arcane wonders of that ancient past (see the Makers, below).

Over the centuries, these True Immortals have dwelt among humans, sometimes ruling over them as kings or petty gods, others hiding their nature and fleeing those who would kill them as witches or demons. They were warriors and scholars, heroes and scoundrels. Their deeds were recorded in ancient chronicles, or were forgotten by all but the undying participants. Some have banded together in loose-knit societies, while other shun the company of their kind. A varied and fractious lot, they are few but proud, each an individual above all.

On Being an Immortal

Immortals start life much like anybody else. They grow to adulthood normally, and the only sign that there is more to them than meets the eye is their occasional dreams about ancient civilizations and men in bizarre costumes speaking a language that is unlike anything they have heard in their lives, but which is strangely familiar. It is not until the Change takes place that their true nature becomes apparent.

The Change occurs sometime between their nineteenth and fortieth birthday; the reason for this wide age differential is unknown. It is a physical and psy-

chic shock to the Immortal's system; they appears to have suffered a seizure of some sort, and then collapse for several hours. During that time, their minds are flooded by images of their previous existence in Atlantis, although most of the images are forgotten as soon as the fit is over. When they recover, their bodies show no ill effects. And, although most of them do not realize this yet, they will no longer age, and they are almost impossible to kill.

Sometimes, the Immortals do not understand the effects of the Change until decades later, when they notice that all around them are growing older while he remains the same. More often, they would suffer an injury of some sort, only to discover that they recovered from even mortal wounds in a matter of minutes. Sometimes, they encountered older Immortals who told them the truth. In other instances, the visions that accompanied the Change included the knowledge that they were ageless beings (many, of course, did not believe the visions until later on).

What the Immortals do with that knowledge varies from individual to individual. Some used their abilities to accumulate power, either financial or political; after a few lifetimes doing so, they either grew bored with the constant charade of pretending to be mortal, or, more often, they ran afoul of one of the many occult conspiracies in the world. The Combine (see p. 102) and their Seraphim allies had little use for supernatural beings; more than one Immortal who's tried to become a king-maker has found himself attacked by beings who knew exactly how to dispose of their kind.

The majority become wanderers, never staying in one place for more than a human lifetime, thus avoiding notoriety. Along the way, they often accumulate much knowledge about the world and the wonders and horrors that were hidden from the Mundanes. In their travels, they encountered all manner the beings, from Vampyres with their own accursed brand of immortality, to beings like the Nephelim and Inheritors, not to mention human magicians and psychics. These meetings ran the gamut from brief and curious exchanges to friendships that spanned centuries, to equally long-lived hatreds and rivalries.

Some Immortals have stronger "memories" of the past of Atlanteans. A few have actually been able to replicate some of the wonders of the Atlantean Arcana. These Makers are highly respected (and envied) by other Immortals, although many become eccentric "mad scientist" types, sometimes creating devices that are more dangerous than useful. A tale of Immortal myth claims that a Maker's correspondence with the human scientist Nikkola Tesla led to an experiment that caused the Tunguska disaster in Russia in 1908, when an energy device built by Tesla allegedly unleashed an enormous amount of energy on the other side of the world, creating a huge crater

and an explosion that literally shook Europe.

Immortals, Death and Reincarnation

All True Immortals know that their self-styled title is a misnomer. They cannot die of natural causes, but they can be killed, although with great difficulty. They can heal from all forms of injury; given time, and as long as most of their body mass remains together, an Immortal will recover. On way to destroy them is to remove their Essence from their bodies. Other Immortals can do this, as well as sorcerers and many supernatural creatures. Mundanes can dismember Immortals and burn the pieces, which will also release their souls from their bodies. Short of those two methods, however, killing an Immortal is nearly impossible. Some have suffered a fate worse than death, however - Immortal folklore speaks of one of their kind who was foolish enough to go against a ruthless gang of mobsters; when normal methods failed to destroy him, the resourceful criminals simply dumped his body on the foundation of a building, and to this day the Immortal lies buried beneath tons of concrete and steel, alive and aware but trapped in a sense-deprived Hell.

Although Immortals reincarnate, they do so with far less frequency than normal humans. It appears that when an Immortal dies, his soul is sent to a separate and isolated realm. Immortals never become ghosts or Undead, and if they ever reincarnate, they do it thousands of years after their demise. The Undying have a long acquaintance with the process of reincarnation, however, involving not themselves but those around them. Mundane enemies can be killed, but a lifetime or two later they may often return to the world, with no direct knowledge of the previous conflict but still destined to meet the Immortal and develop an inexplicable hatred for him. Current reincarnations of past enemies can be an Immortal's worst nightmare.

The Lodge of the Undying

Few as the Immortals were, it was inevitable that enough of them would come into contact to form some sort of organization or society, albeit a loose one. Immortals tend to be fiercely individualistic, and they do not take well to rules or orders, even from others of their kind. In the past, some Undying have tried to force others to obey their dictates; sooner or later, they failed and paid for it with their lives. Over time, however, an informal brotherhood, eventually

known as the Lodge of the Undying, was formed. It was originally the brainchild of a group of Immortals living in Europe, who were inspired by the Freemason Lodges that were becoming popular at the time. The elements of secrecy and mutual aid of the Masons were attractive to these Immortals, who traveled to the four corners of the world seeking as many of their kind as possible. The majority of the Immortals agreed in principle to the idea, and the Lodge was born.

The principles of the Lodge are very simple. First of all, members are expected to extend every courtesy and offer hospitality to other Immortals who arrive in the area. Secondly, no Immortal must knowingly endanger the secrets or activities of a fellow Lodge member. And finally, no Immortal who asks for aid must be refused unless the request is unreasonable or the Immortal has violated one of the rules above. Additionally, a number of volunteers provided a network of information and maintained a number of safe houses in diverse areas of the world.

The rules of the Lodge were largely self-enforced, and thus were often broken by members. The power of tradition still remains, however, and Immortals who visit a city can often expect help, and, if they have the right connections, can locate other Undying in most parts of the world.

The Atlantean Secret Masters

As the Immortals grew in numbers (every generation, a few more Immortals were born, and as few of them died, their numbers slowly but surely increased), they started developing their own body of myth and folklore. The Undying compared notes about their dreams and visions, did research, and explored remote locations to gain a better idea of who they truly were. From this knowledge emerged a number of wild rumors, some having little or no bearing on reality. One of the most popular is the idea that a remnant of Atlantean civilization survived the Flood. According to the myth, these Secret Masters escaped destruction by hiding in some remote or obscure area: some tales claim the Himalayas as a possible hiding place; others, the North or South Pole, the Amazon Jungle, or the Heart of Africa. Many expeditions were sent to these areas, looking for answers. Most returned empty-handed. A few did not return, prompting new rumors and speculation. Perhaps the missing Immortals had encountered the Secret Masters, and had been destroyed or recruited by them. No expedition returned with any concrete proof of the existence of a current Atlantean civilization.

The UFO craze of the 1950s provided more food for

thought. Some of the glowing vessels described by witnesses appeared to resemble the Atlantean Thought Ships (see below), which many had seen in their visions. In some cases, the ships proved to be Thought Ships - except that they had been built by Immortals who had "remembered" some of the lost arts of Atlantis. These Makers (see below) had no more knowledge of the Secret Masters than anything else - or so they claimed, the more paranoid Immortals would whisper to each other.

So far, the Secret Masters remain a myth, a tale to excite young Immortals and to make older ones shake their heads with amusements. A few remain obsessed with the idea, and they risk their lives (and, sometimes, the veil of secrecy that protects the Immortals) to try to find these elusive beings.

The Atlantean Makers — Dabblers In Arcana

The knowledge imprinted into the souls of all Atlanteans was meant to be awakened in a series of special "coming of age" ceremonies, each ceremony releasing some more precious knowledge into the mind of the Atlantean. Immortals have grown up without the benefit of those ceremonies (nor the education that would accompany them), and all they have of their Atlantean legacy are bits and pieces of a fabled past. Some Immortals seem to have better remembrances than others, or for some reason or another they seem to recall more of that information. They can actually build some crude versions of the devices their ancestors used in times past. They are known as the Atlantean Makers, or simply the Makers.

The Makers all share an insatiable curiosity and drive worthy of the most dedicated scientist. Many of them study the sciences, both natural and occult, in an effort to better understand their bizarre creations. Unfortunately, no Earthly discipline is still advanced enough to be of any help. The Makers cannot even make their own contributions to those fields, because the concepts they half-remember are so far ahead of the times that they would be as unsuccessful as a somebody trying to explain microchip computers to a Renaissance clock-maker.

Added to the problem is the fact that the Makers themselves only have a dim idea of what it is they do. They follow dreamlike instructions, and produce results they should have no right to expect. How they manage to turn a boiling vat of mercury, gold, and assorted minerals into Orikalk, or how they can combine silver, iron and lead into Adamant remains a mystery to them, let alone outsiders. And the knowl-



edge is woefully incomplete: the same Maker who can build a two-seater Thought Ship cannot find a way to build a one-seater or a five-seater; the only design that works for him is the two-seater version, and all other designs will be failures, unless he manages to "remember the way the ancients built the smaller or larger vessels.

All this makes this group of Immortals a mixture of fantasy wizards, barely able to control or understand the forces they call forth, and wide-eyed mad scientists. They are the weapon-makers of the Immortals, and their services are coveted but often mistrusted.

The Effects of the War

The number of Undying births increased dramatically in the last years of the 20th century. The number of Immortals more than doubled between the years of 1985 and 2005. Even the most materialistic of the Immortals realized that something strange was going on, but they never suspected what. Now, many think that some force, maybe the Creator, maybe the Secret Masters, somehow summoned the souls of the Atlanteans to come and fight the descendants of their

ancestral foes.

Unlike many other supernatural beings, the Immortals mostly wanted to be left alone. The Church of Revelations made such wishes a luxury nobody could afford. Any Immortal found by the Church was killed. The Servants of Leviathan did not even give the Undying a chance to turn coat - apparently they had their own memories of the war between Atlantis and Ultima Thule, and were not prepared to offer any quarter to their ancient enemies.

Lacking a coherent organization, the Immortals have largely reacted to the War as individuals. Some have joined the Alliance or the Watchers, while others serve in the militaries of the nations of the Free World, or fight in the Underground. They remain highly effective warriors, but lack the numbers or the discipline to make a major impact in the conflict, at least for the time being. Some Makers have made some unique contributions to the war effort, and the occasional Thought Ship can be seen streaking through some battlefields, engaging and destroying the Church's stealth aircraft or flying monsters. It is even rumored that a Maker is working side by side with Air Force developers in some obscure Nevada base, trying to mass-produce Thought Ships - an undertaking that is

almost certainly doomed to fail.

Common Immortal Powers and limitations

These are qualities shared by all Immortals. Beyond these powers, there are a number of special abilities that only selected members of the Undying have.

Supernatural Senses

Immortals can, by concentrating, sense the flows of Essence in the **world** and in human things. This requires a turn of concentration and a Simple Perception Test, which if successful allows them to sense magic, humans and supernatural beings with large Essence pools, and the presence of ghosts and other invisible Essence creatures. Immortals can also recognize others of their kind by looking into their eyes; eye contact produces a brief psychic flash of recognition. They also sense the presence of other Immortals who get within 30 yards of them, but not their exact location or bearing (this they must do by making eye contact).

Immortality

The Undying never age, and are almost impossible

to kill. The aging process stops sometime between their nineteenth and their fortieth birthdays, with the average Change occurring between ages twenty-five and thirty. They can contract diseases, but shake them off without any long-lasting effect two to five times as fast as normal humans; even incurable or terminal diseases are shaken off in a matter of days. Immortals never suffer from cancer or other genetic defects, and can endure huge doses of radiation without dying; they will show all the symptoms of radiation sickness for several weeks until their bodies eliminate the radiation and regenerate themselves. They also regenerate any damage due to injuries at the rate of 1 Life Point per Constitution level per turn (for example, a character with a Constitution of 4 would regenerate 4 Life Points per turn). To actually kill an Immortal, his body must be dismembered and the pieces burned down to ashes; being at ground zero for a large explosion (something that inflicted over 300 points of damage) would also do the trick, as would any event that would disperse most of the mass of the Immortal.

Other Immortals and supernatural creatures can also kill Immortals through the Severing. First, the victim must be given a mortal wound (anything that reduced them, even temporarily, to -10 Life Points or worse). Then, the supernatural creature must attempt to psychically cut the connection between the Immortal and his body; this requires a massive expenditure of Essence. Gifted humans can use the Soulfire Invocation (see p. 125) or similar power that inflicts damage on the Essence of a target. The attacker must spend or destroy more Essence than that contained in the Immortal's Essence pool (the full normal amount, not counting any temporary Essence losses). Then, a Resisted Simple Willpower Test is conducted; if the attacker wins, the Severing occurs and Immortal dies. If he loses or ties, the Essence spent is lost, and the Immortal remains alive.

Example: Marius the Immortal has 60 Life Points and Essence pool of 120 points. He is attacked by the Seraphim Manuel, who inflicts enough damage in a couple of turns to bring Marius down to -30 Life Points; due to Marius' regeneration of 6 Life Points per turn, Manuel has only 3 turns before his enemy is back up to less than -10 points. Wasting no time, Manuel attempts the Severing and spends 120 points (most of his current Essence). It would not matter if Marius had been using abilities that had drained his Essence Pool to nothing or next to nothing; the 120 points of his Pool, which reflect the strength of his soul, still need to be matched. Both Marius' player and the Chronicler (who controls Manuel), make Simple Willpower Tests. If Manuel wins, Marius is dead; otherwise, Manuel has lost all that Essence and Marius still lives.

Ancestral Memories

When the Atlantean race was bred, much of the knowledge of its culture was imprinted into their very souls. Unfortunately, the rituals meant to awaken such memories were lost in the Flood, and the Immortals are left only with what little knowledge seeps through over the centuries. Sometimes, encountering a person or experiencing event may awaken one of those memories; this often happens when the character sees something that reminds him of the past of Atlantis. Unfortunately, there are few things in the world that can trigger such remembrances; among them are some of the monsters summoned by the Church of Revelations (see p. 00).

These burst of memories are meant to be used as plot devices by the Chronicler. A character might meet another Immortal who was a friend or lover during the glory of Atlantis, for example, or perhaps an ancient rival. Sometimes these flashbacks can provide clues or useful information towards defeating an enemy, especially if the being comes from an ancient race (such as the Seraphim).

Manipulate and Regain Essence

True Immortals can channel Essence freely, and do not need (nor are they able) to purchase levels of Essence Channeling (see p. 00). Used Essence is regained at the rate of 2 Essence points per Willpower Level every minute.

Special Restrictions and Resistances

No Immortal can acquire normal Gifted abilities, including magic, psychic abilities, and Inspired Miracles. After transcending the limits of magic, the Atlanteans altered their genetic and spiritual makeup to become more resistant to it, the better to fight enemies like Ultima Thule and Mu, who still used sorcery as a weapon. By the same token, the Immortals are highly resistant to magical abilities, and can resist all Invocations with a +2 bonus.

Special Immortal Powers

These abilities can be acquired with points allotted for the Qualities or Metaphysical categories. After character creation, they can be purchased with experience points, but at double cost (see p. 90 for rules on improving characters after creation).

Awareness

3-point Power

Immortals with this ability have greatly enhanced supernatural and physical senses. They gain a +2

bonus to all Perception Tasks. Furthermore, they will automatically sense the presence of ghosts and other invisible beings, and will detect Gifted abilities, supernatural beings masquerading as humans, and any other Immortal standing within 100 yards of them.

Battle Boost

5-point Power

This ability may have been common among Atlantean warriors. The Battle Boost uses Essence to temporarily augment the character's physical attributes; the increases are balanced out by temporary weakness when the power elapses, however. Any of the three attributes can be raised at the cost of 2 Essence points per +1 bonus, per minute. These increases will not affect any of the Secondary Attributes, however. When the power expires, or the character runs out of Essence to keep it going, the character is weakened; each +1 bonus acquired becomes a -1 penalty, for a period of an hour. So, for example, if an Immortal increased his Strength by 3 (at the expense of 6 Essence points per minute), he would be at -3 to Strength for an hour afterwards.

Destiny Rider

3-point Power

Some Immortals had the ability to unconsciously sense the thin streams of Essence that determine the flow of Time and largely determine Fate. It appears that this power allowed Atlanteans to arrive to places of trouble *before* the trouble started, to better deal with it. Those with the ability were well-trained agents who had the advantage of knowing that whenever they felt a need to go somewhere, their services would be needed at the end of the journey. Destiny Riders are carried by the winds of chance to places where they can make a difference. It is often more of a burden than a help, because wherever they go they know there will be some sort of conflict or crisis. Sometimes, the trouble comes to them, sometimes arriving to his doorstep by some unlikely chain of events.

In game terms, Destiny Riders make for easy plot hooks. They are the heroes who are always at the wrong place and the wrong time. If they go to a walk in the park, they will run into a band of cultists preparing to sacrifice a victim. If they stay at home, the fleeing victim might just crash through his dining room window, pursued by the cultists, and so on.

Maker

6-point Power

Makers have enough awakened memories of Atlantis' past to create some of their advanced arti-

facts. The strange science of Atlantis cannot be duplicated with conventional means; only Markers can combine the physical sciences with Essence manipulation to produce unique substances and devices. This ability is a prerequisite to be able to build any of the artifacts described below. Other Immortal characters may spend character points to start out the game with one or more artifacts, but they cannot make or acquire more except during the course of a game.

Spirit Voice

4-point Power

A few Immortals have the ability to project their thoughts in a manner similar to the psychic power of Mindtalk (see p. 00); they can also "hear" any response thought back to them, but they cannot read minds beyond that. The Spirit Voice costs 1 Essence point per minute to activate; during that time, the character can send telepathic messages to anybody in line of sight. For 3 Essence per minute, the character can try to communicate with anybody he knows, as long as the person is on Earth and not blocked by some sort of Essence barrier, like a Ward or magical Shielding.

Atlantean Artifacts

The Atlanteans developed the Arcane Sciences, a strange collection of magic, psychic abilities and advanced technology. Where the three disciplines are seen as separate and even contradictory, the Atlanteans made no distinction between them. Atlantean Arcana was in some ways similar to medieval alchemy, which was a pale, useless imitation of the real thing combined with some valid spiritual and mystical teachings. Building things or mixing compounds also required the channeling of Essence, which in turn altered the substances involved down to the atomic, or even sub-atomic level, allowing impossible alloys to exist and unstable and poisonous mixtures to perform miraculous cures. A normal human could follow the same steps of an Atlantean Maker, and end up with nothing more than a noxious mess. Only those in whom the Blood of Atlantis remains strong can hope to emulate the achievements of that ancient people.

Described below is a smattering of Atlantean artifacts, and some of their possible uses. More artifacts will appear in future sourcebooks, or in a future game set in the times of the Elder Kingdoms. The cost on the main entry is how many character points it takes for a Maker to "remember" how to manufacture the item. Listed at the end of each artifact are some common items, and how many character points it costs for an Immortal character to own one of them. For a Maker to know how to make an artifact and to own one or

more samples of it, the both costs must be paid. Otherwise, the character must manufacture the artifact in the course of the game, if he has the time and the resources. For example, if a Maker knows how to make Adamant and wants to own an Adamant broadsword, he would have to pay a total of 14 character points; 8 to have the knowledge, and 6 to have the weapon.

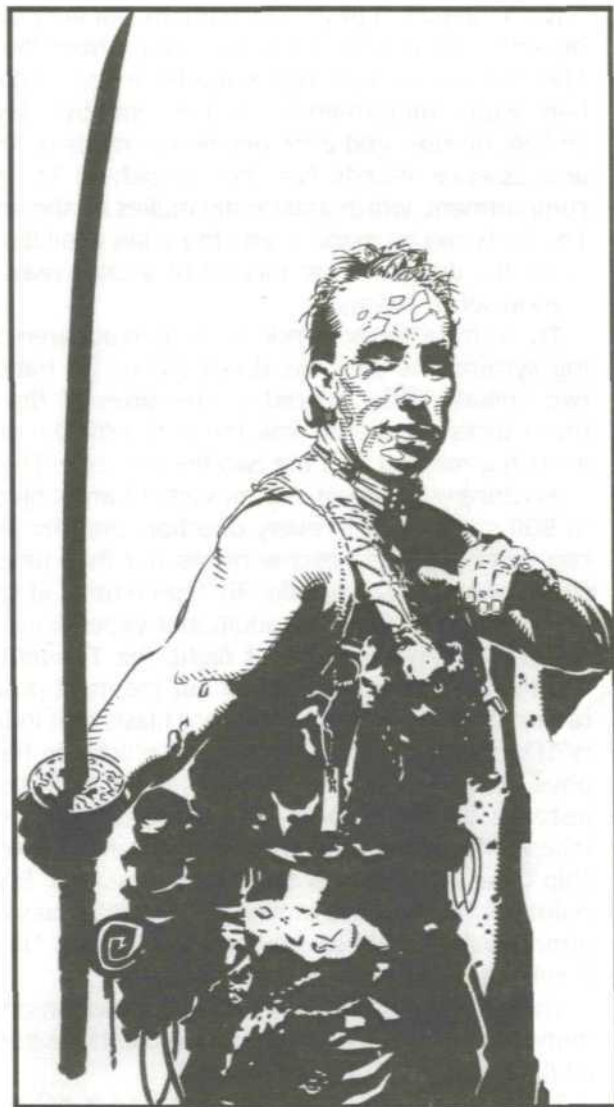
At the Chronicler's discretion, other characters who have a good background reason as to how they might have come to own such objects may also acquire them, at double the normal character points. If a character gains ownership of such weapons in the course of a game, on the other hand, they do not have to pay any character points for them.

Adamant 8 points

This legendary metal is extremely hard and resilient, making it perfect for swords and ancient body armor. It is almost indestructible, although that does not mean that armor made of it makes one invulnerable; even if the armor is unscathed, enough impact energy can get through to kill the person inside. Adamant is made of a combination of iron, silver, copper and lead (the ratio is 3, 1, 2, 4), mixed on a vat hot enough to melt lead (the other metals are somehow also melted in the process), and then mixed well and cast. The creator must oversee the mixture for the entire process, and spend a total of 15 Essence per pound of Adamant created; at the end of the process, it requires a total of 10 pounds of the aforementioned materials, in the ratio above, to produce one pound of Adamant. By the time the mixture acquires the quicksilver-like sheen of the alloy, nine-tenths of the material has mysteriously evaporated. The Adamant is then cast into a solid shape of any type; anything resembling an edge in the mold will naturally become razor sharp. The metal cannot be worked or hammered, but the result (usually swords, knives or metal plates) is nearly indestructible.

Making a mold for a sword, knife or plate requires a simple Intelligence Test. Any cutting weapon made of Adamant will do an additional 3 levels of damage, and will ignore up to 3 levels of any Armor Value (so, for example, a suit of Hard Kevlar Inserts, which normally protects with an AV of 1D8 x 5 (20) would only defend with an AV of 1D8 x 2 (12) against these weapons). Plates of Adamants can be incorporated into modern body armor, as inserts; they increase the AV of such armor by 4 levels (the armor above, with Adamant plates, would have an AV of 1D8 x 9(36) points). Even better, armor of Adamant protects against Essence-based attacks, including Celestial Fire.

Owning a small weapon made of Adamant (a knife or a shuriken) costs 4 character points.



Owning a medium weapon (a short sword, a rapier), costs 5 character points.

Owning a large weapon (an ax, a broadsword) costs 6 character points.

Owning a huge weapon (a two-handed ax or sword) costs 7 character points.

Atlantean Thought Ship 10/15/30 points

Prerequisite: Adamant Essence Wand, Orikalk

The Atlanteans had glowing "flaming chariots" which they used as transports and war machine. These Thought Ships were all supposedly obliterated during the Flood, but some Makers have recalled the secret of their construction. These ships may be behind all (or at least some) of the UFO sightings that have taken place throughout history.

These golden machines were richly sculpted, and had a basic 'delta-wing' shape similar to that of the B-2 bomber, except the ship's outside is made looks like a Baroque decoration more than a ship. These vessels

have no apparent propulsion system, but are powered by ambient Essence and some Essence from the pilot. The skeleton of the ship is made of solid Adamant bars, with a thin Adamant shell covered by a layer of Orikalk outside, and a strange device made of Orikalk and Essence Wands (see below) behind the pilot's compartment, which apparently makes up the engine. The seats can be made of any materials available (typically, the designers use racecar or aircraft seats, with a good set of straps).

The vehicle has no windows, and no apparent steering system; the pilot sits down places his hands on two Orikalk sticks, placed to the sides of the seat; these sticks apparently link the pilot with the aircraft in such a manner that the two become one. The pilot is psychically aware of any movement and objects up to 500 miles away in every direction, and the aircraft can fly at speeds in excess of Mach 2 (two times the speed of sound), and make 90-degree turns at speeds of up to Mach 1. At an additional expenditure of 2 Essence per five minutes of flight, the Thought Ship can become transparent to all but the most powerful radars. The vessel can fire Essence blasts that inflict up to 1D6 x 20(60) points of damage, which can be both physical (i.e., Life and Damage Points), or psychic (Essence damage); these blasts have a range of 50 miles/80 km and can erupt from anywhere on the ship. The ship requires an expenditure of 1 Essence point per five minutes of flight or activity. It has a skin armor with an AV of 1D4 x 20 (40), and Damage Points depending on its size (see below).

Three known models are known to exist among the Immortals; only about a dozen of those crafts (total, of all three kinds) are known to exist.

The smallest seats only the pilot, and is only slightly larger than a large car. It requires 300 pounds of Adamant, 500 pounds of Orikalk, and the equivalent of twenty Essence Wands. Creating it requires a total Expenditure of 300 Essence, which can be spent over a period of 10 days. It has 150 Damage Points. Owning one of these vehicles costs 15 character points. Knowing how to build one costs 10 character points, plus all the prerequisites.

A two-seater ship is nearly twice as big, and requires twice as many materials and Essence (600 pounds of Adamant, 1000 pounds of Orikalk, and forty Essence Wands, as well as 600 Essence to be spent over a period of 10 days). It has 250 damage points, and the passenger has access to a set of control sticks, allowing him to act as the copilot or gunner, and also to contribute Essence to the ship. Owning one of these vehicles costs 25 character points. Knowing how to build one costs 15 character points.

The largest ship seats up to 5 passengers, and is about as large as a private jet aircraft. It needs 1500 pounds of Adamant, a ton of Orikalk, and one hun-

dred Essence Wands, as well as 1500 Essence to be spent over a period of 15 days. It has 500 damage points. All the passengers can contribute Essence to the ship's operations, and one passenger can also act as a copilot or gunner. Owning one of these vehicles costs 35 character points. Knowing how to build one costs 30 character points.

Essence Wand

7 points

This is a short wand that channels Essence and can fire blasts of energy. This energy is invisible (except to those who can see Essence, who will see it as a display of brilliant colors), but it can blast holes in things (and people), or against beings of Essence. Some Makers create the wands and then replace the barrels or normal pistols with them, thus making their own "ray guns."

These wands require a highly polished quartz crystal, copper, silver and a hollow iron rod. The silver must be melted and poured down the rod, and the copper is wrapped around the wand and used to secure the crystal. During the process, the Maker must spend 15 Essence points to effect the change. The result is a wand that naturally stores and fires Essence. The wand can hold up to 20 Essence points, and can recharge itself from ambient Essence at the rate of 1 point per ten minutes. The wielder can also power the energy blasts from his own Essence. Each blast costs 1 Essence point, and it inflicts 1D6 x 6 (18) points of damage, which can be physical or Essence-based. The blasts have the range of a sub-machinegun (see p. 78).

Orikalk Metal

8 points

This mystical metal is a mixture of mercury, gold, copper and silver, heated and melted together. Its creation requires the expenditure of 15 Essence points per pound; the materials need to be mixed in the same proportion (one unit each), and, unlike Adamant, no material is lost in the process (one pound of each of these four materials will produce four pounds of Orikalk).

The resulting substance has a reddish gold color and is fairly soft and easy to work with. It can be hammered and worked, or made into wires or links. Some Makers have woven chain mail out of it, for example. When the final shape is created, another 20 Essence points per pound must be spent to "fix" it; afterward: the material becomes very solid, at least as hard and resilient as good steel. Its hardness is not its principal quality, however: the metal has a special affinity to Essence. It can block or repel hostile Essence attacks and it can block the path of Essence creatures. Ghost and spirits cannot cross an area encircled by Orikalk

wire, for example, while Orikalk swords will cut but physical and spiritual beings; furthermore, the weapons can be made to "bleed" Essence off living beings. Up to half the damage inflicted by such a weapon can become Essence drain instead. Orikalk can also be used to make bullets. These bullets have all the aforementioned effects, including the ability to drain Essence as well as inflict damage. Used against angels and other supernatural beings, they inflict the same amount of Essence damage as they do Life Points, making them deadly against them.

Finally, Orikalk is somewhat responsive to the desires of the wielder. Bullets will arc their flight paths to compensate for poor aiming, although they will not be able to shoot around corners. Swords will shift their balance to allow for faster hits and parries. All Orikalk weapons have an inherent bonus of +2 to all attack and defense rolls. They do not have any special damage bonuses, however.

Owning an Orikalk hand weapon (sword, knife and so on) costs 6 character points, regardless of the size.

Owning Orikalk bullets costs 1 character point per 25 rounds.

The Sephiroth: Planes of Existence

In the world of *Armageddon*, Earth is but of many worlds. Mythical and legendary realms, thought to be mere fantasies or allegories, are real in this setting. Heaven and Hell, the Courts of Faerie and the Abodes of the Gods are all part of the Otherworlds, different planes of existence with their own inhabitants, lands and physical laws. The Otherworlds are known as the *Sephhiroths*, the Spheres of Reality, by students of the occult. There are said to be ten Sephiroths, each of them a universe unto itself.

Each Sephiroth is like a layer in an onion. The Quabbalists and the Norse described the Universe as a tree, with each world or sphere on a different branch of the tree, with Earth (Malkuth

or Midgard) near the bottom, and Heaven or Kether towards the top. Each Sephiroth was in turn divided into several Realms, somewhat like different nations in the same continent, or different provinces or states in the same country. Like nations or provinces, each Realm has boundaries, laws and "government" (or lack thereof). In the Sephiroth of Geburah, for example, there are several Death Realms, from the Kingdom of Hades, ruled by the Graeco-Roman god of the Dead, to the Pit of Abaddon, Lucifer's Hellish domain and prison. Netzach, the Abode of the Gods, is divided into dozens of Realms, each controlled by a different pantheon. Even Binah has realms beyond the Elysian Fields; it is said the Elemental Realms can be found in that dimension.

According to Quabbalism, there are Ten Sephiroth (eleven if one counts the Abyss, the space between spaces). Five of the most important are briefly described below. Future *Armageddon* and *Witchcraft* sourcebooks will provide more information about this and other Sephiroth. They will also provide plenty of ideas for venturing into the Otherworlds.

Some occultists (many of whom are also theoretical physicists on the side) have proposed the idea of the "Multiverse" or "Omniverse:" they theorize an infinity or near infinity of worlds, all with their own Tree of Life, all connected to a central point, which is the Sephiroth of Kether. Think of it as a million million rods, all touching on one point, spreading out like spikes out of a central ball, or like spokes on a wheel. Each universe has its own existence and its own set of ten Sephiroths, each with slightly different laws or circumstances. Some could be parallel Earths, while others could be utterly bizarre realities. For example, the futuristic universe of the *Manhunter* game would be a separate world, with the physical realm (and all the planets in it) being the Sephiroth of Malkuth/Midgard, and with its own nine other Sephiroths (what would the Death Realms of the *Manhunter* universe be like? Probably a place where the Death Gods of a hundred races make their homes). It is possible that Leviathan and the other Mad Gods come from some of the most alien universes, or they might come from an opposite reality, an Anti-Kether located in an utterly different level of being.



Binah: This is a realm of energy and raw Essence. Identified as the Realm of Understanding, several primal forms exist in this realm, including the Elemental Spirits. Chief among the Realms of Binah is the Elyssian Fields, ruled by the Seraphim. The swirling energies that pervade this realm, both physical and psychic, make it difficult for mortals, even the Gifted to survive there for long. Most Realms in Binah are places of extremes, of blinding light or eternal flames, of cold endless oceans or mad whirlwinds. A Place of Understanding it may be, but if so, it is an understanding that still eludes most humans.

Netzach: The Abode of the Gods is a world of epic proportions, where elements of the "real world" are taken and expanded to heroic proportion. Mountain peaks are higher than the Everest, the forests are populated by monstrous trees, gigantic animals and fabulous creatures, and every natural feature, from a tiny stream to a great desert, is somehow alive and vibrant with the power of myth. Many of the legendary pantheons can be found there: Mount Olympus and Asgard are in this Sephiroth, as well as legendary Aztlan and Celestial Court of Jade. The gods for the most part are fiercely insular, tolerating little commerce or interaction with other Realms except through limited visits and the occasional contest and war. Mortal visitors will find themselves in a dangerous world where wolves are the size of horses and the least native is as strong as three men.

Geburah: The Realms of the Dead are in this sphere, the Sephiroth of Severity. This is where the Gods of Death hold their courts, connected to Netzach via a system of Gateways. Tormented souls, ghosts and Phantasms often venture into the Twilight World, a shadowy reflection of Earth where One City, One Forest and One Desert await the errant dead. Lucifer rules over Abaddon, a place where the souls of evil humans are punished and either cleansed of their sins or twisted into increasingly more monstrous creatures. Above all stands Death, the First and Last, an entity of unimaginable power that all beings, human and "immortal," fear. Death's agents, the

Grim Reapers, often act as enforcers and border patrolmen, pursuing those who refuse to die or who invade the Death Realms. Geburah is for the most part a place of gray shadows, marked by a pall of fear and despair.

Yesod: The Sphere of the Moon is home to the Sylvan and Fey races, creatures who descend from the Naturas that were born during creation. The Norse called it Alfheim, the land of the Elves. Once, Fey races such as the Sidhe, the Satyrs and the Dryads lived on Earth, but humans and the Old Gods, and later humans and the Seraphim, eventually pushed them out of their old homesteads. Many Elder Races, long extinct on Earth, survive in some Realm in Yesod. In Yesod, forests and jungles are not as titanic as those in Netzach, but they are far more alive. Most trees can speak to passerbys, or lead them to their doom. Animals are intelligent and human-like, equally capable of good and evil deeds. The Fey races themselves are mischievous and whimsical lot, and many remember the crimes of humans with well-aged hatred. The two major Realms of Yesod are the Seelghie and Unleghie Courts; both have their own ideas on how to deal with humans and their destruction of Nature. The coming of the War has made the Sidhe venture back to Earth in great numbers (the Sidhe are introduced in the *Witchcraft* sourcebook **Mystery Codex**, a future book will detail their role in *Armageddon*).

Kether: The most mysterious of the Sephiroth, Kether is a realm of wild creative energies. It is here that the Creator is said to dwell, although the Seraphim spent centuries and countless lives looking for him there, to no avail. The souls of humans who are ready to Move On are said to ascend to Kether, never to be seen again.

BELIEVERS!
OUR HONOR IS
LOYALTY

ALL PEOPLE
SER

Chapter Four

The Adversary

It was Alonzo's first day at the factory.

He woke up early washed his face, and put on a clean shirt. His head hurt slightly; too much wine the night before, as he tried to allay his worries with some bottled courage.

He'd been lucky, and he'd been smart. Lucky to miss being drafted during the frenzied months after Spain joined in the futile war against El Apostol. Most of those poor unhappy bastards were buried in mass graves from the Pyrenees to Madrid, where the government had finally capitulated - not that it had saved their lives. Smart not to join any of the imbeciles who tried to form resistance cells.

The clean-up after the Church overran the country had been brutally efficient. Alonzo still had nightmares about the executions, about the priests and students and policemen who had been lined up in groups often and shot like so many dogs. Hundreds and hundreds of them, so much that in places their blood had run into little rivulets down into the drains, or pooled into crimson stains where no drains were nearby. All the fools who had tried to fight, who had tried to defy the Edicts - no Christian church services, no assemblies of more than ten people, no firearms - had been discovered and killed.

*As he dressed, Alonzo shuddered. His best friend Manolo had come to him one night, silent like a thief, his knocking barely enough to wake Alonzo up, just a few days after the Occupation. The streets outside still bore the scars tanks and other tracked vehicles had left behind during their triumphant march through the Gran Via. Manolo told him that the students and the Sindicalistas and the Catholic League were planning a massive demonstration. "We have to do something, Alonzo," he said urgently. "They are killing the **auras**, the priests, taking them out of the churches and shooting them dead."*

"Tell me something I don't know," Alonzo replied. "I work down by the Cathedral, remember? They are repainting it with those funny circles of them."

"They are desecrating every holy place in the land. I never went to church that much, and you know I always thought that Father Perez was a drunkard, but this intolerable. Those cowards in the military wimped out; it's up to us, to take to the streets and show the world we do not fol-

low the Antichrist."

Alonzo had sworn he would meet Manolo on the street knowing even as he said the words that he would not do it. He had seen the bullet holes in the Cathedral, and had heard that the bullets, before marring the holy walls, had passed through the bodies of a hundred priests and nuns who had stood in the way of the Army of Revelations. There was no screwing around with the Believers. He muttered a brief prayer for Manolo, and stayed put. He saw what happened on live television: the knots of people beginning to form into a mob in the Gran Via, the major thoroughfare in Madrid, the arrival of several dozen armored cars; the shouts and hurled stones; the Army commander, sitting on the armored car's cupola, raising his fist and then lowering it with the finality of a falling guillotine blade; and the shooting, the endless shooting as the vehicles poured bullets into the demonstrators, killing them by the hundreds. It had been all there on live TV: the Believers wanted to publicize their atrocities, to show the rest of the world what happened to those who resisted. He never heard from Manolo again; bled to death on the bullet-pitted streets, perhaps, and bagged along with the other corpses they later stacked up like cord wood on refuse trucks.

What was one to do? Alonzo kept his head down and his mouth shut. When he went to apply for citizenship papers, he formally renounced Catholicism, which gained him Gentile status - those who refused were given yellow jumpsuits to wear, and lost all their property and most of their rights. He was not required to join the Church of Revelations, although it was bluntly indicated that to attend the "Holy Rites" would be favorably noted by the authorities. He was given a number of aptitude tests, and found himself employed at a clothing factory, which once had made T-shirts and the like for tourists, and which now produced uniforms for the triumphant army. He could have chosen to join the army, instead, but at that point he balked: he had not taken up arms to fight them, but he would be damned if he was going to fight for them.

It was getting close to opening time. Alonzo rushed down the stairs and out his small apartment building, just in time to catch the bus. The other riders all were quiet and sub

dued, with none of the chatter that been normal less than a year ago. Incredible how so much had changed in so little time. In the seat ahead of Alonzo, a woman suddenly burst into tears. A couple of passengers tried to console her, but hesitantly; the bus driver was dressed in a brown uniform, denoting a member of the Auxiliary Service of the Army of Revelation. But even more importantly, he had the Mark. It was on his forehead, above his left eye, a spiked circle. It must have hurt to have that tattooed there, Alonzo thought - but no, didn't they say that the Mark appeared by itself? Before, he'd always thought that was a superstition; he'd seen the young men and women at the discotheques, dancing and laughing like everyone else, but marked that way, and he'd just shook his head and smiled indulgently at the silly fad. But he'd seen the same mark on television, on the face of the Dark Apostle as he made his speeches, on the hands and foreheads of officers and soldiers as they won victory after victory in a world gone mad. The Mark was a lot more than a tattoo, and anybody who bore it was to be feared.

Whether he was distracted by the sobbing woman, or by his own musings, Alonzo missed his stop and had to run several blocks to the factory, arriving just before its gates opened. The workers were milling outside, clearly divided into two groups: regular workers, dressed in civilian clothes, and Infidels in those cheap, hateful yellow jumpsuits. A handful of armed guards in gray watched over the second group.

The bell whistled, and the gate slid open. One of the Infidels was a little slow getting up, and a guard clubbed him on the kidneys. The man staggered with a groan.

Alonzo shuddered and hurried along. At least he wasn't one of them. At least they hadn't found a crucifix on him.

He was among the lucky ones, he told himself.

An evil cult and all-conquering army. A seductive, compelling evil. A breeding ground for monsters and abominations. A cancer on Reality itself. The Adversary is all of that and more. In the world of **Armageddon**, this once-obscure cult has overwhelmed half of the planet, and stands poised to devour the second half. This chapter describes the Adversary, the Church of Revelations, the True Believers, the Dark Apostle who leads them all, and Leviathan, whom he serves.

The Rise of the Church of Revelations

The origins of the Church of Revelations are lost in mystery and speculation. Its own history harkens

back to prehistoric times, to the mythical eras of Atlantis and Ultima Thule. Some occultists claim that the Church was the brainchild of a secretive splinter group of the Society of Thule, the occult Aryan supremacists who backed up Hitler's regime. This splinter group was known as the Searchers of Ultima Thule, and their goal was to contact Leviathan, whom they believed was the patron god of the fabulous culture of Ultima Thule. Since no records of this society have ever been made public, this remains pure speculation.

Whatever their ultimate origins, the Church of Revelations started recruiting members sometime in the mid- or late twentieth century. These early Believers operated in absolute secrecy, and concentrated on amassing financial and political power. Its converts were business leaders, military officers, politicians and diplomats, leavened with a small core of young, fanatical followers. Unlike most other religious organizations, they were in regular contact with their dark deity, and were able to coordinate plans of tremendous intricacy while covering up their activities from both mundane and supernatural watchdogs.

The organization became public during the first years of the new millennium, during the so-called New Age in which supernatural abilities started to surface in unprecedented numbers. Members started to display the Mark of Leviathan, what appeared to be a simple tattoo on their hands or forehead. To many religious leaders, the significance of those marks seemed fairly obvious, but their accusations were lost amidst the other calls to persecute this or that religious minority, or outlaw magic or supernatural powers, or a hundred and one other causes, all seemingly insane to most people. The Church of Revelations was one of a dozen, a hundred strange cults, and they seemed harmless enough. Its members rarely got in trouble with the authorities, they were mostly clean and soft-spoken, and they all appeared to be productive members of society. Many worked in factories owned by the secret, wealthier members of the cult. They often worked two shifts; in the late shift, which were staffed only by Believers, the factories produced weapons and other war materiel, which would be used when the time was right.

By the early "singles," as the first years of the Millennium were often called, the Church was fairly spread in many places of the world. Germany was a major convert area. Many of the new converts were East Germans who still were dealing with lower living conditions than their Western brothers, almost two decades since unification. In Vietnam, the movement spread through the countryside, finding fertile ground among a people who had been stripped of their traditional religion and who had found cold comfort in Communism. In Argentina, the cult started first with

the German-Argentinean community, and then spread to the disaffected youth. In Turkey, they began by quietly subverting some of the more radical Muslims sects, quietly replacing key leaders and slowly corrupting members. Smaller branches of the cult appeared in North America and other countries of Europe and Asia; these branches remained more secretive, but still managed to recruit hundreds of thousands.

By 2008, there were several million converts worldwide. Most of them still operated in secret. Less than one tenth of the converts had a visible Mark of the Beast, and most of the rest did not publicly announce their membership. In 2009, everything changed. The Dark Apostle rose, and every Believer grew the Mark of Leviathan overnight. Within a year, Germany had fallen to the cult. Within two years, war raged across Europe. Six years later, the Church dominated one continent and controlled nearly half of two others.

The Believers

Alonzo had not been in any church in - how long? Not since he was sixteen, since his parents had given up making him go. He'd always found the whole thing boring.

Now here he was, climbing the steps to the darkened church, scared out of his mind but still forcing his feet forward.

*The night before, he'd chided himself How bad could it be? The **Iglesios** the Churchies, they were crazy, but if you went to their ceremonies, you'd get more privileges. Lower taxes, a chance to apply for a better job. Maybe even a car, instead of riding the stinking bus every day. But now, he did not feel as confident.*

Part of it was the defacement of the church. All crosses had been erased or painted over. Everywhere were the Circles of Leviathan, looking down on him like the angry eyes of some ancient monster. And he'd heard what one of the other factory workers, Reynaldo, had whispered to the others. Reynaldo had been the first on his shift to go to the one of the Church's sessions. He'd come back looking pale

The Legend of Ultima Thule

While Atlantis stood on a continent in what is now the Atlantic Ocean, and Mu in a similar giant island on the Pacific, Ultima Thule controlled the area of Northern Europe, with its capital where the Baltic Sea now lies. The delusions of Aryan supremacists to the contrary, the people of Ultima Thule were not Germanic (a few proto-Germanic tribes lived in the wastes of Siberia at the time) or Aryan, but a mixture of diverse racial groups, both Asian and Caucasian. Ultima Thule was ruled by the Hyperboreans, a dark haired and pale-skinned people. They were powerful magicians who largely eschewed scientific development in favor of the pursuit of occult power.

During a millennia-long war with Atlantis, a war that they were slowly losing, a council of Hyperborean mages explored the Otherworlds in an attempt to find a force to match their enemies. They made contact with the being known as Leviathan. The contact transformed the sorcerers into Adepts, who then returned and over a period of centuries seized power in Ultima Thule. A forced process of conversion followed, not at all unlike the one occurring in the current War. The High Priests of Leviathan summoned terrible monsters to battle the Atlanteans. For a time, the manifestation of Leviathan in our reality seemed imminent. It was then that Lucifer, the Seraphim and the Titans combined their powers to blast Ultima Thule out of existence, to destroy Atlantis and Mu, and then send a Flood down on the world, nearly wiping out the human race.

This is what the leaders of the Church of Revelations believe happened, although they put their own spin to it. In their version, the heroic and loyal peoples of Ultima Thule were destroyed for trying to summon the rightful ruler of our reality. Atlantis is seen as the great enemy, and the Angels are considered the Atlanteans' puppets (the fact that the Angels also destroyed Atlantis is rarely considered in Believer dogma). A small department of the Church of Revelations is dedicated to sending archeological expeditions down to the bottom of the Baltic Sea (which is relatively shallow), hoping to find some lost artifacts or magical items of Ultima Thule. It seems that the angels were very thorough in the destruction of that civilization, however, and so far nothing has been found.

*and haggard. When asked what he'd seen, all he'd said, in a voice so low **they'd had to read his lips**, was **"Mounstros"***

Monsters. What the hell had he meant by that?

Alonzo hesitated one more second, and went past the open portals, into the shadowy church. A lot was the same as when he was a child. The candles were there, although the Holy Water vessel was empty. But all the stained glass windows were painted over, with more symbols of the Church. A large photograph of the Apostle was behind the altar. And, presiding over it all was a priest, was a...

He froze, and for an instant we almost bolted out of the Church. You can % he told himself fiercely, you can't or they might just shoot you down, or they might take down your name and tomorrow the Soul Police will be at work looking for you. Do you want to wear a yellow suit like some stupid canary?

Besides, the priest wasn't a monster. He was, who knows, a burn victim, or maybe those were warts on his face. His

mother had always told him he should not stare at people with deformities. Poor man, to have to give the Mass with a face like that. Best not to look at him again, he might take offense and -

- and he just couldn't stomach to look at that face.



Taking a deep breath, Alonzo continued forward. Halfway there, he heard the clattering of booted feet behind him. He'd been so scared he hadn't heard the group rushing into the church behind him. He turned, and saw four Soul Police thugs in their black uniforms. He cringed and fell to his knees. **What did I do?** his mind screamed. **What did I do wrong?**

The four men rushed past him. They headed for the old woman near the front, the one that had been praying fervently when he came in. The priest - don't look at his face, just don't - was pointing at her. The men grabbed her, forced her on her feet. Then Alonzo saw it.

Clasped tightly in her hands was a crucifix and rosary.

One of the men ripped it from her hands, tossed it to the floor, and ground it under his boot. They took her away and as they dragged her unresisting body past Alonzo, he heard the litany of the Lord's Prayer coming from her lips.

They'll kill her for this, he realized. She was praying to her God in His House, which they took away, and now they will kill her for it

He was too scared to be angry.

Moving slowly, deliberately, Alonzo sat down, and then knelt, imitating the rest of the congregation. The priest continued talking, telling the group how to pray, what to expect. Alonzo followed the directions. If he didn't he might end up like the old woman.

At least she had the guts to do what was right a small part of him said. Alonzo ignored it.

He'd survived too much to end it all now.

As the priest spoke, Alonzo felt the irresistible urge to look at the priest's face again. It's just warts, he told himself. Just warts. He looked up.

And saw the tiny tentacles writhing on the priest's face as he spoke.

Alonzo closed his eyes tightly. **I will not scream. I will NOT scream.**

And, sometime after he closed his eyes, he prayed to Leviathan.

And heard an answer.

The Believers are those who have willingly become worshippers of Leviathan. They form the hard core of the Army of Revelations, and of its Church. All of them have been touched by the spirit of Leviathan, and its Taint has begun its work.

These converts come from all walks of life. Before the Church became public, many of them were wealthy industrialists, high-ranking military officers and prominent politicians. The powerful Adepts of Leviathan established a link between the would-be converts and Leviathan itself. These men and women were plagued by dreams of a vast, dark entity, an entity that promised tremendous power in return for service. To the credit of Humankind, less than half of those contacted succumbed to temptations. The ones who did were among the most corrupt in their fields,

people who had already sold their souls in the name of power and expediency. Given a choice to gain even more power, they leapt at it, and became Leviathan's slaves.

The second wave of Believers were recruited among the young and malcontent. Every society has people who feel (rightly or otherwise) that they are not getting a fair chance. The cult started spreading through word of mouth, through little prayer cards handed out in dance clubs and coffee house. It was the new thing to do. Pray to the Great One, and your prayers will be answered. No purchase necessary. Some people tried praying to Leviathan out of boredom, or for a lark. Others did so out of greed, and even desperation. And they made contact with an alien and monstrous being.

Most of those who made contacted were repulsed and horrified. Later on, however, some small wish or another was granted. People who had asked for promotions or good grades or lucky breaks started getting them. Often, people got hurt as a consequence of the wish. People got promotions when those ahead of them were injured or killed in freak accidents. Good grades were achieved when a test was postponed due to a sudden illness that had claimed a teacher's life. Lucky breaks occurred at the expense of others. People benefited by causing others to be harmed. To many, the situation was so horrible that they never prayed to Leviathan again. Others either refused to see the connection or cared only for the results. They prayed again and again, wishing for better and bigger things. And in doing so, their Taint spread.

As the Believers grew in numbers, they started infiltrating other groups. In Europe, several Neo-Nazi and nationalist groups were quietly absorbed by the Church. Their members stopped chanting hate slogans and started acting like productive citizens. They had found something bigger than any Aryan ideal or national identity could offer. The Church also became popular among criminals. Robbers and burglars found that their capers became easier if they used the prayer cards smiling quiet men handed out in the worst bars of the worst neighborhoods. Some were so grateful they started donating money or even their services to the Church. In time, many were working for it full time.

The armed forces of many nations also proved to be fertile ground. Many of those soldiers saw a bleak future ahead of them, as NATO slowly ceased to exist and defense budgets were slashed, then slashed some more. The twenty-first Century seemed to have little use for standing armies, and many soldiers felt themselves betrayed by the people and nations they had sworn to protect. Then along came some popular officers, who spoke of small clubs for some selected people in the services. There, people spoke of new glories

and a new force that would sweep the world. And more converts were gained.

When the time came, every country in Europe had a well-organized and funded Fifth Column of Believers, who had positions in all major services, from the police and fire departments to the armed forces. Even as the Army of Revelations attacked with all its technological and supernatural might, Believers behind the lines sabotaged supply lines, assassinated officers and other leaders and even led entire army units to join the enemy. They contributed a great deal to the triumph of the Revelationists. Similar movements appeared in South and Central America, South East Asia, and the Middle East.

After the conquest, a third wave of Believers appeared. Many converted out of convenience or fear, but as they prayed to Leviathan, they became first willing and then fanatical followers. With terrifying speed, the cult is spreading through the Conquered Territories, to the point that some figures indicate that nearly 30% of the population of some areas is a Believer or in the process of becoming one.

Life in the Conquered Territories

It would have all been worth it if it wasn't for the nightmares.

After the first Mass, Alonzo had gone home and showered and scrubbed himself for two hours straight. He felt he would never be clean again. The dark presence he had felt while praying in the church had spoken to him, and he'd thought he would go insane. It was so hideous, so powerful, so cold. He had felt like a lone swimmer in the dark who realizes that something huge is stirring in the waters below, and that it is coming for him. And if he did not do or say the right thing, its gaping maws would open and drag him screaming into the depths.

The second time was quite so bad.

After the third time, Alonzo had informed on his superior, a surly Basque by the name of Uzcategui. Sure enough, they had found a Bible in his locker. Uzcategui had never been seen again, and Alonzo had replaced him as shift supervisor. Just like the voice that answered his prayers had said would happen.

Good things were happening to him now. Alonzo went to night school, on a Church scholarship. There he perfected his English and started learning German. He heard that a soldier made as much money as a doctor now. He sent in an application to the Auxiliary Service. He wasn't a kid anymore, but twenty-two is far from old, and there were plenty of opportunities for an enterprising man.

On the TV, the news told the same tale. Russia was a burning wasteland. The Americans were besieged in their own back yard. Alonzo had smiled when he'd seen that report. Finally, a World War had come to the homes of the Yankees. He wondered how they liked being invaded for a change. The war was going well on other fronts. Those who resisted simply died. A human interest story involved a little girl who had informed on her parents. A smiling reporter had interviewed the pretty girl, and then the camera had panned to the soccer field behind her. They had hanged her parents and their fellow conspirators off the goal posts, five to a side.

He'd never amounted to much before, but he was becoming a someone. He felt so proud when he finally was admitted to the Auxiliary Service, when he got the crisp brown uniform. Alonzo was on duty twenty hours a week on top of his work at the factory, but the money was great and people were respectful to him. They called him "senor" at work, and "senor oficial" when on duty. It would all have been perfect.

If it wasn't for the dreams.

They came almost every night now, and they were worst on Sundays, after Mass.

In the dreams, he was floating in the ocean in the night, and something huge was swimming below, stirring the waters by its mere presence. It wanted him. It was looking for him. He trashed in the water, terrified, and then felt his hands begin to change, to grow longer, scaliier.

To mutate into something else.

He always woke up with a start. That particular night, he went to the bathroom to splash some water on his face. In a couple of hours, he would have to go to work anyway; no sense going back to sleep.

And when he looked in the mirror, he saw the tiny bumps on his left cheek.

Pimples, he told himself. Just pimples.

Please let it be pimples, or warts. Yes, warts.

The image in the mirror did not answer.

The life of the conquered is nothing new in Europe. For Western Europe, the experience was seventy years old, although Eastern Europe had experienced its own brand of occupation until a mere twenty years before the War. South and Central America had lived under numerous dictatorships for a long time, and neither Asia nor the Middle East were strangers to being oppressed. Nothing could prepare the peoples of the Conquered Territories for the grip of the Church of Revelations, however.

The conquest was brutally swift and efficient. Most people were too stunned by the event to offer much resistance, and the fates of the few who did resist were enough to dissuade the rest. The Soul Police and the Army of Revelations immediately set about recruiting and training local Believers into their ranks. Soon there were enough natives to help the rest adapt to

the conditions of each conquered country.

In some ways, life went on. People needed to work and make money, or they would not be able to eat. They now were being paid with New Marks instead of francs or pesetas or lira, but money was money. The Church of Revelations closed many "unproductive" businesses, like stores and tourist attractions, and the people left unemployed by this had no choice but to go work in the new factories appearing everywhere in the Territories to supply the needs of the growing army.

That was but the first of the changes.

Society

The people of the Conquered Territories are divided into four broad social classes, each with its own set of documentation and rights. The differences are determined by the people's spiritual status.

Infidels: Those who persist in worshipping any deity other than Leviathan are branded Infidels and lose all their rights. In effect, they become little better than slaves. Infidels must dress in bright yellow jumpsuits and shoes made of cheap materials, to be more easily identified. Being caught wearing any other clothing is a capital offense. They are also fitted with a hard plastic bracelet with an electronic identification marker. Removing or destroying the bracelet is also a capital offense. These people automatically forfeit all their property, which is confiscated by the Church. They become Wards of the Church, who either puts them to work in factories, roads or other menial physical labor, or sends them to "work camps" from which few ever return. Nobody becomes an Infidel voluntarily. They are usually discovered by the authorities or denounced by their neighbors. Anybody found in possession of a religious symbol of any kind can be tried by the Ecclesiastical Courts and, if found guilty, named an Infidel.

Gentiles: The vast majority of the conquered peoples are branded as Gentiles, those who do not worship Leviathan - yet. Their freedom of travel and assembly is greatly restricted, and they are taxed heavily, but they can keep their property and are nominally protected by the law. In practice, they are only one pointed finger away from becoming Infidels, and they live in dreadful fear and uncertainty.

Probationary Members: Gentiles who agree to attend to at least one weekly Mass of Leviathan, and who can document this attendance for at least a month become Probationer Members. This status results in lower taxes and greater opportunities, like being allowed to serve in the Armed Forces (which pay higher than most civilian jobs). These people start attending the Church services, and start being influenced by Leviathan. The process is slower for some,





while others become corrupted after only a few sessions. Probationary Members comprise some 20% of the population.

True Believers: Those on whom the Mark of Leviathan appears automatically become True Believers. These are the only full citizens of the Conquered Territories, with the most rights and privileges. The True Believers still remain a minority, about one tenth of the total population.

The Church of Revelations

The pimples -or warts, who could tell, really - did not go away.

But the Mark appeared.

One morning, it was there, right in the middle of his forehead like some hideous third eye. Most people got it on the side of the head, or on the hand, but he had to get it on the forehead. It just figured, Alonzo thought. In a way it was disturbing, but in another, it offered the opportunity he had been waiting for.

For two weeks, he had been watching Gonzales. The other sergeant in the Auxiliary Forces had been acting strangely lately, ever since they had assisted the Soul Police stop that busload of Infidels that had tried to escape a work camp. The Infidels had overcome the guards and seized a bus. That they had nowhere to go did not seem to matter to them.

The Soul Police and the Auxiliary Force men had formed a double firing line across the road, and when the bus had come around a curve, they had opened fire. It had been the first time Alonzo had discharged his firearm outside the training range. He couldn't be sure if any of his bullets had hit the bus, but somebody's had - the old vehicle had been shredded under the impacts. The dead or dying driver had swerved and the bus had rolled to its side. A couple of people had tried to climb out with their hands up, screaming their surrender, and some of the Auxiliary Force men - not Alonzo, luckily, but Gonzales among them - had stopped shooting.

"Who told you to ceasefire?" the Soul Police officer had screamed at them. "Kill them all!"

And so they had.

Gonzales had been acting strangely since then. Maybe it had been the dead children. Well, Alonzo didn't like it any better than anybody, but what could you do? If their parents had not made that useless escape attempts, the children would be alive in some re-education camp. It was their fault, really. So he had watched Gonzales, waiting for a mistake.

Now he had some evidence, and even better, the Mark. He might be able to leave the factory job, now.

Two days after the Mark appeared on him - the other guys in the Auxiliary Force had congratulated him, except

Gonzales - his move paid off. At the end of their shift, a troop of Soul Police officers entered the Auxiliary Force barracks. They were dragging a battered and bleeding young man. Gonzales' face when he saw the prisoner was confession enough.

"Trying to smuggle arms to the Underground was a mistake, Gonzales," the officer snarled. It was the same one who had handled the bus escape, Alonzo noticed. "Seize him!"

Gonzales barely struggled as they took him away. The officer nodded towards Alonzo. "That was a good tip you provided for us."

Alonzo saluted smartly. "Just trying to help, sir. "His forehead started throbbing warmly, making him feel strangely at ease. "Our honor is loyalty," he quoted.

The officer smiled. Indeed. We might have better uses for you than this, Alonzo. Come with me.

"Yes, sir!"

As they walked outside, Alonzo heard Gonzales' pleas for mercy as they strung him and the Underground contact up.

A hanging was too good for the traitor, Alonzo thought.

But no matter; he had provided the springboard Alonzo needed.

All was good with the world.

On his cheek, the pimples - or warts, but who cared, now? - itched as if something was moving beneath them.

In the space of a few years, the Church of Revelations has gone from a clandestine organization to a huge organized body, with a bureaucracy large enough to handle the needs of over a billion people. The COR oversees the government and the "spiritual needs" of the Conquered Territories. Under the Dark Apostle is a network of archbishops, bishops and cardinals who rule with an iron fist.

The COR has many advantages over most human organizations. Its members are mystically linked through the Mark of Leviathan, which also makes it almost impossible to infiltrate. Every member is a proven Believer, and they all share in the dream of bringing Leviathan to Earth. Beyond their fanaticism, members also enjoy huge privileges, including almost absolute power over the lives of Gentiles and Infidels, as well as all the luxuries and comfort possible. The COR makes no pretense that the Church is not interested in material gain; it has total control over the economies of the conquered territories, and it makes it a point to distribute the plunder among its members.

Even so, the COR is an institution, and like all institutions it sees its share of in-fighting, competition, and petty politics. The Church leaders actually encourage some of it, provided that the back-stabbing and

intrigue do not interfere with the primary goals of the organization. This competitiveness also helps to weed out anybody who gets too complacent or lazy; the Church has not tolerance for lack of dedication, and members are always trying to find such faults on others. In practice, of course, rivalries do hamper some operations, with Church leaders getting entangled in "turf fights" and forgetting their primary duties.

Organization

The Church of Revelations' organization is a perverse mockery of the Catholic Church. The Conquered territories are divided into dioceses and archdioceses, ruled by bishops and archbishops. The breakdown is as follows:

The Faithful: They are the equivalent of novices, Believers who wish to serve in a spiritual capacity.

The Priesthood: Priests and nuns are the "foot soldiers" of the Church. They are in charge of local parishes, and act both as priests and as municipal administrators. A number of priests are Adepts (see below); those who are do not get an administrative post, but work as Army Chaplains or troubleshooters for the Church. Other priests serve in the Ecclesiastical Courts (see below) or work as executive assistant to higher-ranked Church members.

Knights: Knights are Adepts who act as agents and assistants to the local Bishops and Archbishops.

Holy Orders: The Orders are special societies within the Church, each of which serves a special purpose. Each Order has a Grand Master (leader or commander), a number of Masters (sub-commanders, in charge of an area or unit), and the Brethren or Sisterhood (the rank-and-file). Some Orders are described below.

Bishops: Bishops are in charge of a city or a district. They combine the position of spiritual leader with the office of city mayor. The Soul Police Commander answers to the Bishop. All the Bishops are at least Adepts of the Second Circle.

Archbishops: The nominal rulers of an entire country. They oversee the activities of the Bishops and their political power is equivalent to that of a premier or president. Archbishops are at least Adepts of the Third Circle.

Cardinals: These Church agents have the same rank as Bishops, but do not have administrative duties. Instead, they are agents and inspectors, ensuring the smooth functioning of the Church. Some are also sent on important missions outside the Conquered Territories. Cardinals are either powerful Adepts, supernatural beings like Seraphim who have turned coat, or Sheol Undead.

The Dark Apostle: Johann Goering remains the head Church of Revelations, as well as the Supreme Commander of the Army of Revelations. Everyone

answers to him.

The Ecclesiastical Courts

The legal system of the Conquered Territories is controlled by the Church. All legal disputes are settled by the Ecclesiastical Courts. Secular lawyers no longer exist in the Territories, and millions of attorneys in Europe, Asia and South America have had to seek other ways to make a living (a running joke in the US is that the war against the Church has the complete support of Congress because most members are lawyers and even lawyers will band together in the face of a common enemy). The Ecclesiastical Courts' justice is swift, biased and cannot be appealed. Common crimes are punished swiftly

Major Orders of the Church

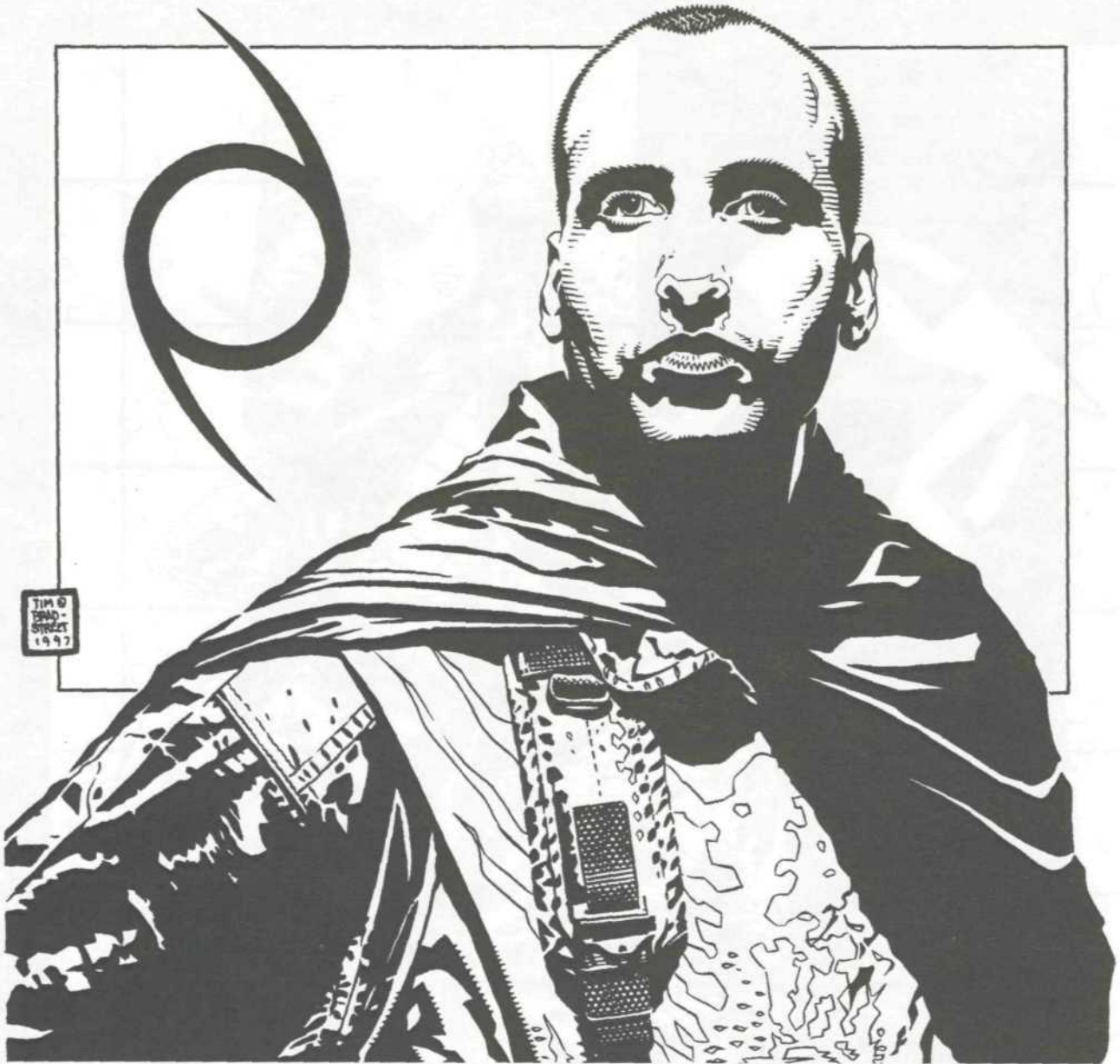
These are some of the sub-organizations used by the Church.

The Undying Knights of Leviathan

This Order is composed exclusively of Sheol, Undead beings whose body and souls have been utterly corrupted by Leviathan. Several famous Nazi soldiers and agents of World War II have been revived and turned into Undead monsters. The chief agent of the Undying Knights is the re-animated corpse of Otto Skorzeny, the premier SS troubleshooter of the Nazi regime. All the members of the order are Sheol Undead (see p. 00). They operate in small teams or single agents, and answer only to the Grand Master of the Order, who in turn answers only to the Dark Apostle. Many are sent to the Free World to oversee espionage, sabotage and terrorism missions. The rest are dedicated to counter-insurgency in the Conquered Territories, conducting their own operations, independent from both the AOR and the Soul Police. This has caused members of both organizations to acquire a dislike for the "zombie knights," and even stirred some destructive infighting.

The Brotherhood of Purity of Purpose

Commonly known as the Brotherhood, the Monks of Leviathan, or simply, the "dark monks," this Order is the ecclesiastical arm of the Soul Police. Its members help oversee the process of conversion and the elimination of the Infidel population. The Monks work side by side with the Soul Police. All of the are Adepts of diverse power, and Masters are at least Adepts of the Fourth Circle. They are also master torturers and interrogators.



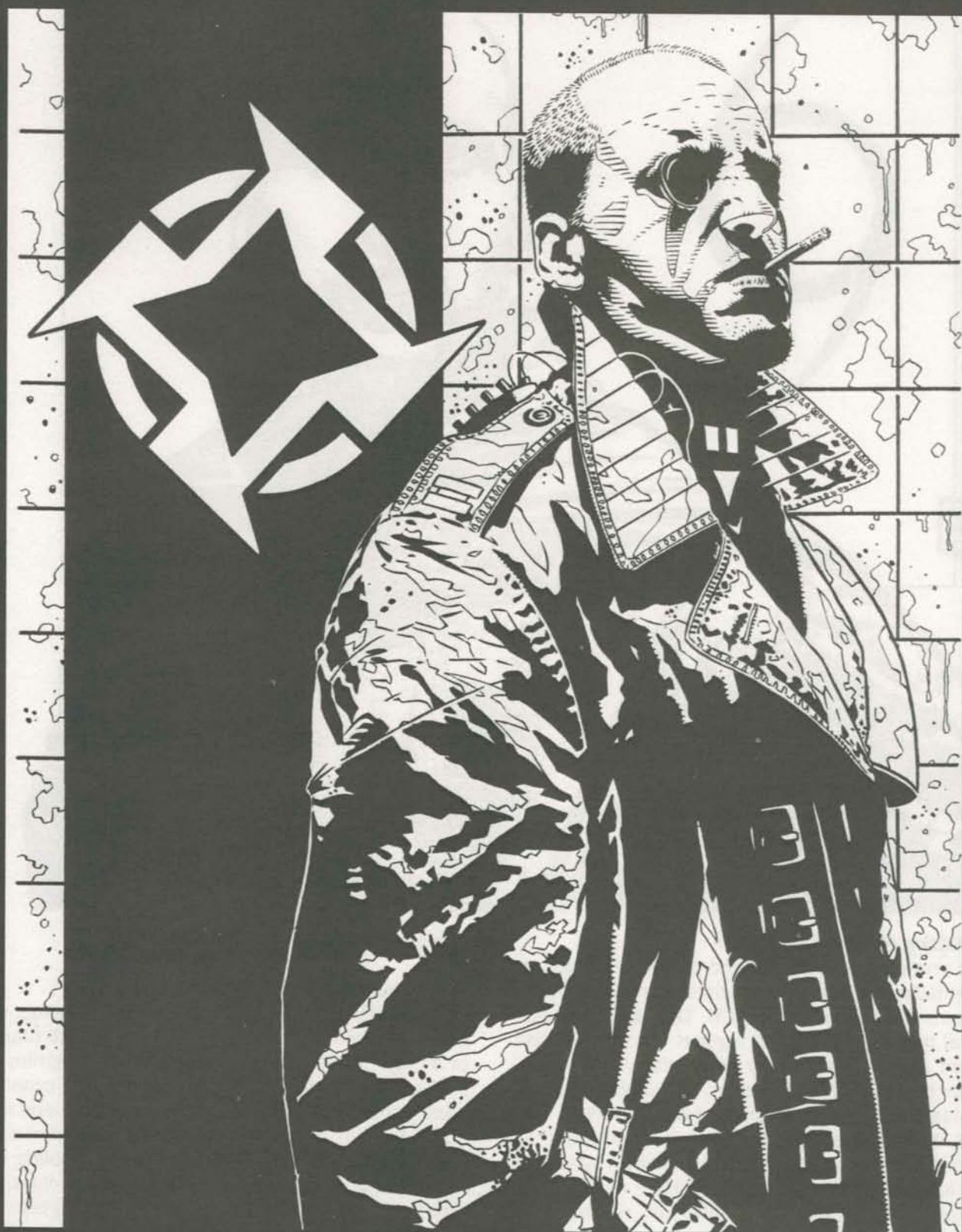
The Helping Hands of Leviathan

Also known as the Hands (and by their enemies, as the Tentacles), this order comprises most of the Army Chaplains who serve in the AOR. The Hands provide magical healing and arcane support. About one third of them are Adepts, usually of relatively low levels. Another third are Gifted Believers, dominated by Seers and Magicians, and the rest are human doctors and nurses, all Believers, all inducted to the priesthood as well as trained in medicine. The Helping Hands are under local military command, and have relatively little influence. Its members are universally respected by the army, and even liked for their healing services. The vehicles of the Helping Hands are white, with a red Circle of Leviathan painted on the sides. The white paint and the red symbol has rarely stopped freedom

fighters from firing on their vehicles.

The Mendicant Knights of Leviathan

This Order is made up of supernatural beings who have accepted Leviathan as their master. All manner of beings, from Vampyres to renegade Seraphim can be found in this Order. The superiors of the order are mostly Sheol or Adepts, with a few powerful and loyal others thrown in. The Mendicants are often sent out to support Soul Police and AOR operations dealing with supernatural enemies. The Order is relatively small, however, and their casualties are always higher than normal - the former brethren often make all-out efforts to destroy the traitors.



The Soul Police

The security army of the Cult of Leviathan is the Soul Police. They hunt down dissidents and Infidels, and in general oversee the submission of the conquered peoples. They are one part Inquisition, one part KGB and one part Gestapo. Numbering over five million agents worldwide, the Soul Police has several armored divisions of their own, which they use independently of the AOR. Its agents are superbly trained and equipped, and a majority of them are Believers.

Organization

The Soul Police is organized along paramilitary and political lines. The basic ranks include trooper, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, and colonel. Colonels are in control of a district. Over the Colonel stands a Director, who is in charge of an entire dioceses, and is answerable only to the local Archbishop.

The SP is divided into four branches. Each branch has its own specific duties and missions. In each district, a captain (or, in the smaller ones, a lieutenant) is in charge of each branch.

The **Criminal Branch** is in charge of investigating secular violations of the law; they perform all the jobs of a normal police department. Ironically enough, is the least prestigious branch of the service, and is largely staffed by former police officers of the Conquered Territories, and has the largest proportion of non-Believers in its rank. Control over any investigation launched by the Criminal Branch can be taken over by any of the other branches whenever any information it uncovers appears to involve "important" affairs; namely, anything pertaining directly to the conversion and pacification of the conquered peoples, the suppression of rebellious elements, or the presence of supernatural beings.

Many of the members of the Criminal Branch are people trying to do their jobs in an impossible situation. Crimes continue to be committed, but when the perpetrator is a Believer and the victim is a Gentile or Infidel, no charges will be filed unless the victim has a powerful Believer intervene in his behalf. The department has minimal resources for investigating most crimes, unless the victim is a Believer with enough connections to get justice done. Most other investiga-

tions are handled in a direct and often brutal fashion, with likely suspects being hauled and interrogated, and with the most likely suspect being sent to prison after a perfunctory trial. Many crimes go unreported because people have no trust whatsoever in the police.

The **Ecclesiastic Branch** is staffed only by Believers; it is in charge of assisting the Brotherhood (see above) in converting the Gentiles and rooting out the Infidels. Its mission has a lot more to do with security than with religion, however, as the Branch is also dedicated to discovering any partisan or guerrilla movements in the Conquered Territories. This department is usually the largest in most districts, and the most prestigious.

Interrogation of suspected heretics or "terrorists" almost always involves torture, drugs, or supernatural means. A significant percentage of the Believer members are Gifted and have a number of paranormal powers, including magic and the Second Sight; many more are Adepts, with the unique abilities granted by the Mark of Leviathan (see below).

The **Special Branch** is the equivalent of the SWAT units in the US, except that it is much larger, with the most personnel after the Ecclesiastic Branch. It has its own helicopters, armored vehicles and even several armored divisions (although largely equipped with captured French tanks in Europe, and similar lower-quality vehicles in the other areas of the world). Its soldiers wear dark body armor and heavy military weapons. Their job is counterinsurgency and general terror. They are called whenever the enemy uses enough weapons or raw power to be a threat.

The Auxiliary Service: These are native forces recruited to assist the Soul police in their peacekeeping activities. The Auxiliary Service wears brown uniforms and do things like direct traffic or drive trucks and other vehicles. They normally do not carry weapons, but are trained in their use, and when the Soul Police needs extra manpower they assign them light weapons, which are later returned. Most of the members of the Service are not Believers; they are evenly divided between willing accomplices of the Church and hopeful rebels trying to infiltrate the enemy (most of the later are quickly discovered and killed).



The Army of Revelations

The militant arm of the Church of Revelations is the AOR. With over six million soldiers, it is the largest army in the world, and the most powerful. The fact that the AOR is committed to no less than five theaters of operations saved the US from being overrun, but every day, more troops and materiel are being shipped from Europe and North Africa to the Americas, accepting the heavy losses inflicted by US submarines and aircraft. Every year, the Army of Revelations grows stronger, as it digests the resources and population of the Conquered Territories, and recruits more converts into its ranks.

The AOR is unique in several respects, even not taking into account the supernatural elements in it. First of all, it is a truly multinational force, with soldiers from dozens of countries fighting together. It has a unified command, with a minimum of inter-service rivalries to get in the way of conquest. And it is highly motivated, staffed largely by fanatics with military training.

Organization

The AOR has two branches, the Navy of Retribution and the Army of Revelations. There is no air force; both the Navy and the Army have air wings, which are subordinate to those services. Navy and Army organizations follow NATO standards. The army consist largely of armor or mechanized infantry divisions with organic artillery and other support units. The AOR has a very large Army Chaplain contingent, with a squad of Chaplains assigned to each company.

Unlike previous wars' Chaplains, these units are made up of a mixture of doctors, psychics and sorceress with both healing and offensive capabilities. The Shaitan (see p. 00) are organized into regiments, and kept segregated from the rest of the army. Some professional soldiers find the monsters to be both repulsive and of little use except as cannon fodder and for mop-up operations, but most accept their presence as yet another gift from Leviathan.

The Army has no sexual bias, and female soldiers are assigned to front-line units routinely; about



forty percent of the army personnel is made up of females, with a higher ratio in support units and a lower one in combat ones.

Training

Training levels vary widely. In the years preceding the uprising, hundreds of thousands of Believers underwent intensive secret training. Vehicle crews were trained with computer simulators so precise that they performed almost flawlessly when equipped with the real thing. Additionally, many Believers were recruited from the ranks of established national armies, especially the German, French, Italian and Polish armies. As it swept through Eastern Europe, many other recruits with some military training followed.

The manpower needs of the Army continued to grow as more nations fell, however. For the most part, most front-line units were formed of hard-core Believers with extensive training and former soldiers. New volunteers were kept in reserve units that trained even as they prepared to relieve older units. The quality of these replacements is lower overall, which accounts for some of the reversals in Russia.

In South America, the hard core of the Army was largely Argentinean, all Believers who underwent the same training as their German counterparts. Vietnamese and Turkish believers also were superbly trained. The Believers in the countries these nations conquered were not as good as the ones in Europe. All these nations had a smaller human pool from which to draw forces, and as casualties mounted, even after they used Arisen to make up for their losses (see below), the quality of replacements fell drastically. That had something to do with the failure of the AOR to move North into the US

Logistics

Another problem the AOR has had lies in its supply lines. A six million men army is a huge monster that needs to be fed and maintained. The First Army has all the resources of Europe to its disposal, but neither the Asiatic nor the South American one have enough of an industrial base to maintain its operations. Shipping supplies is possible but dangerous, as the US has the edge on the seas, even after the loss of several aircraft carriers.

Technology

The AOR has cutting-edge technology at its disposal. The Church subverted many members of the Combine (see p. 00), who had access to the most advanced weapon prototypes of the world. The COR

then converted some of the top weapon designers of the world, many of whom were only too happy to meet with an employer that appreciated their talents and, even better, had the resources to develop the most ambitious projects. As a result, when the war started, the AOR had the best aircraft and tanks in the world.

Supernatural Elements

In purely mundane terms, the Army of Revelations is an impressive war machine. Its weapons, tanks and aircraft only tell part of the story, however. Many Free World generals made the mistake of trying to ignore the supernatural aspect of the AOR; most of them have paid the ultimate price for it. Never in the recorded history of Mankind has a force amassed so much temporal and mystical power together: to deal with one, one must deal with the other. Unfortunately, hundreds of years of materialism have made most people blind to the possibility that magic is real, that other worlds can be contacted, and that beings from Beyond can step into our world. This blindness persists even in the face of incontrovertible proof, and euphemisms are used to block out the facts.

First of all, the Church provides several units of supernaturally-powered people for the Army. The Army Chaplains, staffed by the Helping Hands of Leviathan are psychics and magicians of some skill. More important are the Adepts of Leviathan, Believers who establish a powerful link with the Mad God and who have a host of strange powers (the Adepts are described on page 229). The Adepts are often used to good effect against the Seraphim and other supernatural enemies of the AOR.

The AOR also has at its disposals hordes of Shaitan, alien beings who come from the same dimension as Leviathan and who simply take over and mutate simple life forms (from insects to reptiles) to exist on Earth. Their very presence causes a Taint in reality (see below), and they are fierce creatures, some as large as elephants, all incredible strong and dangerous. Against a modern military, however, the usefulness of the Shaitan is limited. The creatures, while tougher than human, are not bulletproof, and even the largest of them can be easily destroyed by even personal anti-tank weapons, let alone the main guns of tanks or concentrated artillery. They are often used as a first wave of attack to tire out and demoralize enemies. In that role they are very well suited, because they are fearless, their appearance often terrifies humans, and their deaths do not demoralize the AOR human units (who don't much like them in the first place). They are also very effective against disorganized or poorly equipped human armies, and they have been a great asset in Asia and South America.

Finally, two types of Undead serve with the AOR. The Sheol are former humans whose souls are Tainted by Leviathan. The Arisen are mindless zombies temporarily raised by the Adepts to serve as cannon fodder.

Life In the Army

The morale of the army is by and large very high. The troops are all volunteers, and a high percentage of them are Believers (see below). They are well-treated, and indoctrinated from early on into thinking of themselves as an elite, exceptional unit. The soldiers are highly paid, and given the utmost respect.

In addition to material needs, the Church sees to it that soldiers' baser desires are also satisfied. Following the WWII Japanese example, the Church creates "Pleasure Battalions" staffed by male and female Infidel prisoners. Every desire, no matter how corrupt or deviant, can be satisfied there; the ranks of the Pleasure Battalions are rapidly depleted through murder or suicide - and they are just as quickly replenished. Soldiers are awarded "Performance Chits," which are traded for services in the Pleasure Battalions. These chits are awarded for exemplary service and acts of piety (such as attending several Church services every week).

Some soldiers find the presence of Shaitan to be disturbing, but this is slowly changing. More and more soldiers are also exhibiting the physical effects of the Taint, so they are themselves becoming more inhuman.

All company-level or higher-ranked officers must be Believers and bear the Mark of Leviathan. In the lower ranks, the proportion of Believers to Gentiles varies from unit to unit, but it is never less than thirty percent, and in elite units it is almost always one hundred percent. Most non-commissioned officers (about nine-tenths) are also Believers. Additionally, most soldiers convert after their first or second year of enlistment. Attendance to Church services is not officially mandatory, but those who attend are rewarded with extra leaves and other minor privileges, and those who make it a point not to attend them are quietly singled out and isolated.

The Taint

Leviathan is a being from beyond our reality. It is so alien that its mere existence on our world would cause it to break down and decay. Although it has yet to manifest in our universe, its influence has already begun the process of transformation and destruction. Occultists refer to this as Dissolution, or Taint. In a way, the Taint is the opposite of Essence, an energy

that twists life and reality, perverts them, and ultimately destroys them.

Effects of the Taint

The first victims of the Taint are those who worship Leviathan. In a way, the effect is not unlike the one radiation has on people. The longer the Believers expose themselves to the touch of Leviathan, the greater the risk of becoming Tainted. One of the first signs of this is the Mark of Leviathan (see below), but others soon follow it.

Sooner or later, the victims start to mutate and change. Their skin starts to become rougher, or to develop strange growths. Some people start growing hair in unusual places, while others lose it altogether. Others start developing insectoid or mollusk traits. Many start growing tentacles on their bodies, limbs or face.

In some cases, the Taint manifests not through the Believer's body, but through effects in the world around him. Some Believers can cause plants to wither in their presence, kill small animals with a touch, and similar unpleasant effects. These effects get worse with time. Some of the older members of the Church no longer resemble anything human.

The Adepts of Leviathan are those humans who have learned to use the Taint as a power, manipulating it like normal Gifted humans use Essence. Those who wield the Taint are utterly corrupted by it, and their minds and bodies become increasingly alien and more monstrous. To see a high-level Adept is to see Earth's future if Leviathan's minions win the day.

The Mark Of Leviathan

The Mark of Leviathan appears on all the True Believers. It is a circle with two curved spikes, black or dark red in color, that seems to be a tattoo on the forehead or hand of the Believer. It is not a normal tattoo however, although, before the War, some youths started imitating the Mark with tattoos of their own (the fad vanished soon after, and a lot of people underwent the expensive and painful process of having the tattoos removed or covered; those who didn't often died in impromptu lynchings). The true Mark has a psychic as well as physical presence; it acts as a conduit between Leviathan's reality and our own, and can also be used as a means of communication between the Believers.

Effects of the Mark



Those who accept Leviathan in their hearts (not those who pray to him out of fear or convenience, although eventually they will also come to be Tainted) will manifest the Mark. From that point on, the process of corruption is nearly irreversible. Those with the Mark are committed to the service of the Church. Some may try to lie to themselves and pretend they still are their own person, but whenever they are called to act, they will find themselves obeying orders, no matter how loathsome.

The Mark also enhances the latent psychic abilities of humans. Those who wear the Mark can recognize each other on sight, and realize if people are wearing fake Marks. Magical illusions and psychic projections used to simulate the Mark can fool the average Believer, however (but not the more powerful Adepts). Also, Adepts can communicate and receive communications from anybody who carries the Mark. In the course of the War, this has allowed commanders to know the exact location of units in the battlefield, and send orders telepathically through an Adept, reducing the risk of an intercept.

A side effect of the Taint is that those who bear the Mark become more resistant to magical or psychic probes than normal people. All Believers have a +2 bonus to resist unwanted telepathic or magical scanning; this bonus resists all powers, Invocations and other supernatural means of mind-reading, locating or detecting people.

When operating covertly, Believers can, through an effort of will, hide the Mark from the eyes of outsiders. This costs them 2 Essence points, which cannot be regained until the Mark becomes visible once again. Certain Invocations (like Insight) and Seer abilities can pierce this disguise, but first must overcome the Believers' natural defenses (described above).

The Mark and Supernatural Creatures

Humans are not the only ones to surrender to Leviathan. A number of supernatural beings have betrayed their brethren and the rest of Reality and have aligned themselves with the Dark Apostle. The Mark will also appear on those beings. Supernatural beings gain all the Believer benefits described above. Some also become Adepts (see below), but in doing so they forsake most Essence-based abilities.

The Adepts

A number of Believers have managed to establish such a strong connection to Leviathan that they are transformed by it. Their very souls start to mutate, becoming things of Taint instead of Essence. The Taint gives them tremendous power, at the cost of most traces of humanity. Adepts are among the most dangerous of the servants of Leviathan.



Becoming an Adept

Nobody knows what prompts a Believer to become an Adept. It might be that these men and women are reincarnations of the Hyperborean Priesthood of Ultima Thule, the Elder Kingdom that tried to summon Leviathan during antediluvian times. Or perhaps these people were latent Gifted who were irrevocably transformed by their connection to Leviathan. However they are chosen, the symptoms are all the same.

The first change occurs at the most fundamental level. Over a period of several weeks, the Adept's soul is transformed, from a construct of Essence to one of Dissolution or Taint, the dark mirror of Essence, also known as anti-Essence or anti-Life. Instead of an Essence Pool, the character now has a Taint Pool. There are few outward signs of the change at first, because the shape of the matrix is the same; only its composition has changed. Most Adepts of the First Circle look pale and sickly, but that is all.

As the Adept grows in power and experience, the changes begin to become apparent. The mutations that occur to all those afflicted by the Taint (see above) appear with much greater frequency as the Adept reaches a new Circle (see below).

Common Adept Powers

All Adepts have a number of special powers, granted to them by the Taint that has invaded their bodies. In addition, their degree of advancement (or Circle) gives them unique pseudo-magical powers.

Taint Pool: Instead of an Essence Pool, the Adepts have a Taint Pool. This anti-Essence works in some ways like the normal life energy, but in others it is the total opposite. Attacks that drain Essence, like Soulfire, also drain Taint, with the different that the process is even more painful for the Tainted ones (being hit by a blast of pure Essence brings about a -2 penalty to all actions for the following turn, due to the agony inflicted). Adepts start with a Taint Pool equal to their basic Essence Pool. Each Circle adds bonuses to this base pool.

Channel Taint This works like Essence Channeling (see p. 00). Adepts have a base Channeling level equal to their Intelligence attribute. They can recover 1 point of Taint per level every minute.

Hard to Kill: All Adepts have the equivalent of 5 levels of the Hard to Kill Quality (see p. 00). This gives them a total of +15 Life Points and +5 to all Survival Tests.

Taint Healing/Wounding: Adepts can heal any wounds by spending Taint points. Each point spent in this manner heals 1 D6(3) Life Points. The Adepts are limited to their Channeling level as to how many Taint points they can spend in one turn (so, an Adept with

a Channel Taint level of 4 could heal up to 1D6 x 4 (12) points per turn). This Healing will also work on other Tainted creatures (like the Shaitan or other Adepts); if used on normal humans, or any other being of Essence, the Taint will actually harm them, causing burning blisters on their skin and flesh (damage is inflicted at the same rate as healing). Taint burns are terribly painful; victims suffer a penalty of -2 to all actions after being wounded by them, for one turn. The Adept must be touching skin to do so, however.

Psychic Communication: Adepts can communicate with any Believer, and receive psychic impressions from them. The range of this communication is 1 mile per level of Willpower of the Adept. Adepts are often used in lieu of radios or other standard means of communication.

Loss of Non-Tainted Powers: The downside of being an Adept is that all abilities that require Essence to work cannot be used any longer. Adepts with psychic powers lose them; magic is available to them only after they reach the Second Circle (see below), and other abilities, like Seraphim Theophanies or Maleficia, no longer work for them. That is why most renegade Seraphim remain Believers, who still can use their Essence powers.

Adept Circles

The ancient Priesthood of Leviathan divided its Adepts into Six Circles, with each successive Circle indicating a greater level of understanding and power. The old method has been resurrected by the Church of Revelations. Although an Adept's Circle does not represent an actual rank in either the clergy or the military, they are a mark of status, and often powerful Adepts have a measure of authority greater than their actual rank would indicate.

As Adepts attain greater circles, they gain all the new powers listed below in addition to the ones they already had.

Adepts of the First Circle

The First Circle is the beginning stage, the time when the Adept is still learning to use his powers. First Circle Adepts are used as assistants or servants of more powerful Adepts, since they are not considered ready to go into battle. First Circle Adepts are also found assisting the Soul Police in relatively peaceful areas, honing their skills in some safety. Most of the time, they are studying magical Invocations, which they cannot use until reaching the Second Circle.

Powers:

Blast of Taint The Adepts can fire a blast of Tainted

energy, which does damage directly to the target's Life Points. The blast inflicts 1 D4(2) points of damage per Taint point spent on it, and has the range of a rifle (see p. 76). Aiming the blast uses the character's Dexterity and Perception.

Bonuses: None.

Adepts of the Second Circle

These Adepts are the backbone of the Church. They are Tainted sorcerers who undergo a measure of magical training during their initiation, and who are sent out to support the Army and Soul Police in a number of operations. They are the most likely sorcerous foe to be encountered on the battlefield.

Powers:

Magical Knowledge: All Adepts of the Second Circle can use magic, and know the following Invocations: Elemental Fire, Farsight and Shielding, all at a minimum level of 2, with at least one Invocation at level 3. This magic is used normally, except that it uses Taint instead of Essence.

Taint Signs: About 10% of all Adepts of this level have a Taint mark of some sort, usually some sort of facial or skin deformity.

Bonuses: +1 to their Channel Taint level, and +15 Essence points.

Adepts of the Third Circle

Those reaching the Third Circle learn the first secrets of summoning entities from Leviathan's realm. These summoners tend to stay behind the lines, calling down unspeakable monstrosities to be sent against the enemies of Leviathan.

Powers:

Summon Lesser Shaitan: Summoning one Lesser Shaitan costs 5 Taint points and takes ten minutes. 1 Taint point is not regained normally until the Shaitan is destroyed or dismissed. This limits how many monster the summoner can call forth at any given time.

Magical Knowledge: Adepts of the Third Circle usually learn one more Invocation at level 2 or higher. The most commonly used ones are Lesser Illusion, Levitation or Warding.

Taint Signs: 20% of these Adepts have a minor Taint mark as above; 5% have a more noticeable deformity, often a vestigial, useless limb, like a tail or tentacle.

Bonuses: +15 Essence points (cumulative with previous bonuses).

Adepts of the Fourth

Circle

The Fourth Circle indicates a major turning point in the Adept's life. Their bodies undergo a major transformation, which may or may not have visible signs, but which greatly enhance their physical capabilities. Fourth Circle Adepts are no longer human; their strength and vitality are the match of most supernatural beings. That, coupled with their magical abilities, makes these Adepts the ideal agents and enforcers of the Church. Whenever a Fourth Circle Adept shows up, it is a clear sign that the Powers that Be are greatly concerned with the situation.

Powers:

Empower Weapons: The Adept can imbue Taint into bullets and other weapons, at the cost of 1 Taint Point per weapon (must be a bullet, blade or missile), these weapons will kill Angels and similar supernatural beings.

Taint Signs: 40% of the Fourth Circle Adepts have a minor Taint mark; another 20% have a noticeable deformity, and some 5% no longer look human, but have a face full of tentacles, or have six eyes, or some other hideous disfigurement. The rest look human, although this appearance is but a facade.

Bonuses: Add +3 to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution. Then double their Life and Taint pools (taking into account both the new attributes and the previous bonuses).

Adepts of the Fifth Circle

These Adepts are granted the ability to raise the recently dead as nearly mindless cannon fodder. These Arisen remember some of their basic training, and can fight reasonably well for a few weeks, until decomposition sets in and they once again return to the dead.

Powers:

Raise the Dead: The Adept can create up to 5 Arisen per Willpower level, provided he has enough corpses, at the cost of 2 Taint points per Arisen.

Magical Knowledge: These Adepts know an additional 4-6 Invocations, at levels 3-5, including some Greater Invocations, including Essence (actually Taint) Mastery.

Signs of Taint The proportion of visibly Tainted Adepts goes nearly doubles. 50% of all Adepts have minor marks, 40% have a noticeable deformity, and 10% are totally inhuman. No Fifth Circle Adept can pass off as a normal human.

Bonuses: +15 to Taint, +1 to Taint Channeling level.

Adepts of the Sixth

Circle

Only a few Sixth Circle Adepts exist so far. Their powers are extreme, and for the most part they are Archbishops, Cardinals, or Order Masters and Grand Masters.

Powers:

Signs of Taint 50% of all Adepts are no longer even vaguely human. The rest all have major deformities.

Bonuses: Double both the character's Life and Taint points once again. +1 to Taint Channeling level.

Other Adepts

Some of the Church Leaders are believed to be of the Seventh of Greater Circles. The Dark Imam, the Lady of Jade and El General (see p. 00) are all believed to be Eight or Ninth Circle Adepts, although they look mostly human. What powers these beings wield, and how they can hide their Taint, remains a mystery.

The Dark Apostle

Johann Goering, the Dark Apostle is an enigmatic figure. On telecasts, he looks like a normal human being, a charismatic one at that. There is no sign of supernatural power or other qualities. But there is video tape of the riots of 2009, showing Johann Goering as he walked towards police barricades, showing him being shot dozens, hundreds of times, showing his bloodied body reaching the police officers and tearing them apart with his bare hands. The Seraphim and the Old Gods have tried to destroy him, and have failed. So have multiple teams of assassins, freedom fighters, and even some high-level Adepts who tried to take over the Church. None of these would-be killers survived.

Except when making public appearances, the Dark Apostle is almost never seen anywhere. Sometimes, he will appear with no warning near the front lines of Asia, the Middle East and America, sometimes accompanied by a small bodyguard of Adepts and Shaitan, more often completely alone. How he can travel from place to place undetected and quickly remains a mystery. Those surprise visits have terrified and awed the soldiers of the AOR and only augmented the legend around the man.

Occultists are not sure of exactly what or who Goering is. An orphan, raised first by a normal family and then by the Cult of Leviathan, he is clearly more than human - although some think that he is an evolved human who has transcended the limits of the Flesh... and who is now Leviathan's servant.

Creatures of



Armageddon

Described below are some of the people and creatures that serve Leviathan, and their basic attributes and common abilities.

Typical Soldier of the Army of Revelations

This is a common line soldier, who can also be used as a Soul Police SWAT trooper. About 30% of all soldiers are Believers, with the abilities listed on p. 00. The rest are normal humans, but highly motivated and loyal soldiers.

Str 3 Life Points 30 Essence 14
Dex 3 Endurance Points 26
Con 2 Qualities/Drawbacks: Zealot
Int 2 Skills: Assault Rifle 3, Dodge 2,
Per 2 Spear(Bayonet) 1, Knife 2,
Will 2 Brawl 2

Special Powers: Psychic recognition, psychic connection, +2 to resist mental probes (Believers Only).

Equipment: G-22 Assault Rifle with Grenade Launcher, L-11 Combat Armor, Knife-bayonet, HUD Helmet Laser Sight, three hand grenades.

Typical Soul Police Agent

These are the uniformed agents. Plainclothes detectives will have a +1 to their Interrogation skills. About 60% of all agents are Believers.

Str 3 Life Points 34 Essence 17
Dex 3 Endurance Points 26
Con 3 Qualities/Drawbacks: Cruel, Zealot
Int 2 Situational Awareness.
Per 3 Skills:, Pistol 3, Dodge 2, SMG 3,
Will 3 Interrogation 2, Intimidation 2,
 Martial Arts(Karate) 2, Knife 2.

Special Powers: Psychic recognition, psychic connection, +2 to resist mental probes (Believers Only).

Equipment: P-61 machinepistol, Kevlar Vest (sewn into uniform), badge, handcuffs, two stun grenades, dagger, radio.

The Sheol — Leviathan's Undead



The Sheol are humans who were contacted by Leviathan after their deaths. These restless spirits agreed to serve the Mad God, and returned to their bodies as Tainted Undead. The Sheol look like vaguely mummified creatures. They are extremely hard to kill, and have a number of Taint powers. Sheol are used as agents and enforcers of the Church.

Sheol Powers

Attributes: The Sheol have the following bonuses: +3 to Strength and +3 to Constitution. They usually have 20 points for attributes, 10 points in Qualities (and up to 10 in Drawbacks), and 20 points in Skills (older and more powerful Sheol can be created with more points, or as the Chronicler sees fit). Their Life Points are double the normal amount.

Resistant to Damage: The Undead bodies of the Sheol can withstand a great deal of damage with no ill effects. This is reflected in their large Life Point Pool, and on an inherent Armor Value of $1D4 \times 3$ (6). The Sheol can also heal damage by using Taint points, regaining 2 Life Points per Taint point spent. Furthermore, the only way to kill a Sheol is to reduce both his Life Points and Taint Pool to -30.

Taint Manipulation: The Sheol can use as many Taint points as it needs to, and does not need Taint Channeling to do so. They recover Taint at the rate of 1 point per turn (12 points per minute). The character has a Taint pool equal to the sum of his attributes plus 25 extra points.

Create Shadows: By using Taint to dim the lights in an area, the Sheol can create a sphere of darkness, useful to hide or attack in. The area affected is 1 square yard per Taint point spent. Anybody fighting in or into the area is at -3 to most combat Tasks, except the Sheol, who is immune to the darkness it creates. The darkness lasts for 1 minute, or until dispelled by the Sheol.

Psychic Communications: The Sheol can converse telepathically with any Adept. The range of this connection is 10 miles per Willpower level of both the Sheol and the Adept.



prison. Life after death offered redemption, but when contacted by Leviathan the chance to pay back the system that had betrayed him was too good to pass up. He rose up, and works covertly in the US, overseeing a network of spies and saboteurs.

Str 6 Life Points 124 Taint Points 50

Dex 4 Endurance Points N/A

Con 7 Qualities/Drawbacks: Cruel, Acute

Int 3 Hearing, Fast Reactins, Resources+3.

Per 3 Skills: Pistol 4, Brawl 4, Stealth 3,

Will 2 Interrogation 3, Baton 2, Shotgun 2, Streetwise 4.

Powers: All Sheol powers.

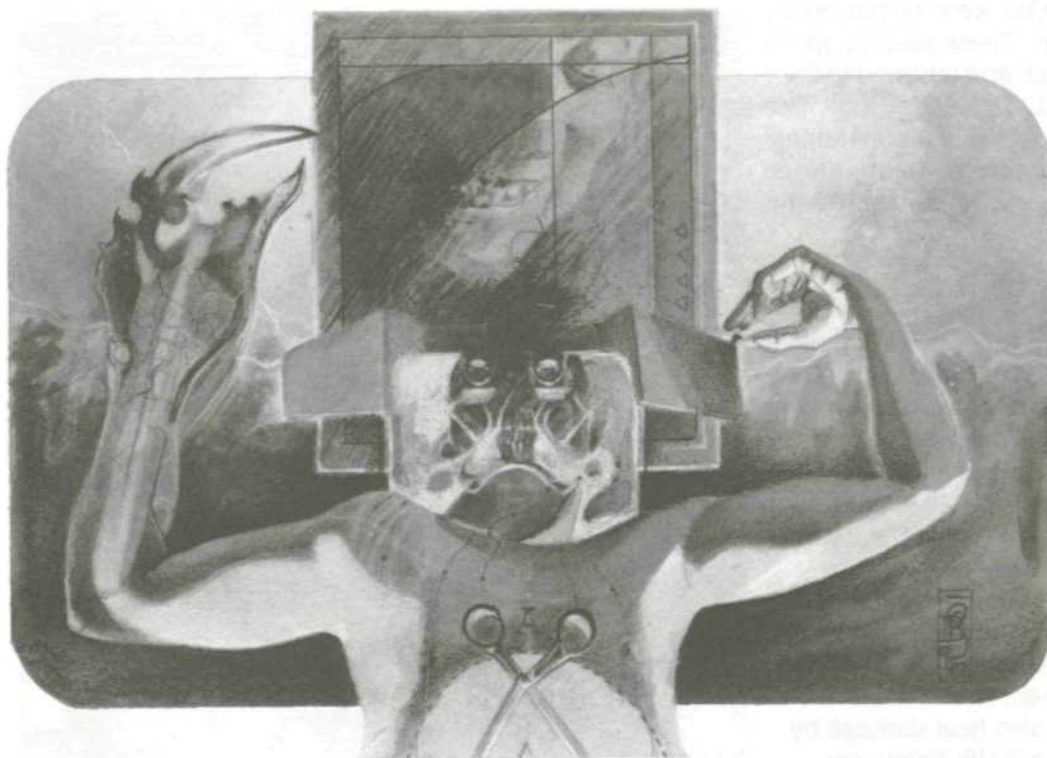
Equipment: Automatic shotgun, 9mm pistol, as well as a small arsenal of weapons and vehicles stashed in several Mid-western cities in the US He also has over a dozen agents, mostly human Believers, spread over those cities.

Dan Gordon — Sheol Spy

Dan Gordon was a good policeman, until witnessing one crime too many unhinged him. One night, Dan walked into a holding area and emptied his service pistol into the group of prisoners there, killing four and injuring seven. He was shocked when the system turned against him and, for a change, actually convicted him in record time. The bitterness and hatred was too much for him, and Dan committed suicide in

The Arisen Hordes

These Undead creatures can be raised by the more powerful Adepts. The Arisen are nearly mindless creatures who follow orders blindly, half-remembering their training. They are tough creatures, but their lack of imagination or initiative makes them relatively easy foes to defeat. Some AOR units that suffered catastrophic casualties have been turned into Arisen commands, and sent ahead of other units to "soften up" the opposition.



The Aisen will follow the orders of any Believer they come into contact with.

Aisen Powers

Undead: The Aisen have double the normal Life Points they had when alive, but once they are reduced to 0, they collapse and die. Until that happens, they continue to fight on, even after losing limbs or other body parts. They had the same skills they had in life, but at a -1 penalty. They can wield the weapons and equipment they were trained with, or attack with their bare hands.

Typical Aisen

Str 3 Life Points 60 Essence 0

Dex 3 Endurance Points N/A

Con 2 Qualities/Drawbacks: Mindless

Int 2 Skills: Assault Rifle 2, Dodge 1,

Per 2 Spear(Bayonet) 0, Knife 1,

Will 2 Brawl 1

Special Powers: Undead.

Equipment: G-22 Assault Rifle with Grenade Launcher. No body armor or other equipment.

Grotesquerie

The Shaitan are not a race of creatures; they are twisted Taint spirits, summoned to our plane of existence, and made to inhabit the nearest lesser life form they encounter. Sometimes this means small animals and insects, but lacking that, they take over fungi and bacteria in the air. In all cases, the animal is consumed and transformed into a mutated, gigantic monsters. Most Shaitan shapes are vaguely humanoid, but many are nothing more than tentacled horrors and sheer mockeries of human life. Their size varies from roughly-human size to crawling or flying horrors the size of houses. They have honed predatory instincts, and fast reflexes, making them ideal hunters and hand to hand fighters.

Against modern weapons, they fare less well, however. Most of the creatures are too mindless to use normal weapons, and so must be able to reach their targets with their hands or claws or tentacles. The largest creatures are highly resistant to small arms fire, but even they will be destroyed by heavy weapons. Their hideous appearance, and grotesque sounds they make, are always certain to lower the morale of their enemies, however. Shaitan were used extensively in the South American and Asian theaters, less so in Europe. They did fine in the Americas until they faced the US Army, where they were slaughtered by the

The Shaitan — The

hundreds of thousands. The Shaitan have the advantage that they can be summoned again and again, making them cheap, disposable troops. And when they manage to break through a defensive line, the slaughter they inflict is hideous. Casualties of human units fighting the Shaitan depend on whether or not the Shaitan manage to reach the defenders. If the defending unit stands its ground, its casualties are relatively light. If the Shaitan break through, casualties can be as high as 80%, most of them fatalities.

Shaitan Powers

For all their wide variety of forms and shapes, the Shaitan have a number of common abilities.

Hideous Appearance: The monstrous shapes of the Shaitans require a Fear Test of -2 (see p. 00) from unprepared or inexperienced soldiers. After a few encounters with the Freaks, as they are commonly called, most soldiers learn to deal with them.

Resistant to Damage: The alien nature of the Shaitan makes their flesh less easy to damage. Special damage bonuses, like those that apply to slashing weapons or hollow point bullets, do not apply against the Shaitan. Also, the Shaitan have rarely less than 60 Life Points, and many have 100 Life Points or more. To figure Life Points, add their Strength and Constitution, multiply the result by 5, and add either 20 (for Lesser Shaitan) or 50 (for Greater Shaitan).

If the creatures are reduced to -30 Life Points, they collapse and rapidly dissolve into a noxious substance.

Skin Armor Most Shaitan are armored by either hard skin or scales, or layers of blubber flesh. Typical AVs range from 1D4 x 2(4) to 1D10 x 5 (25). The Greater Shaitan will have 1 to 5 more levels of armor.

Taint The Shaitan are beings of Taint, and have a Taint pool, usually equal to two-thirds (rounded up) of their Life pool. If their Taint pool is reduced to -20 points through Essence-based attacks, they also cease to exist.

Attributes: Shaitan attributes range from 4 to 10, for the Lesser forms, and from 6 to 18 for the giant ones.

Natural Weaponry: Many Shaitan have sharp teeth, claws and horns that do Slashing damage (see p. 00).

Flight About one fourth of all Shaitan summoned have wings or other means of flight. They tend to be slow, cumbersome fliers, averaging less than 40 mph in speed, although a few can exceed 100 mph.

Typical Lesser Shaitan

Str 7 Life Points 90 Taint 60
Dex 4 Endurance Points N/A
Con 5 Qualities/Drawbacks: Monster
Int 1 Skills: Attack/Defend 3





Chapter Five: The Dying of The Light

Ryadh, Saudi Arabia
0400 hours

Colonel Dufresne contemplated the motley formation passing his observation post with a sense of wonderment. There they were, Merkava Mk3 Israeli tanks flanked by Russian-made BTR-80 armored personnel carriers bearing the markings of Iran, and Saudi-owned M-1 tanks. A squadron of Comanche attack helicopters floated above the formation.

They had been preceded by a scouting platoon of American XM-8 light tanks, the vehicles that had been airdropped, along with Dufresne and the rest of the division, almost two years ago. Back then, having those putative allies not shoot at each other was the most you could ask for. To see the rag-tag remains of the armies of half a dozen countries actually working together with a minimum of bickering was a miracle of sorts.

"Not a sight I would have expected, or welcomed, ten years ago," said Captain Ari Ben Medi behind Dufresne. The Israeli soldier was the liaison between Dufresne's forces and the other Alliance units.

Dufresne nodded in agreement. It amazes me. I cannot..." he paused for a second. "I don't want to offend, but how can you stand working side by side with the Iranians, with people who wanted you and your people dead?" And not just working together, but doing so with incredible effectiveness, he did not add. After the allies had weeded out radical elements from all sides, they had worked with a harmony that astounded the American, used to news reports of rabid hatred and sectionalism.

"It wasn't easy, my friend," Ben Medi replied. "One third of my command is made up of Palestinians and Lebanese, mostly Muslims. Almost to the man, they have relatives who were killed in uprisings or revolts or battles. The rest, my people, we all can name parents and grandparents, uncles and cousins who were likewise killed. But now we all have fresher memories of what this Kirche der Offenbarung has done to both of our peoples. The last time something like this happened, it was my people who were branded subhumans, infidels. Now, it is all of us, and you and our Muslim brethren now have learned what it is like to be persecuted, to be imprisoned and killed for no other reason than who you are. What this Church has done has managed to remind us that we all are People of the Book, that, after you remove all the

trappings and silly dogma, we all believe in the same God. And, there are, of course, other signs." He cast his glance towards the skies.

As if summoned by Art's words, a trio of winged forms, glowing faintly, trailed past the observation post, following the Comanche helicopters and the armored formations towards the battle front, where Jews, Muslims and Christians were locked in battle against the Army of Revelations. Even in the distance, the figures were clearly human-shaped, except for the wings. Each bore a flaming sword, an anachronism that would have made Dufresne laugh if he hadn't seen the footage of those blades slicing the wings off jet aircraft, or if he hadn't examined the burnt-out shells of tanks which had been carved open like so many sardine cans.

Dufresne had never been much of a religious man. Raised a Catholic, he had all but jettisoned his parents' beliefs. Very few could remain skeptical in the face of sights such as this, however. He crossed himself. Ari murmured a prayer.

Overhead, the angels continued to follow the human army towards the sound of the guns.

The world of **Armageddon** is a dangerous, chaotic place. Even the so-called Free World is far from being an Utopia. This chapter gives a general overview of the situation, events and organizations of the war-torn Twenty-first Century.

The World of the Millennium

The Millennium was a time of a New Age, like many people had claimed. Unfortunately, it was not the happy times of spiritual awakening the New Age movement had expected. Instead, it was a time of shocking discoveries and unchecked fear and prejudice, a time in which Humankind showed some of its potential, and its terrible shortcomings. Even before the Reckoning took place, it was clear that the new era would not be without its upheaval.

The Magic Generation

The Wise Crafts, the arts of magic and second sight, had long been considered ill-conceived fantasies, disapproved by Science and unsuited for the age of reason. Despite the vocal minority that claimed otherwise, people, other than consulting the occasional horoscope, had little interest or belief in the supernatural. Even religion, in many cultures the only link between humans and the spirit world, had long fallen out of fashion among many sectors of society, or become a series of empty rituals with no true meaning.

Towards the end of the century, a series of events started to shake this indifference. The number of unexplained events increased steadily with every passing year. A young girl burned a house in Kentucky, and the authorities were at a loss to explain how she had done it. In Seattle, serial killer was brought at bay by police and FBI, and the man managed to walk through a hail of bullets and escape, killing three law-enforcement agents in the process. In Washington, a psychic publicly predicted the murder of a prominent Senator, six months before the event. In New Orleans, a bizarre cult left over a dozen corpses behind, all drained of blood. And so on.

At first, the events were glossed over, or passed off as freak events, or became conversation topics for a week and were forgotten the next. They started becoming too numerous to be easily dismissed, however. A deranged college student summoned a creature of fire that burned down a parking lot and killed two people. A witness made a camcorder record of the event, which the networks showed over and over. A year later, a man claiming to be a true sorcerer created a tornado in a television studio; this event was broadcast live. The New Orleans murders were solved. As the perpetrators were being moved out of a holding facility, they burst into flames when exposed to sunlight.

By 2001, some headlines in the *New York Times* seemed more appropriate for the *National Enquirer*. On 2003, a Gallup Poll cited that 36% of all respondents listed Magic as one of their greatest fears and concerns. The same year, a furious mob burned down the corporate headquarters of the Psychic Pals Network, killing six people, all of them clerical workers or (non-psychic) telephone operators. The genie, so to speak, was out of the bottle.

Many of these incidents involved teenagers and young adults who had developed paranormal abilities. After statistics showing that most of these people had been born between the years 1980 and 2000, people started talking about a "Magic Generation." Some people reacted with awe; many tried to find teachers, or started looking for arcane tomes to learn the secrets of

magic. Others became fearful and lashed out against suspected "witches." Many Pagans were among the first victims of this new wave of hate crimes. The persecution did no end with them, however; attacks on Jews, Muslims and other religious minorities in America and Europe escalated rapidly between the years 1999 and 2004.

Behind the scenes, the military and intelligence agencies of many countries understood the potential of this Magic Generation. At that time, a number of secret societies representing those who had kept the old secrets alive stepped in and quietly offered aid and support, in return for certain considerations. Hands were shaken in the offices of the most powerful men in the U.S. and England, and the Covenants of Magic who had been hiding their existence for centuries became part of the system.

For the U.S., the religious tension came on top of a simmering state of racial conflict and economic poverty. All the country needed was a spark to be ignited.

The Matthews Riots and the Safety Ordinances

On 2004, copies of the same video tape arrived to the offices of *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone Magazine*, *ABC News* and *CNN*. A subsequent investigation revealed that the tapes were sent by former police officer Cynthia Muldoon. Muldoon's body was found in her home a day later; she and her husband had been killed execution style.

The tapes all contained the same 63-minute session. It documented a meeting of the White Justice Society, a national network of rogue police officers. During the meeting, a man later identified as police Captain Albert Matthews of the NYPD casually spoke about the murders of nine black men he had carried out for the WJS. Other murders were also alluded to in the tape; it was clear that the WJS had organized over a dozen death squads in several parts of the country in recent years.

ABC News aired the video tape the day it was received, on a special report following the 6 o'clock news, Eastern Time. CNN did the same three hours later.

By midnight, Eastern Time, cities were burning.

Racial and economical tension in the U.S. was at an all-time high. Cuts in social services and the elimination of Affirmative Action had gradually reduced the standard of living of the inner city dwellers, most of them minorities, while at the same time restricting their opportunities to escape their economic plight. The Matthews tapes were the last straw. The U.S. faced the worst series of riots in its history. Actual casualty figures were never reported, but it is believed that over three thousand people were killed in riots that raged over a dozen cities. The cities worst affected included Los

Angeles, Chicago and New York; for a number of hours, the rioters sealed off Manhattan from the rest of the country before National Guard units were able to retake all the major bridges. In Los Angeles, mobs attacked commuters on their way home, and burned dozens of people in their cars. The National Guard later admitted to shooting no less than two hundred people; some critics claimed the number was almost twice as high.

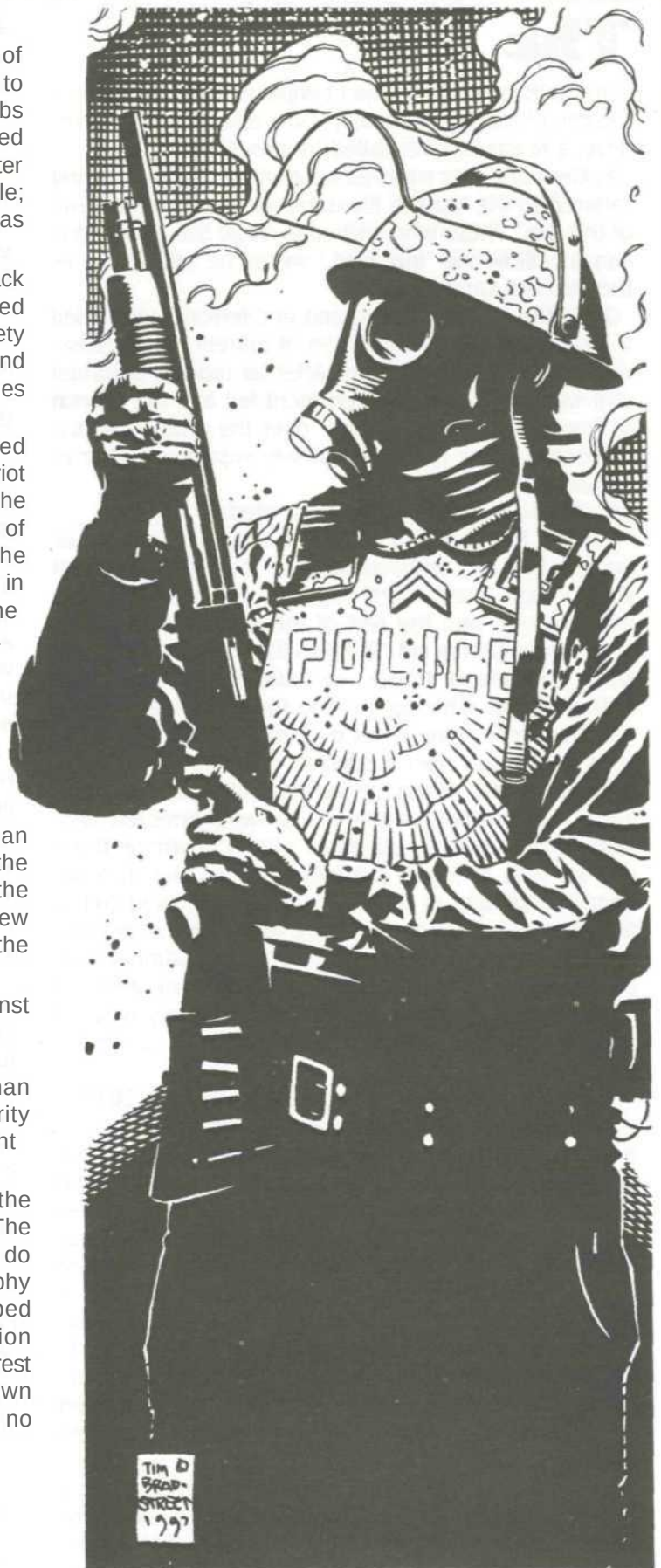
By the end of the week, rioters had been forced back into the worst neighborhoods, and the area cordoned off. Los Angeles was the first to pass a Safety Ordinance, sealing off entire sections of the city, and restricting travel to and from the area. The other cities soon followed suit.

The Safety Ordinances had first been proposed towards the turn of the century by the New Patriot Party, composed by racist right-wing extremists. The Ordinances proposed that the most dangerous areas of the inner cities be isolated for "the protection of the innocent citizens whose only sin is having business in the city." During the desperate hours following the riots, several city mayors implemented the proposals. They let the rioters run rampant through their neighborhoods, and at the same time built walls around them.

There was an immediate public outcry about the unconstitutionality of the Ordinances. Chicago Mayor Brett Junkins' response was typical. Waving the picture of Alissandra Johnson, a young woman whose battered corpse was hung from a lamppost by the rioters, Junkins said "Tell Alissandra Johnson about the Constitution!" He went on to paraphrase Andrew Jackson. "Let the Supreme Court come and tear the walls down"

While "liberal" groups were loudly outspoken against the Ordinances, a large segment of the electorate remained quiet. The pictures of burning and rampaging rioters seemed to scare many people more than the violation of civil rights. Even middle-class minority members were less sympathetic to the rioters' plight than would have seemed natural.

The legal battles over the constitutionality of the Safety Ordinances would take years to be settled. The Federal government did not step in to interfere - to do so would have **run** counter to the political philosophy of the party in power. Meanwhile, barbed wire topped the freshly-built walls, and some three million Americans in two dozen cities were cut off from the rest of country. By the time the Supreme Court struck down the Ordinances, the country was at war and had no time to deal with the problem.



The War

On 2008, over one million people died in one night in the city of Munich, Germany. Only one man was found alive, a former soldier called Johann Goering.

As Germany was wracked by grief and terror, Goering referred to the Munich Massacre as "a sign of the End of this Era." Those who wished to avoid this destruction should follow the "true God," whom he referred to as the "Ancient Great One."

On 2009, German police and anti-terrorist units tried to arrest Goering on suspicion of murder. In response, riots wracked the entire city. After six months of virtual civil war, the German government fell and the Church of Revelations seized control over the entire country. Goering became the Dark Apostle, Supreme Leader of all Germany.

A year later, in 2011, the war started.

Nobody in a position of power, either in America or Europe, had any understanding of the situation until it was too late. The Munich Massacre was seen as a horrible disaster, and the rest of the world was quick to send humanitarian aid. The riots that ravaged Germany were considered to be an internal problem, and nobody knew what to do. The Russians knew better, but they were being beset by their own internal problems (which are now suspected of being the work of Church Agents). When the German Army started mobilizing and satellite overheads showed armored divisions that seemingly appeared out of nowhere, there was no time to regain the initiative. The French Army began mobilizing in 2010. The British followed suit in the early Spring of the following year. The U.S. government, already busy dealing with the constitutional crisis presented by the Safety Ordinances, paid no attention to the warnings of the U.S. military. In many ways, it was an almost comical re-enactment of a similar tragedy.

The Army of Revelations struck early on April, 2011. It used a fleet of Stealth bombers it had been secretly building. The nearly undetectable aircraft bombed key targets in Europe - and in America. For the first time in U.S. history since a Japanese bomb had shelled the West Coast during World War II, the American mainland was attacked. Aircraft that slipped through the non-existent American air defenses struck at bases and factories in three states, killing hundreds and nearly crippling the U.S. military. Other bombers sank three U.S. carriers. In Europe, the first wave of attacks crippled the NATO air force. As Revelationist Fifth Columnists struck behind the French lines, the Army of Revelations rolled into France.

Five days later, the French used nuclear weapons in a desperate attempt to break the offensive. The weapons failed to detonate. Within a few days, the world leaders

all reached the same chilling conclusion: nuclear deterrence was no longer a factor. The war would go to the side with bigger battalions.

America and England did what they could. Hastily-assembled Expeditionary Forces landed in France, arriving just in time to stave off the Fall of Paris by a few months. The war in Europe lasted two years. American and British forces escaped into Spain or were evacuated near Normandy, in a sad reversal of D-Day. France fell; Poland, Italy and Spain followed within two years.

As the Army of Revelations marched on Rome, crushing the last remnants of the Italian Army, a miraculous event occurred, and was filmed by a few courageous journalists. The skies opened up, and a Host of angels descended over the city, attacking the invaders. The miracle soon turned into a nightmare, as the Army of Revelations used arcane powers and high technology to defeat the angelic forces. Catholics around the world watched in horror as Pope John XXIV was executed on live television by the Dark Apostle himself.

The only victory in Europe was obtained in England and Northern Europe. Freak storms interfered with the Army of Revelation's advance on those fronts. When it was revealed that the Old Gods of Europe were responsible for the storms, the world met the reports with a mixture of skepticism, fear - and hope.

Meanwhile, the War opened in other fronts. Turkey became the second nation to join the Church, and its armies, also equipped with new, cutting-edge technologies, swept through Iraq and Syria. In the following years, Argentina and Vietnam became the third and fourth members of the Church. It was clear by then that the enemy represented a world-spanning conspiracy undreamt of by the most fevered conspiracy theorist.

For the U.S., the final shock came when the Third Army of Revelations advanced through Mexico, heading North towards Texas. For the first time in two centuries, the American mainland was threatened by a foreign foe. The U.S. Army and National Guard poured South to meet the enemy away from the border. Mexico ceased to exist as a nation and became a giant battlefield. The Revelationists were stopped, but not before more bombings leveled much of San Antonio and several other cities of the South.

By the end of 2016, the war hung in the balance.

The World of Armageddon

The "default" beginning year of the *Armageddon* world is 2017. The U.S. is trying to push the enemy out of Mexico. Most of Europe and South America are under the yoke of the Church of Revelations. Half of the Middle East, and perhaps a third of Asia are in a similar

state. Both sides are trying to rebuild their war machines while still fighting each other. Europe has become a land of fear, where a courageous few still defy their conquerors. The U.S. is a land of chaos, beset by enemies from within and from without.

The United States

The years 2013 to 2016 were a transforming period in America. Already wracked by internal problems, the War was a shock from which many people have yet to recover. The U.S. Armed Forces, which had been slowly dwindling down, had an unprecedented challenge: to rebuild their strength at a time when most heavy industry no longer existed in the U.S.. They managed to do so, and performed admirably, given the circumstances.

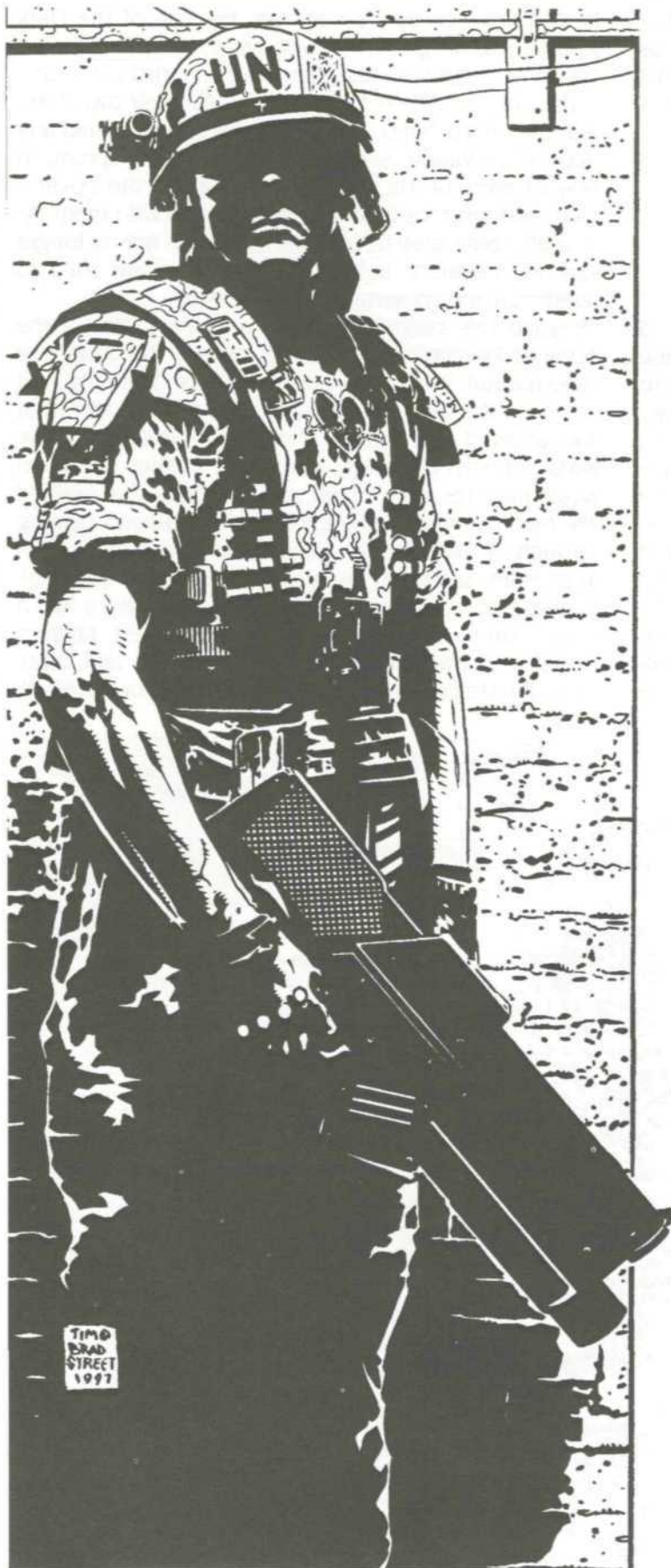
The American people were faced with a national and religious threat, and the differences between the two threatened to tear the country apart. To most people, the danger to the U.S. came first, and patriotism, which up to then had been considered little more than a foolish affectation, became a major force for the first time

in decades. For others however, the rise of the Dark Apostle was a sign of the Apocalypse, or the End Times. Fundamentalist fanatics denounced America's sins, and some prompted their followers to build their own communities of the "elect," since only the righteous had any hope of salvation. Secessionist movements sprung in several parts of the U.S., at a time when the government had precious little resources to deal with them. As a result, some stretches of land in the U.S. are no longer safe for travelers. Religious extremists even tried to overthrow the government (see below).

Beyond this internal problem, and the threat of the Army of Revelations in Mexico, loomed the danger of supernatural infiltrators and predators. Humans had not been the only beneficiaries of the "New Age" that had allowed the birth of the Magic Generation. The walls between our world and other realities had been weakening for some time, and creatures that walked like men but were nothing like them had been slipping through. Hiding among humans, these predators struck at random, adding to the general fear and uncertainty. To make things worse, the Church of Revelations had a Fifth Column of Believers in the U.S.; these fanatics would perform numerous acts of terrorism and sabotage, despite the best efforts of the FBI to root them out.



Aug 97



So this is the America of **Armageddon**. A land at war with itself as much as with an alien enemy.

Government

On 2008, George J. Morrison (R), became the forty-fourth president of the United States. A moderate conservative, Morrison had been elected on a domestic agenda, including the promised repeal of the Security Ordinances. Even before the government's inauguration, it was no longer in control of events. Morrison came to power during a time of war and chaos, when America desperately needed an extraordinary leader. Unfortunately, the former Governor of Kansas was not such a man.

On 2011, after the U.S. was bombed by foreign aircraft, Morrison resigned his post, a move that has been denounced as cowardly by many, but which was, perhaps, the only honest thing to do. His Vice-President, Beatrice Holland, already the first female to be elected to that post, now made history for the second time and became the 45th president. A former U.S. Marine and Senator of Texas, Holland proved to be the leader that Morrison wasn't. Under her guidance, America geared herself for war. Holland was re-elected on 2012, and again on 2016.

In 2014, a group of military officers, religious leaders, and the Governors of two Southern States conspired to overthrow the government. The group had become convinced that America must be "purified" before it could gain victory against the forces of darkness. This "cleansing" seemed to include elements seen as immoral or anti-Christian, including homosexuals, Pagans, sorcerers and even, to some degree, all non-whites. The plot was uncovered by a group of human psychics and magicians, and the leaders were imprisoned, and tried for treason; two are awaiting execution, while the rest are serving life sentences. The plot showed the degree of sectionalism and fanaticism that some people will demonstrate under this conditions.

Life in the U.S.

A journalist described life in the U.S. as an "schizophrenic effort at maintaining normalcy in the face of terror." That, in a nutshell, is how it is.

On the one hand, the country is at war, a more immediate and threatening conflict than any since the Civil War, and with even worse consequences should it be lost. Americans have seen nation after nation as it was overrun, stripped of its national

identity, and oppressed by the most totalitarian regime in modern history. The religious implications of conquest by the Church of Revelations are enough to drive many people into rabid fanaticism: this is a war fought not only over territory or wealth, but for the sake of our very souls. Secular Humanists and the Religious Right, liberals or conservatives, they all agree that the Church of Revelations must be fought to the last.

In many ways, life goes on. People go to work, watch television, surf the Web. More people are going to church and wearing religious symbols, though. Along with the symbols, almost everyone who ventures out into the streets carries a little pouch with a gas mask and an anti-toxic injector, to deal with the occasional gas bomb dropped from a stealth bomber or carried by an ICBM. People tend to go out less frequently, although that could just be a reflection of the influence of the Internet on the social habits of America. Crime continues to be a worry.

The lives of the poor have gotten much, much worse, however. The Safety Ordinances, which were struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional on 2009, remain in effect in several cities. This is due in part to the supernatural infestations that have wracked the slums - the authorities are afraid that if the walls come down, all manner of inhumans monsters will spread through the rest of the cities. In some ways, the people trapped within have simply been forgotten by the rest of the country. For the time being, the only sure escape from the slums is by joining the army.

The countryside of some of the heartland states has become lawless and dangerous. Bandit gangs composed of Army deserters, Army of Revelation infiltrators or religious fanatics of all persuasions roam the back roads in motorcycles or trucks, raiding some towns and robbing motorists. Some small towns and counties have declared themselves independent, looted local armories, and blocked off all roads leading in or out. In there, patriarchs try to build model societies, or create their own petty kingdoms. The government does not have the time or resources to deal with any but the worst of them.

The Native American communities in the U.S. have remained strangely silent during this conflict. Other than sending its share of soldiers to the war, they have had little impact on the conflict so far. Some sorcerers feel a major gathering of power in some sacred sites; it is possible that the tribal shamans are biding their time before they make their move - which might be as disagreeable for the White Man as for the Church of Revelations.

The Military

In the past, former enemies of the U.S. have referred to that nation as "the sleeping giant." The Church of

Revelations may have caught the U.S. napping, but the country has woken up. The military is growing at the fastest rate in its history. There is nothing like an enemy at the gates to concentrate the mind. For the first time since the 1980s, new weapons are being produced in great quantities, and hundreds of thousands of new volunteers (the draft has yet to be re-established) are being trained every year.

Some military planners do not think it will be enough. The Armed Forces are not forgetting the realm of the occult, either. In the years before the war, several government agencies were contacted by some secret societies who had kept the old knowledge alive. Although these groups were dismissed at first, they offered uncontroversial proof of their powers. When a bookish college professor managed to walk into a secured room in the Pentagon with nobody the wiser, people became ready to listen.

By 2006, the Special Operations Task Force Command (SOTF-COM) had been created, although its existence was not publicly admitted until 2011. SOTF units were a mixture of "common" Special Forces soldiers and men and women with paranormal abilities. At first, SOTF teams were dominated by sorcerers and psychics, but as recruitment of newer members of the Magic Generation increased, so did the proportion of supernatural beings joining the force, including their share of Nephelim, Inheritors and Avatars. Members of SOTF teams are given basic military training; members of several occult societies provide instruction in how to best use one's special abilities. To the annoyance of many at the Pentagon, however, SOTF-Com was made an independent command, and can conduct operations at its discretion.

It is believed that the CIA has its own version of SOTF-COM. It is also rumored that the entire Agency has been co-opted by the ever-so-helpful secret societies, to follow their own agenda using the CIA's resources.

The Rest of the Free World

America is not the only nation still free of the Taint of Leviathan. Other countries still fight on, some with more success than others.

The Americas

The AOR rules supreme over most of South and Central America. Of the nations of South America, only parts of Brazil and Venezuela are still free. The U.S. stationed several Marine divisions in Venezuela to protect valuable oil fields. So far, the Marines and the remnants of the Venezuelan and Brazilian Armies, helped in part



by the Andes mountains and the Amazon jungle, have managed to keep the invaders at bay.

Canada's armies are fighting in the U.S. under the auspices of the United Nations. Tens of thousands of Canadian soldiers are in the Mexican border, fighting side by side with their American neighbors. Canada's main problem is the Quebec Separatist movement, which has been infiltrated by the Church of Revelations, and is beginning to use terrorism; denounced by everyone, even most Quebecois (separatism during a world war is utter lunacy, after all), the underground group is becoming more and more brutal.

The Spirits of the Amazon

A number of native shamans deep in the Amazon jungles are conducting their own war against the Army of Revelations. Using magical powers that have not been as strong in centuries, these medicine men are trying to heal the jungle and at the same time repel the invaders. They are helped by a horde of nature spirits and other creatures who dwell deep in the heart of the jungle.

Asia

Much of Asia has been overrun by the Army of Revelations. Large areas of India, Southeast Asia and China have been conquered, and resistance elsewhere is disorganized and primitive at best. Nothing resembling a modern army remains in the mainland; the air power of the AOR has seen to that. Instead, bands of guerrillas operate from the countryside or hiding among the populace of cities, conducting harassing operations. In many places, these operations make entire provinces or regions ingovernable, and the Believers hold only the zones directly in range of their guns. In others, guerrilla activity is little more than an inconvenience, and would-be freedom fighters are quickly rooted out and executed.

Communist China was destroyed by surgical strikes that eradicated the entire leadership of the nation, and by devastating armored attacks that crushed entire armies. China, however, a nation of a billion and a third people is not so easily conquered. The Revelationists, even when its ranks were swelled by millions of Chinese converts, lack the firepower to completely suppress every factory, every armed uprising, and every secret society. By 2016, the AOR could lay claim to only about a third of the country, and even there it had to deal with constant guerrilla activities. The rest of the country is in a state of anarchy. Many regions are ravaged by starvation, plague and banditry, due

to the breakdown in communications and commerce. A few places have been luckier. The ports of Hong Kong and Shanghai are under the protection of the Japanese, who have stationed military and air force units there. The two cities are hotbeds of intrigue and espionage, thoroughly infiltrated by Revelationist spies, profiteers and crime lords.

India, which by 2010 had passed the billion people mark, was a similarly tough nut to crack. Too numerous to overwhelm, and fiercely religious, the Indian peoples have resisted the invaders with stubborn courage. Unfortunately, large numbers of people have become worshippers of Leviathan, especially the poor and the outcasts, who saw little profit in remaining true to the old ways. Resistance remains fierce, however, with horrible atrocities perpetrated against those suspected of collaborating with the invaders.

Southeast Asia is largely under the control of the Church, with the exception of Cambodia and Thailand, who were temporarily left alone while the Church concentrated on China. Vietnam, despite being the core nation of the Church's presence in Asia, remains a hotbed of rebellion. A new generation of Viet-Cong once again are warring against foreign invaders. In an ironic twist, the U.S. maintains a small but steady supply of weapons, equipment and military advisors going into Vietnam, in an effort to undermine the enemy.

The U.S. still maintains a presence in the Pacific. Staging from bases in Hawaii, Japan and Korea, U.S. aircraft still rise up to challenge the Army of Revelation's Air Wing. Special Operations soldiers conduct raids or training missions in Asia, helping carry the battle to the Church on every front. If the COR wins in Asia, the U.S. will be doomed - once the Believers assimilate another two billion people, they will have the resources to create an unstoppable force.

Chinese Secret Societies

The peoples of China have a long tradition of forming secret societies to fight would-be oppressors. Even the Communist regime was never able to completely suppress it. Now, after the Chinese government collapsed and the Church of Revelations seized control over much of their land, the old societies have come back with a vengeance. Old groups like the Yellow Turbans and the Boxers have become reincarnated, and new groups, like the Red Hand (Communist activists), have multiplied in both the conquered and the disputed territories. In many areas, these groups are the only law of the land, defending the local peasantry from bandits and Revelationist patrols, and sometimes oppressing the people they claim to protect.

In addition to a myriad of largely mundane organization, China has a number of supernatural organizations as well. Some of them have joined the Alliance, or at least have agreed to cooperate with it. Supernatural

Covenants in China include The One-Thousand Immortals, a mixed band of True Immortals and Inheritors who claim to be led by the thunder god Lei-Kung, the Storm Dragons, a group of mystic martial artists who claim to be led by an ancient dragon, and the Society of the Harmonious Pattern, geomantic sorcerers of great power.

Europe

England and Northern Europe remain free, although barely so. A furious air war is fought daily over England; this new Battle of Britain uses fewer aircraft, but it is as destructive as the one waged seventy-odd years back. Only the activities of the ancient gods of Britain, Ireland and the Nordic countries keep the invaders at bay. Meanwhile, Britain prepares for the inevitable invasion. In England and the few remaining forests of Europe, the Fey are returning in great numbers, are lending a hand against the Church of Revelations.

In Eastern Europe, Russia still exists, to some degree. The AOR is consistently winning every battle there, but the Russian people fight on with the same stubbornness they demonstrated in World War II. A number of local spirits and deities also stand with the resistance movements there. The Thunder God Thor is said to operate in Russia, protecting the nation that Viking settlers founded.

The Underground Movement

Like the Resistance of World War II, the Underground is made of people ranging from former soldiers to civilians from all walks of life, who are dedicated to fighting the Church of Revelations. This Underground is as much religious as it is secular; some of their activities include secretly conducting religious ceremonies of all denominations and sects, thus undermining the COR's corruption of the souls of the conquered peoples. It also engages in more mundane acts of sabotage, assassination and espionage.

The Underground is a generic name for a very varied group. Some Underground cells are made up of religious fanatics of some denomination or another, while others are open to all who wish to fight the common enemy. Several other groups, from the Heavenly Host to the Alliance, help some or all Underground cells in their fight against the minions of Leviathan.

The Middle East

The Second Army of Revelations deployed from Turkey, and conquered Iraq and Syria. It was stopped on the Saudi border by an unprecedented coalition of Arabs, Persians, Israelis and U.S. troops stationed in the area. Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, Jews and Christians, they had to forget their differences or lose their holiest sites. Even then, bombers damaged the Holy Rock of

the Kaaba and the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem. But here, in this holiest of regions, the Heavenly Host was prepared to make a stand. 20,000 angels have arrived to the region, and they have grudgingly chosen to follow the orders of the human commanders of the region; they learned the lesson of acting on their own in Rome (see above).

The Middle East has become a land of miracles and shaken beliefs. On the one hand, holy men of three religions see in the angels confirmation that their doctrines were true - but the angels' equal protection of all three credos goes counter to the idea that only one of them held the Truth. Most have agreed to put aside all religious conflicts, while hard-core bands of fanatics still carry on with their pointless fighting.

The Alliance

The Cosmologies Chapter (see p. 92) describes some of the supernatural organizations that will stand alongside humankind in this final conflict. This section deals with the largest new organization, a group formed with the express purpose of battling the Church of Revelations. Its name is the Alliance, and it has gathered under it Humans and Supernatural, Angels and Demons, Immortals and demigods, former rivals and former enemies, fighting side by side for the first time. Although this organization is often wracked by internal struggles and petty conspiracies, it provides fresh hope for the future of the world of **Armageddon**.

Origins

The Alliance first came into being sometime after 2008. The first major mover and shaker in the organization was the former Archangel Michele (see p. 00), who about a decade before had been exiled on Earth due to the machinations of the Archangel Gabriel. Michele started contacting a number of secret societies worldwide and asking for their support in creating a hybrid organization, a network that would share information and resources against a common foe. While some groups refused, others agreed, cautiously at first, then more openly as the dangers of the Church became more apparent.

The Norse god Odin also officially joined the Alliance, and pledged the entire pantheon of the Aesir to it. Seeing a Seraphim and an Old God working together did much to allay the concerns of other supernatural groups. The Watchers established some ties to the organization. Shortly thereafter, a third member joined the leadership of the group. This was a ghost, the spirit of a dead human, who claimed to be no other than

the soul of Benjamin Franklin. These three leaders have shaped the course of the Alliance over the last eight years.

Organization

The Alliance is loosely organized. Many of its members also belong to other organizations, and for them the Alliance acts more as a clearinghouse of information and contacts than a ruling agency. The Alliance has connections to several national intelligence and military agencies, including the CIA and SOTF-COM (see p. 00). It also has access to the records of several Covenants of Magic (see p. 00). Between them, the Alliance has the best intelligence resources of the Free World, which allows it to help coordinate the actions of dozens of disparate groups.

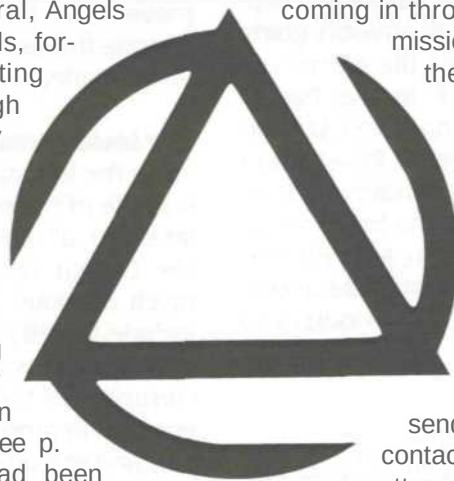
Those who pledge themselves to work for the Alliance full-time are assigned to Teams, which are headquartered in diverse parts of the world. Each Team consists of three to ten members, one of whom is appointed leader and are assigned missions by the Central Command, which is the most organized part of the Alliance. The Central Command, led by Michele, Odin and the ghost of Ben Franklin, studies the information coming in through its contacts, and sends Teams on missions designed to disrupt the plans of the Church of Revelations.

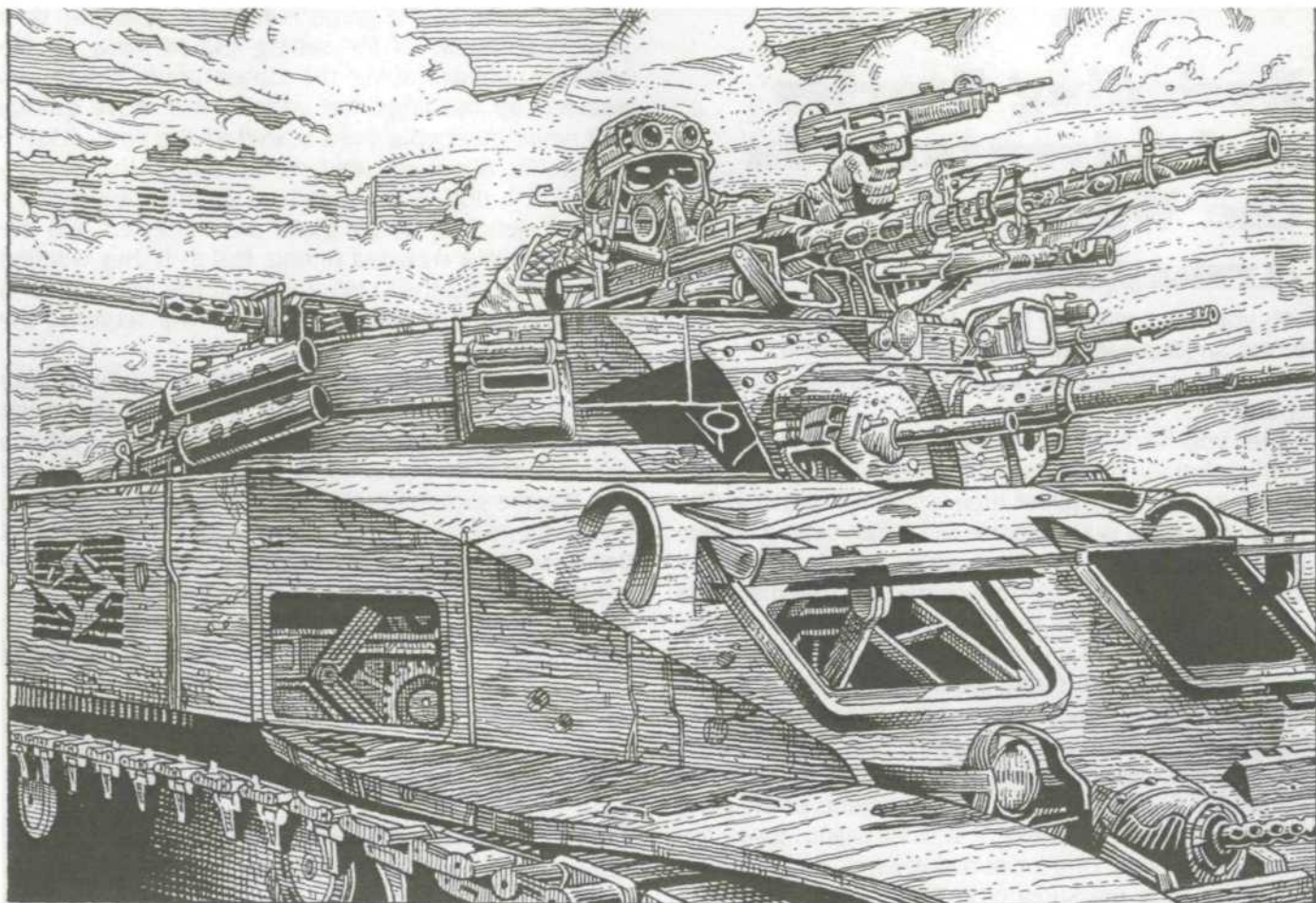
The Teams know of the location of a safehouse, the names of the other Team members, and little else. If captured, they cannot reveal any valuable information. Orders arrive via e-mail or anonymous phone calls, which are identified through a system of code words that changes weekly. Mission reports are filed through the Internet, and are again

send and received blindly, with no direct contact. This security has paid off - so far, no attempt of the Soul Police or the Church agents to infiltrate or "turn" members of the organization has succeeded. Traitors are dealt with summarily - this is war, after all.

Covenants of Armageddon: Other Occult Organizations

Space limitations make it impossible to do more than briefly outline some of the larger groups that are also involved in the War. Five of these organizations are described below. Some of these groups will appear in **Secrets of Armageddon** the first sourcebook for this game. For the 20th-century story and organizations of several of these organization, you may want to refer to





the *Witchcraft RPG* and its sourcebooks. Four of the five groups are described in the *Witchcraft RPG* the Knights Templar make their appearance in the *Mystery Codex*.

The Rosicrucians: An ancient Covenant of sorcerers and philosophers, the Rosicrucians are masters of ceremonial magic. The Rosicrucians were concerned mostly with gaining knowledge and mastering their arcane arts, but the War has forced to become involved. Since most of the group's member are wealthy and influential, it was relatively easy for this Covenant for establish a connection with several U.S. agencies. Many Rosicrucians now serve on SOTF-COM (see p. 245) and with the CIA.

The Sentinels: The Society of Sentinels is a group of Divinely Inspired warriors and scholars, who along with Mundane allies seeks to protect Mankind from supernatural threats. The Sentinels were decimated in Europe and the other Conquered Territories, but survivors are a major force in the Underground movement.

The Wicce: Pagan magicians, the Wicce follow the Old Religion that flourished in Europe until it was crushed by Christianity during the Middle Ages. Although they sometimes worship the Old Gods, most of the Wicce follow forces of Nature, and venerate the Earth itself. Many Wicce were persecuted during the early years of

the New Age by religious fundamentalists, and later by the Church of Revelations. The Wicce tend to operate in secret and on their own, although several Covens are working with the Alliance.

The Knights Templar: This oft-misunderstood organization was founded thousands of years ago, during the time of the sorcerer-king Solomon. The group went public during the Middle Ages, masquerading as a Crusading Order, until its enemies persecuted it and forced it underground once again. The Templars have been involved in a secret war with the Combine (see p. 102) for centuries; they sometimes have worked side by side with the Watchers, although they distrust all angelic beings. The Templars are currently working alone against the Church of Revelations, although they occasionally collaborate with the Alliance.

The Cabal of Psyche: This society of Seers dates back to Classical Greek times. Ruled by members who have stopped the aging process through their mental powers, the Cabal believers Seers are the next level of evolution for Humankind, and its purpose is to protect and teach all psychics they can find. Along with the Rosicrucians, the Cabal of Psyche has become involved with several American and British governmental agencies, providing them with Gifted agents.

Designing Stories and Adventures in the World of Armageddon

So you have read the book, like the ideas, and want to run an **Armageddon** game. So what's next?

Next you prepare a Story and start running a game, of course.

After you have a Cast of characters, all that is left is putting them in a Story, which will develop as the players make decisions about their characters' actions. The Chronicler's job is to prepare the initial setting, create the Supporting Cast and Adversaries, and devise the initial plot that will bring the characters together. The Chronicler's choices at this point may make the difference between a fun game and a boring evening.

Unlike your typical board game, roleplaying sessions don't all start (or end) in the same way. Like any fictional tale, what you do in a game will change based on what themes, plot lines and characters are used. The Chronicler decides what the initial elements of the story is. This includes the setting - a small Maine town, the slums of Chicago, or a cross country trek running from coast to coast; the Supporting Cast of characters that will interact with the player-controlled characters, and the initial themes and conflict - is the small town haunted by an unspeakable entity, or the slums the battlefield between two rival Covenants?

Creating the Setting

When creating a setting for a Story, the Chronicler needs to gather or create information. The setting is where most of the Story will take place. It can be as small as a single wood cabin in the middle of a haunted forest, or as large as a teeming city with a cast of millions. Little bits of information will add local color to the story; people, landmarks and mood will help make the setting come alive for the players. Mapping out every corner of a setting may be helpful, but it's not really necessary. Rather, the Chronicler should think of interesting details. For example, all towns have their own little landmarks, be they statues to Civil War heroes or old buildings with a long history. Mention and describe them, and perhaps make them part of the Story - perhaps the statue has a hidden compartment at its base containing important documents, or the old building has been used for a number of strange and disturbing rituals.

If the theme of the game is fear, for example, then your descriptions of the setting should focus on the ominous, on describing the closed down shops and boarded up buildings, the people who move quickly and never meet your eyes, scared all the time, disturbing graffiti about the end of the world, the bloated corpse of a dog at the mouth of an alley adding to a general stench of decay. Make the characters feel isolated even in a crowded setting, feel as if they will find no help beyond their resources, and the monsters and phantasms you throw in their path will seem all the more terrifying.

The **Armageddon** game is set in the near future, close enough to the present day that many things are the same. You may even want to use a place the players are familiar with - your home town, for example - and give it some supernatural touches (if possible relying on local legends and lore). There could be a nest of Believers operating in the town, or some other supernatural being. If you prefer a larger setting, pick a nearby city. What role do the diverse conspiracies of the game play in that city? Is any one group in control of it?

Creating the Supporting Cast and Adversaries

Most games require a Supporting Cast, the Chronicler-controlled characters who will interact with the Cast Members in the course of the game, ranging from suspicious store clerks and librarians to other Covenant members. Try to make each character distinctive in some way. They don't all need to speak with exotic accents, but they should have some distinguishing quality. Speech patterns and habits are a good start - the street-bred magician should probably use a lot of profanity, while the bookish occultist may rely on obscure and pedantic words. Describing their habits and behavior will make the players remember who a character is.

Adversaries are the characters who will provide the conflict in the story. There may be several Adversaries in a game, from the fellow Covenant member who is trying to outshine or discredit the Cast members to the flesh-eating abomination living in the sewers. Sometimes, the Cast will not meet the Adversary until the end of the story. In others, the Adversary will turn out to be a character the group had come to trust. Adversaries should be resourceful and dangerous; in some cases, the Cast may not be able to truly defeat or destroy them, and they may come back in later Stories.

The agents of the Church of Revelations make for great Adversaries. An Adept (see p. 229) operating incognito in the U.S. can be a challenging enemy.

Although he does not have the full resources of the Church behind him, he has a great deal of supernatural power, and will be backed up by several fanatical followers and monstrous Shaitan and other creatures.

Story, Plot and Mood

What is going to happen in the Story? To some degree, nobody knows - that's part of what makes roleplaying fun. In some ways, the Chronicler knows what some of the important events and developments will be. You, the Chronicler, will set up the basic plot elements, and will help shape the mood of the story.

Plots in *Armageddon* tend to revolve around discovery (about oneself and the world at large), conflict (between the Church of Revelations and the rest of the world), horror (the world is being conquered by monstrous entities) and hope (the characters might play a role in defeating the Dark Apostle and saving the day). The elements of the plot can as personal as confronting a childhood fear come to life or as cosmic as preventing the unraveling of Reality.

Themes of Armageddon

Although all kinds of Stories are possible in this setting, there are some themes and ideas that will play a major role in most settings.

War: *The world is in the middle of a global war. Even America is not safe from the fighting. The characters can be part of an elite military unit, like the Special Operations Task Force (see p. 245), and sent behind enemy units to observe or sabotage them. Of they can be grunts in the front lines, fighting a deadly enemy (the battlefields of the world of Armageddon will be better detailed in *Armageddon: Battlegrounds*, the second sourcebook for this game). The Stories that can be told in a war setting include tales of survival and heroism, of the horrors of war and the people who try to do what is right in the middle of carnage. It can be dark and depressing like *Platoon* or dark but hopeful like many World War Two films.*

The Hidden War: While armies clash in the fields, a shadow conflict is being waged in cities behind the battle lines. Spies, guerrillas, terrorists and saboteurs use means magical and mundane to disrupt their enemies' plan. Secret organizations like the Watchers and the Alliance fight against the agents of the Church of Revelations. This often involves more intrigue and investigation than straight combat; the enemy's goals must be discovered, then hindered in some way (which may involve simple attacks or executions), or one's plans must be kept hidden from the enemy.

In the U.S., the Believers are at a disadvantage, which

they make up by hiding in the largest cities (often conducting their business in the so-called Safety Zones that are little more than giant prison camps), or in the countryside, among small bands of nomadic sympathizers. In the Conquered Territories, the Believers have the police and security agencies of the land at their disposal; characters operating there must be careful and devious to avoid capture.

Ancient Conflicts: Not all the diverse groups who should be aligned against the Dark Apostle do so. Some have old scores to settle first. These Stories will involve enemies other than the Church of Revelations. They could pit Angels against Demons or Pagan Gods. Some Immortals may bear a centuries-old grudge against a Nephlim character, and they may care more about getting revenge than anything else.

In these Stories, there can be two possible resolutions. One involves playing out the conflict until a clear winner emerges. The other is to somehow convince both sides that to fight each other is insane in the face of a greater common enemy. And if the Church of Revelations is aware of these conflicts, its agents will do their best to fan the flames.

The Other Signs of Armageddon: The War is but one of the many changes that are affecting the world. Supernatural predators unaligned to either side of the War remain a threat. In some places, reality seems to break down for no reason, and alien entities, perhaps nearly as dangerous as Leviathan itself, are trying to break into the world for their own dark purposes. Some Stories might involve a danger that the Cast Members believe is part of the Church of Revelations' plans, but which involves a third force, which nonetheless must be stopped.

Bringing the Cast Members into the Story

The best and most dramatic Story will be useless if the Cast Members are not interested in becoming involved. As you create the setting and the Supporting Cast populating it, you want to should be thinking about ways to involve the Cast in the story. Sometimes, it is better to let the players create their characters first, and then weave the Story around them. Alternatively, the Chronicler should tell the players a little about the Story, its themes and its setting, allowing them to create characters that will fit into the plot.

Armageddon Lexicon

Abaddon: Hellish realm ruled by Lucifer and the Infernal Legion.

Angels: See Kerubim, Qliphonim, Seraphim.

Apostle: See Dark Apostle.

Aspect: An element of a god's power and identity, which gives him and his descendants the ability to influence an area of reality.

Atlanteans: See True Immortals.

Atlantis: Mythical Elder Kingdom whose advanced magical and scientific achievements raised its citizens to god-like power. Destroyed in the Flood.

Avatars: Humans whose souls have been imprinted with elements from the spirit, powers and personalities of one of the Old Gods.

Believers, True Believers: Those who willingly worship Leviathan and follow the Church of Revelations.

Binah: Sometimes called Heaven; realm of light and energy ruled by the Heavenly Host.

Church of Revelations: Cult that worships Leviathan and is dedicated to forcibly converting all humans to its worship.

Churchie: Derogatory term for the Army of Revelations, as in "Churchie's moving again." Also called Churchmen in England.

Dark Apostle: Leader of the Church of Revelations.

Demons: Seraphim who followed Lucifer to exile in Abaddon, and now are dedicated to bringing down Humankind. Also see Qliphonim, Seraphim.

Divine Inspiration: The power to perform miracles through the strength or one's faith.

Gifted: Humans who have developed supernatural powers, including Magic, the Second Sight, and Divine Inspiration.

Great Diaspora: Period of migration for the majority of the Seraphim, who left Earth vainly looking for the Creator.

Heavenly Host: The Seraphim who consider themselves to serve the Creator, dedicated to protecting Life and Humankind.

Inheritors: Children born of the union between a human and an Old God. Inheritors have a number of supernatural powers.

Infernal Legion: Name of the assembled demons in service of Lucifer.

Kerubim: Angelic being who once was a human being, raised to the Heavenly Host after death.

Kether Also known as True Heaven, dimension where the Creator is said to dwell, and where some human souls go after death, never to return.

Leviathan: Entity from beyond our reality who seeks to enter and utterly transform or destroy it. Also known as the Great Serpent, the Beast, and the Ancient Great One.

Lucifer: Former High Archangel, overthrown and cast down for threatening to destroy Humankind.

Magic: The Art and Science of causing change in conformity with the Will.

Makers: True Immortals whose ancestral memories allow them to build a number of artifacts using Atlantean super-science.

Mundanes: Humans without any supernatural abilities or senses.

Nephelim: The children of the union between a human and a Seraphim.

Old Gods: Powerful beings, former servants of the Seraphim, who came to Earth and demanded the worship of mortals during the Great Diaspora.

Qliphonim: Demonic being who once was a human being, who made a choice between become a demon or facing damnation.

Revelationist: Member of the Church of Revelations. See Believer, Churchie.

Second Sight: The ability to observe and affect the world with one's mind alone. This term covers a number of psychic abilities, from precognition to telekinesis.

Seraphim: Former servants and messengers of the Creator, who have adopted human shapes and personalities over time. Most Seraphim are associated with the Heavenly Host, the Infernal Legion, or the Watchers.

True Immortals: Humans who carry the "soul code" of the ancient Atlantean race. True Immortals do not age, and are very difficult to kill.

Ultima Thule: Elder Kingdom, contemporary of Atlantis, whose High Priests attempted to summon Leviathan. Ultima Thule was destroyed in the Flood.

Undying: See True Immortals.

Game Terms

Chronicler: Also known as Game Master or Referee, the Chronicler is the player who prepares the setting and makes all the rules decisions -- who failed and who succeeded at a task - and controls what happens outside the Cast Members' actions.

Cast Members: Also known as player-controlled characters or player characters (PCs for short). These are the characters controlled by the other players, who usually also create them. In a movie, they would be the main roles, each played by a different actor.

Supporting Cast: Also known as Non-player Characters (or NPCs). These are all the other characters in the Story, whose roles are played by the Chronicler.

Adversaries: Supporting Cast characters who oppose the Cast Members' actions; they are the enemies to be beaten, or the rivals that provide drama.

Story: Also known as game or campaign. A series of plot-linked game sessions, like the episodes of a TV series or soap opera. A Story is the final result of a game.

Task: This is any activity that requires some training to accomplish, and whose outcome is in doubt. Tasks are resolved by rolling a ten-sided dice (or drawing cards) and adding one or the character's Skills and one of his Attributes. The Chronicler determines which skills and attributes apply, if any, and applies any modifiers. The result, adding the dice roll to all other modifiers, skills and attributes, needs to be 9 or higher to indicate success.

Test/Attribute Tests: A Test is an activity or situation where the character's Attribute levels determine the outcome. Any activity that depends exclusively on the character's inborn talents (such as raw strength, pure intelligence and so on) use Tests. Tests can be Simple or Difficult. A **Simple Attribute Test** adds the result of a ten-sided dice

(or the draw of a card) to the appropriate Attribute, doubled, or the sum of two Attributes. The result, after any modifiers, must be 9 or higher. A Difficult Attribute Test adds the result of a ten-sided dice (or the draw of a card) to the Appropriate attribute, not doubled. The result, after any modifiers, must be 9 or higher.

Resisted Tasks or Test: This rule applies to any situation where somebody is trying to do something and somebody else is trying to stop him, or when two or more individuals are in some sort of competition. These Tasks or Tests are resolved normally for everyone involved, and then the results are compared. The character with the highest result wins. Ties go to the defender, if any; otherwise, it means neither side won a significant advantage.

Level of Success: A measure of how well a character performed a successful Task or Test. The higher the Task result was, the higher the level of success. The success level is used as a bonus on other Tasks or Tests. The Outcome Table on p. 110 shows what results are needed to get a specific success level.

The Rule of 10: If a natural 10 is rolled or drawn, roll or draw again, subtract 5 from the new roll and add the result, if greater than 1, to the total roll. If you roll a 10 again, add +5 to the result and roll again, following the previous method.

The Rule of 1: If a natural 1 is rolled or an ace is drawn, roll or draw again and subtract 5 from the new roll. If the result is greater than 1, consider the result to be 1. If the result is below 0, use it as a negative modifier on the Task. If another 1 or ace is rolled/drawn, you automatically get a -5 penalty, and you roll/draw again, following the previous method.

Essence Control Table

Essence Used	Modifiers	
	Focus	Dismissal
1-2	0	0
3-4	-1	-2
5-10	-2	-4
11-15	-4	-6
16-20	-5	-8

Every additional 5 Essence Points increases the penalties to both Focus and Dismissal by one.

Group Magic Essence Table

Size of Group	Increase in Essence
3	30
7	105
9	90
13	260

Times of Power

Note: All the Extra Essence is cumulative (i.e., during Halloween — one of the Four Days of Power — 35 points of Essence will be available at noon, and an additional 5 at midnight).

Time	Essence Available
Noon and Midnight	5
Full Moon Nights	5
The Solstices and Equinoxes	20
The Four Days of Power	30

Knocking People Out

In real life, hitting people over the head or punching them in the face to knock them out or stun them is never as easy as it appears. Hitting people on the head is as likely to kill them as knocking them out: loss of consciousness is often a sign of a severe, life-threatening injury. A punch on the jaw may knock somebody out/or may just break the person's jaw (and, incidentally, the knuckles of the person doing the punching). However, some Chroniclers may allow "cinematic" rules to apply in their games, allowing characters to engage in non-lethal brawls and attempts to capture people without harming them (or, by the same token, allowing the Chronicler's minions to capture Cast Members without inflicting permanent damage). The following optional rules can be used for this purpose.

If the player announces his character is making a non-lethal attack, and is using a blunt instrument, any damage inflicted is applied to the Endurance Point pool of the victim, instead of his Life Points. This will allow people to get punched repeatedly, pass out and be fine in a few hours. If the Chronicler wants to make a minimal concession to reality, he may rule that every 4 points of Endurance Damage inflicted in this manner will inflict 1 Life Point of actual injury; thus, a character who gets knocked out will still nurse some bruises and cracked ribs after the fight.

Lifting Things

Sometimes, you need to know how much your character can lift. This table will help you out.

Strength Lifting Capacity

1-5 50 lbs x Str (Max: 250 lbs)

6-10 (200 x Strength-5) + 250 lbs (Maximum 1,250 lbs)

11-15 (500 x Strength-10) + 1,250 lbs (Maximum 3,750 lbs)

16-20 (1 ton x Strength-15) + 2 tons (Maximum 7 tons)

The above is for character trying to lift something. Reduce the maximum Weight by one tenth when throwing something. Carrying capacity is one half of the maximum lifting capacity; that is the maximum amount of weight the character can carry without losing much speed or agility.

Pushing the limits: a character can lift more than his normal limit by passing a Simple Strength Test. Every success level achieved allows the character to lift an additional 10% of his maximum lifting weight. This effort costs the character 1D4 points of Endurance for every success level in the test. A failure on the Strength Test causes 1D4 points of damage —

ARMAGEDDON

the end times

Name
Association
Concept

CHARACTER POINTS SPENT UNSPENT

CHANNELING
LEVEL

Primary Attributes

STRENGTH INTELLIGENCE
DEXTERITY PERCEPTION
CONSTITUTION WILLPOWER

Secondary Attributes

LIFE POINTS
ENDURANCE POINTS
SPEED
ESSENCE POOL

Qualities

Point

Drawbacks

Point

Skill/Power

Level

Power/Vulnerability

Level

Weapons/Hand to Hand

Sex

Age

Height

Weight

Hair

Eyes

Type

Range

Damage

Cap

EV

Possessions

Allies/Contacts

Character History

A detailed black and white illustration of a character, possibly a deity or a warrior, wearing a mask with a crown-like top and a large, ornate necklace. The character's face is partially obscured by the mask, and they have a fierce expression. The background is dark and textured, with some mechanical or architectural elements visible.

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The ultimate conflict has begun. An ancient force is reborn, and a war to determine the destiny of Humankind must be fought by forces Myndane and Celestial. Angels walk on Earth once again and the Old Gods have returned.

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making ~~comics~~ Immortal
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