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the World of Darkness

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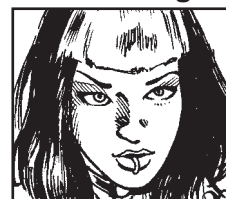


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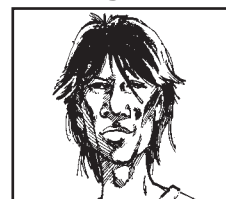
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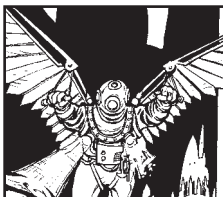
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# New Media

## by David Chart

Kira Dark, Occult Investigator, leaned on the table while hefting her rune-carved silver dagger in one hand. The man across from her was far larger, but the cold sweat of fear shone in the light of the single bulb.

"You'd better come clean now. Your bosses couldn't protect you even if they wanted to. And they don't want to. Hell, I doubt they even know your name."

The man stammered a little, but remained frozen in place as the point of the dagger moved steadily towards his left eyeball.

"And, cut! Great. Carlos, that was fantastic. You really looked paralyzed." Narcissus was grinning broadly as he put the mike down. Carlos relaxed, raising his hands to massage his forehead.

"I'm not sure it wouldn't be easier if you actually did paralyze me." Narcissus shook his head.

"Too risky. One paradox, one simple screw-up, and you're stuck like that. You'll just have to keep taking the acting classes." Carlos threw up his hands in mock-despair.

"But it's *embarrassing*. Everyone else in the class thinks that they're going to find magic in Hollywood. They're wannabes who don't even know what they wannabe." Jana laughed, turning from the case where she had put the dagger.

"Whereas you know exactly what you want to be, right?" Carlos smiled, but Narcissus saw the flinch, and quickly changed the subject.

"OK, I think that's about as much as we can do for now. We need to get a few action scenes before I can add anything else. We're already getting a bit more specific than I'd like." Carlos's smile had gone, replaced by a look of intense interest.

"Any progress?" Jana snorted, and perched herself on the table.

"*Real* progress? Zip. Five different Sheriff-Coroners in eight years, two dead in office, two forced out in corruption scandals. Four successful campaigns based on bringing more officers to Westminster, or Mission Viejo, or the Lagunas. No changes in policy. Nothing in common between the Sheriff-Coroners, at least not before election."



"So, bloodsucker?" Narcissus shrugged, and unclipped the camera from the tripod.

"It's a good guess, but there's nothing solid. Orange County isn't exactly obvious territory for them, but, on the other hand, they get everywhere."

"I don't think it's a vampire." A strange look crossed Jana's face, and she suddenly began pulling her clothes off. Carlos closed his eyes, while Narcissus busied himself with the camera. "It's too... crude... for one.... There's just... too *much* .. violence... for it to be... easy to feed. Shit, where did I put my robe?"

"On the box by the door." Carlos didn't open his eyes even a crack.

"Ah, thanks. OK, all clear." Carlos opened his eyes, looking over at a Jana who was a good six inches taller, thirty pounds heavier, and white.

"That was early."

"Yeah." Jana shrugged. "It always lasts long enough, though. Anyway, like I say, this doesn't really feel like a vampire to me."

"Feelings," said Narcissus, "are for the movies. *Something* is subverting the democratic process there, and I, for one, plan to stop it."

"Oh, stop grandstanding. We all plan to stop it. We're just waiting for you to have a brilliant idea about where to look next."

"Y."

"Because you're the mystically-attuned investigator."

"No, the El Toro Y." Carlos mimed throwing something at him, but Jana actually did. Narcissus dodged the jacket, grinning broadly.

"OK, so why Y?" Jana asked.

"Twenty four people have posted on rottenorangecounty.com claiming to have seen ghosts or spirits there. All the posts have been in the last two weeks, and so have most of the sightings." Jana looked impressed.

"How many of those do you think are real?"

Narcissus rubbed his chin thoughtfully before replying.

"Well, four are well-established trolls. One claimed to have seen a well-established troll under the up-and-over, so I think we can discount that. Six are "friend of my cousin's pool guy" stories. Three look very, very similar to earlier posts, and are probable AOLs. That leaves eleven that could well be genuine. And all of them claim to have seen things in the last fortnight."

Jana was already heading for the door.

"So, what are we waiting for?"





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"You to put some clothes on, sweetheart."

\* \* \* \*

Carlos sat on the hood of the car while Jana fiddled with her PDA and Narcissus adjusted his video camera.

"All done?" Both the mages nodded. "OK. I'll stay within five minutes' drive of the Y, so call if you need me." Jana cleared her throat and looked embarrassed.

"I don't suppose you could lend me a mobile?" Carlos looked surprised.

"I thought your PDA could download drinkable coffee?"

"Ha ha. Fifth-generation service is still only available in major metropolitan areas; I can't get a signal."

"Jana, we're in LA. The only majorer metropolitan area is New York."

"Yes, well, it's a very new system."

"Naturally." Carlos reached into the car and fished around in the glove compartment. "Here you go. It's at least a year old, though, so you'll probably want to hide it. Narcissus, it's the Mars phone; you still got the number?" Narcissus pulled his phone out of its pouch and checked.

"Yeah, on speed dial. OK, let's do this. Jana, you take the north. I'll go south. Standard code phrases, unless anyone can think of something extra we need?" Both the others shook their heads, and the three split up.

\* \* \* \*

Narcissus's phone rang; Jana.

"Yeah?"

"Hi honey. I've got the orange juice, but I can't find the bagels."

"Same here. Best if you buy it, then. I'll meet you at the car." Narcissus flicked the phone to Carlos's number and dialed as he turned back to the parking lot. The phone was still ringing when he reached the entrance; no answer. He hung up and tried again. Still nothing.

Jana arrived about ten minutes, and several unsuccessful phone calls, later.

"The Gauntlet around the Y is absurdly weak for on top of a freeway. I'm sure things get through, but I'm not sure... Where's Carlos?"

"I can't get through. Can you give him a try?" Jana nodded, and dialed the number.

"It's ringing through. No answer yet, though. Anyway, I took a look through the Gauntlet, but there was no sign of anything particu-



larly surprising. It does look like a deliberate weakening, though. Still no answer. Other mages? Vampires don't know squat about spirits, right? So they couldn't be deliberately weakening the Gauntlet. No, nothing." She hung the phone up.

"I have to admit that the weakening looked like it *could* be natural to me, but given where it is I think you're right. Anyway, let's find somewhere a bit more secluded. Have you got the nail clippings?" Jana nodded, and the two made their way to the mall, wandering into and around the parking structures until they found a quiet corner.

After checking that none of the security cameras pointed in their direction, Narcissus took his camera out and set it on its tripod, pointing at the wall. Jana handed him a small ziplock bag with nail clippings in, and he shook one out onto his left hand, closing his fist around it while he adusted the camera's controls with the other. Suddenly, light sprang from the lens, projecting a moving image onto the wall. It wavered for a moment, and then cleared, showing Carlos's predicament.

\* \* \* \*

"Step out of the car, sir, and keep your hands where we can see them." Slowly, his lips pressed together as if holding back a retort, Carlos did as he was told. He was barely out of the car before one of the officers grabbed him and slammed him down on the bonnet.

"You're under arrest on suspicion of grand theft. You have the right..." The officer was not gentle as he put the cuffs on, nor as he dragged Carlos to the patrol cruiser and threw him into the back. Carlos's head banged against the partition, and he fell into the seat.

"Hey," called the other officer, "watch how you treat police property! If you've damaged that partition, that's another charge for the sheet." His partner laughed.

"Get in. This stupid illegal probably doesn't even speak a civilized language. You're wasting your breath. Did you call the car in?"

"Oh, yes." The officer winked, very obviously, and his partner laughed again.

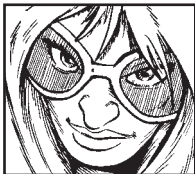
"I'd better go to the *evidence locker* with you, this time. Don't want to risk anything *going missing* before the trial, do we?"

"You don't trust me? I'm deeply, deeply hurt. Hey, fajita-head! You alive back there?" Carlos was sitting upright, watching carefully, but he said nothing. "You been talking to lawyers or something? Or just too dumb to speak? You'll talk at the station, anyway."

The officers continued joking with each other, and taunting Carlos, as they drove to the station, but Carlos just gazed out of the window.

\* \* \* \*





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“Oh shit. How did that happen?” Jana was looking at the scene in an interrogation room, where Carlos’s face was pressed into a table by the police officer leaning on the back of his head.

“We’re idiots, that’s how. How many reports of police racism have we logged from here? And then we send a big Hispanic guy driving around in a Tesla.”

“Oh, shit shit shit. They thought he stole it.”

“Or just that they could get away with that claim in court. We have to get the car back, you know. I really don’t think it’s clean.”

“What about Carlos? Doesn’t he take priority?”

“There haven’t been any deaths in custody for over a year, not since the last Sheriff-Coroner was forced out over the Menendez boy. The car’s more urgent.” Narcissus flicked the camera off, and dropped the nail clipping back into the bag before fishing his car key out of a pocket. “It won’t be far, and we might still be able to get to it before it’s impounded.” The camera sprang back to life, this time showing the car parked by the side of the road, a big “Police” label on the windshield.

“Not far at all,” said Jana. “Let’s move.”

\* \* \* \*

“A *tarp*? Not exactly high-tech, Narcissus.”

“It’ll do. As far as the cops are concerned it’s just a stolen car connected to not very much else. They aren’t going to put that much effort into looking for it.”

“How are we going to get it home?”

“We aren’t. I’m going to report it stolen and buy a new one with the insurance. You’re sure you’ve got everything out of it?”

“Yes. What are you going to do; set fire to it by remote control?”

“The downside of an electric car is there’s no gas; I’m not sure it would burn well enough. No, I think I’m just going to abandon it.”

“OK, so time to open a portal and get Carlos out.”

“Careful, you’re thinking like Kira. Although we may have to film that scene; it’d be a good one. No, we don’t want this to become “suspect mysteriously vanishes from cell”. There’s something supernatural involved here, and if we haven’t drawn its attention already, I don’t want to. Plus, if this becomes a weird case, they will want to ask pointed questions of the legal owner of the car, who happens to be me.”

“Fair point. Let’s get a coffee and make a plan.”

\* \* \* \*



The desk sergeant glanced up at the man who had just walked in, and sat up a bit straighter. The man removed his designer sunglasses, revealing vivid green eyes, and smiled thinly as he slipped the glasses into his upper pocket.

"I believe you are holding an associate of mine, Mr Martin Vasquez."

"One moment, sir. No, there doesn't appear to be anyone of that name here."

"Really? I believe you arrested him for stealing a car this afternoon. It's all been a terrible misunderstanding, and I'm here to sort it out. The car is mine, you see, and I had lent it to him." The man held out folded registration documents, the hundred dollar bill within just visible. The desk sergeant swallowed, took the documents, and examined them carefully, holding them below the visitor's eye level.

"Ah yes, I see. He's just down as M. Vasquez here, but "car theft" it is, so that will be him. Sorry about the delay; if you'd like to take a seat, I'll call the custody sergeant." The man nodded, then fixed his eyes on the officer.

"I do hope nothing untoward has happened to my associate."

"Oh, I'm sure it hasn't sir. If you would wait a moment." The desk sergeant disappeared into a back room for a moment, and then came out, smiling. "The custody officer will be here in a moment; he'd be happy to discuss the matter with you."

The following interview was not long. The visitor's documents were "examined" again, at rather greater length, and the officer was most apologetic that the car appeared to have been stolen again, from the side of the road where it had been left for the police tow-truck. Carlos was brought out of the cells, waking carefully to avoid jarring his cracked ribs, and handed back his possessions. He looked hard at the visitor, and then nodded.

"Sorry, boss."

"If you would at least wear a suit, you would not look so suspicious. I'm terribly sorry for wasting your time, officers. Thank you for your cooperation."

The two left the station together, and Narcissus, dressed as a chauffeur, opened the rear door of the limousine to allow them to get in before getting in himself to drive them away.

"Sorry about the delay, Carlos. We had to secure everything in the car first."

"Shut up, Narcissus." Oddly, it was Jana, still in the form of a man, who said that. "There was a spirit in that station, quite a big one."





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"Crap. Any chance that it spotted you?"

"Doubt it. Carlos, are you OK?"

"Feels like a cracked rib..."

"OK, let me see." Jana pulled out her PDA and waved it across Carlos's chest, placing her fingers lightly on a few spots. "Better now?"

"Yes, thanks. Next time, any chance of getting me out *before* I get trounced?"

"I'll try," Narcissus said from the front. "The footage of the police brutality is really clear, though. If I can figure out a way I could possibly have taken it without magic, I might even release it to the press. Otherwise, it'll go in the next Kira episode, along with the escape."

"Guys, I hate to interrupt, but we have to do something about the spirit. It was *not* friendly looking, and it seemed to be pushing the cops around."

"Well, spirits are your department. Let's have Kira summon and defeat it."

"Um, shouldn't we plan a little bit more carefully than that?" Carlos sounded the voice of caution.

"OK. What do we know about this spirit? It's big and ugly. How can we find out more about a spirit that lives in a police station? Hmmmm... I think Narcissus is right. If I summon it, I can question it before banishing it. And I'm about to change back."

"It still sounds very risky to me," Carlos said while gazing studiously out of the window. "I mean, I know you have power far beyond my comprehension, but so does it."

"Jana's good with spirits. I'm sure she can handle it. I just want to get decent footage of the event." There was a brief pause, as Jana wriggled around in the confined space to change back into her own clothes.

"Do you think this spirit is responsible for manipulating the Sheriff-Coroners?" she asked, as she straightened her jacket.

"Seems unlikely. I would expect that creature to hang around the Sheriff-Coroner, not go slumming in Irvine. I do expect it to be working for whatever is in charge, though. Which means that I now agree with you; I really don't think it can be a vampire. Maybe another mage, though."

"Seer?"

"They don't tend to like violence and chaos, particularly not chaos. Scelestus seems more likely, all things considered."



"Oh well, I feel so much happier now," said Carlos. "What could possibly go wrong, with the two of you facing off against a completely unknown Scelestus?"

"Sorry, mother." Narcissus flashed Carlos a grin in the rear-view mirror. "We do plan to be careful, you know, but we can't be so careful that we don't actually *do* anything."

\* \* \* \*

The parking structure was dark and all but deserted; Jana and Narcissus were the only people on the upper level, and the only parked cars looked a lot like abandoned vehicles. Jana adjusted her Kira outfit again, and glanced out, at the police station.

"I'll have to move quickly with the summons once the spirit pokes its head out of the station, so make sure you're set up."

"I'll start filming before you catch its attention. Please try to make sure there's something to see, though."

"A huge spirit with wings and horns isn't enough?"

"We need something that shows you summoned it. Draw a magic circle on the ground and make sparks leap from your fingers."

"Luminous paint OK for the circle? I think the camera will pick up my attention-getter anyway."

"Luminous paint is fine. Do a mystic pass and then hold the pose." Narcissus bent to the camera as Jana followed his directions. "OK, great. Now you can do the circle."

"You can help. Weird mystic runes, right?"

"Sure." Narcissus grabbed the paint out of his bag, and the two of them quickly painted a circle, deftly adding intricate runes between the concentric rings that marked the edge. It took only a couple of minutes, and Narcissus returned to the camera.

"OK, can you strike that mystic pose again?" Jana stared at him.

"Um, close enough, I guess. Why didn't you say?"

"Sorry. Yeah, that looks about right. OK, *action!*"

Jana lifted her PDA and tapped on its screen, muttering under her breath. Suddenly the whole world seemed to flex and shift, faces peering out from every shadow as a flock of lights took wing from the circle and burst into the night sky. A sound that was equally a silence was felt as much as heard, and Narcissus smiled in satisfaction as the recording level indicator on the camera spiked up. He glanced over to the police station in time to see a spirit appear through the roof, before the effect faded and it vanished. Cursing, Narcissus thumbed the controls of the camera as he cast the rote to allow him to see what was going on.





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Jana smiled fleetingly as she glimpsed his actions, but immediately held her PDA up once more, scrolling down a list of names of power as she spoke words of command. There was a rushing as of cockroaches running from the light, and a fountain of greenish light sprang up from the summoning circle. Orange flames formed in the heart of it, and the spirit appeared, snarling and spreading its wings.

"Hold! I am Kira Dark, Occult Investigator. What is your purpose in these realms?"

The spirit glared at her, and roared defiance at the ceiling.

"Answer me! I command you!" She lifted her PDA slightly. The spirit turned towards Narcissus, who kept his eyes on the camera, its small screen faithfully reproducing the scene, spirit and all. Jana stretched out her empty hand, and bluish-white sparks sprang out at the demon. "Answer!"

"I control this station for my lord." The spirit spoke with many voices at once, some crying out in anger, others in pain, but all screaming.

"Who is your lord?"

"My lord. The lord of us all. The lord who will see you fall into darkness and violence." Jana grimaced.

"Where is your lord?"

Once again, the spirit roared, flexing its wings and apparently trying to break free of the command that held it there. For now, however, Jana's control held.

"Answer!"

"Santa Ana."

"What does he do?"

"He rides the Sheriff-Coroner." The spirit was almost thrashing now, clawing at the air as if there were an invisible barrier. The light was reflecting off the sweat on Jana's forehead, but she kept her voice steady.

"Why does he control the Sheriff-Coroner?"

"He will see you fall into darkness and violence!" There was a flash of black light, and the clawed arm of the spirit crashed into the floor, raising a cloud of dust and chips of concrete. Jana jumped back slightly.

"What is he?"

"He is as I am, eternal, he is lord!" Another flash of black light, and a great arm slammed into a support column. Narcissus swung



the camera round, drawing it back to keep Jana in shot as well. She swung her PDA forward, tapping the screen rapidly. Blue-white lightning sprang from her hands again, striking at the spirit and making it howl. It leaped at Jana, and a gout of fire burst from its mouth, scorching the concrete where she had stood moments before. She rolled, sheltering her PDA, and came to her feet again, lightning stabbing at the spirit once more. It roared again, and this time Jana wasn't quite quick enough. The great fist caught her shoulder, tumbling her to the ground.

Behind them, Narcissus quickly altered the settings on the camera, and watched as the spirit sprang, only to remain in the same spot. Jana got to her feet, swaying a little, and raised both hands above her head.

"Go back to the hells that spawned you, creature of darkness!"

The lightning was even brighter this time, and the explosion of silent flame that followed marked the disappearance of the spirit.

Jana pressed her hand to her side for a moment, and then stood up straighter. She passed her PDA over the scene, and smiled and nodded.

"And, *cut!*" Narcissus called out. "Great work!"

"Thanks for the help. He was a bit tougher than I anticipated."

"No problem. Great footage, too."

"But not the end of the problem."

"No. We do know that it's an agent of violence, however. That's progress."

"A more powerful spirit of violence. Narcissus, I'm really not sure we can take down a more powerful spirit by ourselves."

"So we ask for help at the Lorehouse. Offer guest-starring roles in Kira Dark as an incentive."

"Right. Like that will work."

"We have fans in the Council, you know. Not all those downloads are from Sleepers."

"Whatever you say. Let's get out of here, just in case the boss was keeping an eye on his servant." Narcissus nodded.

"Good idea. The quick way. We need time to think about this."

He turned to the camera to the wall, and the rectangle of light it cast blurred to become a door into a comfortable living room. "Ladies first."

Jana hopped through the door and, grabbing his camera, Narcissus followed. The door vanished, leaving the smoke to drift unmolested in the fading light from the magic circle.



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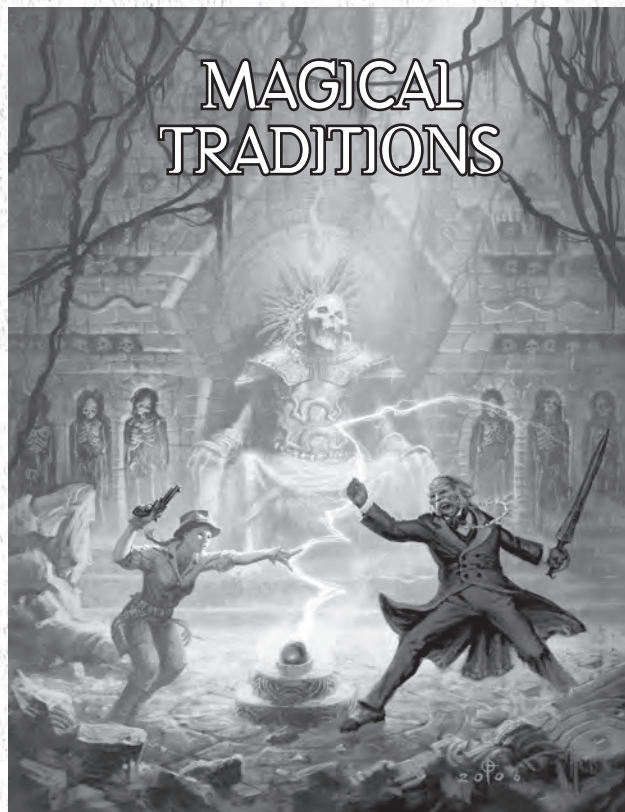
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**Not Tennis, But the Other Thing:** Brian Glass, matt milberger and Craig Grant

**That Smell:** John "Bax" Masterson

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# INTRODUCTION

*"You'll see that, since our fate is ruled by chance,  
Each man, unknowing, great,  
Should frame life so that at some future hour  
Fact and his dreamings meet."*

— Victor Hugo

This book is a bit of an experiment. Unlike the larger format used for **Guardians of the Veil**, this book is aimed more squarely at players of characters involved with the subject order. More attention is paid in here to what your character might know as a member of the Free Council, who he might trust and fear and how you can put that to work for you at the game table. To that end, this book strives to be frank with you, reader.

Yes, this book alludes. Yes, this book implies. Yes, some of the message is in the subtext. But if you're going to use the Free Council in your World of Darkness, we shouldn't take the chance that we don't understand each other. So before you come along for the ride, take a look under the hood.

## *Conflict: What's Past vs. What's Possible*

When first bringing a group such as the Free Council into play, it's easy to take an extremist approach to the order's characterization, but the Free Council is neither a utopian institution of right-thinking geniuses with all the answers nor a geeky and laughable bunch of gadget-crazed technophiles. The Free Council embodies a core conflict inherent in **Mage**: the past versus the future. This is — and must remain — a dilemma for the Free Council, even while some of its members rave like fanatics. Without this conflict, the Free Council would dissolve and be absorbed by the Diamond. The drive to reach the future keeps this order climbing and grasping onward.

The Free Council strives for the enlightened city of tomorrow, the Libertines are desperate to touch the future, but they cannot reach far enough to touch it without standing on the shoulders of the past. The stars of the Free Council speak of leaving the past for the future, but it's not as if they're abandoning all the secrets of the Arcana that have been uncovered during the past 1,000 years. If the mages of the Free Council have to scale the ruins of Atlantis to leave

them behind, are they willing to do that? If the mages of the Free Council have to burn down this city to make room for their prototype utopia, are they willing to do that?

If the leaders of your Libertine cabal hand you torches and long knives and send you out to make room for the brave new world, what would you do?

## *Conflict: Freedom vs. Security*

At the same time, the Free Council is always struggling with its democratic ideals. Hierarchy fosters the Lie, but anarchy subverts futurism, doesn't it? The Free Council relies on social hierarchies to regulate its disparate members and manage its resources — especially its human resources — to avoid making the same mistakes that every other order has been making for centuries.

This is part of a larger conflict: the Free Council versus itself versus the Atlantean orders. The Free Council isn't at war with the Atlantean orders, though. In truth, Libertine mages are probably relieved that others will tend the family farm while they go off in search of the helluva great universe next door. But, at the same time, the Free Council is separate enough from the other orders that they see emissaries as one of the important roles to be filled in any city (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 43). This shines a bit of light on the Free Council's internal conflicts — those of extremists versus moderates, of radicals versus conservatives. Some Libertines shout the party rhetoric while tugging on the leash of their more liberal comrades.

Without some degree of hierarchy, the Free Council would fly apart. Though the Libertines may actively mock and deride the other orders, the Libertines regard them as essential allies — or tools. Though he wants to feel free and powerful, if Jack isn't careful Tyler Durden and his Space Monkeys will get them all killed.



## *Not a Conflict: Magic vs. Technology*

To be fair, magic and technology experience some friction, but the Free Council isn't a reason-versus-wonder organization. It wants to enjoy the benefits of both wonder and reason. The Seers of the Throne and the Exarchs aren't trying to subvert the world with science, they're trying to deny the Fallen World the joys and wonders — the power — that come with magic. The Free Council isn't trying to replace magic with technology (or vice versa); the Free Council is trying to rekindle everyone's appreciation for the wonders of human endeavor. Just because it isn't Atlantean doesn't mean it's not magical.

The Free Council marvels. It appreciates that humans are changing the Fallen World and defying the Exarchs' drab prison world even without magic. Imagine what will be possible in the new utopia, when innovation and wizardry are joined together at last!

## *References and Inspiration*

**Pi:** Mysticism and technology collide, but don't exactly conflict. This is a sterling example of how reaching beyond one's understanding can destroy a person, and how it can be frightening to try and understand the world we live in. The event horizon of an existential crisis is that moment when the sense of celestial scale is finally, terribly achieved.

**The Matrix movies:** In many ways, *The Matrix* is a perfect fit for **Mage: The Awakening**. A handful of open-minded humans escape the subjugation of their kind and fight back against an oppressive and overwhelming enemy that controls our world from a perch beyond our reality? And the humans' secret weapon is an understanding of a higher truth that enables them to defy the world's limits? These movies draw on some of the same ancient inspirations that **Mage** does. To appreciate the unwillingness of Free Council mages to just buy into the Atlantean talk, imagine if you were Neo without the luxury of a magical pill to convince you that Morpheus is telling the truth. If you just had to take Morpheus's word for it... could you?

**Fight Club:** We have something that starts off looking rebellious and scandalously rad, an outrageous rush, but gets too crazy and so out of control, so dangerous and deceptive, that it takes on its own terrible life

and tramples its masters. Plus, underneath it all, is this frightening, unreal revelation that some other dreadful force is at work. On the one hand, the mages of the Free Council are open-minded and modern and accepting and young and even fun. On the other hand, the mages of the Free Council are a sometimes untrusting, manipulative and overzealous bunch who sometimes don't have the healthy fear necessary to keep themselves from going too far.

**Harry Potter:** These staple tales of modern wizardry are important references if only because they don't make a big deal out of blending magic and technology. Magic isn't inherently antithetical to technology, and no one panics over how they both fit into the cosmology of the stories. Wizards work with cars and trains without having to be militant technocrats or fanatical digerati. If nothing else, the *Harry Potter* stories are a major part of our pop culture's picture of modern wizards, and that's relevant here. Sure, the *Hellblazer* comics are also great modern magic tales, but John Constantine is well represented by other orders. Potter is pop culture, and the Free Council covers pop culture better than any other order.

**Hellboy and BPRD:** It's a fine line, dealing with characters who live with the supernatural every day but don't quite lose their ability to marvel at it. In both the *Hellboy* and the *BPRD* comics, we get to see people who don't necessarily freak out at the sight of a ghost or a wizard but who still have an ability to find such things wondrous. Even while the fish-man and the pyrokinetic girl are able to do things like empathize with an abominable snowman, they're able to appreciate the fact that coming in contact with him makes them special. Don't strip the mages of the Free Council of their ability and willingness to marvel.

**The Prestige:** Christopher Nolan's brilliantly methodical thriller reminds us that thinking we know the truth is so often better than actually knowing the truth, even when we were right. It's also a tale about the price to be paid for pursuing power for the wrong reasons. To appreciate why this movie suits the Free Council in particular, consider how even the most mundane tricks maintain their appeal as long as we're willing to appreciate their mystery and let ourselves marvel. Then watch how ruin inevitably follows the desire to look behind the curtain.







# CHAPTER ONE: ESCAPING YESTERDAY

Years ago, Haden made a deal with himself. He'd been living in the past, watching it through a spell on his portable television like an obsessive fan addicted to the drug of the ultimate reality show. Over and over, he watched episodes in the lives of Libertines he knew or had heard of.

He watched the Chicago Consilium meeting of 1996. He watched the execution of Figuero Garcia, and saw that it didn't go like the story they tell. He watched the ball drop in Times Square, 1999, and couldn't see any of the mages who were supposedly there.

From his couch, in the now, every episode was a tragedy in hindsight. Every choice, no matter how well-meant, seemed to lead to more trouble. The world didn't seem much better now than it had been back then.

He told the Consilium about how everything the Free Council did was wrong, if looked at from far enough away. He made a speech in the forum about how they had to watch the past if they wanted to avoid future mistakes. "We can't look over our shoulders all the time," they said. "We have to watch where we're going."

Haden knew that was all bullshit. So he made a pact with himself that he would watch over his own past as he got older. Keep himself from making the same mistakes his fellow Libertines were making every day.

That's how he ends up standing next to himself with a gun to his head.

"This isn't right. This isn't possible," says the Haden sitting in his recliner eating a microwave dinner off his lap. He's looking up at a drier, hairier Haden. "You can't go back and change things like this."

"That's right," says the Haden with the gun. "Not after this, you can't."



***"To be nameless in worthy deeds  
exceeds an infamous history."***

**— Sir Thomas Browne,  
*Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial***

## *History*

The Free Council does not have a long history, but according to some of its younger mages, its history is already too long. Libertines are more interested in where the Free Council is going than where it has been, and this is reflected in the general lack of historical curiosity in the order. They have their share of common legends and culture, but only a small number of Libertines actively study their history.

Of course, with the Free Council just over a century old, there is still a handful of mages in the world who can *remember* most (or even all) of the Free Council's history — and they have their own ideas about how it *should* be remembered.

## *Prehistory*

The Nameless War of the 19th century set mages determined to break free from the constraints of tradition against those who wanted to lay the chains of the past ever-heavier upon the present. The revolutionary changes in Sleeper society inspired mages, who in turn inspired Sleepers, who in turn inspired more mages. There had always, throughout history, been mages who did not fit into the established orders, but in the 19th century, their numbers surged as they took their stand against the traps of tradition and for the freeing possibilities of a liberated future.

For the best part of a century, many of these mages aimed purely to overthrow the established structure of the Atlantean orders but were unable to reach any sort of agreement on what should replace it. Indeed, considered as a single movement, the most notable feature was their diversity — some drew on the steam engine for inspiration, others on growing democracies, still others on fashionable occultism or romantic longings for the noble savage. The only thing on which they agreed was the need to overthrow the (possibly corrupt, allegedly oppressive) society that kept both Sleepers and willworkers crushed.

Mages of the modern Free Council claim that members of these so-called Nameless orders (though none were really orders in the manner that the Pentacle uses that word) were involved in most of the revolutions of the 19th century, from the French communards to the Boxer Rebellion in China, from Bolivar's war in South America to the Meiji Restoration in Japan. This is probably true.

The mages were interested in changing the system and were unlikely to stand by as revolution raged around them. They were revolutionaries as well as mages and likely had ties to mortals involved in Sleeper politics of the age. Mages, after all, loved and lived with ordinary folk whose wills still had the power to shape the world — just not through overt Supernal magic. The Nameless orders took their inspiration, and some of their Sleeper pawns, from revolutions well-known to public history.

On the other hand, the claim made by some Libertines that the Nameless orders were *responsible* for many of the revolutions is treated with much more caution, even within the Free Council. Many mages who were involved in many events made it clear that they were only following Sleepers. Most of the Libertines who took credit for sparking historical revolutions in the mortal world have since been discredited as self-aggrandizing propagandists. In the early 20th century, it was fashionable oratory for Libertines to use famous revolutions as metaphors for the victories and failures of the then-new Free Council. This, in turn, lead later mages to mistake rhetoric for historical record.

Still, mages of the Free Council did make their marks on history in those fateful days. It is, for example, generally accepted in the Pentacle that mages who later became instrumental in the Free Council were likewise instrumental in ensuring the return of 10 British Members of Parliament to vote for the Great Reform Bill. This is not the stuff of mythic victories, valuable as it may be, but it exemplifies the subtle but lasting legacies of yesteryear's more elegant Free Council.

Many Libertines would like to believe that the Free Council already existed at this point. After all, they argue, if there was no unity, how could the Great Refusal have been unanimous? This would, indeed, be a strong argument. Alas, it is flawed.

## *The Great Refusal*

The defining moment of the Free Council was the Great Refusal. The Seers of the Throne came to the technological, revolutionary mages and offered them wealth and power if they would join with the Seers in controlling the mass of the Sleepers. To the last, the Nameless cabals refused



the offer — some of them destroying the tempters sent to them — and joined together to form the Free Council, which would “stand for Liberty and Democracy, ever opposing the Lie.”

That is the story, and many Libertines believe it. It is plausible, in part, because it is not too far from the truth. At the close of the 19th century, the Seers of the Throne did send out emissaries with offers of alliance, hoping to co-opt these vigorous mages. Most of the mages so contacted did refuse the alliance, and these mages did come together to form the Free Council. However, things were rather messier than the legend suggests.

In the first place, the Free Council did not exist before the famous New Year's Eve meeting in 1899 (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 41). The Nameless cabals were not united. All the approaches were individual, to local cabals. They started around 1895, increasing to a peak in 1898 and by the beginning of 1899 most of the unaligned Libertine mages had been contacted.

Most of the willworkers in the Nameless cabals did reject the offers of the Seers, which led to those Nameless being targeted by the Seers as enemies. Many Nameless were killed at that time, but they were used to fighting. Some actually defeated the Seers sent after them; other Nameless escaped. These survivors started contacting other groups with similar aims, warning them of the threat. These contacts were the beginnings of the Free Council as an organized body. By late 1896, these mages, inspired by a Persian mage calling himself Razi, were spreading a common plan; the cabals expressed tentative interest in the Seers' proposals, but refused to commit themselves. Meanwhile, they gathered information and prepared for a devastating strike.

The groups were not used to working together, and had little experience of the realities of a large network. Looking back, Razi said that the most remarkable thing was that the betrayal came as late as it did. In March 1899, a cabal of mages in London decided that, given what they had learned about the Seers, joining them was a good idea. By handing over the information they had about the plot, the mages could win themselves a place of influence. Fortunately for the mages who would become the Free Council, one of those mages had a lover in a cabal in Paris, and he sent a message to warn her.

She told everyone.

The Great Refusal was enacted before the mages were ready, and wasn't the catastrophic blow against the Seers that it could have been. It did, however, very clearly demonstrate that the proto-Libertines were not interested in working with the Seers.

Unfortunately, not every unaligned group joined in. Some made the same decision as the London cabal. These groups were hunted down. Many of their members were killed or had their minds destroyed with magic, so that they could not reveal any information about the new order to their

enemies. The fact that the Free Council's birth involved a witch hunt against people who disagreed with them is not something that its founders took pride in. They quietly wrote the renegade revolutionaries out of the Free Council's history. The Great Refusal was portrayed as unanimous.

The first Assembly was convened at the end of 1899, finishing with the New Year's Eve declaration that founded the new order, the Free Council.

## Razi

Razi may be the most influential mage in the history of the Free Council. Persian, he traveled extensively during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, spreading the Free Council's credo and encouraging new Assemblies across the world. He was almost certainly Mastigos, although a few stories suggest that he was Thyrsus.

Famed for his insight into many problems, love for technology, and extravagant interest in tobacco, he is said to have been magically cured of lung cancer five times. (Some stories say this was by his own magic, others imply these spells were gestures of admiring followers.) He was still active in the Free Council when the link between smoking and cancer was revealed. His response is reported to have been, “That figures.”

Razi has not had well-attested contact with any mage since the early 1970s, and the official Free Council line is to assume he is dead. He was over 100 years old the last time he was seen, after all. On the other hand, there is also no firm evidence that he has died, for among mages absence and age do not always imply death. A few Libertines say that he has joined the Oracles.

## Pre-War

For the Free Council, the pre-war period ends with the outbreak of the First World War. It was a time of great optimism in the Free Council, and of relative harmony with the Atlantean orders. This harmony, say the Libertines, came from the devastating nature of the Great Refusal: the Atlantean orders had a lot of respect for mages who would oppose the Seers so completely, and many felt the Refusal would be a relatively easy lesson to show naïve youngsters the error of doubt and hesitation. It seems almost all Atlantean mages were ready to be patient with the future and to make allowances for this newest addition to the Pentacle's landscape.

On the mundane side, science was making dazzling progress, moving beyond even the certainties of the last century, and finally successfully coming to grips with the nature of living beings. As eminent scientists turned their efforts to investigating mediums, psychics and other aspects

of the supernatural, it was only a matter of time, the Free Council thought, before the world was fully understood, with magic an accepted part of it. Visionaries confidently predicted the mass Awakening of humankind before 1950; true optimists put it before 1925.

Democracy was also advancing across the world, with the old monarchies forced to accept parliaments and the reach of the franchise steadily expanding. In many places, it was regarded as obvious that all adult men should have the vote, and some places even believed that women should have the same rights. The Free Council enthusiastically supported these movements; the democratic utopia was supposed to arrive at about the same time as universal Awakening.

Things didn't work out quite like that.

## *The Great War*

The First World War was the end of innocence for the Free Council. The progress of history was supposed to lead to a creative democracy, peace and universal Awakening, not a generation dying in the mud as they walked into a hail of bullets. Reality was a terrible shock.

Some of the Free Council blamed supernatural forces for manipulating the Sleepers into slaughtering each other, and searched for these shadowy figures. None ever found such puppeteers, but they did find many evil creatures in the shadows of the world. As word of these discoveries spread through the Free Council, the mages came to realize that there were more opponents than the Seers. Similarly, the carnage on the mundane battlefields gave renewed influence to the part of the Free Council who had always claimed that you needed to be ready to fight to bring about peace and democracy. Most of the militant factions of the Free Council can trace their origins to this period, although a few have longer histories, going back to some of the more radical of the Nameless cabals.

The Great War also provoked profound renewed debates over the spread of science and technology within the Free Council. Until then, a majority of Libertines had agreed that the spread of technology among the Sleeping world was a good thing, that information should be spread as much as possible and that science could only liberate humanity. The appearance of weapons of mass destruction, particularly the machine gun and poison gas, made quite a few Libertines think again. For the first time, some members of the Free Council were suggesting that perhaps there really was some knowledge that would be better kept secret, away from the Sleeping masses.

Amid the death and destruction, the Free Council came to confront the unhappy truth that endless debates and votes were not always the best way to deal with crises. The first strategos was elected in 1915, and the post spread quickly across Europe, although its appearance and acceptance in the United States took a bit longer.

## Seimei

Seimei was a Japanese woman who pretended to be a man in order to join the Navy, and found herself sent to Europe on the Allied side of the Great War. She always claimed to have Awakened while floating in the Mediterranean after an explosion flung her from her ship; persistent stories said that she'd actually Awakened just before a medical examination that would have exposed her. Either way, she was Thyrsus, and took both male and female forms with considerable frequency. Many think that she was a member of a Legacy that allowed her to switch genders, but if so, it is a very quiet Legacy.

She did not return to Japan after her Awakening, finding her place in the occult world of Europe. She moved more than many mages, which contributed to her influence, but settled in Barcelona after the Second World War. Despite her violent Awakening, or perhaps because of it, she was a very moderate voice, arguing for subtle efforts to protect the Sleepers and let them find their own routes to enlightenment. She opposed dictatorships, but preferred to develop civil opposition rather than launch violent attempts at overthrow. She was involved in the opposition to General Franco, but her habit of working by encouraging Sleepers makes it impossible to determine the true extent of her influence.

Her other main contribution was in research. She believed that covert magic indicated things that were scientifically possible, and thus pursued, and encouraged, research into psychic powers and mind-over-body healing. A fair number of Libertines believe that she is ultimately responsible for the Western popularity of acupuncture, and there is evidence to support their position.

Her cabal-mates reported her as dead to their Consilium in 1993, at the age of 94. Although that may be slightly young for a Master of Life, it is not unreasonably so, and most mages accept that she is dead.

## *The Rise of Totalitarianism*

After the Great War ended, the Free Council starting taking a more active role in events in both the occult and mundane worlds. They started looking for relics of the past more actively, with the activities of the treasure-hunters often resembling pulp serials. One urban legend told in the Free Council is that at least one pulp serial is actually a slightly toned-down account of genuine Free Council treasure-hunters. (The fact that various versions disagree about which serial is part of the reason this is generally thought to be nothing more than an urban legend.) Libertines also took a more active stance against other supernatural



creatures, and in the promotion of democracy and liberty among the Sleepers.

As a result, the Libertines gradually lost the favor they had held with the Atlantean orders. While many mages were prepared to give the Libertines years to settle down, as that stretched into decades they lost patience. In addition, as the mages of the Free Council started searching for the treasures of the past in earnest they came into competition with other orders doing the same. The combination of ideological and practical conflict meant that relationships deteriorated seriously throughout the '20s, leading to all-out occult war in a few places, and cold war in far more.

While the Free Council clearly lost most of the battles for democracy in the mundane world at this time, they did have more success in cultural and scientific fields. While none of the scientists responsible for quantum mechanics were Libertines, many scientists were watched over by mages who kept them safe from Seers who might have preferred to keep such understanding away from the masses. The Free Council was also involved with the rise of science fiction. Quite a few Libertines from the period had one or two published stories (most of which were not much loved and have not aged well), but their main contribution is said to have been to keep several magazines viable by obsessively buying multiple copies of every issue. While this is an exaggeration — and old rag on the Libertines of the age — it is true that the most valuable (in cash terms) part of the library of some Lorehouses is their collection of old science fiction pulps. Rumors persist that at least one major science fiction author was (or is) also a Libertine, but he (she?) wisely keeps her (his?) identity a secret from all readers, Sleepers and Awakened.

As totalitarianism spread, the Free Council was pushed to seek peace with the “other” Atlantean orders; there were more important enemies for them all to fight. This period saw the birth of the role of emissary. Razi was one of the first, and the position spread rapidly through the Free Council, so that by the time war broke out again in Europe in 1939 it seemed most European Assemblies had one. By the end of the war, relations with the other orders had generally been patched up to something approaching their current state.

### Bistesla

Bistesla is a Russian mage who was always active in the fight against totalitarianism in her homeland. She was born around 1930, and Awakened while fighting the invading Nazi armies. Once the Nazis had been defeated, she turned her attention to trying to undermine the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union. She based herself in Leningrad, and swore that her fight would not be over until the city was St. Petersburg once more.

She fought for decades, using all the methods available to her and showing no mercy or quar-

ter to tyrants anywhere. On the other hand, she had a solid dislike of secret police, informers and show trials, and a great reluctance to get involved in inquisitions within the Free Council. She spoke out against those who suggested temporizing with tyranny, but although some took her words as a call to purge the Free Council, she always stood against such moves.

Despite her home in Leningrad, she maintained contacts with New York, initially in the Russian émigré community, but as the years passed, her contacts became more focused on the Awakened world. Mastery of Space magic (even though she was Obrimos) allowed her to travel quickly between the two places, even at the height of the cold war, and she is believed to have had a substantial influence on U.S. policies toward the Soviet Union.

Her lifelong goal was fulfilled in 1991, when Leningrad was officially renamed. Bistesla is still alive, but as, in her opinion, Russians have squandered the freedom she bought them, she has retreated into more mystical studies.

## *Science, Mysticism and the Age of Aquarius*

In the early years, the Free Council was just as interested in mortal magic as in mortal science. Psychics and mediums can create supernatural effects without creating Paradoxes or luring intruders from the Abyss, no matter how impossible the effect or how numerous the Sleeper witnesses; indeed, even these magicians themselves are Sleepers! This interest was reflected in (or stemmed from every mage's origin in) the Sleeper world of the day, where eminent scientists investigated spiritualist mediums.

However, from the 1930s onward, the Free Council devoted most of its interest to science and technology. This was, in large part, due to the stunning advances in these fields, which had no counterpart in more mystical fields. Relativity, quantum mechanics, plate tectonics, genetics, antibiotics, test-tube babies . . . nothing seemed to be impossible for science, even the logically impossible. Many in the Free Council came to believe that occultism was locked in the past, and that only science could lead them to the brave new world of the future. This move was reflected among the Sleepers, and most scientists came to believe that there was nothing to the supernatural but trickery. A few Libertines found this suspicious; after all, serious scientists *should* have no problem finding evidence of the supernatural. Some Libertines even investigated, but found no global conspiracy, just lots of local ones, which involved the Atlantean orders often enough for pressing the issue to be politically difficult.

Society shifted in the '60s and '70s, with pop culture murmuring about the coming of the Age of Aquarius, which would bring technological freedom and mystical awakening. Many in the Atlantean orders blamed the Free Council for this "New Age" trend, citing the close similarity to Libertine doctrine. Some Assemblies tried to take credit on behalf of the whole Free Council, but most mages took a more nuanced view.

The biggest difference between the New Age movement and the Free Council is the pervasive technophobia of the New Age. While all generalizations have exceptions (and, young mages now point out, many of the exceptions have websites), the general attitude of the New Age to technology was negative, while the Free Council was positive. Imagineers and other mages interested in memetics have spent some time trying to untangle the relations, and most agree that the beliefs of the Free Council were among the streams that fed into the New Age movement.

The influence these days tends to be the other way. The new religions of the New Age are very popular with Free Council mages, and not just because they are new. They also tend to be democratic and liberal, something that appeals strongly to the Free Council. Technopagans form a very comfortable environment for some of the same kinds of mystics attracted to the Free Council, and some mages guide some fringe religious groups in the hope of leading them to a deeper Awakening.

## Adelard

Adelard is an English mage, born in the west of England some time in the 1950s. Acanthus, he is a sincere Wiccan, and is friends with most significant figures in that religion in Britain. However, he prefers to personally play a less public role, although witches who show particular promise are often directed to him for training and advice. He claims that he often learns more from them than they from him.

Adelard is strong believer in freedom and democracy for all, including such figures as the Seers of the Throne and theriomorphs. (He is also somewhat famous for being skeptical about the existence of vampires; many mages think that this is a pose. Others wonder about just why the vampires are so scared of him.) He does not think that Wicca is for everyone, and says that most religions have some good in them. His rather jaundiced attitude to the Abrahamic religions is well known, however. He does not make up problems, or believe wild stories, but he does emphasize the things their followers do wrong. Recently, of course, that has been easier than ever. He is, however, very strongly opposed to witch hunts and inquisitions, even against Christians.

Unlike many mystics, Adelard believes that spiritual awakening, or Awakening, is more likely

to happen in conditions of calm, peace and plenty. Any suffering he imposes is entirely symbolic. Within the Free Council, he is well-known for promoting new approaches to the world, seeing change as an organic part of life. This is an easy sell to Libertines, and has made him a popular figure, although some see him as rather shallow.

## *The Networked World*

The Free Council has always loved communication technology. The Great Refusal itself was organized more by telegram and telegraph than telepathy, and part of the reason the Great Refusal worked so well was that most Seers simply weren't yet looking out for that sort of thing. That changed, of course, but the Libertines constantly pushed to stay ahead of the curve, using the most advanced technology and boosting it a little with magic when they felt it wasn't quite up to standard.

Mages of the Free Council made use of all communication technologies. Duplicators allowed small cabals to produce 'zines, which they then distributed to Sleepers in an attempt to provoke some more awareness of the reality of the world. Other Libertines used contacts in the entertainment business to put mystical messages into films and television. Still others used telephones to contact Sleepers, sometimes cold-calling, salesmen offering enlightenment, sometimes leaving cryptic messages to push a particular Sleeper a bit closer to the truth. Independent films distributed on copied video cassettes, tapes of concerts that went a bit beyond what reality normally allows, photocopies of photographs of strange creatures: all these things were passed around both within and outside the Free Council.

There were attempts to link everything together, to produce some sort of global communication network linking the whole Free Council, and allowing it to rise above the local stage, but they never worked. They either relied too heavily on magic, or were too easy for hostile groups (fortunately, normally the Guardians of the Veil rather than the Seers) to compromise. Some Libertines became experts in breaking into supposedly secure communication systems, and turned their best efforts against the networks the Free Council itself produced. They all fell, but the time taken steadily increased.

Despite these failures, it did mean that the Free Council as a whole was ready for the Internet. They used newsgroups, posting scanned images of Atlantean text as "abstract art" and drawing the ire of the Guardians of the Veil as never before. A few cabals even set up gopher sites. The invention of the web inspired them. It seems more Libertine cabals maintain web pages than don't. Of course, this is generally *not* the cabal's homepage in any relevant sense — mages do not post their names, addresses and photographs to the Internet unless they are naïve and stupid. (And so it



happens occasionally.) Rather, Libertine cabals often maintain websites dedicated to their more mundane pursuits, whether French cinema or anthropology, just to tap into the glorious mass traffic of modern human communication. Code phrases may be included in these sites to help other Libertines find them, but such clues also help Seers of the Throne and Banishers.

The potential of the Internet for global communication was obvious. The Internet's lack of security was also obvious.

So, the top security experts in the Free Council went to work. It took about 15 years, but in the end they had a system that, as far as they could tell, was immune to anything short of rubber-hose decryption. (This refers to the situation in which the secret police beat you with a rubber hose until you tell them your password — it can crack any system.) The social scientists in the Free Council had already designed a system that could handle one or more members being compromised, and which had a good chance of spotting false nodes.

This was then opened to the Free Council as a whole. The system supports a mailing list, but includes time lags that make a real-time system, such as a web bulletin board or chat service, impossible. Many — though nowhere near most — Libertines are on the mailing list. Indeed, a fair number of Libertines are on the list several times, under different aliases. Handles on the mailing list always differ from a mage's common shadow name, although that does not prevent odd coincidences. The security requires an Atlantean password and one piece of magical equipment (which is supposed to be kept in a Demesne) to access. It is covert, however, so some Libertines play fast and loose with that rule. Everyone on the list is, therefore, known to be a mage, and the social engineering aspects mean that any non-Libertine who gets on is quickly found and removed.

The list is completely free of spam. It is also, say its detractors, completely free of useful content. No one posts real contact information to the list; it is always possible that one person on the list has defected or been utterly controlled with Mind magic. No one talks about the details of plans, although lots of people post vague, grandiose ideas for reforming the entire world. There are many arguments about Free Council principles, some of which descend into flame-wars and name-calling. There is a recurring flame-war over the question of whether vampires exist, with mages posting "I know a vampire" being accused of lying in an attempt to mislead others and keep them away from the truth. There are lots of digressions into popular culture, so discussions between the groups who are pro- and anti- this year's franchise blockbuster movie have been banned by peer pressure, on the grounds that they are a waste of the Free Council's work creating the site. The whole list is covered by a strict confidentiality agreement, which the magical component enforces with Fate magic. Most people on the

list agree that the only thing actually worth protecting is a list of Arcana nicknames and Libertine buzzwords.

Global communication has not yet transformed the Free Council. It is an ugly admission for any Libertine to make that, when put in ordinary human environments, a mage's humanity is evident. For all that human ingenuity and Atlantean magic have conspired to create a miraculous tool for global communication, it so often fails to rise above pettiness. Even if every Libertine were wholly dedicated to the creation of a bold tomorrow and a new breakthrough in civilization, they would all still have to escape the distractions and indignities of life in the Fallen World.

## Six Stars

Six Stars is a Brazilian mage, based in Rio. She occasionally pretends that her shadow name is taken from obscure Brazilian mythology, but actually it's taken from film reviews; since *Awakening*, she's one step better than the best. A *Moros*, she has quite a reputation as a Necromancer, despite still being fairly young; most people believe she was born in the '70s.

She is also something of a revolutionary, quite happy to break eggs if that's what it takes to make the omelet. She has a strongly developed sense of right and wrong, and a feeling that the ends justify the means. She also feels that ends can taint the means; something good in itself can be wrong if directed toward oppression. The spread of democracy in South America in recent years makes her happy, but she is still involved in the fight against corruption, police-backed death squads and cults that sacrifice street children to nameless monstrosities from outside space and time.

Her revolutionary activities have more of an artistic streak than most; she is very good at poetic justice. She also seems to be very good at finding the right people, something she prides herself on; and at not catching innocent bystanders in the blast. Some more cynical mages sneer at her as the "ethical terrorist," but those who believe direct, violent action is sometimes necessary mostly admire her.

Six Stars herself has disowned some of the stories circulating about her. These have almost all been a good fit to her image, but she has said that she doesn't want to take credit for others' actions. She has said nothing about the half-dozen versions of her early life, however, or anything about the many, wildly different "photographs of Six Stars in carnival costume" (said costumes normally involving about six stars) that are popular. As a result, for such a famous mage, very few details are known about her and very few stories are certainly true; that is almost certainly the way she wants it.

## *The End of History*

History always ends at the present. Free Council mages think that this makes the present far more important than the past, and mainly worry about the past when worrying about escaping from it. Indeed, the fact that the Free Council has, fundamentally, changed little in the last 50 years has many young mages complaining that the Free Council is too conservative, as bad as the Atlantean orders. The long period of relative stasis is, indeed, somewhat surprising, and many members of the Free Council expect something radical to happen soon, maybe with the mailing list, maybe from some completely unexpected direction.

Most of them are looking forward to it.

## *Philosophies of Freedom*

The Free Council is barely 100 years old, so its members are bound together by its philosophy, rather than by Free Council traditions. There are three central tenets that all Libertines hold to be important, and one interest that virtually all Libertines share. One of the reasons that this is enough to hold the Free Council together is that these principles are radically different from those held dear by the other orders. The other is that the Free Council is, globally, only loosely united, which is the way most of its members like it. A strongly unified order would need a hierarchy, and hierarchy fosters the Lie. The three tenets and one common interest give the Libertines enough in common for them to be comfortable acknowledging other Libertines as members of the same order — as long as the others don't try to tell them what to do. Individual Libertines put the Free Council's principles into effect in very different ways, and won't tolerate other mages telling them that they aren't proper Free Council mages. If they'd wanted that, they'd have joined the Guardians of the Veil.

### **Character Concepts**

Character concepts are scattered throughout this chapter. These are not designed to be the central idea for any character. Rather, they are bits of background or personality that could be added to almost any personality type to give the character an investment in something the Free Council does.

A single character could easily embody three or four of these concepts, and thus be drawn to many of the things that the Free Council does, and torn between different loyalties within the Free Council.

## *Common Ground*

The tenets of the Free Council are the three principles agreed to at the Great Refusal. No Libertine rejects even one of them. On the other hand, by most estimates, there are more active

interpretations of the tenets than there are active mages in the Free Council, and these interpretations can diverge widely. Libertines often accuse their peers of "effectively" rejecting one of the tenets, by reinterpreting it to mean the opposite of its "clear meaning." Occasionally, as discussed below, this leads to actual violence and political purges, but normally it just leads to heated debate in the Assembly or Lorehouse.

## **The Tenets of the Free Council**

- Democracy seeks the truth; hierarchy fosters the Lie.
- Humanity is magical; human works have arcane secrets.
- Destroy the followers of the Lie.

The common factor, then, is meant to be that all Libertines agree that these three points are the important things to argue about, to get right. All Libertine projects should be, at least publicly, defended in terms of these principles. Some young members think that this is largely empty, nothing but a matter of the rhetoric that people use to defend their pre-existing positions. Such young firebrands often accuse their elders of being as bad as the Guardians of the Veil.

Mages with more experience know that this is much more substantial matter than that. A Libertine simply cannot argue that Sleepers should be kept from learning about all magic, because there is no way to interpret "Humanity is magical" as "Humanity is not magical and should be kept that way." It is possible to argue that Sleepers should be shielded from Awakened magic, because such exposure can drive them insane and hinder their ability to produce their kind of enchantment. But this position makes it hard to argue for removing knowledge from a Sleeper who is handling it well, an action that the Guardians of the Veil would take in a heartbeat.

Similarly, while there are strong leaders in some Assemblies, they are always there on the sufferance of the membership; a leader who paints dissent as rebellion tends to quickly face an actual rebellion, as the rank and file decide that she has become a servant of the Lie.

While this culture of debate and disagreement produces lots of tensions within the Free Council, there are two major tensions that the Free Council faces in almost all Assemblies, and a resolution to either of these tensions rarely lasts more than a few years; indeed, resolutions that last more than a few weeks tend to be seen as successful.

The first is the tension between anarchy and organization. While a single cabal can organize without a hierarchy, this is simply not practical for larger groups, such as an Assembly or Consilium. Someone needs to make decisions, and those decisions have to be carried out by others, or the group might as well be a collection of individuals. And a collection of individuals would soon be eliminated by the



Seers of the Throne or the Guardians of the Veil, and never bring liberty and enlightenment to the Sleepers.

Many Consilii are effectively representative democracies, with the Councilors chosen from the cabals of the region, and the Councilors in turn choosing the Hierarchy. As a result, most Free Council Assemblies find that they can tolerate the local Consilium, although they never stop agitating for it to be more democratic, and more like an Assembly. Of course, if the Consilium becomes too dictatorial, the Free Council must take action. Exactly what counts as *too* dictatorial is open to debate, and these debates are the manifestation of this tension that is most apparent to members of the other orders.

The second is the tension between the old and the new. The common interest of the Libertines is in the new, which biases them strongly in one direction. However, rites, Artifacts, and Imbued Items tend to be old. Old, but useful. While creating new rites and Imbued Items is not an uncommon activity for Libertines, once something has been created and fixed, it becomes part of the "old." The resolution of this tension tends to have a very immediate effect on the vitality of the local Free Council. Those who incline too far to the old quickly ossify and lose members to the Atlantean orders. Those who incline too far to the new tend to be weak, and make foolish mistakes because they refuse to learn from history. Those Assemblies that strike some sort of balance prosper, but generally in the face of criticism that they are far too conservative. (Radical Assemblies are rarely criticized for being radical; more often they are criticized for being naïve.)

The common interest in the new is very strong within the Free Council, although it is not formally required by the tenets. There are some Libertines who are fascinated by the past, particularly by past experiments with democracy and liberty, and by the products of dead mortal societies, but in most Assemblies they are eccentric outliers, not fully accepted into Libertine society, and few Assemblies have more than one such mage. Naturally, there is doubtless an Assembly somewhere in the world (most Libertines would say Greece if asked to guess) dominated by an interest in the past, but there may well just be the one.

Most Libertines focus on new science and technology, particularly technology, but most Assemblies have one or two mages with a strong interest in new arts, new religions, new fashions or some other new product of the Sleepers. On the whole, these mages are fully accepted by the other Libertines, who accept that the enchantments of Sleepers are not exhausted by technology.

## Magic and Science

The Free Council sees no incompatibility between Magic and Science, broadly speaking. They differ strongly in their opinions of exactly what each can teach the other, but the official line of the Free Council is that everyone agrees they are

complementary, at least, or even innately interdependent. Some Libertines see Magic and Science as basically the same thing.

Libertines are opposed to technocracy, not technology.

## Science and Technology

The Free Council stands out among the other orders for its energetic engagement with science and technology. Libertine mages with no real interest in science or technology are a small minority; those who are actively hostile to it are extremely rare. On the other hand, mages who just enjoying playing with new technological tools are much more common. Libertine mages have many interests beyond the technical, and many choose to focus on those other concerns instead.

That still leaves many mages with a strong interest in science and technology. Most Free Council mages are more interested in technology than in theoretical science, because they know that theoretical science is, at best, seriously incomplete; it cannot explain spirits, just as a basic starting point. Further, Free Council mages are *mages*, and thus more likely interested in technology from a magical perspective than a scientific one. To the best of anyone's knowledge, no Free Council mage has made a significant contribution to Sleeper science, although a fair number have their names (sometimes pseudonyms, but not often their shadow names) on run-of-the-mill scientific papers. There are rumors of a Free Council mage with a Nobel Prize, but they remain simply rumors.

Libertines typically come to science and technology from the perspective of the difference between covert and vulgar magic. They believe that the distinction tells them something important about the relationship between the Supernal and Fallen Worlds, and that technological advances might allow them to make more effects covert.

## About Science

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

—Clarke's Law

"Any technology distinguishable from magic is insufficiently advanced."

—Popular corollary to Clarke's Law

"Any magic indistinguishable from technology is covert."

—Razi's Postulate

"When we can fling fireballs in Times Square and have the Sleepers think that we are charlatans with something up our sleeves, we will have won the first battle for reality."

—Bistesla



"You're not paranoid when the laws of nature really are out to get you."

—Meme popular in the Free Council

"Magic opens up possibilities. Through magic, we can infallibly learn what we could do without it, if only we knew the way."

—Seimei

### *The Covert Is the Possible*

A relatively small group of Libertine mages have beliefs very close to those of the Atlantean orders. These Libertines believe that magic is covert if you could actually do that, in that situation, without magic, if only you knew exactly what to do. They still think that magic breaks scientific laws, because you do not, in fact, do what would be necessary to make something happen mundanely. If you did, you wouldn't need to spend Mana, and Sleepers wouldn't cause problems even if the result looked utterly improbable.

Those who believe this think that Sleeper science is fundamentally wrong, or at least deeply incomplete. Telepathy (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 212) is covert, which means, if these mages are right, that humans can communicate mind-to-mind without the need for any technology or magic; they just don't know how. Similar considerations apply to all the variants of Mage Sight; they are all covert, so Sleepers could be taught to do them.

This group tends to produce the stereotypical mad scientist types, although it also produces many mages who seem perfectly sane until they start talking about their theories. Mages working along these lines do not publish in reputable scientific journals, and they don't have a good track record of producing working technology. Indeed, they have fewer things to point to as concrete results than any of the other groups. They claim that this is unsurprising; discovering new scientific laws is difficult, and they haven't really been working at it that long. Other mages have to admit that recent scientific discoveries have revealed that a lot more is mundanely possible than they believed a century ago, so this group still has some time to show results before most Libertines will dismiss them as pure cranks.

Mages in this group often take eccentric Sleeper scientists under their wings. Parapsychologists are a particularly favored group, as are scholars working on the links between quantum mechanics and consciousness, or on the

mysterious healing powers of meditation. These savants are dismissed as eccentric at best, charlatans at worst, by the scientific establishment. However, many claim that humans can naturally do things that willworkers can achieve through covert magic. The mages in this group think that they are right, and want to encourage them to find out exactly how humans can perform these feats.

Protection for these groups typically takes the form of ensuring funding and a place to work, and protecting the few journals in which they can share results. Sometimes, however, the researchers are targeted by those who would like to keep the Mysteries more mysterious, from Guardians of the Veil to vampires to theriomorphs, and the mage must take more direct action. Alternatively, some scientists can get themselves into very dangerous situations, particularly ones who investigate hauntings in an attempt to learn to see ghosts. Some mages get a bit too proactive in protecting their pet research groups, launching attacks on supernatural and mundane forces that might become threats.





Many mages also try to nudge the research in promising directions. They believe that anything requiring vulgar magic is impossible without magic, and thus that there is no point investigating it. Parapsychologists looking into telekinesis are thus to be discouraged. This can easily lead to the mage feeling that she has to take control of the group, because only her superior wisdom and knowledge can properly guide it. On the other hand, she does not want to tell them the whole truth, because then they would be less likely to find the mundane way of doing something. She *certainly* doesn't want any of the researchers to Awaken. More than a few mages have woken up one morning to find themselves controlling a group of Sleepers, feeding them useful lies and steering them away from Awakening. Most still manage to justify their actions to themselves, but realize that it would be best to keep them secret from the rest of the Free Council.

Many of these mages also carry out their own experiments, as some covert spells, such as Change Weather (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 172) and Alter Conductivity (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 194), are outside the range of things that Sleeper researchers tend to investigate. Some mages do the experiments alone, trying to build technology to achieve the desired end, so that they can study how it works to learn how to produce the same effect without the technology. Others feel that it is important to work with Sleepers, because there is always a risk of the mage's Supernal connection contaminating the results. While most of these mages believe that their subjects should give informed consent, some come to believe that the end justifies the means, and use technological and magical means to push the Sleepers into situations where they must manifest the natural powers to survive. Of course, *most* of them ensure that the Sleepers will not actually die if they fail, although they must truly believe that they will.

### Scientific Possibility

No magic, covert or vulgar, is scientifically possible. It all blatantly contradicts what Sleepers know of science, and the degree of contradiction seems to have no bearing on whether something is covert. Change Weather (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 172) is covert despite moving thousands of tons of air and violating the laws of thermodynamics on a massive scale, while Telekinesis (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 170) is vulgar despite moving a few hundred kilograms at most. Atlantean mages might think that the distinction is due to scientific possibility, but that, the Libertines say, is because they don't actually know any science.

There is far less consensus on what actually does make the difference between Paradox-

causing spells and covert spells. Is the nature of Paradox-risky magic an arbitrary creation of the Exarchs, designed to summon punishment from the Abyss for Fallen World mages who tread too close to Supernal power? Is it crackling chaotic static caused by friction between the supernatural laws of the Supernal Realms and the natural laws of the Fallen World? Is it all some half-recognized truth misunderstood by terrestrial mages who simply have not yet made the spiritual or intellectual breakthrough necessary to avoid Paradoxes? Disagreements about this drive some of the major philosophies of the Free Council.

### *The Covert Is Almost Possible*

These mages believe that, while covert magic lets you do things that are actually impossible in the circumstances, it lets you do the things that are nearly possible. That is, covert magic fills in small gaps in the existing, mundane mechanisms to bring about the desired result. The most dramatic example is the difference between Call Lightning (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 168), which is covert, and Thunderbolt (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 173), which is vulgar, even though the bolt of electricity is considerably larger in the former case. When there is a storm overhead, the mundane world does not need to be nudged much to produce a bolt of lightning, so the magic is covert. On the other hand, things need to be changed a lot to make a similar bolt of electricity leap from a mage's hand, although a small spark of static electricity is covert.

This is probably the largest single group in the Free Council as a whole, although it is certainly not a majority, and there are many Assemblies that this group does not dominate. They do not, typically, try to push the limits of science, and often have very little interest in theoretical science. On the other hand, they are great enthusiasts for technology. If technology is established in an area, a mage can do more with a small nudge. A mage carrying technology, and familiar with it, can probably set up situations in which he can achieve major effects covertly, by relying on the technology for much of the work. Indeed, in some cases it is possible to achieve the desired result without using any magic at all, and these mages tend to think that that is a good idea.

It is common for these mages to become very familiar with an area of technology, and to push back the limits of that technology in incremental ways. Many of them are responsible for minor, but useful, innovations in ubiquitous gadgets, but they are not believed to have created any world-changing devices. This is because they tend to put most of their creativity into designing covert spells that work with areas of technology they know to produce spectacular and useful effects. The best convert these spells into rites and make them available in Lorehouses.



The main limit on these roles is that they do not work at all in the absence of the relevant technological infrastructure, so mages following this philosophy tend to be enthusiasts for the spread of technology. This includes surveillance technology; many of them would be delighted if every city were covered in a network of closed-circuit cameras, because then they could spy on any point with covert magic. Of course, most supernatural beings would rather that there weren't quite so many eyes in the sky, which causes conflict.

These mages often serve as covert patrons for groups of innovative engineers, ensuring a flow of money and information to them while protecting them from interference. Sometimes, they may even be members of the group, but it is more common for them to stay a little in the background and concentrate on the magic that can be used in concert with the technology. Some still fall into the trap of trying to control "their" Sleepers, however.

While these mages like technology, they are normally a little behind the bleeding edge.

A technology is only really useful to them once it is established, and it takes a little time and study to work out how best to use a given tool with magic. As a result, they completely fail to stand out in contemporary society. Sleeper acquaintances probably come to them for advice on what computer to buy, and the like, but they do not come across as obsessed with the newest tech toys. They are, however, very likely to dedicate a technological item as a Path tool, and then keep using that item for several years, even when it becomes a little out-of-date. Oral tradition within the group strongly recommends against doing this with something very new; too many very new things fail to catch on, and become completely useless within a few months.

### *Belief Defines Reality*

Some Libertines believe that the difference between covert and vulgar magic depends on what the Sleepers

believe is possible — or what the Exarchs have decided will be. As evidence in support of their position, these Libertines point to the fact that Sleeper witnesses can provoke Paradoxes even for covert magic, when the results seem implausible. Vulgar magic, these mages claim, is magic that produces results that are so implausible that the subconscious belief of Sleepers is enough to make the Fallen World strike back.

As a result, they aim to get Sleepers to accept as wide a range of events as possible. They do not do this by casting impossible-looking magic in front of lots of Sleepers — Paradoxes make this foolish, Disbelief makes it ineffective and the Guardians of the Veil get to any mages who try it. Instead, the Libertines go for technological advances. Within the lifetime of the Free Council, flying through the air at hundreds of miles per hour has gone from impossible, from the realm of miracles, to utterly mundane. Granted, flying with Forces still appears to be vulgar, but these mages expect the results to be a little more subtle.

These mages generally do use technology at the absolute bleeding edge, and they enjoy showing it off to their friends, particularly their Sleeper friends. Many Libertines have workshops in which they put together devices with surprising effects. Some of these mages are showmen, demonstrating the amazing things you can do with technology.

Some are even stage magicians of a type, but as they aim to convince the audience that it is *not* magic, they tend to be tolerated by the Guardians of the Veil, and unpopular with other stage magicians. A mage who follows this philosophy often fills her home with gadgets, and carries them with her. She often dedicates a very new gadget as a magical tool, and then dedicates a new one when the "very new" gadget gets a bit out of date. These mages are the ultimate early adopters.

They are also much more likely than the previous group to pursue fringe technologies, such as invisibility cloaks, cars that run on air or teleportation of macroscopic objects. They are not really concerned with scientific principles, as most feel that Sleepers are only convinced by things that they can see, but actual, working technology is another matter. It is, of course, essential that the technology not involve the Supernal, so it is best if the engineers remain Sleepers. A few of these mages also cross the line into





tyranny over “their” engineers; see the discussion under “The Covert Is Possible,” above, for some ideas.

Some work more in marketing than engineering, and a few even work in movies and special effects, often behind the scenes. The ultimate goal is to get Sleepers to believe that something is not improbable and doesn’t require magic; whether it is improbable or not is, they think, irrelevant. Of course, these mages do need the working technology before they can publicize it, but they tend to leave that to others.

Not all the followers of this philosophy concentrate on technology. Those who know about other supernatural creatures know that their powers are not affected by Paradoxes, and thus believe that, if all the Sleepers knew about such creatures, much magic would become covert. These mages face the same sort of opposition as those who want to introduce the supernatural to the Sleepers as magic (see below), but the two groups also oppose each other. These mages want Sleepers to see vampiric powers as entirely natural, so that magic mimicking them will become covert. The other group want Sleepers to see vampires as supernatural, so that they will believe in magic and, possibly, Awaken. To those outside either group, this distinction is of no importance; both groups are dangerous lunatics. (A significant number of mages are also unsure that Sleepers thinking, *Oh, he must be a vampire* would be better than facing a Paradox and Disbelief.)

### Experimental Evidence

Some mages in this group have tried to prove their theory. First, they do something covert but difficult to believe in front of Sleepers, so that it generates a Paradox due to disbelief. Then the mages achieve the same result using technology; this never generates a Paradox, no matter how unbelievable it seems. Finally, they go back and generate the result by covert magic again. This does not generate Paradoxes, as the Sleepers no longer find it improbable.

In theory.

Sometimes, the mage can skip the first step, having already caused a Paradox with that effect during the normal course of events. In many cases, the mage tries to get as much publicity as possible for the technological trials, as Sleepers who do not know about them are still likely to find the result improbable. Finally, if the trials were well publicized, the experimenting mage might try to do the final test in a public place.

The Guardians of the Veil show no mercy if they hear about mages trying these experiments.

To date, these experiments are inconclusive. Outcomes have been extremely difficult to repeat, whether due to the ill fit of scientific methods being

used to measure magic or due to interference from Exarch jailors (if you believe in that sort of thing). It doesn’t seem to be what a Sleeper believes that defines vulgarity, but what the Fallen World believes. But how can mages change the way that the cosmos looks at itself?

### *The Universe Hates Us*

This position is one that almost every mage has held, however briefly, at some point in her career. In the Free Council, however, there is a substantial group of mages who take it as their considered position: They believe that the Fallen World is designed to punish those who use Supernal power, and that Paradoxes are that punishment. Anything that could be used to clearly convince Sleepers of the existence of Supernal power is vulgar, as is anything that gives mages a major advantage in combat. So are many of the effects that would make life easy for willworkers. On the other hand, the dividing line does not seem to bear any close relation to the way the world is, and the line between covert and vulgar does not seem to depend on belief; at least, as far as the historians in this group can tell, the line has never moved.

Most of the Libertines who actually believe the Atlantis myth are in this group. They generally hold that the Exarchs designed the Fallen World to keep mages down. Some even believe that the other supernatural creatures were designed specifically to haunt and hurt mages, and thus are able to do things that would cause a Paradox if a mage tried them.

Other Libertines are more skeptical about such myths, and, instead, attribute the effect to the malicious intelligences living in the Abyss. The existence of the Abyss, and the malevolent minds within it, is hard for any mage who has faced a Paradox to deny, and their hatred of mages is obvious. However, this requires mages to believe that Abyssal intelligences already control the world, and many mages prefer a more optimistic theory. It is saying something when the belief that the Exarchs designed the world to imprison mages is the more optimistic theory.

Despite their rather negative basic beliefs, these mages, in common with most Libertines, tend to have a positive and creative outlook. The world might be a prison, but they believe that they can sneak out between the bars. After all, they presumably did it once, to Awaken.

The first observation is the existence of covert magic. The world only punishes mages for using covert magic if a Sleeper snitches on them. That means that, whatever method the Fallen World uses to monitor Supernal power, covert magic can sneak around it. Given that covert magic can be quite spectacular, in its way, this does not seem to be a matter of simple power.



Thus, many of these mages search for ways to sneak other kinds of magic past the gatekeepers, thus turning vulgar magic into covert. There are two main approaches.

The first relies on the existence of apparently helpful exceptions to the universe's malice. For example, healing is generally covert, even though it is useful and can be obvious. If there are no Sleepers around, a mage can heal a wound as obviously as he likes without risking a Paradox. Given that the Fallen World hates mages, it seems unlikely that the original designers of the Fallen World prison left this exception. Thus, these mages believe that past willworkers found a way to change medicinal magics from vulgar to covert. (If you were planning an eons-long war to free your world, healing magic might be the first power you secured, too.) As this demonstrates the possibility of such a conversion, they try to do the same for other areas. These mages often have very little to do with science and technology, as they focus on the nature of magic itself. Many of them draw inspiration from Legacies, which allow willworkers to invoke vulgar effects without risking any Paradoxes.

It is worth noting that this group takes a position opposite to that of most of the Atlantean orders. The Atlantean orders tend to believe that more magic was possible in the past, but that the line between vulgar and covert, and between possible and impossible, has moved against the mages over the years. The Libertines believe that, since the Fallen World came into being, more and more magic has become covert, thanks to the efforts of mages, and that the process can be continued. They dismiss the claims of the Atlanteans as classic hankering after a golden age.

The second group relies on things that can be done without any Paradoxes, or Supernal power, at all. This normally means technology. These mages believe that, by studying the way technology works, and the way Supernal power flows, they can learn to make the two the same, so that the Fallen World will not notice that Supernal power has intruded. This group tends to analyze technological items in magical terms, and makes extensive use of the Practice of Unveiling, looking for deeper connections within any machine.

Some mages following this route examine supernatural creatures other than mages: everything from spirits to Sleeper occultists. Their powers are not Supernal, and thus do not provoke Paradoxes. The main problem here is that, although mages can build and use technological items, they are incapable of using any other supernatural powers. Most conclude that this is yet more proof that the universe has it in for them. Others just find subjects who can use the powers, and make sure that they use them to help in the experiments. Mundane persuasion is enough in some cases, but not a few of these mages go beyond that.

A few mages in the second group look at ways to break the prison of the Fallen World from within, without relying on Supernal power. The strange features of quantum mechanics have given them increased confidence that this might be possible, and these mages tend to work right on the frontiers of physics, encouraging particularly esoteric research. The research that the mages themselves do never leaks back to the Sleepers. Mages in this group seem to be particularly vulnerable to the blandishments of the Abyss, as the creatures offer to help them break down the Fallen World. Others, however, are among the fiercest opponents of such creatures, believing that the Abyss is responsible for Paradoxes, and that the final victory will be found by excluding the demons found therein.

### Who Is Right?

In the default game cosmology, "The Universe Hates Us" is closest to the truth, and "Belief Defines Reality" is furthest away, although neither is either exactly right or completely wrong. However,





all of the groups have some evidence to support their position, so you could have any group be right in your chronicles.

Even if your mage is wrong about the basic nature of reality, that need not stop him achieving great things. None of the groups are *completely* wrong, after all.

### Character Concepts

- A scientific researcher before your Awakening, you keep in touch with your old field and look for inspiration there.
- You always liked being the first to discover something that became popular. Now you help spread the popularity of new technologies, and maybe help out your magic in the process.
- You liked making machines do things they weren't quite supposed to, and now you enjoy using magic to make them do things they really shouldn't be able to manage.
- After a particularly traumatic Awakening, you are sure that the whole universe wants to punish you for what you have discovered. You find it comforting to be in contact with a group with similar beliefs.
- You were involved in parapsychology (or something similar) before your Awakening, and still think that there is something mundane to be discovered there.

## *The Thrill of the New*

Most members of the Free Council like the new. They think that new discoveries among the Sleepers have a lot to teach willworkers, and that the old ways achieved little beyond getting everyone stuck in the Fallen World. Much of this feeling is channeled into their appreciation for science and technology, as described above, but not all of it. Many members of the Free Council like other new things, whether they are fashions, works of art or political movements.

It is not uncommon for Libertines to work to make sure that new things get a fair hearing. These mages often rail against the vested interests that suppress anything new in their favored field, but also support those producing new ideas. It is not uncommon for Libertines to sponsor small exhibitions of contemporary art or a press devoted to experimental fiction, for example. Members of the Free Council are opposed to censorship in any case, but this gives them yet another reason, and censorship that suppresses new ideas tends to attract their particular ire. Most Libertines are not that bothered about restrictions on pornography, for example, because it rarely includes new ideas or supports democracy, although they still oppose the rules on general principle. On the other hand, rules forbidding the formation of new political parties would be

very strongly opposed by almost any Libertine, striking as they do at several of their key values at once.

Some mages can produce new things themselves, but others prefer to serve as muses and patrons for creative Sleepers, to encourage the creation of more mortal works that bear their own enchantment. This relationship, as with the relationship between mages and scientists or engineers, can become rather overbearing.

The Free Council's tension between anarchy and hierarchy has a direct reflection in this field. The creation of new things is, in many ways, a perfect expression of the Free Council's preference for democracy. The fact that one person has produced a new poem in no way prevents anyone else from producing a different one, and these new creations might lead to the truth.

However, in any modern city, much less the world, more new things are produced than any single individual can experience. This is a good thing, of course, as it means that there is more chance of something appearing to appeal to anyone. On the other hand, it grants power to the critics and patrons. Patrons decide whom to fund, and critics praise and damn as they please. A patron with a lot of money often shapes the art scene of a whole city, as even those she does not give money to try to produce art that might appeal to her. Similarly, an influential critic can make or break careers, based entirely on his own preferences.

Beyond a certain point, many Libertines see these functions as expressing hierarchy, and thus enforcing the Lie. Even if the critic has no formal power, his informal power can suppress innovation and stifle criticism. Members of the Free Council often disagree about where that point falls, particularly when the patron or critic in question is herself a Libertine. (A Guardian of the Veil or member of the Silver Ladder who became a noted critic among the Sleepers would be accorded very little leeway.) Although some people see these disputes as trivial, many Libertines regard them as the most important battles possible, as they are battles over freedom of thought. Extremist mages who target critics they feel have too much influence are not unheard of, although most prefer to destroy a critic's reputation rather than his life.

Some mages generalize this, and turn to clearing away the old to make way for the new. They might try to burn down museums, murder influential artists or discredit entire fields of artistic endeavor. This most often happens when the mage chose to nurture a particular new trend that just did not catch on, whether or not this was due to active opposition. She comes to believe that, with her power, she can "level the playing field." Needless to say, the majority of Libertines oppose such psychopaths.

Mages of the Free Council have a natural tendency to assume that the new is better than the old, in all fields. Even the most senior and experienced mages tend to believe that, in the broad sweep of history, this is true. (Those

who cease to believe it often leave the Free Council for the Mysterium.) However, experience teaches mages that it is not always true in particular cases. In a few cases, the new can be positively dangerous.

In those cases, some mages feel that they have a duty to suppress the new ideas, or at least to not interfere with other forces that are trying to do so. These mages tend to be the older members of an Assembly, as the younger mages do not have the personal experience to know how dangerous things can be. Thus, the younger mages often see this as a sign that the older mages are selling out to the Lie, and rise up in opposition. This may be purely political, but it can degenerate into violence.

The situation is complicated by the fact that neither old nor young mages have a monopoly on being right. Sometimes the elders really have become conservative, and, tempted by their power, are starting to try to impose their will. Sometimes, however, the new movement, fashion, or book is at least as dangerous as the elders think. Cautionary tales of what happens when the wrong side wins circulate throughout the Free Council, which at least ensures that most Libertines are aware that it is a perilous situation. This does not stop the problem, however; the elders are still more likely to see the danger in new discoveries than the initiates.

A more subtle problem arises concerning the things that really are valuable among old discoveries. Nobody can read everything, so to what extent should they ignore the past to keep up with the present? The Free Council puts the balance far more toward the present than any other order, but even the Libertines typically balk at actively suppressing the past. Nostalgia fads and groups such as the SCA can provoke furious debate; is the fad actually something new, or is it restricting the new by harking back to the past?

In terms of lifestyle, most Free Council mages try to keep up with the cutting edge of something from Sleeper society. Some aspect of technology is a very popular choice, but some follow fashion, or the latest hot novelist or health fads. Most Libertines really believe that the newest things in their field are the best, and are happy to argue the point with stick-in-the-mud conservatives still wearing last week's hat. Some, however, believe that the new may not be better in itself, but that it is good for their enlightenment to keep up with the Sleepers in some area. It is certainly true that it makes it very hard for a mage to drift into complete isolation from Sleepers, a state from which some come to see them as less than human.

#### Novelty Quotes

"Even the Atlantean orders were new once. Every rote was invented on some day. Oppose the new, and you deny your own origins."

—Razi

"The world has changed. Do not waste time on things fit for a different age."

—Adelard

"You haven't read it? But it's been out a week!"

—Commonly heard at Lorehouses

"The Nazi party was new in 1920."

—Commonly said by elder Libertines wishing to allow a new idea to be suppressed

#### Character Concepts

You worked as a fashion journalist before Awakening, and still keep up with, and dress in, the latest look.

You really like an area of art in which you have no, or minimal, talent, and so you patronize talented artists, ensuring the production of new works.

As a Sleeper, you ran a listings website for artistic and cultural events. You still do, occasionally using it as a cover for more secret announcements.

### *Humanity Is Magical*

Many willworkers outside the Free Council believe that its mages are obsessed with the products of modern humanity, from techno-gadgets to conceptual art installations. Libertines themselves, however, insist that their true interest is in the Sleepers, as living human beings with something magical about them. Many mages put this conviction into practice, spending time and effort on looking after Sleepers. Sometimes this action has little direct relation to individual Sleepers, being more concerned with the good of humanity as a whole. This section, however, is concerned with the more personal interventions, when Libertines decide to help a particular group of Sleepers.

Some mages help protect the Sleepers of their city from major supernatural threats. Indeed, this attitude is very common within the Free Council, meaning that these mages are often in the vanguard of attempts to deal with a corrupt spirit. On the other hand, most Atlantean mages believe in protecting the Sleepers from such threats as a psychopathic ancient vampire; the main difference is that Libertines do it for the sake of the Sleepers, which often means that these mages are the first to take action.

Many within the Free Council believe that caring for a particular group of Sleepers is a good way to retain Wisdom. If a mage is worrying about the well-being of a group of Sleepers, the reasoning goes, it is hard for him to come to believe that magic and his will are the only things that matter. Even the mages who do not think such a connection is necessary tend to agree that it is a good thing for some mages. As a result, the Assemblies of the Free Council tend to be a lot more tolerant of links with Sleepers than other orders.

Some Libertines still believe that it is unwise to reveal so much as your existence to Sleepers, as it provides a way for enemies to find you. And, these Libertines argue, in the World of Darkness, protecting a group of Sleepers means making enemies. These mages monitor the group secretly, typically using a combination of covert magic



and high technology, and looking out for threats. External supernatural threats are almost invariably the top priority, but most mages extend their concern to cover mundane threats. Thus, a mundane group of drug dealers might be targeted, or a property developer aiming to buy out the current inhabitants and gentrify an area.

Ethical dilemmas rarely arise at this level; most mages use the community's reactions to decide whether something is a threat, which means that they do not impose their own will on the situation. However, it is hard for many mages to stop there. Mages, particularly as they spread their surveillance network, see threats that no one in the community is aware of. Sometimes, it would be a bad idea to reveal the threat to the community, generally because the threat is supernatural, and so the mage must deal with it herself. Once the mage has started deciding what is best for the community, it can be hard to stop.

The next step is deciding that something the community is neutral about is actually a threat. Sometimes the mage has very good reasons for this; she might, for example, know that the new store opening in the area is actually a front for a coterie of vampires. More often, however, it depends on her perspective. She might decide that it is bad for the chain coffee shop to open, because it would drive the locally owned coffee shops out of business, and they are, in her opinion, more valuable to the community.

From there, it is a small step to opposing things that the community is, overall, in favor of. The first time a mage does this, it is almost always because she knows something the Sleepers don't, and any reasonable person would agree with the mage if he knew that fact. Indeed, the first time a mage does this, she often checks with several other reasonable people (generally mages) to make sure that she isn't just imposing her own will. After she has done it once, however, it becomes easier to do it again, in more ambiguous cases. Libertines can find themselves opposing the jazz club that everyone in the area really wants because they don't think that jazz is culturally appropriate, and will ruin the truly interesting artistic expression that is already there.

The mage is generally tempted from the other direction, as well. Mages can often nudge events so that particular things happen. Thus, it is very tempting to make good things happen to the community. As with defense against threats, this typically starts with uncontroversial activities, such as convincing the city to turn the derelict former factory into a park. Every time a mage does such a thing, however, she is tempted to rely more on her judgment, and manipulate things so that other, more controversial, good things happen. The neighborhood might be divided over plans for a new nightclub, for example, and the mage throws her weight behind it, making sure that it happens. At this point, mages sometimes find themselves having to fix the consequences of their own decisions, but the wonderful thing about magic is that it generally means that they can. In the end, the mage might bring about changes

in the community that none of the Sleepers initially favor, because it's for their own good.

Most mages start by looking at the big picture of a community, treating it as a single entity. As they get to know it better, however, this becomes impossible, and they get to know the members as individuals. In principle, this is a good thing; it is the connection to individual Sleepers that serves as the main bulwark against hubris. However, it also means that the mage becomes aware of members of the community who threaten it. This might be an abusive mother, an alcoholic policeman or an ambitious and slightly unscrupulous preacher. The temptation, then, is to do something about that person. The slippery slope then leads in the same direction as for the community as a whole, with the mage starting to manipulate individual lives in ways that the person does not like, "for his own good."

As the mage becomes more concerned with smaller-scale threats, her monitoring of the area has to become more detailed, in order to pick them up. Thus, she may install tiny cameras in every room in a block, so that she can watch the citizens at all times. (Covert, or even vulgar, magic can be very helpful in putting technology in place so that the mage does not have to use magic thereafter.) At this point, she may find herself interfering in the daily decisions of many people, using little bits of Mind magic to nudge everyone onto the right path.

Any Libertine coming across the mage at this point is likely to assume that she is a Seer of the Throne. She has a close net of surveillance over an area, and secretly pulls the strings to mold the community to match her vision. It is very rare to find Libertines using enslavement magic against individuals — that is too obvious a violation of Libertine philosophy — but they do have a tendency to use more subtle magic to the same ends. This can, in fact, be even more effective if the mage is aiming for a general goal rather than specific individual actions.

Most of the time, a community controlled by a Libertine looks too good to be true, with low crime, happy people and an artistic culture. Indeed, some Libertines truly come to believe that the end justifies the means. It is, however, a sin against Wisdom, and makes the mage, in the eyes of most Libertines, an obvious servant of the Lie.

This risk is well-known in the Free Council, as is the fact that the temptation is so subtle and insidious that knowing about it does not stop mages falling. It is presented as one of the strongest arguments for making sure that the members of a community know the mage, and support his causes.

A few mages claim that this means that, if a vampire is hunting in a neighborhood, the mage should tell everyone that there is a vampire, and get a consensus for destroying him or driving him away. Even within the Free Council, however, the overwhelming majority of mages believe in the need for discretion in some cases. The general rule of thumb is that mundane issues must be addressed in open cooperation with the community, while supernatural issues

can be addressed without consultation; but consistently with the community's general wishes. When an issue has both supernatural and mundane aspects, the mundane should normally be dealt with openly. However, sometimes the mundane aspect looks good, and would be good if it weren't for the supernatural aspects. The ideal in these cases is for the mage to separate the two aspects behind the scenes.

This sort of open involvement does seem to be effective in preventing the conversion of the mage into a magical tyrant. It doesn't *always* work, but that fall is much less common when the mage talks to the people about most issues. There is, of course, a corresponding danger. There is a strong temptation, when the people are about to make a really stupid decision, to use magic to make the mage more persuasive, or even to remove a particularly stubborn objection altogether. The mage can easily end up openly manipulating the people. This is, typically, less serious than the hidden puppet-master, as a Libertine is unlikely to outright enslave Sleepers, but it is still a fall.

A further, even more subtle risk, exists. The mage tends to know more about issues than most Sleepers, thanks to magical information gathering, and can use magic to make sure that his favored projects succeed, once they have community backing. A few mages are detached enough to use their magic to help even when they lose, but they are rarely as enthusiastic as they are in backing their own ideas, and even they often refuse to help when they think that something is positively a bad idea.

This means that the mage becomes a source of good advice. Doing as he says leads to success far more often than not doing so. The community start looking to him for leadership, and suppressing opposition to him. If he was using magic to manipulate opinion before, it is even more tempting to do so now, when most people support him doing so. This has led to mages becoming the charismatic mayors of small towns, ruling as they see fit. Again, this is not what the Free Council stands for, and such a mage often finds that his own colleagues turn against him.

A mage who consults with the community does not normally become any sort of tyrant; however, because other problems arise first. The group that favors secrecy is absolutely right that protecting Sleepers makes enemies, and that open contact with the Sleepers makes it easier for those enemies to strike at a mage. A mage who is involved in a community creates a vast number of sympathetic links, and severing all of them becomes effectively impossible. In addition, he typically acquires emotional links to individuals living in the community, and those individuals can then be threatened by his enemies.

It is not uncommon for these attacks to kill the mage, and those that do not are often bad enough to convince him to sever his ties with the community, either out of self-preservation or because he feels that his presence simply draws the community into danger. Many mages cut all links, and then move back to help the community secretly,

hoping to avoid the same dangers. In many cases, they do, as mages can learn from their mistakes as well as anyone else, but this exposes them to the risk of becoming the sort of supernatural puppeteers they originally opposed.

It might be thought that these well-known risks would discourage almost all Libertines from following this path. This is not the case, however, because many of them believe that they have some sort of duty to protect and nurture the Sleepers. It is true that it is dangerous, to body and soul, but after Awakening there is very little that is safe. After all, a mage who shuts herself away from all contact with Sleepers and refuses to intervene in their troubles is also on a clear path to hubris. Thus, Libertines do not discourage their peers from getting involved in such projects; they merely try to ensure that they are aware of the risks, and do not fall.

A few members of the Free Council take it upon themselves to monitor their peers, to make sure that their actions do not cross the line; these activities will be discussed in a later section. Many like to spend time in the Assembly discussing problem cases, and the best way to strike the balance. There is almost universal agreement that this is simply a hard problem, and that there are no easy rules that will guarantee that a mage is on the path of wisdom. Many Libertines mutter that that is precisely the point of wisdom, and it wouldn't be necessary if there were simple rules you could follow all the time.

The biggest set of problems revolve, as might be expected, around the conflict between democracy and hierarchy. Nurturing and protecting a community depends on a vision of what is good for the community, which raises the question of "whose vision"? If the mage just takes his own vision, then he is clearly imposing his will on the community. On the other hand, communities are as capable of having foolish and self-destructive desires as an individual; should a mage help a community to destroy itself, if that is what it wants? Most Libertines would say no, but then there are some circumstances in which it is not merely acceptable, but obligatory, for a mage to impose his will on a community.

Similarly, what happens when the majority in a community want to oppress a minority? When they want to be utterly conservative and traditional, rejecting anything new? When they just don't care about bettering themselves, and simply want to watch television? When they seem to support the imposition of the Lie and the hiding of the supernatural?

While many mages enjoy discussing these as theoretical cases, the reason the discussions continue is that the cases come up for real whenever a mage gets involved with a community. These are the abstract issues that Free Council mages wrestle with when trying to decide how to deal with a concrete problem. In many cases, after a struggle to decide on what is the right thing to do, the mages then have to put the decision into practice, which need not be



easy. These mages have been heard to wish for something easy, like a nest of cannibal spirits possessing members of the community, something clean, where it is easy to discern the right path. Other mages then remind them to be careful what they wish for.

### *Magic and Enchantment*

Most Free Council mages take the claim that "Humanity Is Magical" quite literally. Even Sleepers, the Libertines claim, have a touch of the Supernal about them, for what else is the power of Disbelief? (Those who believe that Disbelief comes from the Abyss hold that a touch of the Supernal is necessary to prevent Sleepers from becoming utterly corrupt.) The doctrine that a universal Awakening is both possible and desirable is paid at least lip service by most Libertines, and any Free Council mage proposing limits on it had better have really good reasons.

In practice, most willworkers, even in the Free Council, do not spend much time working toward the universal Awakening, for the very good reason that mages do not really know how to go about it. No one knows why one Sleeper awakens rather than another, or what prompts the soul to cross the Abyss to the Watchtowers. This is not enough for some mages, though: they grant that no one knows how to cause Awakenings, but they argue that the obvious conclusion to draw is that mages should be devoting their efforts to finding out.

Most of these mages are involved with a community of Sleepers, because they need to work with Sleepers to have any chance of making progress and treating humans, even Sleepers, as mere experimental subjects is a well-known expressway to corruption. These mages have a vision of their community as happy, fulfilled and largely Awakened.

This, by itself, is enough to draw the ire of the Guardians of the Veil, even before the mage does anything. Within the Free Council, however, almost no one disagrees with this as an aim, although the Libertines might well disagree over the means employed. Thus, other Libertines try to shield their colleagues from Guardian investigation, and certainly from punishment. While the basic philosophies of the Free Council and the Guardians are about as opposed as they could be, this is the issue over which they have the most actual conflict.

Most Libertines do not try to provoke Awakenings by performing vulgar magic in public places. It causes Paradoxes, brings the Guardians down hard and, most importantly, *doesn't work*. This last point is impressed very hard on young Libertines who think that the Sleepers will surely believe the evidence of their senses. All mages with even a little experience know that this is simply not the case. Of course, a handful have to get that experience personally; Free Council mages try to clean those messes up themselves, before the Guardians become involved.





Almost all Free Council mages agree that Sleepers are more likely to Awaken if they believe in the possibility of wonders that go beyond everyday existence. Instilling a sense of wonder in a community is thus generally regarded as an essential first step. This can take many forms, but the biases of the Free Council mean that it typically revolves around science and technology. Science fiction is also popular, because good science fiction has the so-called *sensawunda*. The main problem with science fiction is that it is *fiction*, but it can still be a useful foundation.

Libertines thus generally oppose people who strip the wonder from stories, explaining them in completely mundane terms. This does not mean that the libertines oppose scientific explanations; most scientific explanations are quite marvelous. Indeed, mages of the Free Council often seize the chance to provide a surprising and inspiring scientific explanation in place of a rather dull and superficial supernatural one. This tends to earn them credit with the other orders, while still serving their purposes.

Nevertheless, the Free Council does aim to introduce the Sleepers to the idea of the supernatural, and at least have them accept the possibility. For many mages, the obvious thing to do is to make the Sleepers aware of supernatural powers that are not connected to the Supernal Realms: vampires, theriomorphs, ghosts, spirits and the like.

Indeed, many young mages, once they discover that vampires are real, think that the obvious thing to do is to out the vampires to the Sleepers. Monsters would get hunted down, and the Sleepers would realize that there was more to the world than they imagined. Older, even slightly older, mages almost always try to stop this.

Making the existence of vampires public is easy, but it tends to have highly undesirable side effects. First, the vampires do not want their existence to be made public, so the mages must fight disinformation campaigns. These disinformation campaigns are often designed to hurt the mages who caused the trouble. The Free Council believes that at least three attempts have ended with the instigating mage turned into a vampire (which appears to suppress the connection to the Supernal Realms; no mage cares to investigate this too closely) and thrown to the very mobs he had raised. The Guardians of the Veil tend to move in to provide a non-supernatural explanation, co-operating with any surviving vampires. Sometimes, the discovery of blood-sucking monsters creates a general paranoia about the supernatural, which leads to Sleepers hunting mages. There is also some evidence that these circumstances lead to the appearance of Banishers.

Many of these problems can be avoided by concentrating on small groups sworn to secrecy, and a fair number of Libertines serve as patrons to groups of Sleeper vampire hunters, or to cults involved with spirits or theriomorphs. The Libertines doing this claim that their organizations are completely different from the Labyrinths created by the Guardians of the Veil; the Guardians aim to keep the

Sleepers ignorant, the Libertines want to educate them. However, the need to control flows of information and set entry and advancement requirements means that most mages following this route end up looking a lot like servants of the Lie to other Libertines.

A few mages choose to run interference for Sleepers with supernatural powers. Psychics, magicians and shamans all face threats from other, stronger, supernatural powers in the World of Darkness, but have the potential to make more Sleepers aware of greater possibilities. Thus, mages who become aware of such Sleepers often choose to protect them from these threats, ideally without the Sleeper becoming aware of the mage's existence. A Thyrsus mage might find herself negotiating with spirits that a shaman has inadvertently pissed off, while an Obrimos spends more time dealing with the vampires who want to eliminate a ceremonial magician.

While the simple existence of such magicians should, in time, lead to greater acceptance of the supernatural among the Sleepers, patience is not a particularly widely held virtue in the Free Council. Thus, it is not unusual for a mage to try to ease her pet magician into the public eye, whether the magician wants publicity or not. This tends to increase the level of threat to the magician, and the level of attention directed at the protecting mage. Still, a few of the less-famous media psychics, mediums and magicians are the real thing, and many have been shepherded into view by a Libertine. Real supernatural powers, unfortunately, tend to be less media-friendly than faked ones, which limits their influence.

A few mages take more direct action in an attempt to provoke Awakenings. About the only thing that Awakenings have in common is that they usually seem to occur under stress of some sort. As a result, attempts to provoke an Awakening are rarely entirely pleasant for the subject.

Most Libertines are careful about their subjects for such attempts. The Libertines seek out individuals who are temperamentally suited to the Free Council, and slowly drop hints about the true nature of the world. Those who do not immediately reject the possibility of magic are fed more information, and encouraged to investigate further, while the mage protects them in secret. Once the subject accepts the existence of the supernatural, the mage introduces Supernal magic.

Free Council mages prefer to do this in person, as it provides an opportunity to remove any remaining deceptions between them and the subject; most Libertines do not *like* lying to Sleepers, even when they accept the necessity. However, the subject is typically still a Sleeper at this point, so this stage is fraught with risk. Paradoxes are a serious danger, and many Sleepers simply rationalize things away through the force of Disbelief.

Sleepers with unusually strong wills are more likely to accept evidence of magic for what it is, so some mages



encourage their subjects to strengthen their wills. This typically involves putting them through very difficult situations, and some subjects do not survive. Most often, this failure is psychological, but deaths are not uncommon. Indeed, the casualty rate of any attempt to induce Awakening is the main reason that most Libertines do not spend long on such pursuits.

Some, however, come to feel that it is better for humanity if more people Awaken, and that, if some individuals fail along the way, that is an acceptable price. These mages often develop elaborate scenarios for their subjects, in which they are exposed to steadily deeper secrets of the supernatural, and forced to hone their spirits to survive and accept their experiences. Most also strongly encourage the subjects to improve their bodies and minds, because the culmination of the scenario is typically a highly dangerous situation, in which the subject must Awaken to survive alone. High mundane skills buy more time for the supervising mage to step in with a rescue if the crisis is not effective. These mages are not well regarded in the Free Council, being seen as too manipulative and careless of human life, and their methods are often watched carefully. As a result, most try to hide their activities from the Assembly, which just makes it easier for them to slip into abusive patterns.

A few mages, typically after years of working with individuals, decide that mass production is one of the springs of modernity, and look for ways to mass produce mages. There is no evidence that any of them have succeeded, but the experimental plants they use would revolt some Scelesti.

#### Quotes

"The dead cannot Awaken. The despairing will never escape the Lie. We must bring safety and hope to the Sleepers, or we betray everything we stand for."

—Albertus

"If we claim that only the Awakened are worthy of these secrets, we are no better than the Seers of the Throne."

—Caspase

"It is dangerous to teach secrets to the unworthy. We must therefore strive to make all Sleepers worthy."

—Razi

"Give the Sleepers space to express themselves, and they may find a way out of the prison with no help from us."

—Seimei

#### Character Concepts

You grew up in the neighborhood, and still have many friends there. You have no intention of abandoning them now that you know how dangerous the world really is.

You lost your family and friends in the events surrounding your Awakening, and now want to form new relationships with Sleepers. Maybe you think that there is wisdom in "ordinary life," or maybe you want to distance yourself from the world that took so much from you.

You had to pretend to die to get through your Awakening; you attended your own funeral in disguise. Now you want to protect your family and friends, but you cannot reveal yourself.

You were a cop as a Sleeper, and now use your supernatural abilities to catch malefactors who were previously beyond you. You may, in fact, still be a cop.

Awakening opened the world up in front of you, and made life worth living. You want to share that with others, with those who have not yet experienced it.

You have always believed that it is better to know the truth than to live with a comforting lie. As a result, you want to tell the Sleepers the truth about the world they live in.

### *Political Activism*

Given the three basic tenets of the Free Council, it is almost impossible for its members to keep out of Sleeper politics. The form that this involvement takes, however, depends on the state in which a Libertine finds herself. There are a fair few in the United States who feel that their duty to Sleeper democracy is discharged by taking the trouble to actually vote in elections, and who then spend most of their energy on other projects.

Assemblies living under authoritarian regimes tend to be much more active, and politically focused. Mages are often very good at avoiding mundane secret police, which allows them to get more involved in opposition activities than most Sleepers would dare to risk. In an avowedly authoritarian country, every Free Council Assembly is committed, in theory, to overthrowing the government and replacing it with a democracy, and most members of most Assemblies are genuinely making efforts to that end. In principle, the Free Council does not distinguish between benevolent dictatorships and the truly oppressive kind; democracy fosters the truth, and thus must be encouraged. In practice, naturally enough, Libertines tend to be more enthusiastic about overthrowing unpleasant regimes, particularly ones that interfere with the other things the Free Council values.

Given the power of magic, it might be thought that overthrowing a government would be a simple matter for mages. Two things complicate the issue. The first is that very few governments are completely without magical backing; there is almost always at least one group of mages doing very nicely out of the current power structure, and they oppose attempts to change it. (The government is typically not aware of its magical support, of course.) Officially, the Free Council believes that these mages are always Seers of the Throne. Unofficially, many members suspect the Silver Ladder of supporting some technocratic autocracies, and the Guardians of the Veil of being behind quite a few repressive states. Since pushing this point could force a break with



the Atlantean orders, the Free Council keeps it quiet, but does not let that stop it working for freedom.

The second problem is more fundamental. It is true that, in most cases, the Assemblies of a country could completely cripple the government. Even if the leaders have magical protection, they can target lower-ranking, but equally essential, members of the government. However, toppling an evil, dictatorial government does not automatically produce democracy. Rather, it tends to produce either anarchy or another evil dictatorial government. The elders of the Free Council stress the importance of having a plan of how to get to democracy from the current situation, before you start killing leaders and crippling the police and armed forces. Younger or more radical members sometimes see this as effectively collaborating with the enemy; these mages can find themselves opposed by cooler heads in their own order, even to the point of being killed. Thus, the Free Council very rarely tries to simply overthrow a Sleeper government. Instead, the Free Council typically works to create an opposition that can form a democratic government when the dictators are gone.

Many Libertines prefer this approach on ethical grounds as well, as it does not involve making the Sleepers' decisions for them. Indeed, the process of overthrowing an autocratic regime presents many ethical dilemmas to members of the Free Council, and debates rage throughout the order as to the correct way to resolve such issues. In many cases, the only way to overthrow a regime without murdering or mind-controlling anyone is to wait for the leaders to die. That, however, leaves the population suffering under oppression for many years; clearly, that is also not an ethical option. Indeed, many Libertines believe that, in such a country, there are no ethical courses of action available, and that it is always a matter of choosing the least evil option.

Many freedom fighters believe that the end justifies the means, whatever the means may be. Quite a few Free Council mages fall into this mindset as well; the government imprisons, tortures and murders those who oppose it, so they do not see why they should hold themselves to much higher standards. After all, avoiding murder makes it much harder to achieve the good end of overthrowing the oppressors. This approach tends to wreak havoc on a mage's Wisdom, and more than a few find themselves on a Left-Hand Path.

Others do try to maintain ethical standards. They recognize that it is the fact that the government imprisons, tortures and murders that makes it an evil oppressive regime, and that, if they employ the same methods, then they also become oppressors. This really does make their job harder, and they often find it impossible to avoid all dubious actions. Those who are actually active in fighting for freedom tend to be very tolerant of mistakes made by others, while the armchair strategists in places such as the United States often vigorously condemn the smallest deviation from high ethical standards, insisting that the same end could have been achieved some other way. It is





undeniable that the active fighters often do tolerate mages who have fallen to corruption for far longer than they ought. It is also undeniable that those armchair strategists who actually go to help have all found themselves "bending" their ethical rules for the sake of the cause.

It is worth noting that the Free Council tends to be more sympathetic to groups opposing governments than to the governments opposed; the Libertines are almost always on the non-government side, after all. Libertines are far more likely to talk of "state terrorism" than the average mage, and their beliefs can provoke fierce arguments in Consilii all over the world. Not all bad blood between mages is due to disagreements about the supernatural, and the Libertines are more likely than most to provoke splits over purely mundane topics. This is not to say that Libertines approve of all non-government groups, but Libertines do tend to give such groups the benefit of the doubt. At the very least, there is near-universal agreement among the Libertines that it is *possible* for a soldier, obeying the legal orders of his military superior, to be a terrorist. There is much less agreement on which actual events might be examples of that.

It is not uncommon for idealistic mages from democratic countries to travel to dictatorships to help in the struggle, although local groups tend to dislike "visitors." They much prefer mages who are willing to make a long-term commitment to living in the area, and dealing with the difficult parts of the task as well as the exciting ones.

As mentioned earlier, dictatorial governments are often manipulated and exploited by supernatural forces, although outright control is rare. While the Seers of the Throne is the group that immediately occurs to most Libertines in this context, vampires are probably the most common creatures found pulling the strings. Neither group restricts their interest to dictatorial regimes, either, and this provides opponents for Free Council mages in free countries.

It is clear to all Libertines that a government is not truly a democracy if the elected officials are always controlled by the same unelected vampire. Indeed, it doesn't really matter if the power behind the throne is entirely human and mundane; democracy should actually affect the way that a country or city is governed. Many Libertines keep something of a watch on the governments in their areas, to make sure that they stay as democratic as they look. In the World of Darkness, this means that Libertines often discover problems.

Sometimes, this presents few dilemmas; a supernatural creature using its powers to control the mayor's mind is both a servant of the Lie and a menace to Sleepers in general. That does not mean that the problem is easy to resolve, but at least it is clear what needs to be done. If the supernatural creature is a member of one of the Atlantean orders, things become more politically complicated, but the ethics are the same.

Things are more difficult if the manipulators have corrupted the elected officials into being willing servants. Some Libertines see such acts as a vile betrayal of democracy, and have little mercy for the corrupt politicians involved. It is true that the death of the incumbent does provoke a new election, but many members of the Free Council are wary of manipulating democracies through violence. They would rather expose the politician's corruption, have him driven from office and keep the manipulators away from any successors. This may mean killing or destroying the manipulators, but that is not always easy to achieve.

Vote rigging is another problem that the Libertines encounter with depressing frequency. In this case, democracy is only honored if there is a free vote, which may mean exposing the rigged ballot, neutralizing the people responsible and watching over a new election. Naturally, the mages cannot announce themselves while doing this. Legal vote rigging, gerrymandering districts and the like, is something that really exercises the philosophers in the Free Council. A democracy must be allowed to set the rules for its votes, and such things as voting times, district boundaries and voting methods can, clearly, be varied quite a bit. The really blatant attempts to disenfranchise large groups are fairly clear, but also fairly rare. The nearer the border things get, the more some Libertines feel that it would be interfering with democracy to oppose them. After all, Free Council mages are not the legitimate defenders of democracy throughout the world, and setting themselves up as such would merely serve the Lie.

Vote rigging is not the only area affected by such problems. Outright bribery of politicians or voters is generally agreed to be an abuse of democracy (although even there, there are dissenting voices), but what about campaign contributions? Come to that, what is the difference between bribing voters and offering them tax cuts? There are some Libertines who worry that democracies are not democratic enough, and work to keep them on the straight and narrow.

One type of concern is with the process of democracy. It is well-known that, in many popular voting systems, it is possible for the losing side to actually have more votes. Similarly, it is very easy for wealthy candidates to dominate advertising or for corporate backing to have the same effect. The ways in which legal oversight of elections can be influenced by the government is also an area of concern. Mages worried about this sort of thing tend to organize and support Sleeper groups campaigning for change. The opposition to such groups can be quite fierce, and it is often tempting for mages to use magic to remove obstacles. As with all such temptations, it is very easy for mages to go too far, and end up manipulating the democracy they claim to be trying to save. On the bright side, these mages rarely want to manipulate more than the decisions about the process of voting; they are happy to let the Sleepers choose their own policies and politicians; and rarely have any particular grudge against individuals.

The second type of concern, however, is with the performance of the people who operate the democratic system. Humans are imperfect, which means that people operating voting systems are just as prone to bias and partisanship as anyone else, not to mention the risk of simple mistakes. Politicians get caught up in their own importance, rather than carrying out the will of the people who elected them. Parties elected by a relatively small margin govern as if the entire country were behind them. Politicians serve as window dressing while self-perpetuating oligarchies of bureaucrats make all the real decisions. None of these situations are ideal in a polity that claims to be a democracy, and some Libertines decide to do something about it.

As always, the temptation to use magic to solve the problems is strong, but since, in this case, the “problems” are usually people, it is very easy for mages taking this tack to slip away from Wisdom as they compromise their ethics in the interests of purging democracy. Most start with an obvious problem, such as a politician who broke all his campaign promises within hours of election, instead using his position to enrich himself, his family and his friends. But from there it is easy to start going after somewhat lesser cases of corruption, and the slide down to targeting politicians who simply fail to meet the mage’s high ethical standards is an easy one. (By that time, the mage generally fails to get anywhere close to her own standards.)

A related concern arises when democracy elects the wrong people. Naïvely, some mages think that, if it’s a democracy, then it *can’t* elect the wrong people. These mages forget that the Nazi Party was democratically elected in the beginning, and took over dictatorial power from a position of control in the democratic government. When an elected government shows strong authoritarian tendencies, many Libertines feel that it needs to be nudged back toward the true liberal ethos of democracy. A few think that nudging is too weak, and are more in favor of a strong push.

The definition of “true liberal ethos” is also a problem. It is very easy for mages to see a government that bans something they enjoy as authoritarian. However, it is part of the job of governments to ban some things (murder, for example), and it is an important part of the job of democracy to decide which things get banned. That doesn’t mean that democracy always makes the right decision, but it does mean that mages who use their power to reverse those decisions are opposing democracy. Affiliation to civil liberties groups is very common for mages who maintain a Sleeper identity, as campaigning is clearly legitimate. It is not, however, always effective, and the power of magic is very tempting to mages who see supposedly-democratic governments trampling on the rights of minorities, whether those minorities are Jews, communists, marijuana smokers, or gun owners. The mages taking action against what they see as serious abuses of liberty in the name of democracy are fond of citing the Nazi example. Mages opposing them are

aware that the Nazis were elected *once*, and that there have been lots of slightly authoritarian democratic governments that lost power through entirely democratic means.

It is very easy for mages who feel that they, or a group they sympathize with, are oppressed to slip into the mindset of the fighters opposing truly oppressive states. In that case, they might justify truly horrendous acts, to themselves if no one else, in the name of bringing democracy to a country that just about everyone in the world believes to be a democracy already.

A major problem facing mages who want to radically change the current system, whether in a clear dictatorship or in an inadequate democracy, is that of deciding what to put in its place. If they are fomenting true revolution, the change had better be a large one to make the struggle worth it. However, in that case, the mages need to ask themselves whether the people of the area support the changes. If the mages are imposing a new structure on the people, that is hardly democratic, even if the structure itself is democratic. Many Libertines think that everyone instinctively loves democracy, and will embrace it enthusiastically when it is offered. Those with more experience are more cynical, and talk about the importance of preparing the ground in advance, and getting the agreement of the people. Of course, this risks the mages being led to fight for something they do not really believe in, because the people do. How far can a commitment to democracy take a mage away from her own ethical ideals?

Ideas of democracy can apply across a broad range. In largely democratic countries, Libertine mages tend to be more involved in local politics than national, because those are the policies that are likely to have the most direct effect. Mages also tend to be most concerned with the safety and health of their own territory, another factor driving them toward local politics.

Government politics are not the only field in which the mages of the Free Council are active, although it is the main one. Religions are often undemocratic structures that try to control their followers’ lives, so many Free Council mages are, at best, very disenchanted with organized religion. Neo-pagan faiths tend to be less authoritarian than the older religions, and they also have the advantage of being new, so they are fairly popular in the Free Council. Willworkers taking action against undemocratic religions, however, stir up even more trouble than those working in politics. Undemocratic structures anywhere bother many Libertines, and a few push for completely democratic schools or the democratic transformation of the armed forces. Even most Libertines think that these mages are somewhat eccentric.

#### Political Quotes

“The fight for democracy is the fight for reality.”

—Razi



"The election of a government you dislike does not *prove* that democracy has been corrupted. If you investigate, however, you often find that it has been."

—Bistesla

"If you like the current government, it is best not to look too hard at their democratic credentials."

—Simplicius

"A country awakening to democracy is like a Sleeper Awakening to the Supernal. The process is difficult and painful, and you end up with far bigger problems than you had before. But it is so worth it."

—Six Stars

### **Character Concepts**

You were born in a dictatorship, and don't feel that you can abandon either your country or its people.

As a Sleeper you were a Party activist, and you can't quite give up politics completely.

Without basic civil rights, such as privacy and free assembly, many mages' activities become a lot harder. You are prepared to work to defend them.

## *Inquisition*

The third tenet of the Free Council is "Destroy the Followers of the Lie," and Libertine willworkers take it very seriously. This was the tenet that allowed the various modernist factions to unite into a single order, and in many ways, it is the principle that does the most to keep mages of the Free Council united. The Free Council is very diverse, and its members disagree about the best way to achieve its more positive aims. A common enemy serves a very important role, reducing the risk that the Free Council's internal disputes will pull it apart.

This tenet licenses Libertines to be militant, and many take advantage; militant opponents of oppressive Sleeper governments were discussed above. The targets of this activity are always followers of the Lie, but as that is not a name that any group applies to itself, there is room for debate over whom, exactly, the Free Council should attack.

The paradigm servants of the Lie are the Seers of the Throne. The Free Council initially formed in opposition to the Seers, and no one within the Free Council is in any doubt that the Seers serve the Lie. The overwhelming majority of Libertines believe that the Seers are the most conscious and effective servants of the Lie, and thus the most deserving targets.

Free Council cabals are thus the most likely members of the Pentacle to take an actively hostile attitude toward local Seer pylons. While none of the Atlantean orders like the Seers, the other orders are much more likely to take a more subtle approach, while the Free Council is prone to direct action. There are many exceptions on both sides, of course, but this is one of the behaviors that the Atlantean orders have in mind when they talk about the Free

Council as a bunch of hotheads apt to bring destruction on all willworkers.

Direct action often proves to be ineffective, as the Seers are skilled wielders of power. On the other hand, direct action is occasionally surprisingly effective; the belief that a group has extensive hidden reserves can deter attack even when it is, in fact, weaker than it appears. Wise cabals learn from both their successes and failures, and generally develop a strategy more reminiscent of that employed by the Atlantean orders. Nevertheless, Libertines who work actively against the Seers are almost always trying to set up the conditions for a final strike that will eliminate the pylon altogether, and the Libertines tend to risk that final strike rather earlier than other mages might. This succeeds about as often as it fails, which is about the same sort of efficiency as the more cautious approach. This leads the most experienced mages to think that there is no way to determine which general strategy is best in a particular case, and that it is a good thing that different cabals pursue different approaches.

Those members of the Free Council who know about vampires tend to regard them as servants of the Lie, as well as blood-drinking monsters who feed off Sleepers. Vampire hunting is not particularly easy, even for mages, but some Libertines do take on the mission of ridding a whole city of its undead parasites. The informed opinion among vampire hunters is that vampires are like roaches: it is not possible to wipe them out, but they can be kept under control. A tiny number of Libertine mages know enough about vampires to realize that most of their peers are working with gross generalizations. However, even within the liberal Free Council Assembly, it is difficult to stand up and publicly defend blood-suckers, and it is impossible to deny that some vampires are at least as bad as they are generally portrayed. Thus, these mages try to keep their more zealous colleagues focused on the most evil and manipulative vampires. Naturally, this draws the mages into vampire politics, and often it is not clear who is most manipulated.

Spirits, ghosts and theriomorphs are not generally believed to be servants of the Lie as groups, although specific individuals may be. A few mages do regard any supernatural creature without Supernal power as a servant of the Lie, reasoning that those powers were created to distract people from the true might of the Supernal Realm. These mages are regarded as extremists, but as long as they restrict their attentions to the most clearly evil and oppressive creatures, the rest of the Free Council tends to let them be. This is not normally a problem; obviously evil and oppressive creatures are rarely in short supply, and it is a rare cabal that can claim to have wiped them out and thus need to start on the more borderline cases.

A handful of these mages come to believe that the benevolent supernatural creatures are the biggest threat, as they are likely to convince Sleepers that believing the

Lie is a good thing. These mages target such beings, which often draws these Libertines into conflict with the rest of their Free Council.

The real problems come when considering two final groups: Sleepers and mages of the Pentacle. The Free Council is almost unanimous in its belief that most Sleepers are not *servants* of the Lie, despite the influence that their Disbelief has on magic. Rather, the overwhelming majority of Sleepers are the victims of the Lie, and the whole point of destroying its servants is to release the Sleepers. Exceptions to this consensus rarely last long. They believe that, as Sleepwalkers do not cause Disbelief, those Sleepers who do are, in fact, servants of the Lie. Thus, they try to destroy as many Sleepers as possible. This tends to draw everyone's attention, and everyone is interested in hunting them down and stopping them. Many of these mages really do turn Scelestus, but even the ones who do not are pursued with the same determination.

One belief that truly does appear to be universal in the Free Council is the belief that not all mages are servants of the Lie. At the very least, Libertines do not believe that they, personally, are serving the Lie. (Spies for the Seers may believe that while pretending to be Libertines, but they are really Seers.) However, the belief that some mages, in particular the Seers of the Throne, do serve the Lie is almost equally common. These two cases, then, present the problem of discrimination: how does a mage decide whether someone is a servant of the Lie?

Asking a suspect "Are you now, or have you ever been, a servant of the Lie?" does not tend to work, even with aid of Mind magic, as most servants of the Lie do not think of themselves in those terms. "Are you a servant of the Exarchs?" does tend to catch Seers of the Throne, but there are easier ways to find them; the difficult cases rarely think of themselves as serving the Exarchs either. Indeed, many of them have never heard of the Exarchs, and wouldn't believe in them if they did. (Come to that, a fair number of Libertines don't believe in the Exarchs either.)

Add to that the fact that servants of the Lie tend to, well, *lie*. They try to keep their allegiance hidden, and make responsibility for the acts appear to lie with others. Some may not even realize what they ultimately serve. Anyone could be a servant of the Lie, even the trusted Sleepwalker Retainer, even the other mages in your cabal!

That way lie paranoia, witch hunts and the collapse of the Free Council. That, of course, is exactly what the servants of the Lie would want to happen, so maybe the most zealous inquisitors searching for enemies of the Free Council are, in fact, its worst enemies! Which, of course, merely fans the flames of paranoia. Assemblies *do* collapse under the weight of suspicion, weakened by executions, battles and defection. Other Assemblies are often reluctant to investigate the causes, since it was an excess of investigation that brought the failed group down. However, the general consensus is that in many, if not most, cases there

was no particular conspiracy by the Seers of the Throne or any other external group; the Free Council brought about its own destruction.

On the other hand, a few Assemblies have been brought down by agents of the Seers planted in the Assemblies' midst, Seers who managed to reach positions of power and influence because they were not investigated by mages over-worried about witch hunts.

As so often, there is no easy solution, and so many Libertines debate the ethics of investigation, while some cabals put a particular set of guidelines into practice. In most cases, an Assembly has no authority capable of setting all the ground rules, so different cabals in the same city may apply very different standards of evidence and methods of investigation. Each of these cabals may regard the methods of the others as signs of corruption, although when that situation arises, the Assembly is generally doomed. Of course, Assemblies with more than one cabal focused on these issues are rare; most don't even have one whole cabal with this focus, although Assemblies without a single willworker who sees this as his main concern are very rare. A lone inquisitor is, unfortunately, more prone to go off the deep end, as he has no colleagues to rein in his excesses, so many Assemblies require inquisitors to work with other mages on other projects as well, to keep their perspective. This can be interpreted as a distraction intended to keep the mage away from the truth, and can actually serve as such.

The ethical debates over inquisition can usefully be divided up according to the stage of the process they concern. The first step is investigation, the second arrest, the third trial and the fourth punishment.

### *Investigation*

The main purpose of investigation is finding servants of the Lie, so that they can be dealt with. The first difference from regular policing is that "servant of the Lie" is not a particular crime. There is nothing in particular that starts most investigations, and nothing that means that they are over. Thus, while the police are normally not investigating whole communities, those searching for servants of the Lie always are.

It is obvious that mages can do surveillance very well if they put their minds to it, and the technologically savvy mages of the Free Council can do it even better than most. This means that they can thoroughly invade the privacy of any Sleeper, and can thoroughly monitor more individuals than would be possible for mundane forces. So, do people have a right to privacy? Most Libertines believe that they do, and that inquisitors must have some evidence before going digging through a person's life. Some inquisitors protest that this is a catch-22 situation: they can't get evidence without investigating, and they can't investigate without evidence.



In most Assemblies, this results in a set of messy compromises (and rule-bending by the investigators), as the level of investigation allowed is adjusted to the level of evidence. Thus, mere suspicion might license a cursory survey, and if that turns anything up, further investigation is permitted.

When the target is a Sleeper, one question that arises is that of mind-reading. When is it permissible for a mage to rifle through a Sleeper's mind? Some mages argue that this is actually less traumatic for the Sleeper than rifling through her filing cabinet, as she won't know that anything has happened, and thus it should be a fairly early stage of investigation. Used against a Sleeper, mind-reading does, after all, tend to be decisive. Other mages argue that, precisely because the Sleeper does not know it has happened, it is a serious violation of rights, and should only be used to get the final pieces of confirmation.

Different problems arise when the object of suspicion is a mage, as magic can hide or fake many kinds of evidence. A mage skilled in Mind can even fool mind-reading. What, if any, methods should not be allowed in those cases?

A final problem is that of knowing when to stop an investigation. With a particular crime, it is quite easy to reach the point where you know that the suspect cannot be guilty. With something as general as "serving the Lie," there is always the chance that maintaining the monitoring for another day will turn up the vital piece of evidence. If the investigators had their way, this would be decided purely by the availability of resources.

Quite a few Libertines think that something similar to the Sleeper system of requiring warrants is a good idea. Unfortunately, mages do not have the infrastructure of courts necessary to make this work, so they must make do with less effective versions. A popular requirement is that an investigator must get approval from a mage in a different cabal before undertaking a major investigation. This rule

is often ignored, for fear of alerting the subject, but the most respected and experienced investigators in the Free Council are noted for following it far more often than not. They say it saves them from serious mistakes, and gets them useful allies. Any other mage will do; rumors tell of young mages being confronted by third-degree Masters seeking their permission to investigate the Hierarchy.

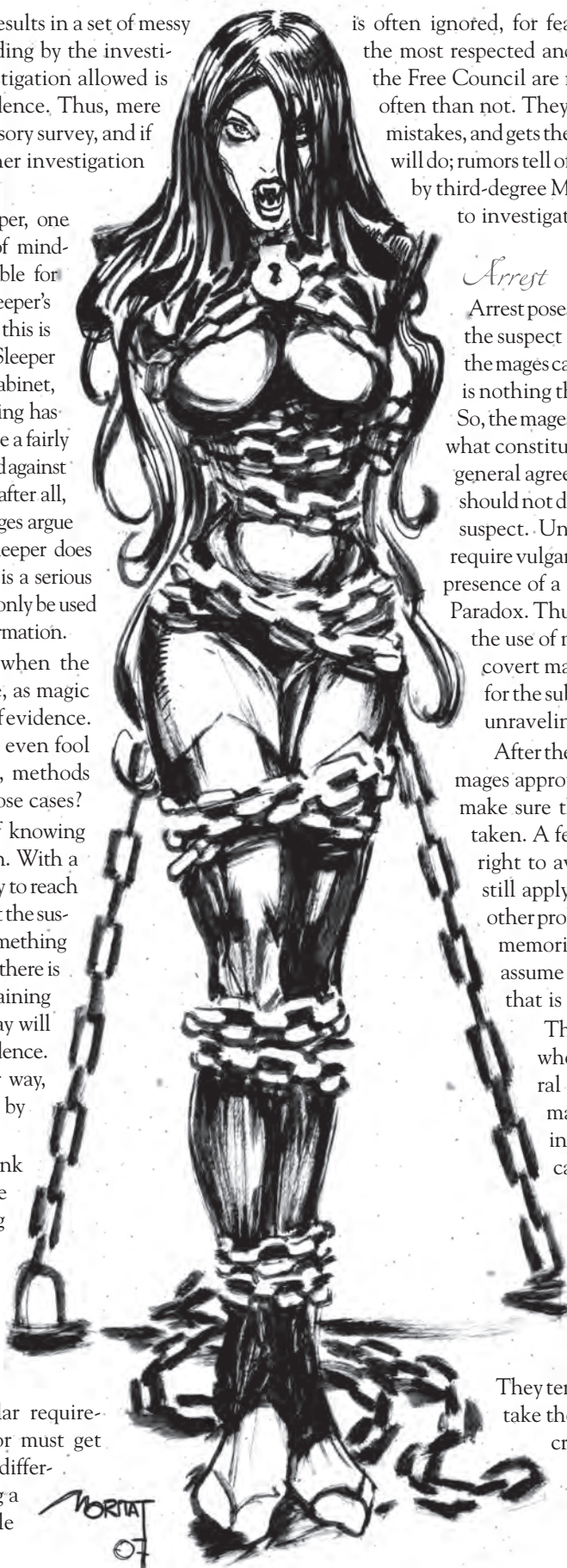
## Arrest

Arrest poses two opposing problems. When the suspect is a Sleeper, the problem is that the mages can do almost anything, and there is nothing the Sleeper can do to stop them. So, the mages must decide for themselves just what constitutes an abuse of power. There is general agreement that the process of arrest should not do any permanent damage to the suspect. Unfortunately, that would often require vulgar magic, and given the necessary presence of a Sleeper, that risks a dangerous Paradox. Thus, a number of Libertines favor the use of mundane force, enhanced with covert magic. That may be a little worse for the subject, but at least it does not risk unraveling the fabric of reality.

After the suspect has been arrested, most mages approve of the use of Mind magic to make sure that the right person has been taken. A few feel that something like the right to avoid self-incrimination should still apply, but they are a minority. The other problem that arises is that of altered memories; most investigators simply assume that they can spot that, but that is not always the case.

The problems are very different when the suspect is a supernatural being of some sort. Then, the main question is whether the investigating mages can actually capture and confine the suspect at all. As a result, very few mages worry over-much about the human rights issues involved (the suspects often aren't human, after all), and most don't worry even if suspects generally fail to survive arrest.

They tend to trust that mages would not take the risk of fighting a supernatural creature if they were not sure that they had the right one.





## *Trial*

Trials are an important check on the authority of inquisitors. Trials force the investigators to produce the evidence, and provide a forum in which the suspect can provide a defense. Perhaps most important, trials allow justice to be seen to be done. Mages of the Free Council generally recognize the importance of all these points. Unfortunately, putting them into practice is much more difficult.

The first problem is a simple lack of numbers. There aren't remotely enough Free Council mages in any city to have a permanent court, and most of them aren't particularly interested in specializing in law. Come to that, the Free Council doesn't have formal laws for any courts to apply, because it doesn't have enough members to create legislative bodies. As a result, both jobs tend to be done informally, gathering together ad hoc groups of mages to serve as judge and jury. (Obviously, the evidence cannot be presented to Sleepers.)

The evidence can also be difficult. Often a great deal of the evidence was discovered using magic, and the physical objects reveal nothing by themselves. Even if some of the presiding mages can read the accused's mind to determine his guilt, many mages present will not be able to, so the evidence can hardly be publicly assessed; it all comes down to the word of the investigators, which is precisely what this point was supposed to avoid.

Then there's the defense. Allowing a Sleeper to present a defense is risky, because it means telling him that he has been brought before a secret court of mages. Even in the Free Council, most willworkers think that's a bad idea. When the defendant is a supernatural creature, allowing her an opportunity to use her powers on lots of mages at once is generally thought to be a bad idea. Several stories, most probably apocryphal, illustrate graphically why it is a bad idea.

Finally, there's the problem of having a public court, with its proceedings a matter of record, in the largely secret world of mages. Obviously, the Sleepers can't be told what goes on. But, in many cases, other mages can't, either; the Free Council does not have sufficiently good relationships with them. Indeed, often, it isn't even possible for all the members of an Assembly to learn about a case.

Thus, the best trials that the Free Council can offer are wide open to abuse and cannot fulfill the functions a trial is supposed to have. Nevertheless, most Libertines still feel that something is better than nothing; execution without trial sits very ill with the vast majority.

## *Punishment*

Which brings us to the question of punishment. The tenet is "Destroy the Followers of the Lie." That would seem to mandate death for every offense, and that is a popular interpretation among investigators. However, some mages argue that, if someone can be converted to

not follow the Lie, that destroys the follower. Some of these mages favor heavy use of Mind magic to rewrite the personalities of the convicted. Other mages believe that death is a lesser punishment.

This is a problem because the Free Council does not have much choice. The Free Council cannot imprison those it finds, and fining them doesn't make any sense. Some mages simply force Sleepers out of positions of influence, which generally ruins their lives but does, at least, leave them alive.

The whole idea of punishment bothers many Libertines, however. When they punish someone, they are setting themselves up over that individual, saying that their view of right and wrong is more important than his. But that, surely, is an example of hierarchy. And wouldn't that make all the investigators in the Free Council followers of the Lie?

### **Inquisition Quotes**

"The people who keep humanity imprisoned *deserve* to be punished. If we do not do so, we contribute to the Lie and thus follow it."

—Six Stars

"We cannot let the Seers go unopposed. But we cannot oppose them by democratic methods. No matter what we do, we risk losing our souls."

—Razi

"It is only safe to oppose the obvious followers of the Lie. Once we start looking for enemies, we will find them everywhere, and become what we profess to hate."

—Adelard

### **Character Concepts**

You were approached by the Seers of the Throne after your Awakening, but fled. You are fairly sure that they are after you, personally, and you return the favor.

The biggest risk is the fall of the Awakened in the Free Council, so you keep an eye on your peers for signs of corruption. Of course, you know better than to become obsessed.

You are very suspicious of the inquisitors; they often seem to engage in witch hunts. You have started looking into some of their past investigations, to see whether they were truly justified.

## *Awakened Politics*

It should come as no surprise that many members of the Free Council take an active interest in Awakened politics. As in other fields, they push for freedom and democracy and trying out new and better ways of doing things. This does not tend to endear them to the Atlantean orders, but it makes the Libertines even less popular with the Seers of the Throne, so most areas see an alliance of convenience, at least.

In fact, most Consilii are not as unpopular with the Free Council as might, naïvely, be expected. In practice, most



Consilii are a form of representative democracy, where each cabal gets to send one member. While Libertines do not see this as an ideal form of government — they obviously prefer their own Assemblies — they also do not see it as following the Lie. This allows the Free Council to interact with the other orders on a civilized and political basis, which should be carefully distinguished from a “friendly” basis.

There is an ideological conflict between the Free Council and the Atlantean orders in most areas, one that runs deeper than the conflicts among the four Atlantean orders, and that is far more profound than a simple difference of style. Put crudely, the Free Council want to try new things because the old ones have yet to overthrow the Lie, while the Atlantean orders want to stick to the old ways because they have yet to get mages wiped out.

This has a tendency to mirror the division between young and old mages, and certainly the stereotype is for a Libertine to join an Atlantean order as he becomes older and learns “wisdom.” The most common destination is the Mysterium, which shares a desire for knowledge, but all the Atlantean orders claim defectors. Libertines do leave for the Guardians of the Veil, generally because the things that the Libertines have seen have convinced them that protecting the world is the best that can be hoped for.

On the other hand, it is certainly not unheard of for older mages to leave the Atlantean orders for the Free Council. This is normally because the mage has become utterly frustrated with ossified conservatism in his previous order. In regions where the Atlantean orders are more liberal and innovative, defections to the Free Council are rare. Indeed, there are some regions where an Atlantean

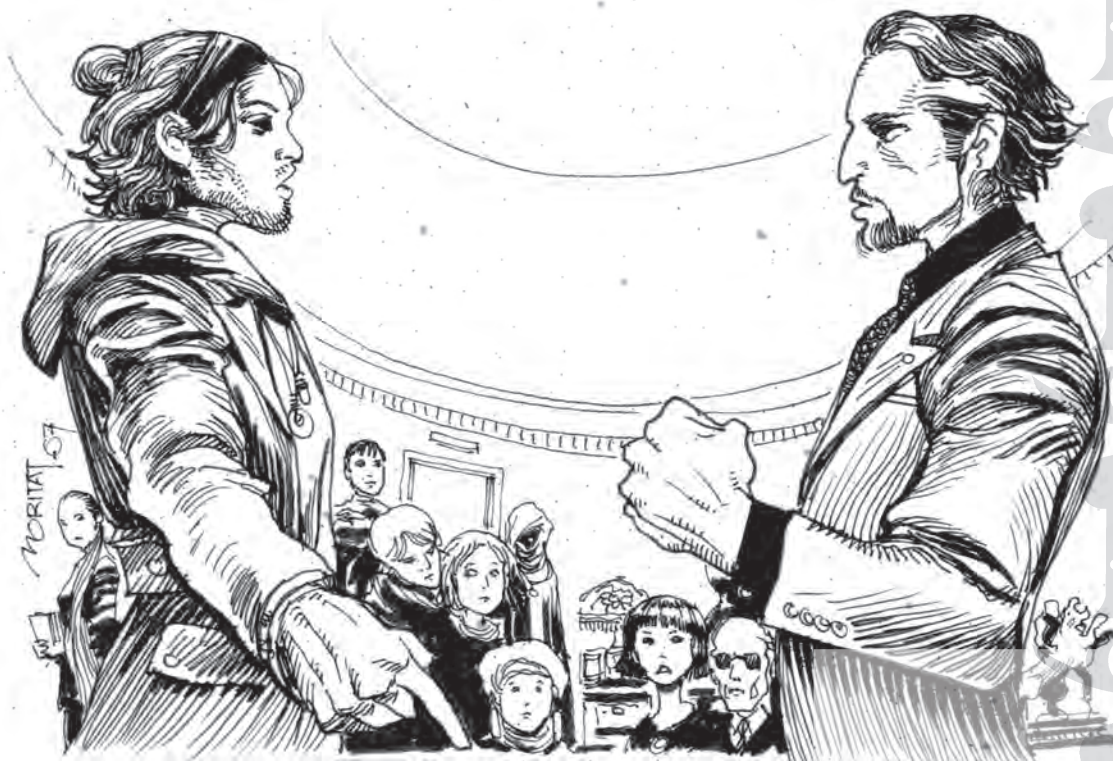
order (generally not the Guardians of the Veil) is, on average, more liberal and forward-looking than the local Free Council. These are the regions most likely to have an Assembly *instead* of a Consilium.

Many Libertines like to portray themselves as optimists, and the Atlantean orders as pessimists. The Atlanteans support existing policies because they haven’t, yet, led to complete and utter disaster. The Libertines, on the other hand, support new policies that have the potential to make the situation much better. Atlantean mages tend to refer to these positions as “realism” and “self-delusion,” respectively.

These philosophical differences explain why, even when the Libertines do not thoroughly disapprove of the Consilium, the Free Council mages of a region tend to have an Assembly, and appoint an emissary to deal with the Atlanteans. On a wide range of possible issues, the mages of the Free Council really are on one side, with all the Atlantean orders arrayed against them on the other.

Needless to say, this tends to provoke tension when the Free Council participates in a Consilium, because the Libertines tend to be seriously outvoted. Since Libertines favor democracy, they generally take these defeats relatively well, and continue to participate. However, there is a more fundamental conflict over the role of the Consilium, over which the Free Council has been known to withdraw its cooperation.

In most cities, the Free Council and the Atlantean orders are both happy enough with the way that the Consilium works, although neither sees it as ideal. However, their ideals tend to be opposed. The Atlantean orders tend to





want something similar to a king and his advisers, where the Hierarch holds authority and uses it wisely. The Free Council wants something more like a cabinet with a chairman, where the Hierarch can do nothing without getting the consent of the other Councilors. Obviously, this is a crude generalization, but the Free Council and the Atlantean orders do tend to pull the Consilium in opposing directions. In many cases, this results in heated debates and elaborate political plots, but none of the orders actually want to lose the participation of the others. In other words, politics as usual.

In some cases, however, the Atlantean orders freeze the Free Council out of the Consilium. In a few areas the Free Council has never even been allowed in, and in those areas Free Council mages are treated as apostates at best, as Banishers or Mad at worst. In these cases the Free Council functions as an opposition faction, trying to change the Awakened government of the area.

Sometimes, this gives Libertines the chance to be heroes, as the Consilium is corrupt and oppressive and mired in the past. This normally means that most of the mages in the area would like a change, but do not dare to openly oppose the powers that be. If the Free Council can provide a viable opposition, the Libertines can often recruit many supporters and allies, and may even be able to overthrow the old Consilium without resorting to violence. That is not common, however.

At the other extreme, the Consilium might be autocratic, with a powerful Hierarch who has no intention of surrendering power, and conservative but fair and competent, and genuinely concerned for the welfare of the mages it governs. Such situations are rare, but difficult for the Free Council when they do arise, as the revolutionaries are unlikely to garner much support from mages who are doing perfectly well under the current regime. Some Libertines even find that they have moral problems with overthrowing someone who is doing a good job just because he is not a neophilic democrat. Perhaps fortunately for the Free Council, such enlightened despots are very rare.

Situations intermediate between the two extremes are, however, very common, and make up most of the Consilii across the world. This leads to Libertines disagreeing with each other over when it is best to work within the system, pushing for reform, and when it is best to withdraw and try to overthrow it from outside. "Mindless revolutionary" and "sell-out" are among the mildest insults that get traded back and forth in these circumstances. Once both camps are of substantial size, they tend to polarize the Assembly, and, amid fierce debate, both sides try to implement their own schemes and undermine those of the other. This can lead to so much infighting that the Free Council becomes politically irrelevant. It can also lead to the Consilium being brought down by a combination of internal and external assaults. This debate can easily arise whether or not the Free Council participates in the Consilium, and tends to

be messier when the Free Council supplies one or more of the Councilors. In those cases, the revolutionaries may accuse their peers of being followers of the Lie.

This accusation is also made against members of the Atlantean orders, particularly Guardians of the Veil. Since the Free Council is committed to destroying followers of the Lie, such an accusation always causes political difficulties at the very least. When a cabal of Libertines decide to carry out their sentence against an Atlantean mage, it can create serious problems for the whole Free Council. Across the world, successful assassination of a "follower of the Lie" is the most common single reason for ejecting the Free Council from the Consilium and persecuting its members. Of course, such a response looks a lot like evidence that the whole Consilium follows the Lie, at least to a member of the Free Council, so opposition hardens.

As a result, it is not uncommon for Free Council mages to spend some time trying to stop other Free Council mages from dealing with unpleasant, but Atlantean, willworkers. Libertines with contacts typically try to get the mage's own order to take action, while trying to frustrate the inquisitors without getting themselves targeted as followers of the Lie. Sometimes, of course, the inquisitors are just completely off-base, in which case simple protection of the innocent target may be the order of the day. The inquisitors are not always wrong, however.

The problem is compounded by the fact that behavior that the Free Council regards as following the Lie may be acceptable, even admirable, within another Atlantean order. This is particularly the case with the Guardians of the Veil (some Libertines think that the Guardians are just a branch of the Seers of the Throne), but the Mysterium hides the knowledge of magic from "the unworthy," the mages of the Silver Ladder set themselves up as rulers without seeking a democratic mandate and mages of the Adamantine Arrow follow orders no matter whom the boss might be. In that case, a mage's own order will do nothing to rein her in, and Libertines must decide which is more important: their principles, or peace. Naturally, not all Libertines make the same call, even in the same situation.

It has often been observed that it is easier to live up to high principles while not having any power. This is as true in Awakened politics as in the mundane world, and Libertines often find that the mages who replace a corrupt ancient regime are not much better themselves. The temptation is then to overthrow them in turn, leading to perpetual revolution. Similarly, the Atlantean orders typically outnumber the Free Council, so that a democratic constitution often results in a Consilium that drifts away from the ideals of the Free Council. A few Libertines come to the conclusion that the Consilium needs some enforced limits, so that it remains democratic, a constitution of sorts. These mages often take on the task of enforcing the constitution, and of hunting down subversives who would try to overthrow it.



There is a group of mages within the Free Council that takes a very different approach to politics. They are a minority in the Free Council as a whole, but a fairly large minority, so that they do make up the majority in some Consilii. These mages believe that the basic principles of democracy, freedom and innovation mean that they should be striving for a world in which everyone, even the Seers of the Throne, will be happy. Many mages in other orders regard these Libertines as traitors, and even many Libertines think such mages on crack, but they persist.

The basic thought is that the discontent and conflicts in the world are all manifestations of the Lie, and that the most lied-to are those who seem to do the most to support the system. These mages thus see Seers of the Throne as the primary victims of the Lie, rather than its enforcers. As a result, these mages do not want to destroy the Seers, but rather to liberate them. The methods used to pursue such liberation are highly variable, and not always pleasant for the target, but these mages are by far the most likely to have cordial contact with Seers of any mages who are not Seers themselves.

These mages generally try to talk to their enemies, on the grounds that you cannot help people to get what they want if you don't know what they want. Of course, some wants seem mutually incompatible; it might seem that it is not possible for two mages who both want sole possession of a particular artifact to be satisfied. The argument is that, if you go back to deeper wants, you will find that they can all be satisfied simultaneously, as long as people can be brought to realize what they really want.

Talking to the Seers of the Throne is bad enough, but these mages also talk to other supernatural creatures, including vampires, theriomorphs and spirits. These mages even form alliances across "racial" lines, something that brings criticism from all sides, just as interracial relationships among Sleepers do in certain cultures. In more liberal areas, the mages use that analogy to oppose their critics.

Some of these mages even think that the acamoth can be given what they want. Those mages tend to turn Scelestus, and be hunted down.

For the most part, these mages are friendly idealists. However, their belief that many people do not know what they really want opens the way for them to become tyrants. It can be very tempting for such mages to act for another person's good, perhaps particularly when that person does

not truly realize what his good is. For example, a Seer might not immediately appreciate being framed for treason so that she has to go on the run, but she will "discover her true self." Sometimes, this actually works.

Sometimes.

#### Politics Quotes

"The most important thing to remember is that the Atlantean orders are *not*, in fact, as bad as the Seers of the Throne. Usually."

—Razi

"He that is not with me is against me."

—Matthew 12:30

"For he that is not against us is on our part."

—Mark 9:40

"Democracy and freedom restricted to the people who agree with you are just nice names for tyranny and oppression."

—Six Stars

"Those who wink at tyrants are almost tyrants themselves."

—Bistesla

#### Character Concepts

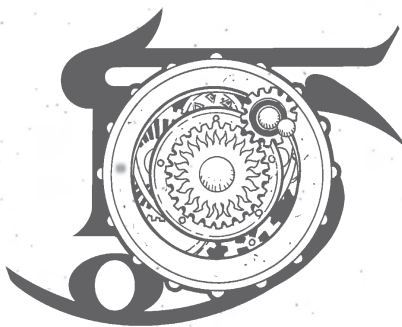
You have friends (cabal-mates?) in the Atlantean orders, and so feel the need to work for harmony within the Consilium.

You have a friend who is a vampire, and thus are concerned by moves to demonize all vampires as blood-sucking parasites governed by nigh-uncontrollable urges to violence and murder. *Especially* because it's more or less true.

You have trouble seeing the difference between keeping magic away from Sleepers, as the Seers do, and keeping magic away from Sleepers, as the Guardians of the Veil do. You tend to see both as wrong.

## Conclusions

Conclusions are something that mages of the Free Council is very short on. This is, perhaps, not surprising. They value debate, innovation and freedom, and none of these values promote agreement or consensus. Thus, while you can find Libertines to exemplify every attitude given in this section, you can also find Libertines who criticize them vigorously. What makes them Libertines is what they think is worth criticizing and arguing about. And that means that life in an Assembly is never dull.









# CHAPTER TWO: THE LIBERTINE CULTURE

Norton's feet were iron weights — actual iron weights. The flesh of his arms had fused together, turning him into a single lumpy column below the elbows, like melted plastic. The ski-masked man in the middle was the transmuter. Norton didn't know what the other two were here for.

Above him, a television hung from the concrete ceiling by its cord. The electric snow on the screen was the only light.

One ski mask leaned in close to another. "Do your thing," he said.

"Libertine," this third ski mask said. She sounded Southern. "Look at me." Norton did. He couldn't blink. Gradually, he came to realize that his eyelids wouldn't move. Were they even there anymore? "This can happen quick," she said. He'd been in this room for two days already. "Say an address. Name a building. Give us a true name. And you can go home."

Norton opened his mouth, then paused. "I don't know what you want," he said. He looked at the transmuter.

"Don't look at him!" the Southerner scolded.

Norton started to choke. Water was condensing on the inside of his nose and throat, seemingly from nowhere.

"Look at me," she said. He did. "You're a Technoir. You've been seen with the Liberati. Give us a true name, and this can end for you right now."

"I don't know any of their names. Real names. I saw them at a, ah, uh, meeting."

"A rally."

"A fucking symposium."

"You're lying."

"I'm not!"

"You're a Libertine. You said as much."

"But I'm not a Liberati. I'm no technomancer. I'm an archivist with the Grant Street cabal."

The Southern ski mask stared at him. The sound of static from the TV seemed to sync up with Norton's breathing. His stomach filled with rocks.

"We'll see," she said.



***"There are no magic answers, no miraculous methods to overcome the problems we face, just the familiar ones: honest search for understanding, education, organization, action that raises the cost of state violence for its perpetrators or that lays the basis for institutional change — and the kind of commitment that will persist despite the temptations of disillusionment, despite many failures and only limited successes, inspired by the hope of a brighter future."***

**— Noam Chomsky**

The Free Council is a diverse body formed by loyalty to shared beliefs, rather than by necessity, and held together by its ideas more than its traditions. This sets it apart from the Atlantean orders of the Diamond, which were crafted in response to societal needs and are held together by traditions as cracked and ancient as stone. The Free Council is honest, experimental and passionate, and these qualities make it free.

Libertines can argue, and have argued, that the Free Council was born from a societal need rather than constructed as a social experiment or evolved by chance out of an educated culture, but it was not a need of the so-called Atlantean society of mages. The Free Council emerged from the needs of the Nameless cabals to escape warfare with the Diamond so that the brightest members might continue their essential work, building an enlightened future. The Free Council's primordial cabals formed in response to the needs of modern mages to grow and change as thinkers, to understand their world by stepping out from under the shadow of the Atlantis myth and forth into the open air. The Diamond's Atlantis may have needed its orders to keep itself running, but the whole of the Fallen World needs the Free Council to build something better.

## *Libertine Culture*

Libertine culture is young. Though the Free Council has absorbed more cultural artifacts from the orders of the Diamond than its founders would have hoped (and more, still, than many Libertines like to admit), these are largely tools for communication rather than instruments of history or strategy. Although many if not most subscribers to the Free Council philosophies regard Atlantis as an abused myth, it seems almost every Libertine mage is conversant in the Diamond's legendry.

Atlantis is a precious symbol, a monumental legend with great metaphorical power, and its value as a tool for facilitating communication between mages from disparate backgrounds should not be underestimated. Atlantis and its surrounding myths translate complex and esoteric metaphysical concepts that are difficult even for the very wise to fathom into a parable with intuitive resonance.

Don't believe what loudmouthed apprentice punks and young Turks spit out in their bitch sessions — the legend isn't bullshit. But neither is it true.

The Free Council has a complicated relationship with the orders of the Atlantean Diamond, but most Libertine figureheads like it that way. The Free Council celebrates complexity and examination, debate and civil disobedience. The Free Council isn't afraid of being wrong, it's afraid of never asking the right questions.

Due to its relatively short history and its slight, even bare social structure, Libertine culture is best understood through observation rather than reporting. Whereas the Guardians, the mystagogues, the Arrows and the théarchs all have their traditional customs to learn and abide by, the Free Council's casual modernity implies much more than it decrees. A lot of Libertine behavior has to be felt out. It's difficult to explain why it would be complimentary to call one mage a "retromancer" and rude to label another one the same, but after a few Assemblies, the flow and style of Libertine culture begins to make sense.

This chapter presents measured reports of the Free Council's internal culture and general relationship with the Atlantean orders, as well a survey of its dealings with other supernatural agents. Factions within the order, revealing the breadth of the Libertine philosophy in action, are contrasted with sample cabals. But first, the Free Council's cultural background is revealed through textual artifacts, beginning with a frank glossary and continuing with excerpts from works by Libertine writers.

## *Glossary*

The Free Council, although known for modern style and casual language, is still a subculture of specialists, still a secret society. Thus, they've created or adopted a sizeable amount of distinctive jargon. Most Free Council terminology is either highly local, drawing on area landmarks and personalities for meaning, or so intrinsically linked to academic, technological or scientific jargon as to be nearly indistinguishable. Here, then, is a selection of only those words and phrases that are either in uncommonly frequent use or are unusually to decipher out of context.



Note that, for purposes of this list, *traditional* terms are those that seem to date to at least the formation of the order or are so ubiquitous as to be common. Terms marked as *jargon* are unofficial but common enough that Libertines in far-off cities would likely understand them; these terms probably won't offend anyone. *Slang* terms might not be understood by an outside speaker and, even if they are, might be offensive; they are not for polite company.

**anachromancer:** (n., 1990s, slang) A mage who uses obsolete or even fictional technology as part of his magic, usually out of nostalgia or for fashion; especially mages who use technology designed and manufactured prior to 1950. See also *retromancer*. "I've actually seen one of these before with Graham, that anachromancer from the Village with the collection of old phonographs."

**Assembly:** (n., traditional) A regional congress of *Libertine* mages or their representatives. An Assembly is separate from the local Consilium, though not necessarily opposed to it. See also *Column*.

**Atlantis on the Moon:** (n. or adj., 1960s, slang) Free Council hyperbole referring to an idealized utopian future where magic and technology coexist in harmony. Often used to describe a best-case scenario. "In Atlantis on the Moon, we'd get in there tonight and be done with it."

**billfold:** (n., 1985, jargon) Free Council slang for any object or place that houses a magical object; for example, a sanctum with an artifact within. "Careful with the car, man, it's my billfold."

**cell:** (n., 1960s, jargon) A sanctum. "I've got to get back to my cell."

**ensor:** (n., 1980s, jargon) A Seer of the Throne, a Banisher or one of their agents. "There's a censor downstairs, so keep your mouth shut."

**church:** (v., from 1900, slang) To clean or repair an object; to make like new. After the 1990s, its usage expanded to include one's physical person. After about 2001, its usage expanded again to include psychological repair. The phrase is utterly ironic, though, and never seems to be used for moral absolution. "I churched that thing last night, so we're good to go."

**Column:** (n., traditional) An Assembly convened to prepare and organize *Libertine* mages for battle. A Column may refer to the whole body of the militant Assembly or, less often, to its figureheads alone.

**columnar:** (adj. or n., slang) Of or pertaining to a Column; also, informally, any single participant in a Column. "You can't come, tonight's for columnars."

**communards:** (n., slang) A member of a communal sanctum or "hippy" cabal; alternately, any Free Council mage with few or no connections to the rest of Pentacle society; a shut-in. "Edgar's a real communard. I haven't seen him outside of an Assembly for a year."

**critical path:** (n., 1990s, jargon) A series of events leading to an important outcome in which one mistake throws

the final outcome into serious doubt. In the Free Council, this borrowed business phrase refers almost exclusively to events that have been foreseen, predestined or prophesied. "This day is the first on a new critical path to our control of the Consilium."

**cube:** (n., 1950s, slang) A Sleeper; rudely, any boring or unimaginative mage. "Don't be a cube, Doug."

**dime:** (n., 1970s, slang) Mana. "I've got to get dime."

**emissary:** (n., traditional) An ambassador from one Free Council body (e.g., a cabal or Assembly) to any other Pentacle organization, including the Consilium. An emissary typically is endowed with no authority beyond visitation, messaging and oratory, though the emissary may be empowered with further responsibilities and freedoms at the discretion of his representatives. "The Grant Street cabal's emissary says he's prepared a speech for the Column."

**employer:** (n., 1980s, slang) The order to which a mage belongs. This phrase is often followed by an allusion to the mage's order in the Pentacle, rather than a clear statement of membership. "My employer is the manager of Silver Hardware."

**execute:** (n., 1990s, slang) To cast a spell, especially a rote. This use arose from computer-savvy Libertines in the DOS era and has largely fallen out of use since. Today, the term is more likely to be used sarcastically in reference to a spell that is difficult to cast or when a mage is likely to fail. "Edgar, this isn't going to execute!"

**fallen:** (adj., 1920s, slang) Being drab, sad; a letdown; weak or flimsy. "You're actually coming to me with that fallen argument?"

**fault:** (n. or verb, 1990s, jargon; also, adj. **faulty**) A Paradox; to cause a Paradox. "Shit, we're going to have a fault here," or, "I'm going to fault."

**felon:** (n., 2000s, slang) Any inhabitant of the Fallen World, but especially a mage. "I'm no great felon, I'm just trying to get through the day."

**fived:** (v., 2000s, slang) To be out-politicked or otherwise screwed by Pentacle formalities, customs or intrigues; to suffer a setback due to any order but the Free Council. This word seems only to exist as a past participle (pronounced as if it were the past tense of the word *five*); no one uses the terms "to five" or "fiving." "I'm not talking to those guys; I don't want to get fived again."

**fix:** (v., 1980s, jargon) To subject a person or object to a spell with a long-term effect. "I'll fix the door so we'll know if anyone comes inside," or, "He's fixed me with Fate and now I'm afraid to leave the house."

**freakout:** (n., 1970s, slang) A member of the Free Council, from the perspective of a mage from another order. Some modern Libertines use this to describe Free Council colleagues they don't want to be associated with. This is probably a deviation from *freak ounce*. "Who's the new freakout, Doug?"

**glassblower:** (n., 2000s, slang) A person, either Sleeper or Awakened, who spends an inordinate amount of leisure time in front of a television or computer monitor. *"Don't be such a glassblower, Haden. It's a beautiful day outside."*

**goggles:** (n., 1990s, slang) Any form of Mage Sight. This use, born in the glory days of raver culture, is now quite out of fashion. *"Put your goggles on, man, something's up."*

**hexxer:** (n., 1940s, slang) A malicious mage; any wicked or irresponsible user of supernatural power. This is not a nice thing to say to another mage. *"Get out, you fucking hexxer, or I'll cut your fucking cord."*

**interpathy:** (n., 2000s, slang) An ironic, intentionally cute phrase for telepathy, especially when used for romantic, sexual or intimidate exchanges. *"I heard it through interpathy."*

**Liberati:** (n., 1990s, jargon) Historically, a member of any contrary, liberal faction within the Free Council, especially members who vote in blocs or fail to uphold decisions reached at Assembly; casually, any Libertine mage who maintains ties with the order and participates in Assemblies just enough to influence decisions, but without truly serving the interests of the body politic; rudely, any Libertine mage who acts as if he were smarter than the voting body or any mage who disparages voters while still a member of a voting body. *"You're just another Liberati snob who thinks he's too good to abide by us voters, but your opinion isn't worth more than my vote, asshole."*

**Libertine:** (n. or adj., traditional) Any mage with a worldview, personal philosophy or personal attitude that is compatible with or friendly to the Free Council. Though often used to describe mages with actual membership in the order, this term can also refer to any mage who thinks or acts in a manner congruent with Free Council philosophy. Rarely, *Libertine* is used to mean any young, liberal or egalitarian mage. *"The Free Council and every Libertine mage in the city is going to be at tonight's Assembly."*

**log on:** (v., 1990s, jargon) To pay attention; to attend an Assembly or Column; to use any form of extrasensory perception. *"Log on and tell me what she's thinking."*

**Lorehouse:** (n., traditional) A storehouse of records, manuscripts, files and other data important to the Free Council, overseen by a particular body (e.g., cabal or order) in the region. A Lorehouse may be open to friendly mages of any order or may be restricted to use by Free Council mages or even members of only a particular faction or cabal. *"I'm looking for information on a technomancer who bombed Detroit in '88. Can you get me into the Grant Street Lorehouse?"*

**manually:** (adv., jargon) Without magic. *"I'm restoring this car manually, for fun."*

**Metropolis, the:** (n., 1900s, jargon) The utopian Awakened City Free Council mages hope to build in the future; the Libertine Atlantis, existing only in the future. *"This isn't how they'll do it in the Metropolis."*

**narc:** (n., 1970s, jargon) A Seer of the Throne; a Sleeper agent of the Seers of the Throne. *"That guy by the pay phone's a narc of the Throne."*

**number man/woman:** (n., 1950s, slang) Any Libertine mage with uncommon expertise in a mundane field, but especially mathematics, science or accounting. *"I can't even make sense of what my spell's trying to tell me, so let's take this thing to my number woman and have it put under an actual microscope."*

**on staff:** (adj., 1990s, slang) Being a member of an order other than the Free Council; especially used to describe Libertines who are not Free Council mages. *"Nice guy, but he's pretty on staff with the Arrow."*

**paper:** (adj., 2000s, jargon) Old-fashioned, antiquated, obsolete, outdated. *"That's kind of a paper car, isn't it?"*

**pi:** (adj., 1980s, jargon) Of obscure nature or origin; puzzling; mysterious; unsolvable, especially by magic or science. This is particularly suitable for puzzles that one comes into contact with regularly, yet cannot explain. *"Love's pi, man, what can you do?"* or, *"Can you help me, I've got this pi artifact I can't make heads or tails of."*

**punch-carding:** (v., 1990s, slang) Doing something without magic or with old equipment; using out-of-date technology in a new way through magical empowerment. *"Are you guys still punch-carding with that TV in the basement?"*

**pyramid builder:** (n., 1920s, slang) Anyone, Sleeper or Awakened, who follows directions without question; a person, especially in a service role, unwilling to tolerate questions of the status quo; a follower. See also *pyramid building*. *"Can you believe that pyramid builder talked to me like that?"*

**pyramid building:** (v., 1920s, slang) Work asked of the proletariat by a political power or ruling figure; drawn-out Sisyphean work, especially that assigned to persons who identify their social class by doing the work; drudgery; sometimes, extremely difficult ritual spellcasting. See also *pyramid builder*. *"The Ladder's got us all down here building pyramids while they're turning lead into gold upstairs."*

**rank and file:** (n., 1970s, slang) The local population of mages belonging to other orders in the Pentacle; unflattering. *"You sound like the rank and file when you talk like that."* See also *ranker*.

**ranker:** (n., 1970s, slang) A member of any other order but the Free Council; unflattering. *"We don't want any rankers in this meeting."*

**razi:** (adj., 1940s, jargon) Old but good; having old-fashioned style or elegance; worth keeping. This derives from the influential Free Council mage Razi (see p. 19). Typically, when used in this way, the name is pronounced "rah-zee." *"That's a razi old watch, where'd you get it?"*

**redcoat:** (n., 1900s, slang) A turncoat; traitor; especially mages who aid the Seers of the Throne. *"You keep talking like that, and they're going to think you're a redcoat."*



**retromancer:** (n., 2000s, slang) A mage who uses out-of-date or obsolete technology as magical tools, typically for reasons of nostalgia or fashion; especially mages using tools from 1950–1989. See also *anachromancer*. “I don’t think Don’s a retromancer, I think he’s just had that same radio all this time.”

**rewild, rewilding:** (v. or n., 1980s, slang) To render a place free of functioning technology, especially through sabotage, for the purpose of restoring a natural setting or environment. Also a Free Council anarcho-primitivist philosophy that supposes that technology is purely an instrument of the Lie and that the future Atlantis will be ruled by magic utterly without technology. “Those crazy bastards are out to rewild the harbor.”

**ring:** (v., traditional) To sound genuine or authentic; to be persuasive; to change someone’s mind. “I have to tell you, I thought his lecture was going to be so much bullshit, but I sat through the whole thing and it rings.”

**rubber-hose:** (adj., 1990s, slang) Brutish and non-magical; rough and simplistic; callous and harsh. “Looks like you had a real rubber-hose strategy for getting here, cube.”

**secretary:** (n., 1980s, slang) A Sleeper, especially one with a corporate job. “I don’t know how I ever rode the train with all those secretaries all those years.”

**ship:** (n., 1950s, slang) A car, especially one altered through magic. “If you want to go, we can take my ship.”

**shuck:** (n. or adj., 1930s, jargon) An illusion or illusory effect; having an illusory quality; appearing better than it is. “I’m telling you, that gun’s a shuck,” or, “I’m not making any shuck deals with you Adamantines.”

**smack:** (v. or n., 1990s, slang) To invoke a Paradox; a Paradox itself. “The last thing I remember is trying to get this spell off when I smacked,” or, “He didn’t even cast it before the smack came.”

**strategos:** (n., traditional) A Free Council representative endowed by his constituents with the power to make decisions on their behalf, within his purview, without calling for a vote. Strategoi are typically named to their positions in times of desperation, when time is too short to afford elections; thus the position is typically one with martial or defensive authority. Essentially, the strategos’s constituents vote in advance to back whatever course of action the strategos decides. A strategos’s authority is always limited to a single area of his or her proven expertise, such as investigation, archaeology or battle.

**subscriber:** (n., 1920s, jargon) A Libertine with membership in the Free Council; a Free Councilor, especially one with ties to a faction within the order. “It’s all right, he’s a subscriber, he can come inside.”

**syndic:** (n., traditional) A elected representative for a cabal, faction or other Free Council body, who is tasked with debating that body’s issues against other bodies, usually within the order but also against other Pentacle cabals or factions. A syndic has no real power except as

a mouthpiece, but may attain great celebrity or influence within the local Pentacle community due to his or her visibility and oratory.

**techné:** (n., traditional) The Free Council style of magic. Techné incorporates ancient Atlantean mysticism with modern (and sometimes experimental) styles of art, technology and culture to create a kind of wizardry that blends well into the contemporary world and draws from vibrant modern symbols.

**the Great Refusal:** (n., traditional) The defining moment of unity and integrity for the Free Council, when it turned away from the offers of the Seers of the Throne and thus chose participation in the Pentacle as a single, united order.

**the Nameless:** (n., traditional) The various unallied but philosophically related sects, cabals and factions that predated the Free Council. These political and philosophical bodies created early forms of the Free Council’s tenets and societal structures but misspent them on angry or misaimed revolutions. The body politic that would become the Free Council were the jewels cultivated from the dross of the Nameless cabals. (Prior to the formation of the Free Council in 1899, the Pentacle used the phrase the Nameless orders, as no one could be sure how many potential new organizations — friendly or hostile — were trying to emerge from the ideological chaos of the day.)

**ticket-holder:** (n., 1980s, slang) A Libertine who is not formally a member of the Free Council. “Quiet. We don’t tell that kind of stuff to ticket-holders.”

**traitor whore:** (n., 2000s, slang) 21st-century Free Council hyperbole for any young mage Awakened by a Libertine who goes on to join the Seers of the Throne or become a Banisher. Especially rude Libertines may use this phrase to describe any such mage who joins an order other than the Free Council. “I know him, he’s that traitor whore from Manassas.”

**two ounces:** (n., 2000s, slang) Discouraging slang for Free Council rhetoric or propaganda. Possibly derived from *weird ounces*. “Shut it, freakout, I don’t need another two ounces.”

**voter:** (n., traditional, jargon) A member of the Free Council. “Get the voters together.”

**weird ounce:** (n., 1970s, slang) A member of the Free Council. This is a common mutation of an older phrase among British Libertines, “freak ounce,” which was a casual dropping of the last syllable in “free council.” See also *freakout*.

**write:** (v., slang) To cast a spell; to create a rote; to Awaken; to work magic. This term has expanded dramatically over the Free Council’s century on Earth. The term seems to stem from early writings that inspired Libertines to “write a new history of tomorrows,” though many modern mages believe it comes from expressions about writing code. Typically, only spells with tangible subjects

or targets are said to be written. "I wrote a spell on him so he won't forget."

## Status and Positions

### Voter (●)

These are the groundlings of the order, respectable and even admirable for their membership and support. A voter needs no qualifications besides allegiance to be worthy of liberty in the Free Council. In some Assemblies, however, being worthy and being granted voting rights are not the same thing. Voters may be required to jump through hoops before their votes are recognized. In some places, the criteria are as simple as attending a minimum number of Assemblies or agreeing to donate a few days a month to serve on some committee. Other Assemblies require voters to pledge allegiance and swear off any previous or superseding loyalties, including those to the Consilium. Though every voter's vote is supposedly worth the same to the order, not every Assembly prizes the position of voter so cheap.

### Host (●●)

Similar to so many Libertine honors, the position of host is both ceremonial and temporary. A host is simply any voter who donates his space to the order for an Assembly or debate. A mage who routinely hosts meetings or who sacrifices his time or money to create a great environment might retain his local status for weeks after an Assembly. The mage who merely lets his fellow Libertines use his basement when it's his turn enjoys the benefits of status only as long the meeting lasts.

To represent the lasting influence enjoyed by a hosting character in simple game terms, do this: Roll Presence + Expression, Persuasion or Socialize + order Status: Free Council as an extended action with each roll representing one hour of hosting. Only a number of rolls equal to or less than the Size of the venue may be made. The same Skill doesn't have to be used for each roll. For every five guests after the first five, apply a -1 die penalty to the roll. Each success extends the host's Status for one day.

### Emissary (● to ●●●)

Emissaries are among the most common positions in the Free Council. Virtually every Assembly names emissaries to serve as contacts for the local Consilium and the rest of the Pentacle. An emissary is, in general, only as good as he is liked by both the Assembly dispatchers and the audience to which he is sent. Still, even the most eloquent and genial emissaries are regarded as messengers at best and decoration at worst. An emissary doesn't craft the message he delivers or debate the issues he brings word of; he simply talks and listens. That what amounts to a courier position

can still warrant the prestige it does within the Free Council is testament to the order's ability to value honesty, communication and a keen perception. A weak emissary lacks nuance and misses out on innuendo. A talented emissary subtly influences listeners and speakers alike with his demeanor and courtesy — it can be the difference between merely delivering bad news to a théarch and causing a conflict that derails the Consilium for weeks.

To be a good emissary requires tact, poise and a willingness to let others get the attention. In exchange, an emissary gains a ready audience, face time with influential local wizards and a reputation for discretion. Emissary is not a prestigious position, but it can be a valuable one.

### Minuteman (● to ●●●●)

Any Libertine who agrees to fight (in some Consilii even just figuratively) may customarily be called a minuteman. In practice, however, only a Libertine who has actually fought on behalf of the order enjoys the benefits of added respect from the citizenry.

Minutemen, obviously, are fashioned on the guerilla militiamen of the American Revolution. The image of the common colonial man summoned out of his house in the middle of the night to defend against the redcoats is not too far off from what a Libertine minuteman actually is. A minuteman is expected to come when his cell phone rings or the strategos calls out to him through telepathy. Minutemen pull on their boots and convene in empty parking lots at four in the morning because a Seer pylon has found someone's sanctum. They drive to the Assembly site when a mage needs to be escorted out of town. These are the citizen soldiers of the Free Council, and they are all volunteers.

### Letter Carrier (●● to ●●●●●)

The so-called letter carriers exist in only a few Consilii nowadays. Letter carriers are, to a large extent, emissaries, but nostalgia and a history of sacrifice lend them an aura of additional prestige. In casual language, a letter carrier may be any emissary who travels abroad to carry a message on behalf of the order. Historically, a letter carrier is specifically an emissary who allows his memory to altered with Mind spells so that even the courier himself may not have access to the message. In a few areas, where the Free Council was especially paranoid about Seer surveillance, letter carriers were even ensorcelled into believing they were traveling for their own reasons, not on order business. Some letter carriers may still be carrying around hidden messages in their psyches and not even know it until the mental barriers isolating the message from their own memories begin to erode.

The position of letter carrier started as little more than a local custom and a nickname somewhere in the Eastern United States around the late 1930s. During the thick of



the cold war, when paranoia was in fashion, letter carriers were more common throughout the United States. Today, they've gone the way of the milkman in most Consilii. The majority of Libertines who still identify themselves as letter carriers are in their 60s or 70s now and keep the title out of nostalgia more than anything else. But the title still carries an aura of old-fashioned dedication.

### *Citizen Agent* ( ● ● to ● ● ● ● ● )

The title of citizen agent is reserved for those Libertines who go beyond the call of the minutemen and serve the order as watchmen, spies and covert operatives. A citizen agent's identity as an operative of the Assembly is seldom kept secret. His missions almost always are. It is an oddity of the order's desire for democratic transparency and its needs for security.

Citizen agents may be combative, but they're just as often explorers and infiltrators. Whether they're descending into abandoned military bases on climbing harnesses in search of resonant technology or scheming up improbable magical deaths for Seer mages, the common factor in all citizen agent missions is peril. These mages jeopardize their lives for the sake of the order, and in exchange they gain celebrity, clout and a degree of unofficial authority.

No real command structure exists for the citizen agents. They take on missions passed by a vote in Assembly or, more often, in a Column. They work together largely on a volunteer basis or when directed to by election or strategoi. They have no real subordinates and no generals to guide them. In theory, the body politic provides everything its citizen agents need, but of course this isn't always possible.

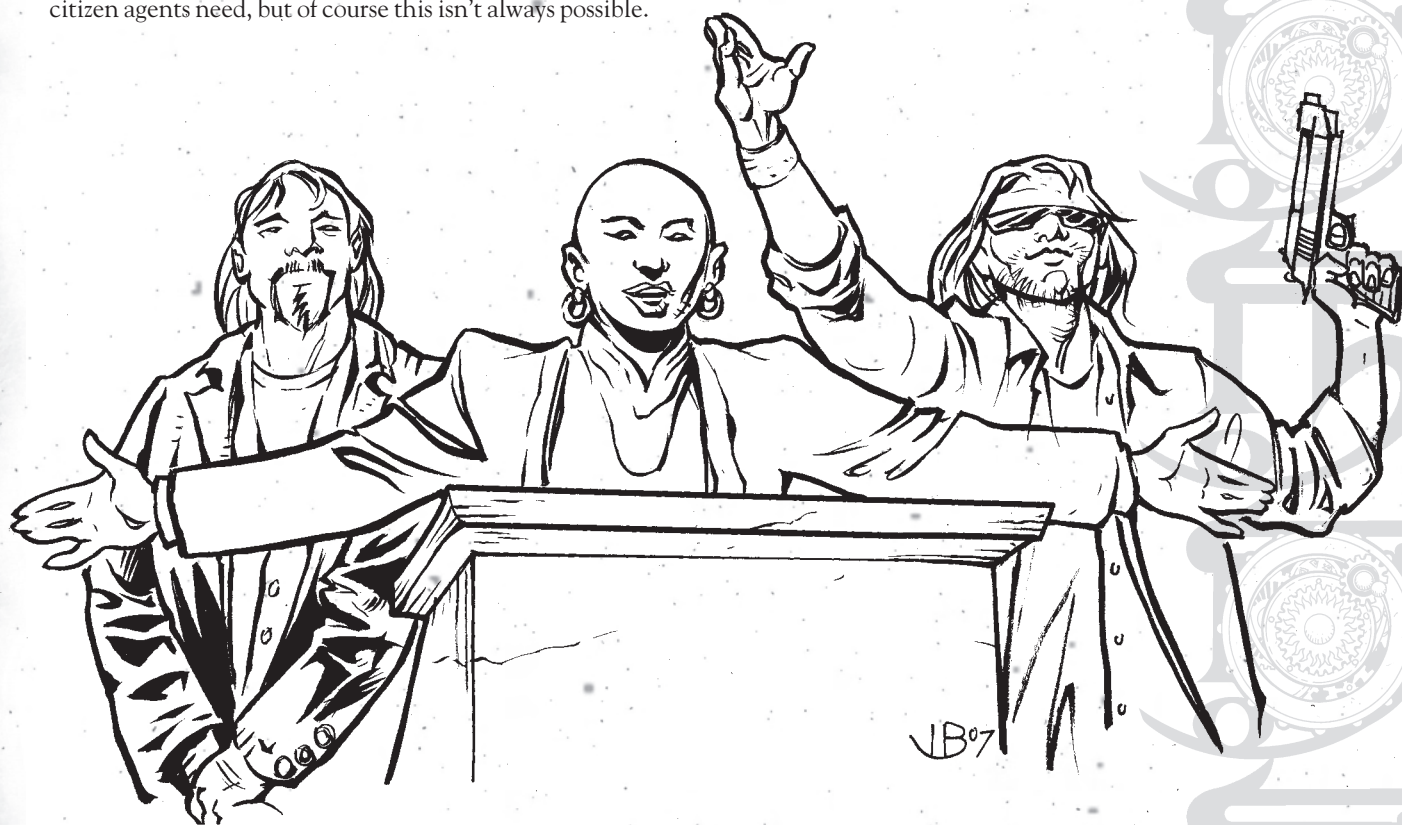
In practice, a citizen agent has good intelligence only if he is investigative and good weapons only if he arms himself.

### *Strategos* ( ● ● ● to ● ● ● ● ● )

The strategoi are the generals, pundits, experts and directors of Free Council Consilii. They're like straight-jacketed presidents, managers and executives of their small area of authority, but powerless outside their purview.

The position of strategos is an artifact of Libertine hope, however. (Some would say it is a sign of the order's self-importance.) The role of the strategos makes the most sense in areas where Libertines are numerous enough to make rapid communication and quick decision-making difficult. Not that many Consilii have so many mages, much less so many Libertines, that the role of strategos can be kept adequately apart from other roles in the order.

A strategos represents a willful surrender of democratic power on the part of the people — the voters' authority is invested in the strategos with the understanding that it will be paid back later. As an investment, many Libertines expect their power, or the order's, to be more valuable when it is returned. The people give up a degree of their liberty to the strategos, who gains a great deal of authority but also becomes responsible for the safekeeping of that liberty. It's a quietly cherished rule of the Free Council that a strategos who hoards authority and shirks liberty can be toppled by popular revolt. (But, of course, history has shown that tyranny alone is sometimes not enough to provoke the people to action.)



In practice, the kind of responsible and dedicated personality that makes a mage suitable for the role of strategos is uncommon enough that no more than one or two area mages are trusted enough by the Awakened masses to take on the role. But the traditions of the Free Council prohibit a single mage from serving as a strategos in more than one area of expertise, so even if a single experienced and brilliant wizard is the ideal candidate to take on responsibility for both affairs of medicine and affairs of science, she must be restricted to one or the other.

In some regions, where Free Council mages are few, every mage is given the title of strategos over some area of experience (if not expertise), to prevent one strategos from wielding too much power over the three or four other mages who make up the Consilium. This kind of patronizing, token promotion goes against the spirit of the platonic strategos — a rare and celebrated expert worthy of the people's trust — but is sometimes the only way to foster the sense of fairness that allows trust to develop. A city of strategoi inevitably becomes a house divided, however, as each vaunted mage tries to steer others according to his own "expertise."

### *Syndic (● to ●●●●●●)*

At their best, the syndics are statesmen, transforming complex and often delicate issues into surmountable topics for debate and eventual voting at Assembly. At their worst, they're two-faced politicians, reducing complicated issues into hot-button rhetoric and obfuscated schemes to manipulate voters and disguise the truth. As representatives, they can be shining champions using words like spells to clear away fogs of fear, confusion and prejudice. As self-aggrandizing power-grabbers, they can be lying tricksters, creating illusory threats and fearsome shadows out of non-issues and buzzwords, subjecting their supposed allies to a confounding blindness derived from fear, from which only the syndic can protect them.

In the platonic model of the Free Council, syndics would be clear-minded orators embodying the issues of the day and battling like champions in contests of reason and words against friendly and honorable combatants. They are meant to be a kind of idealized Greek debater — clairvoyant neo-Ciceros shaping the ideals of a shining future. In the eyes of the founding Libertines, the syndics might be idolized and revered — certainly they should be appreciated and respected — but they should not be elevated above the voters. In theory, a syndic is merely an agent of simplicity, translating many voices in a single cogent argument.

But a syndic is meant to enjoy no more power than any other Libertine. A syndic gets one vote, the same as any other mage. A syndic should have responsibility, not authority. For that she deserves thanks, not obedience.

In practice, syndics are as greedy, defensive, deceitful and power-mad as many mortal politician — or more so. Syndics can achieve a kind of celebrity, and with that comes

status and prestige. Some syndics avoid this kind of fame, but find it thrust upon them like a crown laid on the head of a reluctant hero. Other syndics cultivate their celebrity, constructing a new road to power and prominence out of hollow promises and empty poise.

Some syndics sit down with their constituents, make eye contact, and absorb their opinions and agendas for the future, then carry those ideas to Assembly. Other syndics come to the mages they represent, sit them down, and say, "Here's what we're doing, and here's how we should vote."

No special social mechanisms exist to keep syndics honest — only the pressures that come from close contact with one's people. The voters must keep their syndic honest and informed. Enlightened reason among Awakened minds should be enough to elevate syndics above traditional democratic squabbles and temptations of power. But, too often, it's not.

Is magic an acceptable means of keeping a syndic honest and ensuring that the relationship between the citizens' voice and the syndic's ears stays clear and true? This an ongoing issue within the Free Council. Philosophically, voluntary submission to spells is the only acceptable way to affect a syndic's behavior through wizardry. But how can the Consilium be certain that the citizenry are not secretly manipulating — or even just tracking — their syndics with sorcery? And in an Awakened society, why isn't that as valid a process as mundane speech and oversight? These are matters for serious debate. It is the syndics who will make the arguments.

### *Lorehouses*

The idea of Lorehouses is integral to the Free Council's identity. They collect information for the sake of all libertines, in the hopes of translating both mundane scientific data and arcane magical knowledge into information accessible and understandable to all Free Councilors. Eventually.

In truth, the "Lorehouse program" is inconsistently implemented and often functions in practice very differently from the theory of its design. In the eyes of some libertines, when compared to the size of the Lorehouse mission, the project is still so early in its operation that it's not really "up and running" yet. Some day Lorehouses will be palaces of learning and knowledge, a franchise of Library of Alexandria for the 21st century, but until the order is ready to share many of these institutions will remain private or even secret.

For some libertines, Lorehouses are just another part of the order, as ubiquitous and easy to take for granted as a local library. For others, they are the first phase of a larger project — the Lorehouse program — which is itself a slowly percolating utopian vision for the future. Lorehouses, ideally, will one day be temples of knowledge combining science labs and literary archives and occult sanctums into a single house



of learning. They will shine like beacons. They will be new Watchtowers for the new Metropolis. They will anchor the future city like keystones. But for now they are so often little more than warehouses and basements packed with hoarded books, files, and discs by obsessive, understaffed librarians.

Some Consiliums support a local Free Council Lorehouse when it benefits all the mages of the city. Other Consiliums have no idea where the local Lorehouse is or what goes on there — if it even exists. Despite the notion that the Lorehouses are part of a larger project on which the whole of the order is working, no two Lorehouses are exactly alike.

Here are some example Lorehouses:

### **The Asheville Stacks**

In the woods outside of town, where the highways turn to winding two-lane roads and the dirt is rich and black and blanketed under brown pine needles, there's a run-down brick farm-house built around the turn of the 19th century into the 20th. You'll know it by the barn — it's a long dairy-style thing of bent and peeling boards, bristling up top with miniature satellite dishes and antennae, as if a sports fanatic living inside decided he needed to catch every soccer game in the world live. The house itself sports lovely architectural flourishes and original Victorian glass work in ornate windows, all beautifully disheveled by years of rain and wind.

Inside, the place is a weird mash-up of eras. The first floor is a collection of mundane textbooks, scientific journals and paperback non-fiction books with red-edged pages — the sort of stuff available in any out-of-date library. Upstairs, behind painted-black windows, are rare books and arcane texts with cracked leather spines and vellum pages — the sort of stuff Sleepers fear and Banishers burn. This top floor is where the little artifacts (some magical, most not) are kept; hands in bell jars, cryptid skeletons in glass cases, framed fragments of famous portraits, that sort of thing. On these two floors, everything is kept the way your grandmother would keep it: crammed together in no discernible order, in bookcases behind bookcases, without

any real sense of what's worth what. The primary goal of the Asheville Stack archivist, regardless of who's holding the position this year, is to get stuff and keep it here so that, some other day, some other mage can come and catalog all of it.

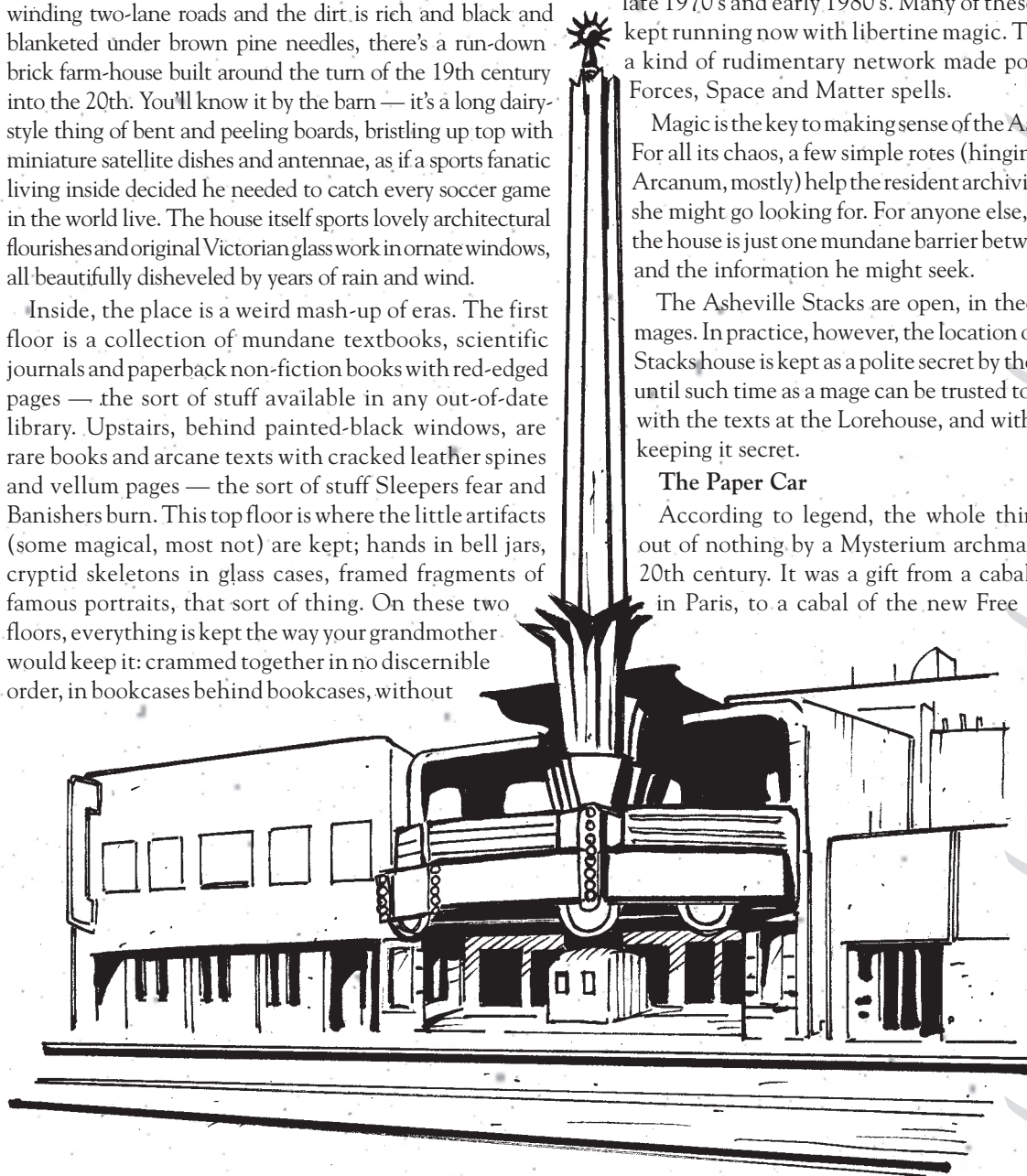
In the basement of the Asheville Stack Lorehouse is an antique computer lab. Three interconnected rooms of cement floors and painted brick are furnished with folding conference tables and swivel chairs on raised wooden floors, all stacked with computers from the 1980s. Cheap lamps down here do little to enliven the glows coming from green and amber monitors here. These old machines are how the local libertines access old files left over from the order's efforts to digitize occult manuscripts in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Many of these machines are kept running now with libertine magic. They're even on a kind of rudimentary network made possible through Forces, Space and Matter spells.

Magic is the key to making sense of the Asheville Stacks. For all its chaos, a few simple rites (hinging on the Space Arcanum, mostly) help the resident archivist find anything she might go looking for. For anyone else, the disorder of the house is just one mundane barrier between an intruder and the information he might seek.

The Asheville Stacks are open, in theory, to all local mages. In practice, however, the location of the Asheville Stacks house is kept as a polite secret by those in the know until such time as a mage can be trusted to play nice both with the texts at the Lorehouse, and with the custom of keeping it secret.

### **The Paper Car**

According to legend, the whole thing was crafted out of nothing by a Mysterium archmage early in the 20th century. It was a gift from a cabal of that order, in Paris, to a cabal of the new Free Council. That



libertine cabal may have been made up of Austrians or Muscovites, though some say they were Czechs emigrating from Prague to Vienna. It's likely the cabal was made of mixed nationals and ex-patriots. Whoever they were, these mages who received the gift of three magically conjured train cars from a maestro of the Mysterium, they are long since dead.

The Paper Car is one of three train cars supposedly conjured around 1912 to serve as a mobile sanctum for the young order of the Free Council. (In truth, the train cars may have been salvaged from a rail yard in Paris and remodeled with Matter spells.) These three train cars traveled between Paris, Vienna and Moscow, often with significant detours, until at least 1939, when the train disappears from local records. It seems to have been regarded as the roving penthouse of an eccentric aristocrat and his staff (almost certainly a cover story for the wealthy Free Council cabal who operated the train). Back then the three-car train was often called The Tsar, for its Imperial Russian style, elegance and excess. The Tsar gradually aged and lost its luster, however. By 1939, when the train was last registered as arriving in Paris, it was more of a tacky oddity than an eccentric delight.

Two of the three train cars resurfaced in 1949... outside Omaha, Nebraska. Now and again it was recognized by history-minded mages between 1951 and 1970, from Boston to Saint Louis to Tacoma. It picked up a few cars here and there, including a flatbed and a wooden cargo car, but never lost its original engine or "penthouse car." After about 1971, the train went largely unseen again by mortals and mages alike.

The European cabal who operated the old Tsar train is gone, apparently killed during WWII. The third of the original train cars — the dining and entertainment car — remains missing. How the train got to the States is anyone's guess, but wizardry seems likely.

Today the old "penthouse" car is known as The Paper Car, and is one of the best-known (and least-visited) Lorehouses. The Paper Car is packed full of loose pages, newspapers, vellum maps and papyrus scrolls (hence its name), all only vaguely cataloged. Many of these were supposedly collected by the eccentric mages who first ran the old Tsar train, and are kept very much in the state they were discovered after the war, just in case their disarray is part of some inscrutable plan to symbolically confuse and confound enemies searching for the car.

A new Free Council cabal of Midwestern wizards tends this museum on rails, collecting American occult texts and mystic artifacts from across the country and keeping them secret. Cleverly designed spells keep the train protected, to a degree, from divination and sympathetic magic, but secrecy and occultation are its greatest defenses. Visitors to the train are kept to an absolute minimum. Instead, the train and its collection are brought where they are needed and Emissaries from the Lorehouse courier items to borrowers on

foot. In emergencies, the train may be broken up into two or three smaller collections of roving cars, so that a hostile mage divining the location of one car or object won't so easily find the Lorehouse's complete collection.

In more than a dozen US cities, the Paper Car maintains contact with local ambassadors who are able to contact the train through magical or mundane means. These agents arrange pick-ups, drop-offs and lends from the Lorehouse to area cabals and Consilii. The archivists of the Paper Car aren't concerned with Pentacle politics — they just want to keep their collection safe. Most of the train's contacts are libertines, but not all. In theory, trustworthy mages of any order are welcome to borrow from the Paper Car, but in practice the Paper Car cabal is concerned that some Mysterium mage may yet know about some mystic trick built into the car back in 1912 that will enable them to take it back from the Free Council. Where they got that idea is anyone's guess... and so is the location of the missing car from the old Tsar train.

### Silo 7

Somewhere, out in the flat brown tablelands of the American West, where long green grasses turn to rocky expanses of nothing, is a concrete circle almost eight feet high and forty feet across. The top of it is sealed by a pair of rusted metal doors with hinges the length of your arm. Those doors are sealed smooth in a way that welding can't manage. Built into the side of this concrete cap is a red metal door with a weird contraption of metal bars jutting out of a central iron lock. It looks a little like the hatch on a submarine crossed with chastity belt. Behind all these metal barriers is Silo 7.

No one lives near Silo 7, but a whole cabal resides inside. Those libertines who reach this Lorehouse usually do it through magical travel — no roads lead here anymore. Powerful mystic wards prevent teleportation within the Lorehouse by all but the most potent archmages. (Rumor has it these wards were put in place by one of the original founders of the Free Council in 1994.)

Only libertines are told where to find Silo 7. Diamond mages aren't welcome there. This is meant to be one of the order's great treasures. If information kept at Silo 7 is to be shared with mages of another order, a Free Councilor has to take that information to the recipient. Diamond mages aren't welcome there. Silo 7 is a well-known name among several American and Canadian cabals, but only a small handful of mages know how to get there. Most of the wizards who've been there don't know how to get back there again, either because they were brought there by another mage's magic or because their minds have been tweaked by libertine spells. Diamond mages aren't welcome there.

Silo 7 is a reclaimed underground launch silo, but not for nuclear missiles, despite what many libertines say. Instead, the silo was built by a private company in the 1960s for the purposes of clandestine satellite launches. A handful of rockets were fired from the silo in the 1970s, but whatever



company built the place abandoned it by 1978. A Free Council mage was already waiting for them to leave the silo when they did. This is the archivist of the Lorehouse, called Rasmussen. He worked for the company that built the silo — some say he even ran the company into the ground to take possession of the place.

Today, Silo 7 is like a museum of technology that might have been. Old models, blueprints, wrecked prototypes and salvaged show pieces are kept in climate-controlled rooms for study. Rasmussen's ultimate goal is to identify the magical properties that underlie human invention — to determine what Supernal spark enables some Sleeper minds to realize what their souls visualize without Awakening themselves. It may be folly — it's possible that no arcane connection exists between magic and human innovation — and Rasmussen knows this. But it's his life's work and he loves it still.

Rasmussen and his cabal are retromancers of the highest order. They specialize in identifying magical artifacts and reverse engineering modern technology. They take pride in crafting old-fashioned, middle-of-the-century-looking devices that do modern things through a combination of magic and technology — avocado-green MP3 players and the proverbial yellow submarines. Every mage in residence in Silo 7 is a patent-holder.

In exchange for the freedom of living their dreams — working only on what they love in a place that's all theirs — Rasmussen's cabal also allows other libertines to store illicit and secret technology in Silo 7's magically secured vaults. Rumors suggest that they have everything from cold fusion reactors to alien spacecraft in there, but ask Rasmussen and he smiles, saying, "Or at least the stuff that people have mistaken for those things, maybe."

### Wintergarden

The Wintergardens are a notorious oddity. The first Wintergarden was constructed in Berlin in the 1990s by vegan Libertines with a reputation for New Age craziness, and the "franchise" has never escaped their reputation. Since then, two more Wintergardens have been created in Europe, with another four spread across North America.

Each Wintergarden is, to casual inspection, a greenhouse. Several have the appearance of overwrought iron-and-glass Victorian greenhouses. Others are simple commercial-looking buildings hiding behind a bland façade.

Inside, a Wintergarden gradually reveals its own bizarreness. The deeper into a Wintergarden you go, the weirder things get. They are experiments in Space and Life magic, often larger on the inside than the outside, and always spreading underground into small, humid tunnels through rock and dirt. Heat lamps and bubbling artificial springs abound.

A closer look at the plants inside, whether it's the weeds growing the floors, the fungi in the tunnels or the big leafy trees in the greenhouse proper, reveals the weird purpose

of the Wintergarden. Each leaf is adorned with writing. Green buds house curls of rough, natural-fiber papers with bits of text on them. A row of flowers form a larger image, each petal a pixel.

Wintergarden archivists grow information. They use Mind, Space and Life spells to draw in information from the surrounding populace — from the ambient meta-mind — and infuse that knowledge into the black dirt from which their arcane plants grow. Each crop of data is different, reflecting what was known, what was thought about, what was said in the days when the plant was sprouting up.

As the mages who run the Wintergardens say, "It's not about storing stuff we already know, it's about cultivating the things we believe into words and coming to understand and appreciate the things we *think* we know. It's about turning what we think into knowable things. It's about *really thinking*, absorbing natural, living know-how and instinct, rather than killing it and staining dead paper with it."

## Groups of Individuals

The Free Council is as likely to divide itself into strident factions as any other order. This is not to say that factions, or the differing viewpoints that spawn them, do not exist within Libertine society. However, the overall tendency of Libertines to listen and give value to others' opinions, even when the mages don't agree with the others, is, in general, contradictory to the fanatic single-mindedness that is often at the heart of factional politics.

It is not that the Libertines are any less fervent in their opinions than other mages; quite the opposite, in fact. No matter how strong the Libertines' opinions on a topic, however, there is pressure within the order for members of the Free Council to be willing to at least consider the merit of other's views as well, or at least not to actively go out of their way to quash them. This custom acts as an anti-coagulant for harsh factioning within the order, often resulting in those with drastically different opinions struggling side-by-side toward a common goal, or at least not working directly against each other. Libertines with extremist positions still get a say at Assembly, where presumably votes will yield to the reasonable average. Those who find they are unable or unwilling to have an open mind toward other's opinions are likely to eventually leave the Free Council, often under pressure, and most often for the Silver Ladder, although the Guardians of the Veil and Adamantine Arrow have both received petitioners who found the Libertine order too accepting of differing views.

Despite what those who leave the order for others because of this might profess, however, Libertines are rarely milquetoast or tend, as an order, to lack conviction. The mages of the Free Council are as strongly opinionated as any others. Trends and movements not only exist within the order, they are intrinsic to it: Libertines are, after all,

the rabble-rousers of the mage world: An order that holds democracy and freedom as part of its basic tenets tends to attract free-thinkers, individuals who not only philosophize on change but are driven to take action on their beliefs.

Their inherent distrust and rejection of hierarchal organization, however, tends to translate into factions that are more freeform groups and committees driven toward a particular goal than static philosophical blocs of the type that might be recognized by other orders. A splinter group of a Libertine faction, united by a goal and a philosophy for going about achieving it, may not even realize that others of their kind exist. One Wright, for example, may believe herself alone, while a few towns, states or countries away, other Wrights have come to the same conclusion about the nature of humanity's ties to magic, and are implementing similar experiments to attempt to spur their targets toward achieving their full potential.

It would be impossible for any one individual or organization to detail every faction within the Free Council, in no small part because the lines between faction and philosophy are so blurred. Many Libertines do not consider themselves to be part of a particular faction (and may be completely unaware of its existence), and yet their views and actions are strongly in line with it. Other times, an individual or cabal may believe itself to be following obvious Libertine dogma, and yet have actually formed such an extreme worldview as to be seen by others as a splinter faction quite different from the mainstream views of the order. This phenomenon, apparently unique to the Libertines among the orders, has even become the focus of a faction itself. The Libertine known as Zenos (after the pre-Socratic philosopher famed for "proof by contradiction"), noting the ambiguity of factioning among his order-members, began studying the trend in the mid-1980s, comparing it to similar trends in factioning among modern religious orders among humanity. Zenos has sometimes been criticized by his detractors for labeling general trends or extreme views as factions, drawing connections and collations between individuals or small groups that would not consider themselves to be related, but few contemporary Libertines deny that his studies reveal a great deal of insight about the depth and breadth of variation of thought and action within the Free Council as a whole.

The factions and cabals detailed here are but a small portion of those mentioned in missives and works credited to Zenos on the topic. They cannot be considered to be anything like a definitive categorization of every faction or faction-like group within the order, but do bear witness to some of the intriguing, diverse and sometimes extreme forms in which Libertine philosophy can manifest.

### *Sample Factions*

The factions offered in this chapter are not the political parties or oversight committees within the Free Council. If these factions exist at all in your World of Darkness, they may be as insubstantial as vague cultural trends within the

order — whichever people praised a fellow voter's manifesto or whichever Libertines voted against a winning motion at Assembly, for example — or they may be as organized and distinct as a militia.

The Free Council, for all its loudly chanted principles and proudly repeated slogans, is a varied and marbled body. Between careful mundane occultations and protective magical wards, the mages of the Free Council are virtually impossible to measure as a whole. Even the Libertines themselves are like the proverbial blind men feeling out an elephant and sending their reports back to one another. "I have a tail here," whispers one, "I think it's a camel." "No, no," says the one at the front, "I have the head and I think it's a snake!"

In theory, the Free Council's enlightened egalitarianism grants it an ideological flexibility that means the order needs no manifest of its own ranks, no internal census, to guide its decisions or shape its identity beyond the philosophies of its founding thinkers. In practice, this lack of self-awareness means that even while some cabals and Assemblies have excellent awareness of their own membership and strengths, the overall order is riddled with shadowy corners where hidden subcultures and extremist factions take root and grow. These factions, and many others besides, may exist behind the votes and speeches of the local syndics without anyone but their conspiring memberships knowing a thing about it.

### *Sample Cabals*

Throughout this chapter, you'll find sample cabals described in sidebars like the one below. These cabals may or may not exist outright in your World of Darkness. They may be long-dead groups remembered by today's Libertines as examples of the way things used to be, or they may be groups just beginning to form in the primordial politics of your new chronicle. Some of these cabals represent extremities of the Free Council, others are simply noteworthy examples of how the order can be interpreted (or misinterpreted) by members who see it only through the lens of their own obsessions.

These cabals typically represent smaller units of Libertine culture than the factions do, but the Free Council belongs to you now. Do with all these cabals as you will.

## Heretical Historians: Lamplighters

Few Libertine cabals have done as much to alienate both members of their own order and those of the Atlantean Pentacle as the group that calls itself the Lamplighters. Although most who have come into contact with their outspoken theories are quick to paint the group as crackpots, others worry that there may be more truth in their theses than the majority are willing to believe.



Although Yesterday's Tomorrows do not officially recognize the Lamplighters among their numbers, nominally at least, the cabal fits within the faction's perimeter. Similar to the Historians, the Lamplighters study the past and, in interpreting the mistakes made therein and comparing them to modern situations, attempt to prevent the same mistakes from being made again. However, where other members of Yesterday's Tomorrows focus on the recorded facts of humankind's history, the Lamplighters turn the same critical eye upon the history of the Awakened.

While it is not surprising that the Atlantean orders would bristle at the idea of a cabal of "upstarts" casting aspirations at the mistakes made by the founders of mage society throughout Awakened history, much of the Free Council has had a similar reaction to the Lamplighters, although for different reasons. While the cabal falls short of stating unequivocally the rest of mages of the Free Council is blind to their own faults, the Lamplighters do not hesitate to hold up the mirror of situations where the tenets of democracy and freedom of information have only made a situation worse, and even more painfully, where members of the Free Council themselves have taken actions (often at the behest of or at least with the support of the rest of the order) that knowingly or unknowingly fostered the Lie or its followers.

## *Creating a Glimpse of Truth: The Wrights*

While Libertines, in general, believe that humanity is magical, the Wrights further refine this tenet. The magic of humanity, they believe, is inherently tied to humankind's ability — need, even — to create. Only when a human is creating something new (be it physical or speculative) is he truly exerting his full potential, and this creativity may hold the key to facilitating Awakening. In general theory, this philosophy seems almost inherent to the Free Council, but the Wrights take it beyond the simple encouraging or mentoring of artists or scientists, to a level that few outside of the faction would agree with.

Perhaps the breaking point comes from the Wrights' exceedingly critical definition of the term "create." While many Libertines would have no problem with the idea of fostering a poet or theoretical technologist in their work, the Wrights believe that the Lie has blinded humanity to the extent that the vast majority of output produced is chaff, meaningless variations on already created themes. The Lie lulls humanity into a comfortable sense of creative-hibernation, and even the most productive writer, artist or scientist is hard-pressed to produce a single work of true creation in her career. However, the Wrights believe that

a Sleeper can be stirred from that complacency through exposure to various extreme situations. Necessity is truly the mother of invention, and the Wrights believe that the safety of a writer's nook or laboratory inherently hampers the true spark of creativity that can only be achieved in the most intense situations. Whether they subject their victims to physical peril or emotional tortures, the Wrights believe that the ends not only justifies the means but are truly the only course by which the Libertines can observe humankind at its most magical.

## *Creation*

True creations, according to the Wrights, are those that are produced when humanity strips away the Lie perpetuated upon them by Exarchs. The ability to see through the Lie, however, is a rare event. The vast majority of humans will never gain the slightest glimpse of what Truth lies just beyond their comprehension. Certain situations, however, seem to encourage that insight. Although humanity, in its Lie-induced stupor, may not recognize it (the Lie's complacency dampens discernment as well as creativity), those who have Awakened generally identify that the majority of the non-derivative pieces of art, literature and poetry, as well as the truly creative scientific theories and technological inventions have been produced by humanity during periods of extreme emotion or need.

## *Wright Making*

Similar to many Libertine factions, the Wrights rarely think of themselves as belonging to any particular subsection of the order, and few would call themselves Wrights. The term is believed to have been coined by Zenos in his missive to the Northeastern Assembly titled "When Truth Serves The Lie." In it, he detailed four "theoretical" Wrights whose procedures ranged from casual observation to outright kidnapping and torture. While Zenos insisted the examples were not based on any particular individuals, the mirror his missive held up apparently reflected certain individuals sufficiently clearly as to make him the target of at least three assassination attempts in the year after the missive was penned. Because of the severity of Zenos's allegations, the term Wright is most often used as a negative epitaph by those who warn against the dangers of allowing the ends to justify the means, and is thus identified most often with the more extreme actions taken by holders of this philosophy.

Many Libertines, however, are willing to accept that challenging circumstances are likely to bring out hitherto untapped potential in humanity, even if they do not believe that these circumstances are the sole key to understanding humanity's link to magic. What sets the stage for a Wright to become a Wright is, many times, a growing disillusionment with humanity as a whole. If humanity is magical, the mage comes to ask himself, why is it that the vast majority of humankind never realizes even the slightest manifestation

of that magic? While Libertines extend the definition of magic well beyond just those powers and abilities granted by connection to the Supernal Realms, even the most open-minded and liberal mage might have difficulty seeing magic in the mundane, destructive and self-centered existences that the vast majority of humanity slog themselves through on a daily basis. The more jaded a Libertine becomes, the less likely he is to be able to perceive anything magical about humanity, until he may even question whether this basic tenet of the order's philosophy is more than an naïve mantra coined by starry-eyed idealists. Many Wrights find their path while contemplating abandoning the Free Council for another order, one with more "realistic" views of humanity's potential or lack thereof.

But then, something happens. Most often, it is something cataclysmic, something horrendous, something that, by all rights, should leave its victim utterly destroyed, emotionally or physically.

But it doesn't.

Somehow, some way, the victim draws upon humanity's innate connection to the Truth, and "creates" an solution. Perhaps it is a stroke of insight that shows the key to a desperate situation. Perhaps the emotional torment gives forth a flurry of muse-inspired creation that, although it cannot "solve" the problem, translates it to others in a way that is wholly unique and innovative. Or perhaps the "creation" is a manifestation of heretofore untold strength, intellect, cunning, dexterity or stamina, giving the person some small insight and access to the true potential he possesses. Humanity all too often discounts such happenings as flukes. Deviations from the norm make people uncomfortable, and as a group, humankind is quick to look for simple explanations. What it cannot explain away as a burst of adrenaline, a momentary flash of insight or a "lucky guess," they tend to ignore completely, burying the true "creation" under a mountain of more comfortable pap, layered with discrediting rumors, half-truths and lies.

But to the mage, this "creation" is proof that humanity truly is magical. In one brief flash, the jaded Wright realizes that this credo is not inane jargon, but inherent truth, and just as a child who strikes match after match, heedless of the danger, the Wright becomes obsessed with the idea of witnessing it again.

#### **Observation vs. Intervention**

Not all Wrights agree upon how direct a role to take in humanity's creative process. Some feel that observation is as great an interference as can be allowed. Wrights who are proponents of this "hands-off" philosophy create connections with human society in times and places where the likelihood of extreme situations is increased. While few Libertines have the personality for extended careers in hierarchal organizations, Wrights may take entry-level jobs in fields such as law enforcement or firefighting, or they may find other ways to integrate themselves into similarly challenging environments. Other Wrights may establish

themselves as independent experts in areas in which they will have direct contact with people who are experiencing the greatest challenges of their lives. Wilderness guides, paramedics and Sherpas for extreme mountain climbs are obvious choices, but Wrights are just as likely to be found as intervention activists for battered spouses or substance abusers, midwives and doulas for particularly challenging childbirth cases or counselors, therapists and medical support staff for those who have suffered devastating injuries. Regardless of the environment, these observers remain alert to the potentiality for excellence afforded by the challenges those the Wrights observe are undergoing. This view, although more palatable to the majority of Libertines, is slow, unreliable and haphazard at best. Casual observation, no matter how carefully planned, rarely affords the Wright opportunity to witness truly challenging (and thus potentially creative) situations.

Some Wrights, less patient and more willing to accept a certain karmic burden in light of the potential information gained, take matters into their own hands. By orchestrating supremely challenging situations, rather than simply waiting around for them to manifest, these Libertines are far more likely to be able to garner worthwhile information. The greater control they have over a situation, they assert, the more able they are to record the events and outcomes for future reference, as well as minimizing the likelihood of any undesired observers taking notice of the situation. In theory, these explanations seem logical, and few would argue with the merit of taking proactive steps toward avoiding the notice of the Seers or unAwakened humans, but beneath this thin veneer of reason lurks a much darker body of action.

#### **Dark Wrights**

Argos has never considered himself a bad man — quite the opposite, actually. He is a devoted Libertine, whose dedication to humanity, Awakened or not, is the single driving force of his existence.

After Awakening to the Path of Doom, he thought that it seemed only appropriate to continue his career: ambulance staff for a struggling independent medical transport company. While his subtle spells helped some of his passengers survive until more intensive medical treatment could be given, and eased the journey of those who were beyond his ability to aid, he found that in some cases, where death was concerned, humanity's will seemed as strong as his own Supernal spells.

One of his transport runs after a multi-car accident involved a man who had lifted a fully loaded cargo van off a trapped child as the ambulances arrived. When Argos arrived on the scene, icy chills ran down his spine. He watched the man rescue the child, even more awed by his actions than the rest of the observers. While they had only witnessed a feat of amazing strength, Argos's Death Sight seemed to indicate that the rescuer was physically dead. The mage didn't know what to make of the situation, and



for a moment he doubted his own senses, thinking perhaps the chaos of the accident had confused him.

As the child was whisked away in another ambulance, however, her rescuer crumpled to the ground, and Argos's team swept him up and began triage. Argos, upon examining the victim, found that the man's skull had been crumpled inward, forcing numerous shards and plates of bone into his brain. The injury, which should have killed him instantly, had remained undetected because of the dark-colored knit stocking cap he'd worn, which both hid the injury from view and soaked up the blood and liquid matter released by the blow. Argos's Death Sight was correct — the man had been killed long before his collapse, most likely at the moment of impact, and yet something drove him onward. This fact intrigued Argos and spawned his interest in the phenomenon of people who find the wherewithal to continue despite injuries that by all rights should have killed them. He was convinced that the Death Sight that had manifested as he arrived at the scene that day was his first real insight into the magical potential of non-Awakened humans.

For months, Argos fixated on the apparent manifestation of human magic he'd witnessed. Finding Supernal

magics apparently unable to track such a materialization of "human potential as magic," he was reduced to more mundane and less direct means. He kept a sharp eye out for similar situations in his workplace, but the vast majority of his ambulance runs were relatively mundane. Despite his earlier failure, he turned his Supernal skills to the challenge. While he could not be led to human magic directly, he used his skill with Fate to seek the dispatch calls that were most challenging and yet not immediately lethal to those involved in them. As time passed and his searches came up empty, his obsession only grew. He began working double shifts and coming in on his days off, certain that he'd somehow missed an elusive opportunity by virtue of being off shift at the wrong time. When this didn't help, and the company protested his increasingly unprofessional refusal to deal with anything but the most spectacular of situations, he quit and acquired his own ambulance. Calling again on his Supernal abilities, he began monitoring all the emergency dispatch calls and ensuring he was the first responder to all the most promising situations, but he witnessed no further demonstrations that he could attribute to unAwakened human magic.





Patience may be a virtue, but it is not one that those with the power to shape reality are often accustomed to developing. Time passed, and Argos quickly transitioned from eager to impatient, and then from impatient to obsessed. Somewhere along the line, the line between using his magic to search for near-lethal situations and using it to bring them about was crossed, and like a gambling addict who believes that the next turn of the roulette wheel will be the one that brings him the big win, once the line was crossed he could not stop himself from going just a little further.

While patience is not a virtue inherent to mages, paranoia often is. Every action Argos took to nudge a human into a hazardous situation weighed upon him heavily, and he fretted constantly about how to make certain his actions were not discovered before the "big breakthrough," which he hoped would prove his theory correct and thereby validate his interferences to the rest of the Free Council. He was soon living two lives: the mask he maintained for interactions with the rest of mage society barely concealed the edgy and anxious schemer who knew he had crossed into dangerous territory but hoped to find a lifeline if he ventured just a bit further.

The final line for Argos came when found himself leaving the scene of an emergency with no intention of taking the transient victim to the hospital. His Supernal senses told that the passenger had no strong connections to any other human beings, and although he was unconscious, his wounds were far from fatal. Because Argos had left the scene before other authorities arrived, there was nothing connecting him to the accident, and having relied upon spells rather than dispatchers to find the scene, there was no paper trail of responsibility. Desperate inspiration struck him. Rather than yet another failure, perhaps he was being given the opportunity for success. Pushing his weakened conscience to the side, Argos told himself he was doing the victim a favor. As it stood, the man's drug abuse and advanced stages of disease would likely kill him within a matter of months. Rather than taking him to the hospital, Argos took him back to his sanctum, where he healed the man before beginning what would evolve into months of emotional, and eventually physical, torture as the mage attempted to recreate the same desperation in his vagrant victim as he'd witnessed in the already dead auto accident victim months before.

Fortunately for Argos, it is not unusual for mages to withdraw to their studies for extended periods. His every waking hour, however, is filled with the knowledge that eventually his work will be discovered. He is locked in a desperate race, struggling to push his victim toward what every passing day suggests may be an unachievable goal. If Argos is discovered before he can prove his theory, he knows he will likely not be forgiven for his actions, a knowledge that only spurs him to greater extremes as his hope fades and his desperation grows.

## Mysterious Cabal: The Oblige

Magic is the great equalizer, or so claims the Oblige, a cabal that makes it their business to ensure that the powerful and experienced do not use their access to more powerful Supernal magic to oppress the young and idealistic. Not only does putting access to equally powerful spells through the use of Imbued Items level the playing field in terms of power, say the Oblige, but it keeps the elders from growing too complacent in their roles at the top of the Atlantean hierarchy, which, although a poor substitute for doing business with the Oblige, can be a complicated series of offers and counter-offers, or disconcertingly simple, depending on the nature of the transaction. They are willing, even eager, to help those whom they see as in need or oppressed: young mages who are experiencing oppression for thinking outside of the box, those who have been treated unfairly by elder or more experienced mages and those who are struggling against the shackles of tradition and hierarchy inherent in the Atlantean traditions. That is not to say that the Oblige will not do business with more powerful, experienced or conservative mages. Dealing in favors as the Oblige do, it is often to the advantage of democracy to have some clout within the hierarchy, and more than one Atlantean Diamond bigwig has discovered himself inadvertently serving the Libertine causes when the favor was called in.

There are a plethora of reasons for a mage to approach the Oblige. Perhaps he wants to provide a Sleeper associate or member of his cabal with an extra bit of protection or luck and does not possess the ability to create Imbued Items himself. Or perhaps the mage faces a challenge in which a certain specific spell would serve her well, but she does not have the time to dedicate to learning it and all its prerequisites.

After listening to whatever information is given about the current situation, the Oblige inevitably offer an item that seems to hold the key to whatever knotty issue the mage is wrestling with at the moment. The solutions offered by the Oblige are always simple, elegant and to the point.

Rumors about the Oblige tend to be passed from city to city as the cabal itself travels, and a time of great need seems to summon them. They do not, however, approach those who may need their assistance, although when they are present rumors begin to appear in their vicinity.

## *Yesterday's Tomorrows*

While mages of the Free Council have a reputation among the Atlantean orders for having turned their backs



on the “old ways,” this group, one of the few public and self-proclaimed Libertine factions, does not see “old and new” as a conflict, as much as a prescription for success. For the Historians, new is not better simply by virtue of being new, and old is not worse by its inherent nature. The secret, they believe, is in being able to divine the right future by looking at the mistakes and successes of the past. They advocate looking at each situation, each lesson, each person, and determining what can and should be brought forward, and what excised away, sometimes literally.

While these mages are sometimes looked down on by more forward-focused Libertines for the Historians’ focus on the past, they still differ strongly from the orders of the Atlantean Diamond. No matter how strong their interest in a particular aspect of history, the members of Yesterday’s Tomorrows do not cling to that period as the ideal past or see it as a long-lost utopia that the Awakened should strive to regain, but instead examine their favored era with a surgeon’s discerning eye, looking for the success and the failure in each situation and extrapolating how to use those lessons learned in future situations.

### *Time and Place*

Some Historians have a particular time period of interest. For some, this is a broad scoping era, such as the Dark Ages or Elizabethan era or the Industrial Revolution. For others, their interest may be focused on a specific century, decade or even a certain year. Other Historians may be drawn to studying trends within a particular culture. While few Libertines outside of the Historians focus on ancient history, the extremes and excesses of the Greco-Roman culture and the harsh (but effective) exploits of the Mongolian Empire are stereotypical examples of societies that the Historians might learn a great deal from. As well, the Egyptian and Chinese Dynasties are often the subject of scrutiny by Historians who find a great deal of interest in these hierarchal social structures that blend superstition, spirituality and social dominance in a way that those who have dealt with the Atlantean orders find very familiar.

While some Historians are generalists, studying all world events within a particular time period, most have a particular area that is their passionate focal point. It can be as general as “Failed Attempts at Democracy in History” or as specific as “the Kennedy Dynasty.” Rare, but even more focused, are those whose interest is specifically focused on a particular incident or event, choosing to study every possible thread in a tiny area of the tapestry of the past. It takes a particular type of individual to dedicate his entire course of study to the Treaty of Versailles, for example, or the Battle of Waterloo, but those Historians who choose to focus so narrowly insist that even with such specific events, it is possible to glean an almost infinite number of lessons if one seeks deeply enough.

### **Thrax Reborn**

Historians are drawn to the faction through a variety of means. The Mastigos Thrax was originally recruited by the Mysterium, in large part because of his preAwakening reputation as a noted researcher into the culture of the Thracian people of what is now Bulgaria. A handsome but bookish young man, Thrax Awakened in the depths of his university’s library archives, and took his name from the legendary forefather of the culture he’d dedicated his studies to for the past handful of years. His work in interpreting the excavation of an early Thracian temple stood him in good stead with the Mysterium, and it appeared originally that he would pass his initiation and enter order with a minimum of challenge. It quickly became apparent, however, that Thrax’s interest was more in the interpretation of the Thracian culture than in discovering its supernatural secrets. After repeated volatile “discussions” with his mentors as to the import of Thracian mundanities such as political policies and social hierarchies, the matter was deemed an irreconcilable difference, and Thrax was invited to seek other sponsorship. He had, however, drawn the attention of a Historian, who encouraged him to seek initiation into the Libertine fold, and into the numbers of Yesterday’s Tomorrows as well.

Similar to many of the Historians, Thrax is the only faction member within his cabal. As an insightful advisor, he is a valuable member of the cabal, which is tolerant, if not understanding, of their cabal-mate’s fascination with the past. More often than they could have imagined, the Historian’s knowledge of some obscure happening in the early Thracians’ democratic practices has given them the answer to a seemingly unrelated issue at hand. Because of this, Thrax’s cabal-mates go out of their way to support his strange fascination with a long-dead culture, even when it leads him (and them) into the depths of libraries, museums and occasionally on globe-crossing journeys to investigate ruins that many of them believe to be more the province of the Mysterium than Libertines such as themselves.

### *The Archivists*

Because Historians’ focus is inevitably split between the lessons of the past and how they may be used to improve the future, these mages frequently have little interest in the mundanities of remaining connected together as a faction. Because of this, the early years of the group’s history have been less well documented than one would expect from a group whose focus is on learning from the past. Ironically, a sub-faction within Yesterday’s Tomorrows, noticing the history of research-oriented groups to succumb to such tendencies in the past, has dedicated themselves to exploring this phenomena and how to overcome it. Part of the Archivists’ (as the sub-faction has come to call themselves) energy is dedicated to the creation of an electronic infor-

mation warehouse for recording and coordinating faction member's current and past projects. This server, known as MINERVA, uses both modern encryption, magical warding and a healthy dose of historically learned obfuscation techniques (such as encouraging members to use a "nom d'Archive" similar to a shadow name and used for much the same purposes thereof) to protect the information therein, and redundant hard copies of the data (protected with similar levels of security and magicked to self-destruct after an appropriate length of time) are systematically hidden in locations across the globe, ensuring that if MINERVA is ever deemed to be breached, the information can be recreated in time. Strangely, however, it is not the actual information therein that deals entirely with mundane history, albeit some that humanity as a whole has not had access to as it was gathered, researched or verified using Supernal magics. However, where local Lorehouses are under the direct control of their controlling cabals, MINERVA is accessible to all Libertines (and, should they find a Libertine who is willing to give them access, to other mages as well). Therefore, MINERVA might be used as a method to track down the members of Yesterday's Tomorrows, should it fall into the hands of the Seers (or antagonistic mages), and it is this danger, rather than a need to keep the information itself secure, that the encryption acts against. When it can be done without endangering the researchers, Archivists often leak important aspects of the Historians' research on human history into appropriate areas of the Sleepers' education circles to ensure that the mages are not keeping the truth from their unAwakened brethren.

A secondary purpose that the Archivists have dedicated themselves to, in order to avoid the problems they perceive as having plagued the faction early in its history, is maintaining the connectivity of the faction as a whole. To this end, they organize regular gatherings, held in a new location throughout the world each year, to ensure that the faction members do not lose a sense of community and connection with the present, as a result of their dedication to studying the past and focusing on the future. Despite the Archivists' goals, however, these gatherings act as an opportunity for Historians to debate their pet theories as they do serve as a social outlet.

### *Those Who Do Not Remember the Past...*

While it is easy for those who know the Historians only by reputation to discount them as nothing more than a faction of musty bookworms obsessed with the past, those who meet them on the debating blocks of the Assembly hall or Consilium are quickly dissuaded of this view.

Despite the self-adopted nickname, Historians are not content merely to study the past, but, as a faction, thrive on interpreting the mistakes of those who came before them and applying them to current situations. Any mage who chooses to take on a Historian on a topic that the faction member believes relates to her own area of expertise may

well find himself floundering under an overwhelming weight of facts as the Historian's research and the extrapolation of future impacts thereof are delivered with the surety that only someone who has dedicated years of study to a topic can deliver. Those who are foolhardy enough to engage an entire team of Historians in such a verbal battle are almost inevitably sorry they have done so.

## In Service to the Dream: Rogue's Haven

Although not a part of Yesterday's Tomorrows, Rogue's Haven has its own interest in the history.

This cabal has appointed itself "protector" of a household of the SCA whose members are also closely tied to one of the major software developers in the world. Through the re-creation groups' idealistic views of honor, nobility and service, they are steering the same virtues in the company (and thus to their producers, distributors and end-users).

Where the Historians focus on actual past incidents, times, places and cultures, Rogue's Haven's interest is the past "as it should have been."

Through interaction with the other members of their re-enactment household, these mages foster, not so much the study of actual history, but rather the invention and implementation of pseudo-historical ideals. These principles, while not notably prevalent during the actual medieval period that is otherwise the focus of the household's recreation and re-creation interests, are in line with the Libertine ideals, or at least form the seeds of how to bring a feudal society (whether medieval or modern) into more democratic standards. Although democracy is often as out of place in today's business world as it would have been in most of medieval Europe, by encouraging it in the powerful business men who make up their re-creation group, Rogue's Haven has planted the same seeds in their workplace. The re-creationists have begun implementing many of the same standards in their business practices, treating the company as an extensive democratic fiefdom wherein each member is a vital and respected partner.

The phenomenon of romanticizing the past is common among amateur historians; a broad variety of stereotypes have been created and inaccurately labeled upon bygone eras. From the noble savage of pre-history to the housewife in heels of the 1950s, most eras have inaccurate and yet commonly accepted stereotype labels associated with them. Unlike most who promote such inaccuracies, however, Rogue's Haven (both the cabal and the medieval household) have consciously chosen a set of characteristics that they know are inaccurate and are intentionally incorporating them into their re-creation activities.



## *The Cutting Edge*

Not content to wait to discover what will become cutting edge technology, this faction creates trends, pushes research and spreads the “new” to the masses. They believe that the key to breaking humanity out of the Lie is to lead them to recognizing the Truth by constantly raising the bar on what the general public believes is possible. By creating a self-perpetuating “snowball” of technological advances and information driven not only by an elite minority of the population, but by the mainstream as well, The Cutting Edge intends on proving Arthur C. Clarke’s posit that “sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”

## *Form and Function*

While many mage factions are localized around a particular area, The Cutting Edge (TCE) exists globally, maintaining contact through virtual communities, networking and communications systems that are encrypted through both mundane and magical means. There are many Cutting Edge-dominated cabals, and most Assemblies have at least one member of the faction as a member. Whether this is simply because of the faction’s pervasive nature or because the faction actively encourages the “seeding” of unrepresented Assemblies with faction members is a matter open for conjecture. TCE purports that it is the former, but the latter more closely represents the groups’ viral-spread tactics where technology is concerned. As The Cutting Edge actively recruits the assistance of Free Council members (and non-Libertines) to aid in various aspects of their outreach work, it is likely that, if both members and closely linked associates are considered, TCE is the most populous and prevalent Free Council faction.

TCE recognizes that any institution that hopes to accomplish goals must find a way to keep its members organized and communicating. However, similar to other Free Council groups, TCE finds the stereotypical hierarchy of even the most benevolent human organizations to be inherently distasteful. TCE uses a lateral networking paradigm that mirrors, but does not exactly duplicate, the Assembly system used by the order as a whole. Each branch, organized by function and focus rather than location, is responsible for regular reporting of its goals and activities to the central information data warehouse, where reports can be freely accessed by other TCE members. As well, as a branch grows sufficiently populous to allow it to bud off into sub-branches, it is allowed to do so in a fashion that, while it may wax and wane as various technologies boom and then are replaced by other innovations, lends itself to constant growth and expansion overall.

While actively striving to maintain a “flat” infrastructure, certain individuals have surfaced within the faction as “people of import.” If pressed for a name, most would label Pallas, an Acanthus Libertine, as the face, if not the head,

of the faction. Although Pallas herself would steadfastly deny such claims, many both within and outside of the faction feel the woman’s insights on and suggestions about every branch of the faction have contributed significantly to its success and effectiveness.

### **Pallas Athene — Advocate of Organic Systems**

Pallas considers herself a kindred spirit to the technology movement that her faction believes may be the key to lifting the veil of the Lie from the eyes of humanity. As a child, hers was the first generation to have television commonly available in every household, and her early school years were witness to the integration of the first educational computer systems in American classrooms. As the girl who would become Pallas Athene grew, technology grew alongside her, lending her a sense that it was as much a natural part of her development as puberty or her eventual Awakening.

While many Acanthus eschew reliance upon technology as foreign, or even contradictory to their Arcadian natures, to Pallas’s mind, the development of a new computer program, scientific theory or technological device is as mysterious and magical as humans’ first experiments with fire or a mage’s exploration of new spells and rites. To her, technology is as natural a manifestation of human potential as Supernal magic itself, and one that she hopes has the power to lead humanity at large out of the darkness of the Lie.

## *Driving Force*

Despite having a well-established Awakened population structure, TCE is far from walled off from unAwakened society. Contact and interaction with humanity is the entire goal of the faction, and its branches remain a constant part of the ebb and flow of information that makes up the heartbeat of society at large.

TCE members frequent virtually every layer of human society that uses any form of electronic communication, technology or science. Keeping their virtual fingers on the pulse of the scientific and technology community, they actively report on new breakthroughs, giving small inventors, theorists and experimenters widespread publicity through TCE-backed sources such as *Adept*, as well as through contacts with mundane media from news organizations and professional journals to trendy scandal sheets.

The faction members work interactively with other branches to drive forward the integration of technology used in First World countries from the cradle to the grave, from the education and integration of technology in forms and functions that are appealing and useful to the world’s ever-increasing elderly population to finding methods of introducing children to immersive technology at an ever-younger age. TCE’s efforts are largely responsible for the exponential increase in leisure, business and educational technology used during the past decade.



One of the more successful branches of the faction focuses entirely on just this task, infiltrating non-technologically focused strata within human society and finding ways to integrate technology use into them from within. While Cub Scouts, scrapbookers and country music fans, for example, may not have any inherent tie to technology, branch members have, for example, suggested technology merit badges, pushed for the development of integrated genealogy and virtual photo-manipulation programs and popularized country-western videos and karaoke machines, effectively bringing each stray interest closer into the technology fold. Once that ice has been broken, TCE has discovered, humankind's own desires often are sufficient to spread the technology from a single application to every aspect of their existence.

#### Technology Tools

Many associate The Cutting Edge with *Adept* magazine (see "Lovelace and Adept" on p. 69). And in truth, the publication (and its associated blog and mega-search engine) is a powerful tool for the faction. The Cutting Edge, through Lovelace, uses the publication to drive trends that increase the baseline techno-savvy of the human population. By constantly touting the newest tech as not only "cool" but also accessible, TCE creates and fuels constant public clamor for new devices, new features and (perhaps most importantly) new knowledge.

EdgeTV has become a household name since coming online through free 24-hour streaming access (available live or in a digested downloadable format that allows viewers to subscribe only to the programming that appeals to them). EdgeTV was most recently in the news because of the groundbreaking release of LiveEdge, a live-time reality MMORG in which players using stylized icons of themselves can socialize, shop, take leisure or educational courses (including coursework up to and including post-graduate studies) in a three-dimensional virtual environment.

In a modern take on Shakespeare's "play within a play" theme, LiveEdge players can participate in a variety of sub-MMORGs with themes ranging from fantasy to far-future, by entering into the game's Possibilities feature. Within the LiveEdge tutorial system, players are rewarded for learning and demonstrating not only technological knowledge, but also diplomacy, democracy and "fair play," as well as innovative thinking. Competitors are racing to attempt to duplicate the AI they theorize must be behind LiveEdge's programming that adapts seamlessly to new input and encourages players to seek solutions "outside of the box" rather than limiting them to scripted quests and interactions. In truth, the MMORG's technology is supplemented through intricate uses of techné. While detractors from outside the order fear that competitors striving to duplicate this magic/technology hybrid may



discover more about the Truth than they are ready to handle, many members of TCE believe that this may be precisely the right carrot to dangle in front of humanity's noses to encourage them to make the intuitive leap out of the Lie for themselves.

While the faction has been very successful in seeding mainstream society with a hunger for technological devices, The Cutting Edge doesn't focus only on the layman, however. While part of their focus is on spreading the use of technology to a constantly growing mainstream population, they also consistently spur new development by dangling the "carrot" of new possibilities to tempt the "forward thinkers" further and further along. Several major breakthroughs on integrating "real" technology with theoretical science (such as the implementation of string theory for the design and development of sub-microscopic data processing systems) have developed from seeds planted by The Cutting Edge.

#### Research, Education and Fiction

The Cutting Edge realizes that technological advances are more than just video games and portable music players, and that no matter how great the public fervor for new products, demand is not enough. Someone has to actually invent each new product, and the more access new creators have to earlier information and technology, the less time they are likely to spend reinventing the wheel. Likewise, access to a new idea may spark a dozen variations when the idea is exposed to outside perusal. Because of this, The Cutting Edge has developed C.E. Data, a branch that focuses entirely upon fostering communication between independent developers and the mainstream organized technological professions. Modeled on The Cutting Edge's own data warehouse system, C. E. Data nominally acts as an information warehouse for scientific journals and advanced student theses, but takes advantage of the constant flow of information through their virtual doors to direct, focus and occasionally accelerate promising ideas toward the individuals and organizations they believe will make the best use of them.

Approaching the same situation from a different perspective, PaperCut Press, another branch of The Cutting Edge faction, works behind the scenes of an entire publishing house that produces speculative futuristic science fiction works. In their day, the fictional creations of Jules Verne, who detailed his Nautilus 25 years before the first power submarine was successfully built and described the use of explosives to launch rockets to the moon with human passengers a century before the first successful lunar rocket landed there, were considered quite outlandish. Likewise, as recently as 40 years ago, science fiction detailed handheld communicators, medical imaging and voice-activated computers that were impossible with the technology of the time, and yet are now commonplace. In this same way, PaperCut Press, and the mages behind it, hope that the fiction of today may lead to the technological leap that vaults humanity as a whole out of the oppression of the Lie.

By subtle and overt suggestions of what might be possible, The Cutting Edge often provides the jumping off place for humanity to take the next leap of human intuition/creativity, essentially making certain that the "shoulders of giants," whether real or imaginary, are well publicized enough that those who might be inspired by them have access to learn from them and leapfrog forward into new and unexplored territories.

### Information Pushers: Lovelace and Adept

Owned and operated by a single cabal, but having symbiotic faction members throughout the world who share/ promote/keep an eye out for information in their various communities, Adept is one of the most powerful tools used by The Cutting Edge to promote and steer the course of innovative technology among the unAwakened human population. In a few short years, Adept has grown from a clandestine underground tech-site into a multimedia conglomeration that includes an e-zine with a readership in the millions, the world's most popular (and efficient) search engine site and a blog-community that has gained a reputation as the "thinking person's MySpace."

The cabal members behind Adept call themselves Lovelace, after Ada Byron, the Countess of Lovelace, who is credited with being a driving force behind the early exploration of theoretical computing. The cabal operates Adept as an organic entity similar to their faction itself, seeing themselves as the caretakers of a force for change, rather than the owners of a business. They strive to include as many other Libertines as possible in Adept, which is seen by many as the nervous system of the Cutting Edge movement. Lovelace's syndic, an Obrimos who calls himself Babbage, is a frequent visitor to Assemblies throughout the world. His travels, as well as a strong online presence, allow Lovelace to establish firm ties to cabals and independent Libertines throughout the world. Babbage is constantly looking for new avenues that will allow Adept to grow and adapt to better serve the Free Council, and humanity, in the future.

### TELM Trust

While the stereotype of the Free Council is far from investment banking, there is an element of democracy to the concept of a free market, and not all Libertines fall into the anarchist stereotype. The TELM Trust is a faction of the Free Council that believes strongly in the power and freedom of their idealized form of capitalism, and uses the strength of their knowledge and affinity for economic systems to promote the same.

## *The Power of the Almighty Dollar*

The Free Council is infamous for rebellion, but not all revolutions are carried out by mobs of protestors or armed insurrectionists. In modern society, power is more often measured in bullion and bills than bullets, and, at least according to the Trust, truly effective change must come from within the system, rather than outside it. The Trust has members (or pawns) in almost every major branch of the economic world, from the stock market to the Federal Reserve, and while they are careful not to attract attention to themselves by amassing overt amounts of wealth or obvious power in any one location, it is commonly theorized within the Free Council that if they were to put their efforts to it, the Trust could topple the world economy.

Why, then, does such a powerful faction within an order that declaims hierarchy as fostering the Lie not destroy the world's most powerful Sleeper hierarchy, if it is within the faction's power to do so? Because, while the mages recognize that hierarchy fosters the Lie, they also know that the utter chaos and anarchy that would inevitably come in the wake of such destruction is not necessarily any more conducive to the Truth. While the Lie is protected by the power structure of the First World economy, were that power structure removed, the void left would quickly be filled by those who are just as greedy to gain power over others (and much less constrained by the current static system), creating an environment in which the Trust would be far less able to promote their purposes.

Instead, by using a façade that the economic world sees as one of its own, the Trust is able to siphon off vast amounts of the system's power (to be read as money and influential favors), using it to build democratic systems both within and outside of the economic hierarchy. This accomplishes two functions that utter destruction would not. First, it gives the Trust access to a vast pool of resources, financial and bureaucratic, that they can use to further the causes of democracy and enlightenment within the Sleeper world. And, secondly, it gives them the time and framework to slowly build a replacement system for the current flawed one. Not until they have some hope that the democratic systems they've begun laying a foundation for within the First World economy are strong enough to bear the weight of the destruction of the current system will they feel comfortable changing their focus from construction to demolition. And, considering the forces working against them, both within and outside of Awakened society, it seems doubtful that day will be any time in the foreseeable future.

## *Team TELM*

Unlike many other financial aficionados, Jacob Langtree, figurehead of the TELM Trust, sees the financial world not as a source of personal wealth and power but a vital tool for regulating and shaping the rest of the world into a more ideal form, and the rest of the Trust agrees. For them, the

money is just a means to an end, albeit a very powerful and (for Langtree at least) exciting means. Using a combination of economic savvy and supplementary Supernal skill, Langtree and his faction-mates play the economic world like pool sharks, using their profits to tilt the balance of power toward what they, and the order as a whole, see as appropriate endeavors. Acting more as a coordinator than a leader, Langtree has at his fingertips a virtual army of literal financial wizards whose diversity of style and broad range of skills the Trust can call upon to accomplish its goals. From social specialists who artfully work the corporate cocktail parties, schmöözing and flesh-pressing to promote or bring about the fall of those the Trust has targeted, to the probability gurus who, through a blend of Supernal adeptness and gut instincts, guide the Trust through the fast-paced world of fiscal risk management, the TELM is a team of experts working toward a common goal.

### **Jacob Langtree**

While the Free Council abhors hierarchy, those who wish to interact with the corporate world and be treated as an equal must conform at least superficially to methods the rest of their peers recognize. Therefore, Jacob Langtree is the agreed-upon "face man" for TELM Trust, registered as the CEO and touted in many circles as a loose cannon. Langtree himself is a stock market cowboy, whose Supernal skills only supplement a natural affinity for buying and selling stocks, bonds and futures. The thrill of the virtual hunt appeals to his Acanthus nature, and his talent with Time magic allows him advantages that no Sleeper stock player could hope to match. Langtree's losses in the market are as famed as his gains, a characteristic that makes little sense given the nature and extent of his mundane and Supernal abilities. The "easy come, easy go" demeanor is a façade as carefully cultivated as that of the Trust itself, however. Inevitably, when Langtree "loses," one of the faction's covert connections is the winner, allowing the Trust to redistribute funds directly under the eyes of Sleeper competitors without raising the suspicions that constant success would evoke.

Langtree and the Trust play the financial game to win, even though part of their tactics involve frequent (and very publicized) losses. They are far more cut throat than their façade would have outsiders believe though. Not only have the Trust and its undisclosed associates siphoned off billions of dollars from the economic community that would have otherwise continued to foster the static hierarchy of mega-corporations and billionaire family financial cartels, but the Trust and others have at least taken the wind out of (if not destroyed completely) a number of businesses and organizations that were deemed to be either directly or indirectly supporting the Seers and their pawns.

The members of Langtree's former cabal, all Silver Ladder as he originally was, see the Obrimos as having turned traitor on the order he was originally initiated into. They abhor his use of Trust resources, both supernatural





and mundane, to level the playing field not only among Sleepers but occasionally among Awakened society as well. Although almost a decade has passed since Langtree left the cabal and order, their hatred has not waned and they will not miss an opportunity to actively bring him harm given the chance.

### *The Face of the Trust*

While it might seem that moneymaking and economic manipulation is a sufficient purpose, for the Trust, it is merely the fuel source to accomplish their true goals. According to public record, the TELM Trust is a philanthropic financial investment company whose purpose is to further the cause of scientific study for the betterment of humanity. This purpose allows the Trust to make public donations to a wide variety of under-funded organizations and institutions that would otherwise be drowned in the sea of red

tape that is government and corporate competition for scientific funds. Behind the scenes, the Trust does more than contribute financially, however. The Trust's actual primary purpose is a bit more focused: to promote egalitarianism within the field of scientific development. Some methods employed to achieve this purpose are very straightforward. The Trust, both publicly and through "private" donations by faction members who are not publicly associated with the Trust, promotes independent research through grants and scholarships that allow enterprising individuals the education and facilities to achieve their goals without buying into the corporate structure: Similar funding and support are given to organizations that promote research in the fields of medicine, physics, space exploration and a wide variety of scientific endeavors, to aid such groups in beginning or continuing their investigations without falling under the corporate or government hierarchies that often control the purse strings of scientific research.

Other methods employed by the Trust are a bit more complex and clandestine. While many of the Trust's influences are fiscal, there are definitely members of the faction who excel in less above-the-board manipulations; sometimes the appropriate tools for the job are bribery and blackmail. There are even rumors that the Trust contains a sub-faction dedicated to corporate espionage, which steals cutting-edge technology, deconstructs it to a non-patentable form and provides it, through a variety of means to independent inventors throughout the world.

### Subversive Splinter Group: Patent Breakers

There are rumors that the Trust contains a sub-faction dedicated to corporate espionage, which steals cutting-edge technology by various means and provides it to non-corporate individuals who then use it in a variety of ways. Acquisition may be through magical methods such as mind reading, dream walking or scrying. Or, the Libertine may use more mundane methods to extract the information: file hacking through networks, breaking and entering to obtain necessary data or the time-honored seduction/drugging of his target. He then deconstructs the information into a non-patentable form and provides it to a variety of independent inventors throughout the world. This information may be shared through mundane or magical means. Some may use anonymous emails, clandestine or public electronic forums or other traditional modes of communication. Others may seed the information directly in the thoughts or dreams of certain chosen individuals (or share

it with other Libertines who will do the same with select Sleepers across the globe). These individuals may not ever realize that the information they suddenly are in possession of was not wholly their own invention, giving weight to the phenomena of spontaneous simultaneous invention, and reducing the likelihood that the generation of the idea can be tied back to the original corporate creator.

Regardless of how the information is spread away from the hierarchy of corporate science, the individuals who end up with it can then use it to go forward with their own distinct variations, effectively undercutting the corporate advantage.

### Headhunting Cabal: Commonwealth Recruiting

While most Libertines eschew the hierarchy of corporate bureaucracy, Commonwealth works from within the red tape of industry to encourage the best and brightest individuals within any given field into organizations that support democratic management styles, thinking outside the box and other Libertine-approved philosophies. Commonwealth prefers to work with individuals who are already Free Council-compatible, linking them with organizations that will further foster their already established ideals and giving them the opportunity to succeed and further tip the market scale in Libertine-friendly directions. Mages of Commonwealth will also act as a catalyst for those companies and individuals who teeter on the fence between democratic and hierarchal practices, doing their best to subtly or overtly combine them in ways that will promote and foster Free Council ideals. Commonwealth is not, however, above sabotaging the careers of those organizations and individuals who are too firmly entrenched in corporate hierarchy to be brought into line in less destructive ways. "If you want to make omelets, you have to break some eggs" is a frequently quoted tenet of Commonwealth business meetings.

Many both within and outside of the Free Council believe that Commonwealth's tactics border strongly (and occasionally cross completely) the line between Libertine doctrine and that of the Atlantean Diamond, but for the cabal members who have dedicated their existence to encouraging the order's tenets within the confines of an otherwise hierarchal society, there is no contradiction.

### *Open Source Movement*

The slogan "information wants to be free" is commonly credited to Steward Brand at the first Hackers' Conference

in 1984. While Brand used the phrase in a monetary sense, juxtaposing the value of information (expensive) with the constantly lowering cost of providing information (free), to the Free Council, the motto has far different and deeper meaning. The legal ownership of information in human society inevitably leads to preventing that same information from reaching the hands of at least a portion of those who could benefit from it. In a hierarchal structured society, denying access to information is often seen as a method of protecting or increasing its value by restricting it only to those who can afford to pay an over-inflated price to attain it. While few within the Council would deny creators an appropriate reward for their efforts, those who purchase creations and ideas not to reward their maker, but to keep others from acquiring the same, stand in harsh contrast to the views of many Libertines, especially those who consider themselves part of the Open Source Movement.

### *Faction vs. Movement*

The Open Source Movement is a less a faction, in terms of its members believing themselves to be part of an exclusive group, and more of an interest group whose members may very well belong to other factions as well as being fervently dedicated to the principles espoused by the Movement. While stereotypical Open Source Movement members are either computer hackers or devout open source software advocates, the movement encompasses far more than computer technology. At its heart and its most encompassing, the Open Source Movement is about the freedom of information, all information. Both individually and as an organized network, the Movement fights corporate or individual ownership of intellectual property (other than the reasonable rights of the creator himself to be compensated for his work). As a group, the Movement tends to focus upon large-scale purchases of information and other non-fixated creations that the mages believe could better serve humanity as a whole. Many Movement members believe not only that information and knowledge are inherently something that should be accessible to the masses, but that restricting access to it mirrors the Lie imposed upon humanity by the Exarchs, a reflection that is intolerable and must be actively worked against.

Even within the Movement, however, there is a great deal of conjecture and conflict in regards to exactly how "free" information should be. Just as there are those Libertines who believe that humanity should be exposed to whatever magic possible to encourage large-scale Awakenings and other more cautious Free Council members who warn against the foolishness of such a scheme, within the Open Source Movement there are those who believe that all mundane information should be completely accessible to everyone and those who believe that there are certain necessary exceptions to this admirable, but potentially dangerous, philosophy.



## Censorship?

Proponents of the Open Source Movement often focus on the wrongs of denying information to the world at large due to the inherent proscriptions it puts on the advancement of science, technology and other forms of human creativity that Libertines see as contributing to humanity's inherent magic. Those aspects of information brokering that bolster the hierarchal structures within the humanity, especially in the realms of education, science, politics and economics, are seen as doubly abhorrent, both for preventing the free flow of information and for fostering the Lie. However, there is another aspect of the free exchange of information that finds adherents both for and against within the Libertines in general and the Open Source Movement in specific: censorship.

While the ideal of freedom of speech is protected by the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and formally recognized by the laws of most countries, the degree to which this right is actually upheld varies greatly from culture to culture. However, few human nations in truth protect wholly the individual's complete right to free speech. While authoritarian governments may practice overt censorship, a practice that is decried by more democratic nations as abhorrent, even the most liberal of human societies have some regulations in play against some form of communication, be it obscenity, defamation or hate speech. These regulations void the principle of true freedom of speech; regardless of the reasoning behind prohibitions, if any form of communication is prohibited or curtailed, the power of individual communication then becomes a matter of the whim and will of the ruling body, which then has the power to decide and enforce what is acceptable and unacceptable for the people the ruling body controls. This power, no matter how well intentioned, is not only ripe with the opportunity for abuse but also mimics the Lie, making it distasteful to the Open Source faction (and most Libertines).

No freedoms are without consequences, however. Without any form of regulation on communication, humanity as whole is exposed to ideas, opinions and information, both false and factual, which humans may find offensive, heretical or dangerous. Where one person's freedom of expression violates what another considers sacrosanct, conflict is likely to erupt. In societies where reputation is vital to one's well-being, the rights of another to defame a person may lead to personal or professional disaster. Providing information, such as how to create illegal or harmful substances or weapons, is considered by some to be tantamount to being an accomplice in whatever crimes are committed with the information. Other information may be considered by some to be dangerous, harmful or simply inappropriate for some or all audiences or in certain situations: sexually explicit material, religious doctrines or politically incorrect statements. Humanity has struggled with where to draw

the lines restricting communication, or how to deal with the ramifications of not drawing lines, since 1523, when Sir Thomas More first requested the right for freedom of speech from his monarch, Henry VIII. And, for many of the same reasons, Awakened society — especially the Free Council — struggles with these same issues.

What information, if any, is too dangerous for unAwakened humans to be permitted to learn about it is often a matter of dispute among Libertines, and even among the members of the Open Source Movement, considerable debate rages on the topic. Some believe that discovering "forbidden" information can be a step toward, if not Awakening, then at least beginning to realize that the Lie exists (which may be the first step toward eluding its blinding influence.) Others believe that until a person actually Awakens, exposing him (or allowing him to become exposed) to any information about the supernatural world is cruelly involving him in a reality he does not yet have the tools to perceive completely, let alone deal with effectively. Most Libertines, however, fall somewhere between the two extremes.

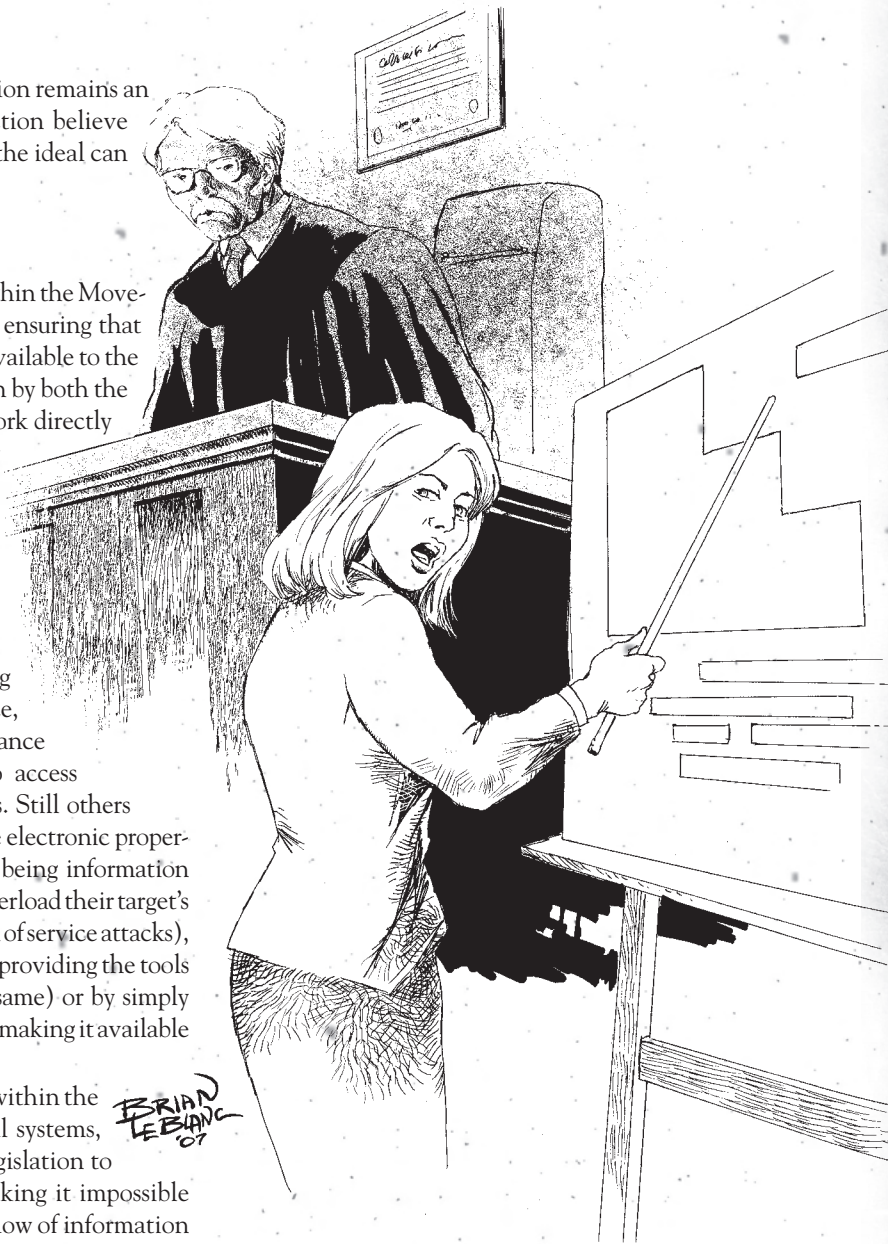
As for more mundane information, the debate focuses more often on whether any mortal information can truly be harmful, beyond the inherent role it may play in keeping humanity blinded as part of the Lie. While a few Open Sourcers may believe that certain information may be best circulated only among certain members of the human race, most believe that many of the flaws humanity possesses spring from centuries of dealing with oppressed information. When sexuality is sequestered and treated as evil, the results are inevitably conflicted adults and undereducated youths. When information about how to create dangerous or illegal substances is forbidden, those who discover and take action upon it often place the blame with the source that did not adequately "protect" them from the knowledge, rather than taking responsibility for their own actions. This phenomenon also often manifests when one party rallies others to violence: too often the mob is held less responsible than the rallying speaker, rather than being held accountable for their own actions, regardless of the motivation. And as well, when slander, libel, hate speech and "heresy" are outlawed, too often the parties expressing the offensive opinions only grow stronger by being "oppressed," forming underground or overt movements that believe themselves justified in taking actions against their oppressors. If information were simply allowed to be free, but all of humanity held accountable for their actions, the problem of displaced responsibility would be negated, say the more fervent of Open Sourcers. Not all Libertines are quite as optimistic about the practicality of such a plan, however. To free the information without making the cultural changes necessary to enforce broader cultural focus on direct personal responsibility and reverse the recent litigious trend in first world nations (especially the United States) would be disastrous. So, while the freedom of at

least the majority of mundane information remains an ideal goal, at least a portion of the faction believe that vast changes must be made before the ideal can be put into place.

### *Methods to the Movement*

Differing views also come into play within the Movement, in regards to the way to go about ensuring that information becomes or remains freely available to the public. Hackers abound, of course, drawn by both the name and ideals of the faction. Some work directly using techné-supplemented computer skills against what they see as the biggest offenders to their creed. One may specialize in developing aggressive or insidious viruses that integrate elite technical craftsmanship with subtle Supernal attributes. Another may rely on magically assisted social engineering techniques, such as disguising her voice, fingerprints or even her entire appearance as someone who has the authority to access otherwise secure information or systems. Still others specialize in entering or taking down the electronic properties of those organizations they feel are being information misers, by using techniques that either overload their target's computer systems with false input (denial of service attacks), by breaching their security (and possibly providing the tools or information to the public to do the same) or by simply stealing the appropriate information and making it available to the masses via technological sources.

However, some Open Soursers work within the jurisdiction of the Sleeper world's legal systems, lobbying for state, national or global legislation to protect the rights of creators while making it impossible for others to profit from restricting the flow of information to the rest of the world. These individuals believe that the laws (and correspondingly, the way humanity thinks about information) must be changed to reflect information freedom. It does little good for a particular piece of data to be freely available, these mages say, if humanity doesn't think of information, as a whole, as something that belongs to everyone equally. Access to information, they say, is the great equalizer and until humankind realizes and accepts that knowledge as their inherent right, they will continue to allow others to limit their thinking, a mindset that plays into the Lie. Others go out of their way to directly ensure certain ideas, patents or works of intellectual value become or remain free by purchasing the rights and making them freely available to the public. For some, this is due to the belief that free access to certain information is more vital than to others, or even that some information should be proprietary, while other should be free. While many movement members have their pet projects or areas of particular focus, some focus on them to the exclusion of all others.



### **Katherine Gunn**

Most Open Soursers know her as Galena, a shadow name meaning "calm advisor," but to those who meet her across the witness stand, this feisty legal consultant is always "Ms. Gunn." Renowned in higher court circles as an expert witness in matters of patent infringement, copyright and intellectual property rights within the technology field, Galena has made it her business to use legal channels to prevent individuals and companies from patenting software programs, processes and, in some cases, general ideas as their own personal domains. Known as much for her incorruptible nature and unfailing logic as for the tilting-windmills cases she most often takes on, Galena has a reputation for using her quick wit and extensive investigation network (which is supplemented by the faction's Supernal resources) to break exclusive rights use to commonsense technological processes or obscure techniques that would give one



party the ability to stifle others' creative endeavors and advancement in the field.

While many Libertines see Galena's personality as a bit tight-laced for one of their order, and her training and continued work in the legal field has garnered more than its fair share of slanderous comments about having "sold out," she continues on undaunted. In her 20-year career, she is proud to point out, she has contributed significantly to patent-breaking cases against more than 100 of the world's most notorious information misers. Her work has opened the way for a multitude of competition in fields such as software development that were in severe danger of becoming monopolized by a single powerful company as well as laying the foundation for a revamp of the entire concept of patent law in the United States. In light of this, while her conservative demeanor and willingness to work within the system may cause discomfort for some of her more liberal minded order-mates, most are very thankful that her drive, skills and intellect are being focused toward goals they share.

### Virtual Cabal: Legion

There are few mundane forms of security that can keep out an enterprising mage, should he desire entry. For those with skill in the Space Arcana, locks and walls are no deterrent, and few secrets can elude a Mind mage. Technological security, however, is more elusive for some Awakened, existing between Arcana as it does. Virtual data is not precisely the realm of Forces, being more than the electric impulses that create, store and transfer it. Virtual data are not exactly Mind, once the idea has left its originator and been recorded. Cyberspace isn't really Space, and while practitioners of techné are quick to note that within the cyberworld humanity writes its own reality, it is not truly the domain of Prime either. Physical equipment is necessary to technology, but the processes, storage and transfer of information by technological means go far beyond the realm of Matter. In short, it is more than simply the newness of technology that makes it difficult for the Atlantean orders to deal with: it is a complex and often indefinable paradigm where navigation is as often an art or an instinct as it is a science. This makes technical security one of the most difficult barriers for most Awakened to thwart.

That does not slow down the techné gurus known as Legion, however. While Libertines use a style of magic in which techné blends modern arts, sciences and technologies with Supernal magic to form a non-traditional style of spellcasting that many Atlantean traditionalists feel borders on blasphemy, Legion has tweaked the magical style to their own needs: virtuosity, a magic form that focuses entirely on the technological reality that exists between computer servers connected via the Internet. These spells, designed predominantly to

evade, negate or overpower the security measures in place on their target's systems, blend complex computer codes with Supernal abilities that speed up, strengthen or hide the invasive programs. Using elaborately designed computer programs as a virtual versions of magical tools, Legion is capable of infiltrating personal, corporate or government computer systems throughout the world. This access can be used for monitoring, stealing or altering almost any information that is being handled virtually on any system that connects to a network linked to the Internet. When necessary, Legion mages have the capability of disabling, debilitating or even destroying any of the systems they have access to, although they rarely do so. As long as their entrance remains undetected, it makes little sense to destroy a resource to which they've gained free access.

Unlike most cabals, Legion is not made up of mages from one location. Their members are scattered across the globe, joining together through the virtual medium that they find most comfortable. There are even unsubstantiated rumors that Legion contains non-Awakened members, Sleepers whose skills with technology are such that they rival the Supernally-enhanced abilities of their Awakened cabal-mates. This is impossible to prove, however, as the cabal as a whole uses the group's moniker for their online activities. While it is assumed that they have some method of differentiating one's activities from another's among themselves, to the outside world, they are only "Legion."

### *Freedom Fighters*

Few Libertine factions could be considered to be in any way militant. The stereotype of a pacifist communal Free Council member is certainly not true of all Libertines, but "martial organization" is a term more commonly linked to the Guardians of the Veil than the Free Council. Still, one of the basic tenets of the Council is "Destroy the Followers of the Lie," and while more public focus is often placed upon the value of democracy and humanity's inherent magical nature, for some Libertines the third tenet is by far the most important. What good is it, they proclaim, to recognize humanity's potential or to squabble about equality, while Awakened and unAwakened alike remain shackled by the existence of the Lie? The Freedom Fighters are clear in their goals: to destroy oppression, especially that of the Lie, wherever it is found.

Many Columns (martially focused Assemblies of Libertines) are predominantly organized by members of the Freedom Fighter faction, although not all faction members belong to a Column. Many have roles within a non-combat-oriented Assembly, while independent cabals, or even individuals are not uncommon to the faction.

## *History of the Fighters*

As a faction, the Freedom Fighters has its roots in the same Great Refusal that spawned the Free Council's inception as an order. When the Seers of the Throne offered alliance with the then-unnamed rebel mages who would later form the Free Council, the Seers' offer was not answered with political diplomacy or polite demurral but with an unequivocal repudiation, in the form of a wave of destructive violence. This explosive rejection of the Seers' proposal was the birth cry of the order, and although many modern Libertines are uncomfortable with the brutality of their roots, others cling tightly to it.

The Freedom Fighters have, as a faction, participated in most of the righteous rebellions of the past century that have escalated into bloodshed. Whether the violent outcome was inevitable, or whether it was made more likely by the presence of the faction is a matter of debate, especially among those Libertines who believe that the Freedom Fighters' methods are more than a little too reactionary. Subtlety is not beyond the faction, but is also not their preferred method of dealing with trouble. The Freedom Fighters' tendency to jump in with (literal or figurative) guns ablazin' has not done much to enhance their reputation in times of peace, but few Libertines could deny that there have been times when the faction's presence has turned the course of the order as a whole.

As is the way with many human military movements, support of the Freedom Fighters has waxed and waned over the century of the Free Council's history, as has the role of the faction itself. Some individuals and cabals that are part of the Freedom Fighter faction dedicate themselves almost wholly to Sleeper situations. They give what aid they can to those who are struggling against oppression, whether it be in helping to provide arms and training or more direct intervention. Some within the faction, such as Boxley's Boys, prefer to deliver their assistance overtly. Others work behind the scenes, but no less lethally. For the most part, Freedom Fighters deal with small groups who are obviously being wronged by those with superior forces and selfish agendas. It is rare for the Freedom Fighters to become involved (as the Boxley Boys did in the Second World War) with large-scale wars among the Sleepers because of the likelihood of these situations enforcing their own version of oppression, rather than the freedom of true democracy, upon the "winning" cultures. Unfortunately, as those who involve themselves in such things frequently discover, there is rarely a wholly right side in any social or political conflict, and the possibility for both sides of a large-scale war to be corrupt and oppressive is quite high. Still, there are enough blatantly wrong actions to keep the faction members from falling idle even if they were to devote themselves entirely to the unAwakened world.

Few Freedom Fighters have the opportunity, or the inclination, however, to focus entirely upon the Sleeper

world. While humankind's oppression of humankind is a pressing issue, the Awakened themselves are the target of those who would enslave them. While the weapons may be different, the same tactics that are used for guerilla warfare in unAwakened culture are often applicable for use against the Seers, and the Freedom Fighters are always the first to rally to the defense when need exists.

### **Boxley's Boys**

Formed by an Obrimos Libertine who called himself George Boxley, after a noted abolitionist, Boxley's Boys are one of the oldest and most noted Freedom Fighter cabals. None of the original six members remain, having been slowly replaced as each fell to age, injury or attack. However, each new member has brought something unique to the cabal, fortifying weakened areas to ensure that the unit remains as strong or stronger as it was when Boxley founded it in the mid-1920s.

Boxley, who was killed in the failed Mau Mau Rebellion of 1952, personally led his cabal into successful combat more than 200 times before his death. While the rebellion that killed him itself failed militarily, Boxley's Boys are quick to note that the uprising did drive a decisive wedge between the white settler community of the area and their British ruling party, which Boxley's Boys credit as setting the stage for the Kenyan independence movement a decade later.

Before his death, Boxley had led his cabal with a lack of democracy that some Libertines felt was quite inappropriate. Boxley served in the First World War, having lied about his age to be allowed to serve in the U.S. Army although he was only 16 at the time. He served in the 369th Infantry, 93rd Division, one of the few infantry units in which black soldiers were permitted combat roles, and his ferocity and battle savvy helped earn the unit the nickname "The Harlem Hellfighters." Boxley Awakened in a trench on the front line outside of Minacourt, France, but did not encounter another mage during the entirety of his service in Europe. He returned to the United States after the war, and attempted to settle down near his hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma, but a quiet life was not in Boxley's destiny. Shortly after returning, a soldier Boxley had served with during the war was accused of a sexual assault against a white woman in a city elevator. Although the woman later denied any wrongdoing on the former soldier's part and charges were never filed, the accusations made on her behalf by her family sparked a racial war in Tulsa, and Boxley's family was targeted, along with the rest of the city's black community. The riots, which leveled 35 city blocks and resulted in more than 300 deaths, attracted the attention of Free Council mages, who, although they arrived too late to stop the damage, aided hundreds of victims of the riots in escaping the violence and eventually restoring the rights of those who were wronged in the racial conflict. Boxley himself, knocked unconscious while attempting unsuccessfully to save his family from the mob, was rescued by the Libertines and later was initiated into the order.



Boxley's Boys were formed soon after his initiation, with the sole purpose of aiding those who had the will, but not the might, to throw off the shackles of oppression. His team aided the causes of democracy throughout the Second World War, fighting alongside the American forces and, when necessary, correcting the situations when the Army's bureaucratic chain of command prevented them from doing "the right thing." The cabal remained abroad long after the war was over, aiding those communities and regions that suffered oppression long after the American Army had returned home to pat itself on the back for a job well done. Although obviously not part of the military, Boxley's Boys were run like a miniature version of the Army, with individuals assigned by Boxley according to their skills and abilities to best serve the cabal's purposes. Military units are not noted for working as a democratic force, however. Originally, the cabal rallied around the charismatic (if hot-headed) mage who founded their group, and for more than three decades, Boxley ruled the cabal with an iron hand, using techniques he had learned during his extensive service during the First World War. He was the self-appointed general of his small team, and while those outside the cabal often disapproved of his tactics, his unit followed him with a loyalty that was matched only by their ferocity. After his death, Boxley's Boys nearly fell apart, being encouraged to take on an egalitarian dynamic that proved ineffective for a cabal that had managed to find a way to serve as a functional martial force without losing their egalitarian focus as a cabal. After almost a year of struggles, the longest-standing member took it upon herself to take up the reins Boxley's death had left slack, and the cabal members rallied under their new leader.

### *Martial Arts*

While some members of the Freedom Fighters specialize in direct physical or magical combat, a martial unit consisting entirely of fighters is little more than a mob. Within the Freedom Fighters' ranks there are also cunning tacticians, adroit scouts and spies and those who specialize in mundane and Supernal healing. Technologists and communications experts are valued members of Freedom Fighter teams, as are those with connections in obtaining supplies, from mundane needs such as funding, transportation and firearms to tass, magically Imbued Items and spirit allies.

Perhaps the most unique branch of the faction, however, are the mages who concentrate their energies on developing the combat potential of the Awakened in general. Since the 1950s, these individuals have affectionately been referred to as Qs, after the similarly focused Branch Q in Ian Fleming's James Bond novels. Unlike Fleming's team, the Libertine Qs are not a collective, but a scattered smattering of individuals who are driven to seek out ever-more-efficient supernatural combat roles and find new ways to integrate Supernal magic with mundane weapons and armor. Because of their usefulness, when word of a

Q's interest and skill becomes public in the Awakened community, he is often quickly snatched up by whichever Freedom Fighter cabal is able to reach him first. Capable Qs rarely want for company or protection, whether they have any real combat skill themselves.

### **Furtive Faction: Tesla's Children**

While many are aware of Tesla's contributions to the fields of science and technology, fewer know that he was a passionate advocate of eugenics, a social philosophy of intentional human evolution. Followers of eugenics believe that it is humanity's responsibility, as reasoning creatures, to promote the health and success of their race through various means that strengthen it, physically and intellectually. The proponents of such a theory vary in their views on how to bring this about. Some believe that by using things such as birth control, prenatal testing and screening and genetic counseling, many debilitating weaknesses, birth defects or genetic diseases may be prevented and eventually "bred out" of the human genome. Other, more radical, proponents believe that the same theories can just as viably be applied to entire sectors of the human race. Some feel that only those with above-average intellect (and no discernable physical hindrances) should be allowed to breed, enforcing a humanity-enforced version of Darwinian evolution that would, they say, result in a better humanity. More drastic advocates believe that segregation (both racial and to separate the mentally ill or lacking from the rest of humanity), compulsory sterilization, forced abortions and even genocide are not only desirable, but are necessary for humankind to evolve to their full potential.

Many mages do believe that there are certain traits that make a human more likely to Awaken than others. A smaller number would go so far as to suggest that it is possible that by encouraging these attributes (subtly or overtly), mages can create a greater likelihood for each human generation to produce individuals who are resistant to the Lie and more likely to Awaken than the generation before it. However, most Libertines would eschew even moderate eugenic practices as being contradictory to the egalitarian democracy they value.

Not all are so ethical, however.

For decades, rumors within mage society have circulated about Tesla's Children, a cabal that has dedicated itself to adapting the principles of eugenics to the Awakened condition. Similar to the more extreme human supporters of eugenics, Tesla's Children are rumored to believe that the actualization of these principles to be a necessary evil, the only true path to bringing humanity, as a whole, out of the imprisonment of the Lie. However, if even half the stories regarding Tesla's Children are to be believed, the cabal may well

have lost all sense of empathy with the reality of humanity in the mages' search to save it, as they are rumored to employ techniques that would make even the most fervent human follower of the theory question their appropriateness.

## *Many Paths to Truth*

While the Free Council is, inherently, populated by free thinkers, some groups range further to the extremes of various philosophies than others. The Free Council tends to be a haven for those whose beliefs, practices or viewpoints differ strongly from those of the Atlantean orders, to the extent that at times, the thing the Libertines have most in common with each other is how different they are from those outside of the order. Because of this diversity, as Zenos noted in his studies, there is a similar diversity in the way Libertines themselves tend to congregate, communicate and form themselves into smaller and more specific delineations within the order. Not all of the sub-groups within the order can truly be considered factions or even movements. Some share no more similarity of viewpoint, goal or focus with other members of the same "group" than they do with others, and yet share general attributes by which they can be described. Zenos referred to these sub-groupings as "genuses" in his studies, depicting more than a dozen different variations where non-hierarchical strata had been formed during the century since the order's inception. Similar to the Open Source Movement, many of these genres are populated by Libertines who belong to other formal or informal factions, but they form an important enough subsection of the order that no discussion would be complete without exploring them.

## *Spirituality and Religion*

As an order, the Free Council is more likely to attract those who had strong religious beliefs before their Awakening than any of the Atlantean orders. Because of this, one common genus that Zenos identified as existing within the Free Council is that of spiritual and religious groups. While their individual views vary from circumspect members of the Religious Society of Friends (often called the Quakers by those outside their churches) to the vibrant and occasionally outright rowdy Ásatrú who follow a historic or modern version of the ancient Norse religion, there are many Libertines who have retained their preAwakening spiritual beliefs (or gained them after Awakening). While most other orders do not expressly forbid their members from retaining their earlier religious devotion or continuing with their spiritual practices, the Libertines' independent perspective seems to attract and retain a higher proportion of those with devout spiritual philosophies that are not necessarily tied to the Atlantean legend.

## **Father Goodfellow**

Until the Protestant Reformation, the practices of magic and Christianity were not wholly antithetical to one another. The veneration of saintly relics, originally merely a form of respect and a hope for intervention on the behalf of the petitioner, eventually evolved into a belief in the supernatural power of the relics. Many churches not only fostered their members' belief in the magical qualities of these bits and pieces of deceased holy men and women but went out of their way to attempt to obtain particularly valuable examples of them, in hopes of attracting the attention of pilgrims who would come to partake of their purported powers. It was not until the 16th century that widespread battles over power, doctrine and religious interpretation of scripture in the European churches led to strong public denunciation of magic as something sinful and unchristian. Even so, in many areas outside of the metropolitan centers, devout Christians held on to their centuries-old beliefs in which magic and Christianity were inextricably intermingled.

The man who would become Father Goodfellow was raised in a devout Roman Catholic home in a tiny town in southeastern Wales. His family attended church every week and celebrated all of the holy days, fasts and abstinences. They also took the children of the family to an ancient well every spring to be immersed as protection against disease, and used healing blessings written on slips of paper and kept in a small bag hung around the afflicted person's neck to deal with toothaches or other maladies. For his parents, as it had been for their parents and their parents before them, there was no contradiction in these practices: they were simply what one did. As a young man, Goodfellow Awakened while studying at an American seminary, and left his training, not because of a change of faith, but because he felt that his Awakening was a calling directly from God to go forth and do his work: a direct ordaining that superseded what he was attempting to gain from the seminary and made further instruction unnecessary. He was given the shadow name Father Goodfellow by the Free Council cabal who found him working in a Catholic soup kitchen, where he also lead bible studies and performed religious functions for the staff and visitors to the mission.

For Father Goodfellow, Awakening was not becoming aware that magic existed; he'd never had any doubt of that. Instead, it was a divine directive, God's own hand stepping in to halt his formal studies and guide his Christian path from one of learning to one of leadership.

## **Coven with Clout: Hearth of the Moon**

The Hearth of the Moon was founded by Thena Silverwolf, a witch who believes she's been able to work magic since her teens and sees Awakening simply as the next stage in her mystical develop-



ment. Thena and her coven-cabal have intertwined their neo-pagan faith with the Atlantean legend, creating a unique mythos that neither denies the legends believed by the Atlantean orders nor gives them prevalence over the mythos of any other pagan culture. The Hearth of the Moon is a haven for those who wish to go forward without leaving their past behind. The cabal sponsors a huge gathering for nature religions every year, using it as a way to foster and support the belief in magic in the Sleeper community. The combination of community, spiritual synergy, sleep deprivation and Supernal magic is enough to send participants in these massive Sabbats home with a renewed sense of devotion to the miraculous divine both within and outside of themselves. This energy is spread throughout the world as attendees return to their home covens and conclaves and share their enthusiasm and experiences with those who did not have the privilege of attending.

The Hearth of the Moon is not the only group of Free Council mages to hold non-Atlantean beliefs, by any means, but the cabal is notable in many ways. For one, while these mages do not practice vulgar magic in front of the non-Awakened, or reveal the existence of mages as a group to others, the Hearth of the Moon make no secret of their belief in the existence of magic. Several members have penned books that dance just on the safe side of the border of what would likely bring down the Guardians upon them. Although protestations and formal complaints have been lodged with their local Assembly, thus far the Hearth's works remain available to an unAwakened public who is, for the most part, too blinded by the Lie to find the deeper Truths within them.

### *Weird Science*

Libertines are not so much bound by a common view of technology as they are noted for a collective willingness to accept the potential value of new things, including technology. While not all members of the Atlantean orders are Luddites, it is far more likely that a Free Council member will not only use and value technological advances, but that these views will be seen as not incongruous with his philosophy about himself as a mage and about magic as a whole. Just as Zenos recognized that the religious genus contains individuals with broad and diverse beliefs and practices, united in their category only by virtue of having religious or spiritual views that they held alongside or instead of the traditional Awakened legends of Atlantis, the technological genus contains a full gamut of individual beliefs, philosophies and practices, united only in that they contain a central theme of science and technology. Some, such as the virtuosity developed by Legion and shared with other cyber-focused Libertines, deals entirely with the

virtual reality of the Internet and cyberspace. Others may focus on the magic of chemical and alchemical reactions, the exploration of the sub-atomic world through physical and magical means or fostering the development of an ever-expanding range of technology wherein human-created devices create effects that for centuries were achievable only through magic.

### *Industrial Rebels: Action!*

While other Libertines may focus on researching spells or lobbying for democracy, the members of ACTION! spend their days sharing magic with the world — in a manner of speaking. As the driving force behind the world's most fantastic special effects, this cabal revels in the challenge of using technology, rather than magic, to make the world believe that anything is possible. Unlike other notable special effects companies, ACTION! has remained small, resisting corporate buyouts from major movie movers-and-shakers. Instead, ACTION! charges exorbitant rates (and enforces the kind of radical contractual conditions that make bigwig producers pull their hair out) to the megamovie corporations, while working almost pro bono for tiny independent companies that have yet to make their big breaks.

ACTION! uses Supernal magic wrapped in the guise of high tech to create their amazing effects. However, the cabal has been inadvertently responsible for a dramatic growth in the quality of mundane special effects technology as well, as Sleeper artists push their skills and innovations beyond the limits of what they had believed was possible in order to attempt to duplicate ACTION!'s effects.

Among the quirky idiosyncrasies attributed to (or fostered by) ACTION! is the mages' refusal to accept any of the awards their incredible work has been nominated for over the years since their inception in the late 1990s. Notification of such awards is inevitably met with one variation or another of a letter that basically states that ACTION! cannot accept kudos for merely aiding others to see the wonder that already exists in the world — a statement that raises no end of media buzz, considering the topics of their work are almost always far futuristic, alien or fantasy in nature. ACTION!'s refusal letters also recommend that any prizes, honorariums or "gift baskets" of the kind often bestowed upon nominees for high-level Hollywood awards be instead auctioned off and the proceeds donated to one of a long list of worthwhile charities promoting imagination, democracy and occasionally outright anarchy.

### **Preachers of Truth: Gospel Sentinels**

While Arthur C. Clarke may have postulated that sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic, there are those among the Libertines who take his law a step further, claiming that



sufficiently advanced technology is not just similar to magic: it is magic. While some Awakened may believe that magic is inherently the purview of the Supernal Realms and those who have accessed them by Awakening, one of the core tenets of Libertine philosophy is that humanity is magic as well. Gospel Sentinel philosophy elaborates on this point, stating that the reason that humanity is magic is that there is no true distinction between the laws of the Fallen World and that of the Supernal Realms. Magic and science, they espouse, are simply names for different parts of the same thing: an ability to create change through the use of tools.

One of the strongest mandates of the Gospel Sentinels is the discovery of exceptions to the "laws" of science, as they feel that each one offers a potential doorway into understanding the full gamut of reality. Each new discovery that invalidates previous assumptions about how reality works is an epiphany to the Sentinels. Quantum mechanics, non-Newtonian fluids (which behave as a solid under pressure), supersolids (which, at extremely low temperatures, flow apparently unaffected by friction) and string theory are all seen by the faction as "proof" that their theories are valid.

Unlike many Libertines who avoid imposing their personal doctrines on others, the Gospel Sentinels are strong proselytizers, believing that it is their duty to convince and convert others (Libertine or not) to the truth of their philosophy. According to the Sentinels, the belief in a separation between Supernal magic and science is just one more manifestation of the Exarchs' Lie — one that all together too many Awakened fall prey to — and there is no responsibility more important than relieving their fellow Awakened from the burden of that falsehood.

### *Democracy*

Even in the human world, the term "democracy" bears many different, sometimes even contradictory, definitions. Similarly, while Zenos noted a genus focused on the concept of democracy, each individual within the political strata's definition of the term may vary widely. Whether free market economics, non-governmentally enforced communist models, electoral politics or individual free-





dom-focused anarchy, the order's anti-hierarchy tenet is one that spawns diverse, and sometimes contradictory, but rarely apathetic viewpoints.

### Deviation

Half performance artist, half political activists, half education advocates, Deviation is a nomadic cabal that stages seemingly random demonstrations designed to educate underprivileged children in large cities about the systems they live in and their rights and responsibilities therein. Deviation appears curbside in ghettos, slums and barrios, on the street outside schoolyards, playgrounds and parks or in the parking lots of malls, arcades and city bus terminals — anywhere and any time that a crowd of pre-adults can be found. Boiling out of a seemingly normal panel van amidst a flurry of color, sound, lights and smoke, Deviation rarely fails to draw the attention of their intended audience. Once their dynamic entrance has attracted a crowd, the troupe delivers a show that uses a combination of covert magic, legerdemain, pyrotechnics and dynamic stage theater to seemingly break the laws of reality and attempt to instill pre-teens and young adults with a sense of wonder. Fantasy is not the only message Deviation delivers, however. Woven into the core of each show are lessons for the youth on politics and empowerment. Deviation ties together the magic and mundane so seamlessly that few in their audience can help being touched by the cabal's power and energy as they re-spark the fading lights of jaded youth and share the importance and opportunities wrapped up in becoming politically aware, using their democratic rights (voting, free speech, etc.) and finding alternatives to dealing with the established hierarchy.

It is difficult to say which aspect of Deviation is more startling for most people when first encountering the troupe. Physically they are extremists. Each member has a distinctive, but ever-changing, style that blends body modification, extreme fashion and unnatural hair color and styles with theatrical makeup and prosthetics to create unique visages that may both inspire and frighten those who look upon them. Their message, however, may be even more surprising, considering the appearance of the source. For, while their message often borders on political insubordination and is never respectful of the blatant oppression of the current political hierarchy, Deviation seeks to educate the youth the cabal encounters on how to work within the system, taking advantage of every opportunity to circumvent the shackles placed upon the young, the poor and the disadvantaged by those with power, money and experience on their side.

### Anarchist Movement: Sabot

Democracy is commonly seen among the Libertines as a positive principle. One of the core tenets of the order, after all, is "Democracy Seeks the Truth, Hierarchy Fosters the Lie." While the

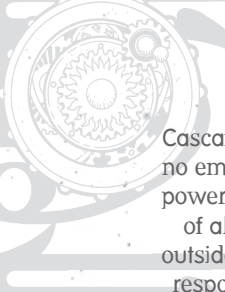
members of Sabot do not disagree with the tenet, they do have a drastically different interpretation of it than the majority of the order. While they eschew hierarchy as a tool of the Exarchs, they believe that the phrase "Democracy seeks the truth" is not a recommendation but a warning. While democratic procedures may seek the truth, they do not find it, according to the Sabot. In fact, democracy is, in their view, nothing more than oppression of the individual by the majority, as stifling and tyrannical as any monarchy or hierarchy could be. Truth can only be found by the individual, through his own path, and cannot be dictated whether from above or by the masses.

While the Sabot mages are very fervent in their beliefs, the anarchist movement they promote has gained little Awakened popularity, even among Libertines. While the ideal of total individual autonomy might suit the Free Council's ideal, in practicality it has proven to evince little in the way of change or effect, save to slow down democratic processes whenever they appear to lodge protestations. Much as their namesakes, the wooden clogs (sabot) that dissatisfied workers used for sabotaging early Industrial Revolution factory machinery, these mages seem effective only to grind progress to a noisy halt.

### Assassin Guild: The Cascans

It is possible that there is no such thing as the Cascans. Certainly, no Libertine in his right mind would admit to being a member of the fabled group. While they might speak rebellion against a particularly oppressive Consilium leader should diplomacy prove ineffective, most Free Council members would balk at the idea of the outright assassination of another mage, let alone the idea of living a life dedicated entirely to such efforts wherever and whenever they might prove advantageous. Rumors, however, are rarely without some seed of truth to them, and the rumors of a group known as the Cascans, after the senator to strike the first blow against Julius Caesar during his assassination, has circulated in Awakened society for nearly a century. Exactly who and what the Cascans are is a matter of conjecture, although the most popular and widespread theory states that they are a clandestine subfaction within the Freedom Fighters who use their Supernal and martial skills to enact swift and lethal consequences upon those they target.

Exactly who might be the Cascans' preferred target is also a matter open to much speculation. Some credit the underground assassins with targeting only Awakened oppressors. Tales abound of the leaders of oppressive Consilii who were struck down by unknown assailants when their tyranny became too strong to ignore. Others claim that the



Cascans police only the order itself, ensuring that no emissary, strategos or syndic uses his granted powers for personal gain rather than for the good of all. Still others claim that the Cascans look outside of Awakened society, that they have been responsible for the deaths of numerous Sleeper dictators as well.

Less common rumors assert there is a connection between the Cascans and one of several Sleeper groups suspected of using assassination techniques, including terrorist factions, organized crime families or various governments' elite military forces. Some even believe that there are no "Cascans," but a single "Cascan," a powerful Libertine mage who has, with or without the backing of other powerful members of the Free Council, assumed the role of vigilante on behalf of the Libertine causes.

## *Looking Back*

The Free Council stands on the shoulders of the Pentacle orders that came before it. Smart mages know this. Clever mages admit to their allies in other orders only when it will get them somewhere.

On one level, the culture of the Free Council feels separate from the rest of the Pentacle, the order's society seems to be one generation removed. On another level, however, the Free Council is the fifth point of the star that makes the Pentacle the Pentacle and wise Libertines don't forget it. The Free Council counts on the other four orders even while it cherishes its own ideological individuality. The Pentacle benefits from the work of Free Council mages, even when its members wish they did not.

In regions where the Free Council is well integrated with the four Atlantean orders, a cultural divide often still separates the Libertines from the rankers. In some places, this divide is as harmless as the joking harassments of grown brothers — it's the difference between football players and chess players, the difference between fans of the book and fans of the movie. In the shadow of some Consilii, however, the culture gap is profound. A Free Council mage may be the billionaire nerd in a city of scholarly paupers, or he may be the lonely gay cop who can't be sure that his comrades will come quickly when he calls for help.

Where the Free Council is less integrated with the other four orders, the cultural divide between them is often more pronounced and better defined, but ultimately less meaningful. It's a matter of comfortable custom, in which everyone knows where the Free Council subscribers stand and what they're about. They are more comfortably categorizes and know it. Even when a Libertine gets mocked to his face with stale jokes about his parents' basement or the cult of Mac, it's easy to ignore because the stereotype takes the hit rather than the individual Libertine. The

mage is a member of the Free Council, which is itself a part of the Pentacle, but just as marines and sailors work together against the same enemies, they don't pretend to be the same thing.

In some cities, the culture gap is intentional, or at least happily upheld. The Free Council isn't a facet of the old Atlantean society, it's like the body politic of all the barbarians and foreign citizenry who lived thousands of miles from Rome and expected never to lay eyes on it in their lives. They're conversant in Atlantean ways, but they often don't consider them their own.

In practice, the diverse culture of the Free Council makes it difficult (and sort of misleading) to generalize the Libertine attitude toward any other Pentacle order. Only a few generations' worth of relationships exist to form the basis for tradition or routine for this inter-order dynamic. Yet, for the sake of whatever clarity it offers, we offer a bit of coverage.

## *Conflict*

To be clear, the Free Council is constantly in conflict with the orders of the Pentacle, but this constant condition is only true because of two unavoidable truths: one, the mages of the Free Council and the Pentacle are still human beings, with all the frailties, strife and animal rivalries that come with our existence, and two, conflict is necessary for drama.

Don't confuse conflict with hostility. Don't mistake rivalry for warfare. Libertines work with mages from the other orders every day. Mixed cabals of mages from multiple orders may, in fact, be more common than single-order cabals. No one order has the power or finesse to survive in the Fallen World on its own — this is why the orders have endured for so long. Whatever the Libertine pundits may say, the Pentacle orders persist because they work together and they must work together to persist.

The conflict between the orders is undeniable, and perhaps inescapable, because even in Consilii where two orders have no official squabbles, the individual members of each order still do. For Libertines, ideally, conflict is nothing to be afraid of — the friction of ideas sparks the fires of free debate, and debate is essential for healthy democracy. In practice, of course, personal ideological conflicts are just as often nothing more than static. The bickering Libertine and mystagogue may seem to never shut up, to never stop antagonizing each other, but this doesn't mean each wouldn't risk life and limb for the other. An antagonist is not always an enemy; sometimes he's merely an antagonist.

Here's the bottom line: Conflict can be a great tool for getting into character and sparking in-character dialogue. A Libertine and a théarch might argue in the car on their way to Assembly, and they might debate the ramifications of an Awakened killer's motives while investigating a



crime scene, but it doesn't have to hold up the action of telling the story.

So, while the following sections sometimes paint the worst-case conditions of conflicts between the orders, do not let this get in the way of your own play. The orders are carefully constructed to believably serve two masters, and both of them are you:

**The orders conflict** so as to provide plenty of opportunities for stories and drama. In one story, a Free Council-dominated cabal might act against a mage of the Silver Ladder whom the local Column has decided has gone too far in his regimenting of the Consilium, bringing Libertines to a confrontation with théarchs that might escalate from debate to threats to violence. In the next story, the same cabal might have to work with mages from the Silver Ladder to rein in an extremist Libertine who is in danger of alerting local Banishers to Pentacle operations through his thinly veiled public speeches. The amount of conflict between the orders can be dialed up or down to serve the needs of your stories.

**The orders cooperate** to enable players to create as many different character types as is necessary to find their fun and yet still play together. Inter-order conflicts may stir players' characters to intense philosophical or moral debates, tinted with the imaginary positions of their **Mage** characters, and that's part of the point. The orders work together to overcome the obstacles to their utopian dream of saving the world, or at least themselves, from the shackles of magical poverty, even when those obstacles come from within.

Think of the orders as divisions within a single police force (though in practice they are usually not so closely interrelated): all cops bitch about the brass and look sideways at the Internal Affairs guys, but still they work together when things happen that are worth telling stories about. When they *don't* work together, there's a story to tell there, too.

#### Conflicts as Concepts and Flaws

In each of the order assessments below, you'll find a list of potential conflicts. Some of these are serious confrontations, the kind of things that can spark whole stories. Others are simple interpersonal frictions, the kind of things that can define the relationship between two characters. They all get categorized together simply as "conflicts," though, because some troupes can handle levels of conflict between players' characters that other groups can't — you have to judge what's too intense for you to manage without risking your fun.

(And that is the ultimate gauge: No amount of pseudo-literary clout is worth risking your good time in these games. Don't forget that.)

**Conflicts as Concepts:** Each of these conflicts requires at least two characters — a Libertine (though not necessarily a Free Councilor) and another mage (who may or may not be a Libertine). Thus, these are not character concepts

but *relationship* concepts. You adopt one of these concepts, along with another player, to define the dynamic your two characters have "on stage," at least at the outset.

Good dramatic relationships evolve over time, so don't straightjacket your rapport just for the sake of these concepts. These are just places where you and another player agree to begin your characters' dramatic journeys — though in practice it doesn't have to be as fancy as all that. If nothing else, by incorporating these conflicts into your character concepts, two players can work together to share the burden of characterization and earn experience awards for roleplaying (see pp. 216–217 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) their concepts through their inter-character dynamic.

**Conflicts as Flaws:** Careful with this; conflict concepts are already useful enough without giving them the force of full-on Flaws (see p. 217 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Just by giving an inter-character dynamic the title of "Flaw" you risk generating more strife than one experience point is worth. Don't let inter-character conflict interfere with anyone else's ability to play the game. As a rule of thumb, if the dynamic between characters is not enriching a scene, it's just adding drag to the story. Save it for the right scene.

That said, some conflicts can be so substantial as to qualify as Flaws and, if the Storyteller is game, may be adopted as such. These Flaws always have repercussions in the game mechanics. Also, unlike many of the Flaws given in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, these are usually more interesting to see resolved eventually. An inter-personal conflict without at least an attempt at resolution is potential energy going to waste.

## The Adamantine Arrow

The Free Council's relationship with the Adamantine Arrow is complicated. Most of today's mages are utterly removed from the Nameless War; it's nothing but history now. But little more than a century ago, the Adamantine Arrow was defending the Atlantean orders against the Nameless cabals that seemed to be ready to tear them down, and now the heirs to those enemies are their allies.

In the culture of the Free Council, the war is the distant past. It was fought between people who are dead over ideas that have since been replaced by newer versions. The Nameless War was the cause of Nameless cabals, not the Free Council.

Among the mages of the Adamantine Arrow, however, spite lingers. Today's most experienced Arrows know people who lost loved ones to the spells of the Nameless cabals. The eldest Arrows may have lost mentors, parents or teachers. Today's Libertines sometimes joke that some Adamantine Arrow mages never got over "the War of Nameless Aggression," but the Arrows don't think it's so funny.

But things heal. Since the formation of the Free Council, warfare and technology have wed in the blood-muddied trenches of Europe and honeymooned in the incinerated wreckage of Japan. The Adamantine Arrow and the Free Council seem to have their fates knotted together, whether they like it or not.

Libertines who pull their weight for the Atlantean orders, who give back to their cousins in exchange for the protections and leadership they provide, enjoy the same respect as any other Pentacle mage. Those who take advantage of the Adamantine Arrow and its allies, who have upheld Atlantean ways for millennia and died to protect the secrets and security the Free Council has so recently inherited, shouldn't be surprised to find their rescuers dawdling.

#### Conflicts

- A Libertine mage, fed up with the slow progress of democratic action, joins the ranks of the Adamantine Arrow with a goal of drumming up a full-on attack against local Seers of the Throne. But this Libertine knows things — secret rites and mystic lore — that the Free Council is unwilling to lose. This Libertine-turned-Arrow mage refuses to surrender his knowledge through any Mind magic, and so the Libertines are left with a dilemma: violate the liberty of one of their own for the sake of the order's power, or let a valuable *roté* circulate among militant mages who might misuse it?

- The Adamantine Arrow upholds the motto that Service Is Mastery. While it's noble for so many brave mages to trade their liberty for security, have they really been given a choice? Or does the weight of Arrow tradition coerce every recruit into surrendering the power to share his willful opinion in a democratic forum? The Libertine polls the Arrow forever about his rights and the quality of his choice, but doesn't want to give up the protection afforded by the Arrow's short-sighted choice.

- Freedom versus Security. The Libertine wants every vote to be counted, but the Arrow wants to save mages from the peril of warring on the order of masses who have never seen a real fight.

- **Conflict Flaw: Hesitation:** Can the Libertine count on the Arrow to save him in the heat of battle, or will the Arrow's doubts of the Free Council's loyalty cause him to hesitate for a fatal extra moment? Can the Arrow count on the Libertine to back him up, or will the liberal leave the Diamond warrior to his own fight? In any situation when your two characters must count on each other to fight, neither of you can muster the trust necessary to take your eyes completely off the other one. You each suffer a -2 dice penalty to Initiative in each other's presence. Gain experience when one of you causes the other one to doubt his trust.

## *Guardians of the Veil*

The Free Council are the crackpot technophiles writing about flying saucers on the Internet. The Guardians of the Veil are the men in black who make those writings disappear.

Those, at least, are the common stereotypes both orders share with each other. Those characterizations have an element of truth, though the real dynamic between these two groups is much more complicated. The Guardians of the Veil are more like NSA operatives working to keep the idea men of the Free Council and their DARPA-like endeavors out of the public eye. Both orders know they are on the same side. Their leaders typically synergize to protect both organizations and their members. The members, however, often conflict over the boundaries of their ideals and duties.

The Free Council is populated by more than a few mages who have shouted "Information wants to be free!" as a rallying cry. The Guardians' primary duty is to make sure no one frees the information under their protection. Even while Libertines count their blessings that masked mages follow behind them, cleaning up their messes, they look over their shoulders in fear.

The Guardians of the Veil remain an ancient, labyrinthine organization unknowable to many Libertines. It has thousands of years of experience on the Free Council. Worse than that, Guardians of the Veil probably know the most about the Free Council's mistakes and failures.

#### Conflicts

- A Free Council mage goes too far with his magic in public, and two days later he disappears. Weeks go by. The Libertine consensus is that the Guardian Interfactor has imprisoned or even assassinated the missing mage. Though most Libertines agree that their fellow voter was guilty of going too far, his punishment should have been dependent on a trial by Assembly. The Libertines elect a strategos of law and call for the Interfactor to be punished, but the Guardians refuse to reveal his identity.

- Freedom versus Fear. Fearmongering is the coward's insidious tool of oppression; it is not only tyrannical but deceitful, says the Libertine. How can there be liberty in the shadow of conspiracy? The Guardian upholds that fear is a byproduct of her order's reputation for success; fear keeps mages honest, not oppressed. Fear exists only because the Libertine cannot trust, says the Guardian. If the Libertine trusted the Guardian's judgment, there would be nothing to fear.

- **Conflict Flaw: Secrecy:** Neither the Guardian or the Libertine trusts the other to keep secrets. The Guardian presumably reports to her masters and the Libertine to his Assembly. ("But at least I wouldn't tell the whole Con-



silium,” says the Guardian. “I won’t lie to you by pretending I’ve kept your secret if I haven’t,” says the Libertine.) Each character suffers a –2 dice penalty when aiding the other in an action (see “Teamwork,” in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Experience is gained when either character reveals meaningful information about the other.

## *The Mysterium*

In many ways, the Mysterium represents the old ways. It is the phonograph to the Free Council’s MP3 player. The Mysterium is not competition. It is worse than that. It is a novelty.

To many Libertines, the Mysterium is valuable only as a resource, albeit one that will soon be vestigial in the Pentacle. The Mysterium conserves all the knowledge and data collected prior to the enlightened formation of the Free Council, and that is laudable, but once the mages of the Free Council have had time to scan all those musty tomes and add the text within them to their hard disk archives, the Mysterium can be safely assimilated into the Free Council.

This is arrogance, to be sure, but it seems to be the mainstream arrogance of the order. Out of context, every reasonable Libertine mage would presumably deny the idea that the Free Council has nothing to learn from that past — that kind of generalization is plainly ridiculous. Yet, in the context of Consilium business, reasonable mystagogues and reasonable Libertines can still resort to defensive ignoble squabbles.

Conflict between the Free Council and the Mysterium ranges from good-natured rivalry to cold neglect to outright hostility. Though conflicts between Libertines and mystagogues are almost always personal, rather than official, they are not uncommon. Arcane duels between members of these two orders so common in the middle of the century, especially during the rise of computerized storage and duplication machines, that in more than a few Consilii, duels became regularly scheduled events, occurring even when no specific spat needed to be resolved.

Here’s the thing, though: The conflict between the Free Council and the Mysterium is so often petty to the point of bordering on juvenile. It reflects badly on both orders and, as rational, educated persons, leaders in both bodies strive to find some cooperative arrangement between them wherever they can. But the Libertine-mystagogue rivalry has been so absorbed into the culture of both orders that it can seem inescapable. Even in cities where Libertines routinely share access to their Lorehouses with the mages of the Mysterium, the cultural stereotypes are well-known.

Does the cultural friction between these orders hide some genuine lingering malice? It may. Some Lorehouses do not allow access to mystagogues at all, while others ban

entry to all rank-and-file mages as a politically polite way of banning mystagogues specifically. Likewise, the stereotype of the crusty mystagogue dangling a rare parchment over the head of the greedy Libertine is not born from nothing. Mysterium agents have destroyed Lorehouse collections to protect the rarity of their own secrets, and Libertine infiltrators have stolen treasures from mystagogue Athenaeums. Both sides have their extremists and their peacemakers. Around and around it goes.

### **Conflicts**

- A Free Council mage is in trouble. He was the only Libertine in the city granted access to a map kept by the Mysterium, and now he has followed that map to danger. The Assembly votes to send rescuers, but the Mysterium won’t grant anyone else access to the map. “It is too dangerous,” says the mystagogue, “as your friend could tell you if he were here.” The Free Council mages are unwilling to give up on their member, but the Mysterium won’t endanger more lives by letting unready mages see dangerous lore. Something’s got to give.

- Old versus New. The Libertine and the mystagogue banter over old and new interpretations of ancient lore. “That’s not what Haineswright is saying in her new analysis of the Horace codex, if you’ve read it,” says the Libertine. “Have you even read the Horace codex?” asks the mystagogue. “No, because your Curator wouldn’t include it in the collection he lent the Lorehouse.”

- **Conflict Flaw: Static:** The Libertine and the mystagogue constantly question each other’s methods. “What’re you using, there, a Flemish knot?” says one. “What’s wrong with a Flemish knot?” says the other. “Nothing. I didn’t say anything.” Whenever either character performs an extended action in the other’s presence, they waste one turn bantering. Experience is gained when this puts either of them in jeopardy.

## *The Silver Ladder*

The founding thinkers of the Free Council wrote that “Hierarchy fosters the Lie,” and the Silver Ladder has co-opted the whole of the cosmos as a metaphor for their hierarchy. Their Silver Ladder stretches all the way from the modern proletariat to the lofty memory of ancient Atlantis, positioning themselves at dizzying heights above the sorry plebes below. The théarchs are on the brink of destroying themselves with hypocrisy.

The mages of the Silver Ladder claim to be the champions of the enlightened fire and the Awakened soul, combating the Exarchs through unquestionable integrity and with a vengeance kept alive with a clear view of the Lie. Théarchs act as if they are able to perceive the subtleties of the Lie in ways that lesser mages — that is, anyone but them — cannot appreciate. These are the descendants of

the great leaders who suffered most because they had the farthest to fall, all the way from the top of Atlantis.

But has the Silver Ladder learned nothing in the ages since Atlantis? Silver Ladder mages continue to resemble those who caused the Exile and told the Lie. The Silver Ladder is guilty of ignoring the failures of the past; the Free Council merely doesn't want to recreate the same glories that were lost. The strict hierarchy and oppressive hubris of the ancient Awakened provided the crucible of pomp and deception in which Atlantis's fatal enemies were made.

The party line of the Silver Ladder is either a sad unwillingness to see its own failure or a willful denial of the truth for the sake of perpetuating its own authority. Either way, Silver Ladder mages are hypocrites who will eventually be done in by their own efforts, and that is why the Free Council is able to avoid the kind of direct conflict the Nameless cabals could not: Libertines must trust it is inevitable that part of tomorrow's new enlightenment will include the shedding of the Silver Ladder and its shortcomings. A time will come when the théarchs realize their hypocrisy and see that the price for a new Atlantis will be their pompous authority — and the théarchs will pay it.

Ultimately, the Free Council's acceptance of the Silver Ladder's position in the Pentacle stems not from a recognition of the order's authority but from a respect for the mages' day-to-day responsibility. Even in the shadow of the order's ancient shame, the mages who gather under the banner of the Silver Ladder are predisposed to be capable leaders and strategists, and their modern goal of emancipation by Awakening is something Libertines can support. The Silver Ladder takes up a lot of the logistical slack that makes it possible for Libertines to find time to dream and brainstorm and plan.

Even if it seems like every decade sees more liberal factions within the Free Council calling for the Silver Ladder to surrender its caution and vigorously pursue the emancipation of the world's Sleepers or, paradoxically, dissolve itself into a democratic leadership unified with Libertine Assemblies, the fact is that théarchs continue to run the Pentacle. In the egalitarian Atlantis of the future, the Awakened will know true liberty and the Silver Ladder will be a memory, but this is not that future and for now the order of the théarchs is a necessary evil.

#### Conflicts

- A Libertine syndic believes a Sleeper is ready to Awaken, and the vote at a public Assembly supports his assessment. The Free Council will help this seeker Awaken. But the Silver Ladder stonewalls them, dispatching a licitor to keep the Libertines away from the would-be seeker. It seems the théarchs measured the Sleeper's value and decided in their own ranks that he is an unnecessary risk right now. The voters have spoken, and Caesar has ignored them. This poor Sleeper has no idea the trouble he's caused in the invisible world of wizards behind him. How far will the Free Council go to carry out the will of its Assembly?

- Liberty versus Order. "That's a really good idea," says the Libertine, "I'll bring it up at next month's Assembly." The théarch shakes his head and says, "Just take it to the strategos and get him to do it." The Libertine shakes his head and says, "We should vote on it." "You just said it was a good idea! So make it happen; you know more about this stuff than anyone else in that Assembly," says the théarch. The Libertines prize good ideas, but isn't willing to jeopardize the system to achieve them. The théarch thinks those who won't lead should get out of the way.

- **Conflict Flaw: Authority:**

### *Seers of the Throne*

Traitors. Liars. Fools. The Seers of the Throne are the citizenry of the enemy hierarchy. They foster the Lie. At least those fundamentalist Diamond mages who evangelize about Atlantis and dwell like sorry, broken victims on the glory days before their marriage to a dream fell apart — at least they believe in the Atlantis myth with good intentions. The Seers of the Throne are either liars taking advantage of the Atlantean mythology to subjugate all the Fallen World, or they are the worst kind of turncoats, prisoners of war collaborating with their enemy jailors. They give up their freedoms in the hope that some absentee usurper-gods will grant them power, and deny liberty and enlightenment to everyone but themselves just in case it will further the chance that their selfish betrayal will pay off. They are a waste of wisdom. They are greedy, petty tyrants.

Humanity is magical. The Seers of the Throne enslave, demean and ruin humanity.

Hierarchy fosters the Lie. The Seers of the Throne are the agents of the soul-crushing, dishonest hierarchy.

Destroy the followers of the Lie.

### *Looking Out*

The Free Council has data on many strange phenomena from throughout time and across the globe, but the order doesn't have solid explanations for everything its members have seen. The words of an admitted vampire are not conclusive for scientific Libertines — how trustworthy can a vampire be? Even in cases where a Libertine group has access to firsthand information on werewolves or ghosts, that data may not tell the whole story. Werewolves have their own folklore and society, but can any culture accurately identify its own place in the world if it is lacking essential information about the celestial architecture of the universe?

This is the open-minded arrogance stereotypical of the Free Council, and many of its members see it as such. A Libertine is often smart enough to keep an open mind about many possible truths, but is often also too committed to his own cause to genuinely consider that his own beliefs may be wrong. If the iconic Libertine is part engineer, part



anthropologist and part guerilla, then it is the shadow cast between these three methods that so often leads them astray. The anthropologist needs to gauge every foreign culture with an open mind, the engineer needs to fit everything he finds neatly into some place in the great universal machine and the guerilla needs to believe he is right.

In the end, these contrasting (and often conflicted) methods grant the Free Council an unusually good view of their strange neighbors in the World of Darkness, but does little to help the individual Libertine make sense of, or his peace with, them all. It may be the Free Council's lot to forever be exposing itself to more and stranger things than it is ready to understand.

## *Ghosts*

Ghosts are a sure thing. The Free Council knows they exist, and it has the tools and the Arcana to find them. Some Libertines stalk and study them like wildlife, taking notes and giving lectures on local phantasm numbers and behaviors. But ghosts do not figure much into the big picture for the Free Council. They are yet another fantastic facet of a mysterious world that turns out to be only partly knowable through science, but they won't help build the Metropolis.

Free Council interactions with ghosts can largely be filed in two broad categories: emotional and rational. The rational method of interaction involves careful quasi-scientific study and careful record-keeping, but the Libertine body that finds this work important is rare. This is more often a task undertaken by mages with a personal interest in ghosts in general, or one ghost in particular. More often, local voters regard ghosts as sad echoes of old pains that can't be undone. They're yesterday's news, and the Pentacle keeps the Mysterium around to deal with old business. If you don't look back, you'll probably never see a ghost.

A counterculture of Libertine mediums emerged in the 1940s, however, in reaction to the shocking losses of life stemming from the Second World War. Beginning in London, but rapidly spreading to the continent and eventually to America, this compassionate trend portrayed the restless dead as unrepresented masses—human constituents desperate to be heard even beyond death. “Every ghost counts” was one slogan used by the English Libertines. The idea was that ghosts were a magical aspect of humanity and so were the order's business. Ghosts are people calling out magically for help, and if the Free Council will not help them, than who will?

Though the “compassionate spiritualist” subculture has largely faded away during the past 20 years, their message has not been forgotten. Modern Assemblies sometimes dispatch cabals to investigate and catalog encounters with ghosts for the order's archives. Many Libertines intend to devote some of their time to investigating local ghost stories

and potentially helping some sad shade reach peace, but few get around to it. The order has new problems to deal with, involving people that can really be saved.

## *Vampires*

The hidden societies of vampires lurking beneath mortal cities are a puzzle for Free Council cabals. Are these monsters grim evidence of the magical inherent in human works — maybe evidence of some mystical plague? Are they creatures of the Abyss, intruders wielding supernatural powers drawn from the growing cosmic chasm that smothers Awakened magic?

The Free Council doesn't know. More surprisingly, it has no official position on the matter other than a simple affirmation that bloodsucking undead are no longer human in the eyes of the order. To regard them as “people” of some sort is dangerous. They are phenomena and should be regarded as such. Whatever convoluted shadow culture they have no doubt serves the Lie. They prey on the Sleepers (and the Awakened) that the Free Council so champions, so they are enemies.

Except. Individual Libertines have made contact with individual vampires and found them to be considerably more complicated than one might expect. Though any Libertine would be a fool to trust the word of a vampire, more than one Libertine has cultivated long-term contact with the undead without violence or bloodshed. Who knows how many Libertines have come into contact with vampires and not known it? Historically, these tentative exchanges between Libertines and bloodsucking beasts have not amounted to much aside from a gradual realization that the order's awareness of the undead is perilously underdeveloped . . . but that vampires are thankfully even less informed.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, various Free Council cabals began continuing experiments into vampirism as a mixed supernatural and scientific plague. Information gleaned from contact with multiple vampires revealed that much of the traditional folklore surrounding the undead was untrue, and that vampirism could be spread by a vampire's blood. Though almost 20 years of mystic experimentation — and bloody confrontations with vampire society in search of test subjects — have so far yielded no fruitful results, every few years it seems another Libertine cabal takes it upon themselves to confront and solve the mystery of vampirism.

## *Werewolves*

Unlike the undead, werewolves are regarded by many Libertines as being fundamentally human. Though contact with werewolves is uncommon, and few werewolves seem to regard themselves as human, the Free Council's fundamental

philosophies regarding these shapeshifters have remained unchanged for the better part of a century. Whether the Libertine mages aim their scientific reason at the werewolf as a human or a spiritual being, however, the word “fundamental” seem to keep coming up in Libertine studies of the so-called Forsaken. A core philosophy is about all the Free Council has to go on when dealing with werewolves — interactions with these enigmatic monsters is rarely a matter of science and more often a matter of emergency.

Libertines have encountered and cooperated with werewolves throughout the order's 100-year history, but little meaningful cultural exchanges have taken place. When mages and werewolves interact, more important things are often going on than anthropological surveys. So Libertine mages continue to debate the cosmological origins of were-

wolves among themselves, even though the folklore and mythology of the Forsaken has been documented through direct contact with werewolves and spirits.

Because of werewolves' close connections to humanity, the Free Council continues to search for an explanation for their condition that jives with the Libertine philosophy. That werewolves draw mystic power from the Shadow Realm may be explanation enough for why they do not experience magical interference from the Abyss, but how does a werewolf's semi-spiritual existence interact with the Quiescence? What is the state of the werewolf soul? These are questions one Libertine asks another; few cabals have the kind of rapport necessary to risk frank contact with dangerous half-spirits just for the sake of their own curiosity.





## *The Created*

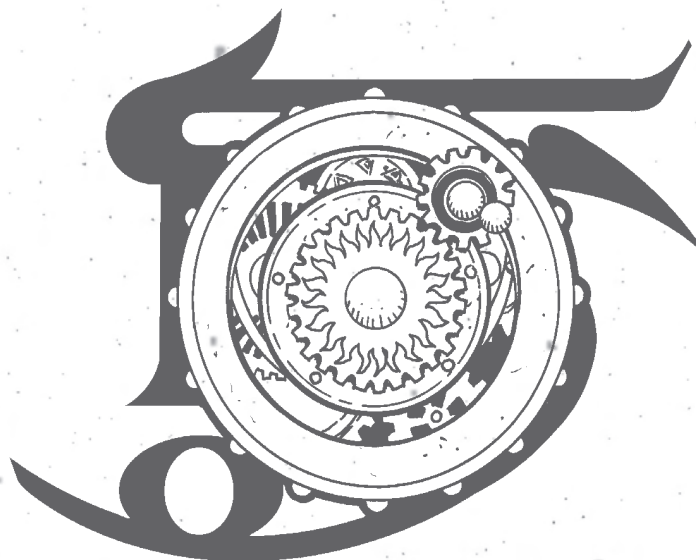
Every year or so, another story comes out from some remote cabal about beings invested with alchemical fire moving among human beings. From what the Free Council's archivists can put together from scattered accounts and observations, these are artificial beings, constructed by Sleepers or possibly even artificial artificers. Contact between a Libertine emissary and one of these "Created" in Philadelphia in 2006 yielded tantalizing new information: the being did not seem to the Libertine to regard itself as human. Rather, just as Shelley's own monster, the creature longed to feel some sense of humanity, some sense of kinship.

Free Council cabals debate the questions of the Created with a fervor that only the union of the human endeavor and a mystic puzzle can spark. Is an artificial person a person? Does it have the same Quiescent sympathy with the Abyss as a Sleeper? Is it right for such a being to suffer in pursuit of some emulation of humanity? Shouldn't the Created be granted liberty for what it is, without shame? Can a being so apart, so cosmically alone, be free when it has to live a world meant for other beings?

The most pressing question, which too few Libertines are asking, must be, when the next Free Council cabal encounters one of these beings, will it be treated as a human being or as a mystery to be solved?

## *Changelings*

Libertines have heard tales of changelings just like any student of the occult has. Few Libertines regard these tales as anything more than another body of folklore with possible metaphorical insights into Awakened prehistory. Do changeling legends allude to the capture of human souls by the mythic Exarchs? Are the tales of souls escaping from the faerie realms back to the Fallen World referring to Awakened souls returning to their earthly bodies? Just how well informed the writers of old faerie folklore were about the mythology of the Supernal Realms remains unclear. Perhaps changelings themselves are even allusions to some genuine phenomenon. The Free Council continues to marvel at the undiscovered depths of vampire and werewolf societies lurking in the shadows of the Fallen World — what else is escaping them?







# CHAPTER THREE: ARCANE OPERATING SYSTEM

"Don't do this," said Amelia.

"Calon down," Turner said. "I need to concentrate." He leaned over the girl in the hospital bed and lifted one of her eyelids. The end of his finger lit up, and he waved it in front of her face. Her brain shined inside her skull, through her skin, like the veins of a hand over a flashlight. "This isn't going to get easier if the staff finds us in here."

"It's not going to get easier because this doesn't fucking work, Turn." Amelia looked at the girl. She was maybe nine years old. The last one had been older, probably 12, when Turner had tried to dispel her mental illness. Amelia never shook the feeling she got looking down on that girl's vacant face, her mouth sagging, her eyes limp.

Amelia snapped up her chart, flipped through it. "Come on, Turner. This girl's on all kinds of meds, anyway. She's getting care. We don't even know how the meds will interact with —"

"Pills are shackles, Amy. Muscle relaxers to make the mind soft." Turner smeared iodine on the girl's face, painting out two interlocking spheres. "This girl might even wake up if her 'doctors' weren't such tools."

Amelia rolled her eyes. "Yeah, the world's full of great and powerful wizards subversively medicated to keep us in line," she said. "Aspirin is the Exarchs' atomic bomb."

Turner slid his glowing finger through the girl's forehead, wincing as he pressed through her skull and between the hemispheres of her brain. He felt little electric clicks inside, like tiny gears flipping on and off. Underneath his fingernail, he felt something solid, like a staple in a piece of uncooked chicken.

"Amy," he said, looking back at her, "there's something in here."



*"The workings of the human heart are the profoundest mystery of the universe.  
One moment they make us despair of our kind,  
and the next we see in them the reflection of the divine image."*

— Charles W. Chesnutt

Despite their fascinations with science and technology, despite the posturing and the rhetoric that positions them as exemplar engineers and orators for the modern day, the mages of the Free Council are practitioners of magic. Their minds may dwell on matters of natural law, their tastes may favor contemporary fashion, but their souls are instruments of sorcery. The Free Council is an order of wizards, perhaps the last order of wizards the world will ever see — this is what they do with their magic.

#### Legacies

This chapter presents three new Legacies associated with the Free Council, for better or worse. Unlike some older Legacies, these modern soul-changing pursuits are less concerned with ancient arts and more involved with the reinvention of old arts in new forms.

#### Techné

Technology is the application of science to everyday life. Techné is the application of magic to the everyday world.

To the Greeks of old, *techne* was the methodology of creation through art or craft, in contrast to achievement through science. It is telling that the original founders of the Free Council chose this word, rather than *episteme* (science), to label their philosophical approach to the Art. It is telling, too, that so many modern Libertines seem more interested in science and technology than art and craftsmanship.

Still, the contrast between the techné of the Awakened Libertines and the science of the Sleeping masses is a common theme in Free Council debates and writings. Many more early Free Councilors were craftspeople and artists, philosophers and politicians, than were scientists. And while the order has long respected and even admired scientific endeavors, it does maintain that some magical quality is inherent within the scientific works of humankind — even the technophiles of the Free Council must attribute some aspect of the Art to science, perhaps to rationalize why the sciences remain so mysterious even when explored by magic.

According to Greek and later Western customs, crafts and material arts encompassed by techné are not the business of gentlemen. Rather, gentleman should concern themselves

with the *ars liberalis*, the arts suitable for free men, such as arithmetic, astronomy, chemistry and biology. Techné is a servile art, the stuff of labor.

Again a revealing dichotomy within the order's self-identity emerges. The Free Council sees itself as an order for the free, for libertines, for people of science, who are historically upper-class folk. At the same time, the order associates itself with the crafts of the lower class, the proletariat.

For some Libertines, this means disguising pride with humility and couching self-aggrandizement in modesty. But in the minds of the mages of the original Free Council, this was meant to close the divide between the servile and the free, to transmute servitude and authority into a single liberty, to unify thought and action. Techné is not just jargon for wizardry, it is a call to marry work and power — it is the means by which all people shall create and be free.

#### Spells

The Free Council, even with its considerable focus on material endeavors, is still in its heart a body of practicing magicians. What the Libertine order may lack in bold new spells — these mages do have to compete with all of history when striving to introduce new ideas — the order makes up for in style.

#### Mystic Objects

Many modern Libertines are gadget fans, and many of the order's noteworthy mages have spent more time developing mystic objects than new rites. In the Metropolis of the Awakened future, the ubiquity of magical devices will bring the greatest sorceries to the masses.

#### Phenomena of the Free Council

This section contains a handful of remarkable supernatural phenomena that can be attributed to Free Council mages (or blamed on them). Use these as a player to motivate or inform your own character or as a Storyteller to spark new stories about the Free Council.

## Legacies

Since the day of its formation, the Free Council has had an uneasy relationship with the practices surrounding



Legacies. Soul-shaping is an essential part of an Awakened mage's maturity as a wizard, but it is also a difficult process to make sense of without embracing some of the ancient mentoring techniques employed by the Pentacle's oldest tutors — most of which rely on Atlantean parables and folklore. Science cannot explain Legacies, and though soul-shaping is surrounded by metaphors of craftsmanship, it is a deeply personal and internalized process, while the Free Council is a highly social and extroverted order.

Only a few Legacies can be directly associated with the Free Council. Most of the Legacies represented by Libertine mages actually predate the order, often by many centuries, and were imported into the membership by transplants from the Atlantean orders. These draw uncomfortable attention to the volume of lore and wisdom the Free Council owes to the Diamond mages who came before.

During the early years of the Free Council, dozens of new Legacies formed... and failed. Large numbers of hopeful mystical pioneers set out to remake their souls in some unique way, diverging from their tutor's orders and branching off into ill-conceived spheres of power. A fad of individualism drove many young Libertines to turn away from longstanding Legacies in favor of new ways. Divergent and fledgling Legacies were often shaped by pride or fashion rather than wisdom, and dozens of Libertine mages found themselves trapped on lifelong paths to desolate souls. Practically none of the Legacies began during the early years of the Free Council ever found apprentices; most of these Legacies no longer exist.

To this day, Legacies represent an embarrassing mistake in the order's history. The idea of striking out down new paths of the soul still scares many Libertines who don't want to bring new shame on the order if they fail. Libertine apprentices often seek out tutors from outside the Free Council, not to avoid their own forebears, but to demonstrate their respect for what has come before even while they move ahead toward the Metropolis.

### *Other Legacies*

The Free Council is home to many mages who subscribe to Legacies whose origins do not reside solely with the Libertine order.

From **Legacies: The Sublime**: Each of these technology-minded or metropolitan Legacies can find a productive place for themselves in Free Council cabals.

- The self-aggrandizing Daksha, who sometimes regard themselves as the *ubermensch* of the future Metropolis,

represent the power that can be won through pride — a vice common to Libertines.

- The Metropolitans of House Ariadne have a unique gift for understanding the signals given off by modern cities, and their knack for unraveling the threads of Fate may lead the Free Council to the great city of the future.

- Pygmaliens — patrons of earthly and magical artists — strive to cultivate artists in the Fallen World, driving Sleepers to manifest their wills and change the world. If all human invention, whether art or science, does carry some residue of the Supernal in its creative impulse, then the Free Council is right.

- The weird theorists called Threnodists boggle old-fashioned mages with talk of quantum demons and mystic mathematics. Even if some Libertines think they're crazy, the attitude of the Free Council celebrates their kind of lunacy more than any order in the Diamond.

- The Legacy of Transhuman Engineers are physicists in the scientific community of the Free Council, turning the intangible ideas of Libertine futurism into crunchable numbers and arcane schematics.

From **Legacies: The Ancient**: Though both of these Legacies predate the Free Council, each of their passions takes on new life when paired with modern methods.

- Skalds interested in exploring the modern ramifications of their ancient traditions and timeless fascination with storytelling and songwriting find new allies and great tools in Libertine Lorehouses stocked with cameras, computers, transmitters and high-speed modems.

- The Thrice-Great, meanwhile, can bring bold new innovations to their study of the planets and the distant heavens thanks to Free Council connections in the astrophysics community. Modern telescopes and satellite telemetry may revolutionize this Legacy's contact with the spirits of the stellar sphere.

### A Note on Origins

The three Legacies in this book descend from parent Paths. Each of them also descends from the philosophy and history of the Free Council, as well. With the Storyteller's permission, any Libertine mage may be able to join one of the following Legacies, regardless of Path.

# THE BLANK BADGES

The Free Council is widely thought of as “revolutionary,” despite being an established order for generations (“recent history” having a somewhat different connotation for mages whose history extends back to the days of Atlantis). Many Free Councilors are dedicated to revolutionary ideals, but few as much as the Blank Badges, who craft their very souls toward the overthrow of the Lie and all who support it, who give up their own identities in a quest for a greater identity, and a greater destiny, for all.

This Legacy is descended from one of the first cabals of the Free Council, formed during the Nameless War. These outcast mages took their Nameless status as a badge of honor, wearing white or blank badges as a sign of their allegiances, or some other white token, from a flower to a handkerchief. They said the white was for purity, but it also represented limitless potential, a clearing away of all the detritus of centuries of mystical tradition that bound the so-called Atlantean orders in chains of expectations and limitations. To be a mage, according to the Blank Badges, was to cast off such things and to embrace limitless potential and possibilities.

The cabal survived the Nameless War and the formation and recognition of the Free Council, eventually becoming a true Legacy that forged and reshaped the souls of young mystics initiated into its ways. Not all survived, because the Blank Badges explored the edges of mystical knowledge, fighting to push back the boundaries, while at the same time defying the power of the Seers of the Throne and their Exarch masters. Better to burn out than the fade away was their motto long before it came into vogue amongst the Sleepers.

For decades, the Badges have been on the forefront of the war against the agents of the Lie, but theirs is a secret war, much as the Nameless War between the Atlantean orders that created their Legacy. Blank Badges have been a part of rebellions around the world, seeking to cast off the established order to create something new. They have also fought in the shadows, unseen and unsung by any save the most perceptive of the Guardians and wisest of the Mysterium. The Badges have had to, since the enemy their fight against is conformity, expectation, the Lie of mundane existence.

In recent years, the Blank Badges have undergone an internal revolution as well. An increasing number of initiates of the Legacy have realized the Free Council is becoming (has become, according to some) as much as part of the occult “establishment” as any of the other Atlantean orders. The fifth point of the so-called Pentacle has gone from hot and fluid as an eruption to cooling and hardening

into unyielding stone. As so many revolutionaries before them, Free Councilors are becoming the New Order, and the Blank Badges don’t like the sound of that at all. Therefore, the Legacy has gone from the core of the movement to the periphery of it, pushed out by their own nature, where they continue to follow the Legacy of their souls: revolution, evolution and defiance of expectations.

Their revolutionary nature keeps the Blank Badges on the forefront of the struggle against the Exarchs and their servants, the Seers of the Throne. While the Seers have largely lumped the Free Council in with the Atlantean orders since the Nameless refused to ally with the Seers more than a century ago, they remain keenly aware of the Invisible Company due to their penchant for provoking Paradox and stirring up trouble, to say nothing of their habit of killing Seers when they have the opportunity.

Some Pentacle mages try to keep the Blanks from drawing too much attention to the mystical community, because it only leads to Seer offensives and crackdowns, but others see the activities of the Legacy as a useful smokescreen. While the Seers deal with magical bomb-tossing anarchists, they have less attention to devote to harassing other members of the occult community. The Blanks, of course, see order mages who try to stay their hand as Exarch apologists and collaborators, traitors to the cause.

The Blanks therefore exist on the outer edges of Awakened society, acknowledged as members of the Free Council and afforded the protection of Awakened tradition and protocol, even if they don’t respect it themselves. They work with other mages when circumstances require it, but the Blanks don’t trust anyone, often not even members of their own Legacy, because they know the Lie extends its influence everywhere, and is not so easily thrown off as other willworkers might like to believe.

**Parent Path:** Acanthus

**Nicknames:** Blanks, The Invisible Company, Nameless, Rebels

**Appearance:** The Blank Badges are distinctly indistinct, hiding in plain sight. For some, this means adopting the most outlandish appearance they can, from radical punk to fetish and modern tribal styles, the better to shock people and make them remember only the shock and not the person behind it. Others take a subtler approach, looking just like everyone else, except for that gleam of rebellion in their eyes, that touch of defiance in their stance and their walk and the ubiquitous blank badge worn or displayed somewhere on their person.

Either way, Blank Badges don’t go in for traditional mystical symbols or trappings: you won’t find many (if any)



wearing pentacles, runes or the signs of dead gods, much less “Atlantean” symbols, except as some sort of ironic poke at mages of the Atlantean orders. Instead, Blank Badges make their own symbols and invest them with their own meanings, which is the only way to do it, if you ask them.

**Background:** Blank Badges are most often people no one looks twice at, the kind no one misses when they simply and quietly disappear one day. They tend to have unremarkable backgrounds and few ties to the mundane world, even more than most mages. When they Awaken and find their way into the Legacy (often one right at the other), they walk away from ordinary life while carrying it with them as their disguise and shield. This does not necessarily mean all Blank Badges come from mundane backgrounds; some start out as outcasts and freaks, the kind of people others pretend not to notice and studiously avoid. They’re just as “invisible” in their own way as others of their Legacy, and often even more dedicated to overthrowing the status quo of the Lie.

**Organization:** Talking about the “organization” of the Blank Badges is a virtual contradiction in terms, but not quite. The Legacy isn’t a complete anarchy, or else it wouldn’t exist as a Legacy at all. Still, the Blanks’ infamous defiance of authority and hierarchy makes theirs a particularly loosely organized Legacy. They tend to work together in small cabals, typically known as “cells” and make use of the cellular structure that has served resistance movements around the world and across history. Each cell has limited contact with other cells, and therefore cannot compromise more than their immediate contacts if they or their information are captured.

Despite their revolutionary ideals, Blank Badges tend to recruit and initiate the old-fashioned way: one-on-one, teacher to student. In fact, some young mages found and taught by a member of the Invisible Company know little to nothing about the Pentacle or the history of the Atlantean orders. Their

teachers see no reason to pass along any “Atlantis” nonsense and don’t proclaim themselves members of any order, so some of their students don’t even know they’re in the Free Council (by default lineage, if nothing else), they believe the Blank Badges are the whole of it, unaware their “secret society” just scratches the surface of a much deeper occult world.

**Suggested Oblations:** Acts of rebellion (flouting authority, graffiti tagging, minor lawbreaking); attending a rock show (preferably punk or thrash and moshing or rushing the stage); breaking taboos (making out with someone of the same sex or streaking in public, for example); panhandling; random acts of weirdness and wonder to help wake people up.

**Concepts:** Anarchist, freak, homeless person, infiltrator, lone drifter, punk, rebel, social chameleon.

## Attainments

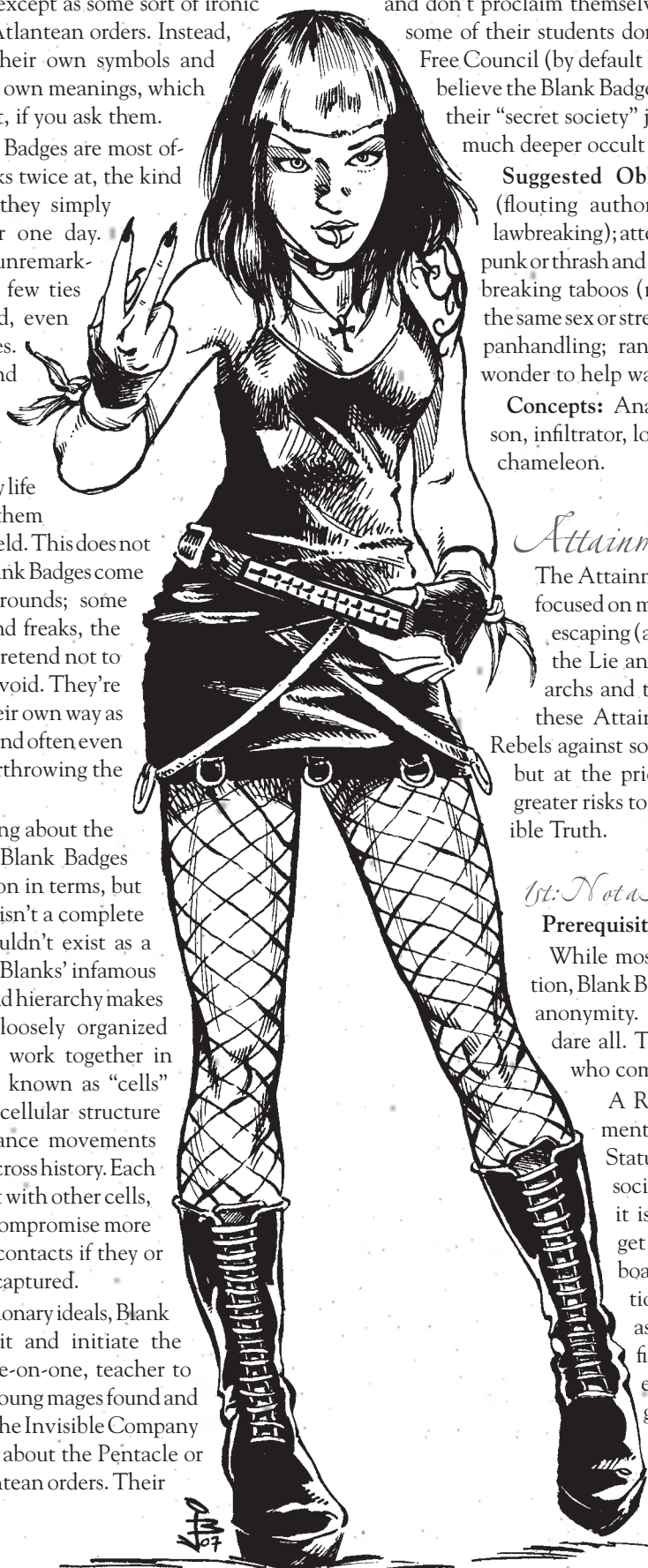
The Attainments of the Blank Badges are focused on making them more effective in escaping (and therefore fighting against) the Lie and its agents (namely the Exarchs and their servants). In particular, these Attainments help to insulate the Rebels against some of the effects of Paradox, but at the price of sometimes demanding greater risks to exposure others to the Invisible Truth.

## 1st: Not a Number

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Occultation 1

While most live lives of quiet desperation, Blank Badges draw strength from their anonymity. Not officially existing, they dare all. They are mysterious strangers who command respect.

A Rebel at this level of Attainment treats Occultation dots as Status when entering a mundane social situation, regardless of what it is. So they’re just as likely to get a respectful response in a boardroom, hospital, police station or politician’s office, so long as they take any effort at all to fit in there. Even the flimsiest explanation seems to carry great weight, and people avoid questioning who the Blank Badge is, fearing to appear ignorant. The Blank Badge



gets all the benefits of Status, and then people forget just as quickly, leaving little or not trace.

**Optional Arcanum:** Mind 2

Blank Badges skilled in the Arcane lore of the Mind are able to better avoid the pitfalls and subtle traps of Mind magic. They subtract one die per dot of Occultation from spells or supernatural powers that attempt to mentally control, detect or influence them, as the “Mental Shield” spell, except it operates at all times and is based on Occultation rating.

*2nd: The Quiet One*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Occultation 2

When the Blank Badge invokes Paradox, the player may roll the character’s Occultation: each success subtracts one success from the Paradox roll for determining the severity of the Paradox *only*, with a minimum of one Paradox success. The total Paradox successes are still used for any other purpose. So, for example, a result of two Occultation successes against four Paradox successes lessens the severity of the Paradox from a Branding to Bedlam. It’s still considered four Paradox successes for all other purposes.

Blank Badges are far more given to Havoc and (particularly) Bedlam than the other outcomes of Paradox. Other mages say this Attainment is one reason why members of the Legacy are so often “eccentric” (to say the least).

*3rd: Nothing Is True, Anything Is Permitted*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 7, Occultation 3, Persuasion 1

Some younger Badges call this Attainment “mind-freaking.” It’s the dangerous and difficult practice of at least partially Awakening Sleepers, convincing them something fantastic is not only possible, but *real*, and giving them a moment of clarity free from the Sleeping Curse. It breaks expectations and can (rarely) even lead to true Awakenings, but most often the effects are temporary.

A Bank Badge at this level of Attainment can take an instant action before casting a vulgar spell to make a Manipulation + Persuasion + Occultation roll. The player must roleplay some suitable explanation to any Sleeper onlookers, ranging from telling them it’s a magic show to actually giving them the truth: that they are witnessing a real act of magic. Each success subtracts one die from the mage’s Paradox dice pool. An exceptional success allows the mage to treat all onlookers as Sleepwalkers: a single act of vulgar magic performed in their presence does *not* provoke the Sleeping Curse or invoke a Paradox.

In addition, an exceptional success with this Attainment may cause a Sleeper who experiences an act of true magic to become a Sleepwalker *permanently* or even lead to a spontaneous Awakening as a mage. This cannot be predicted, however, and is entirely at the Storyteller’s discretion, as best suits the story. It’s also quite rare, so Storytellers should be sparing with it.

“Nothing is true,  
everything is permitted,  
and the revolution is now.

Wake up!”



# CRYPTOLOGOS

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in the Supernal Realm, and the Word *was* the Supernal Realm. So say the Cryptologos, the Legacy of the “Hidden Word.” Words, language, are the first true magic, the power of the Awakened or conscious mind. Language allowed humanity to express and share thoughts, to communicate effectively, to survive and to build a civilization. Without it, humans are no better than cunning animals; with it, their potential is limitless.

While there have always been mystics interested in the intricacies of language, and the Cryptologos draw upon their traditions, the Legacy itself is fairly recent in origin. The Legacy’s roots are dug into the *science* of language, the modern development of linguistics and, later, concepts such as ur-languages, root language and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). Mages, just as mundane scientists, asked the questions: Where did language come from? How did it develop? How do we turn abstract and arbitrary sounds into meaning? Of course, the willworkers had something of an advantage in that they could study High Speech, what they believed was the true root of all human language.

Of course, the Cryptics were not so sanguine about the myths of Atlantis and the Fall of the Celestial Ladder. They believed High Speech was a kind of ur-language but not necessarily that it was proof of an ancient island nation of mage-kings who challenged the gods. Instead, most of the younger mystics who became the founders of the Legacy saw the Atlantis myth as just that, a metaphor, an interpretation of a time when language first developed and wielded power over not just our perception and definition of reality, but reality itself.

The “fall” for the Cryptologos is not a failed rebellion against Celestial forces, but a splintering of the true root language, High Speech, into diverse dialects and tongues, none with the true power of the First Language to encompass and define reality. High Speech became polluted and drifted, and so humanity fell asleep, because they could not longer truly communicate with the world around them or each other.

The rejection of the history and orthodoxy of the Atlantean traditions ensured the scholars of the Hidden Word were outcasts, called radicals or heretics. They continue to research and expand their theories on their own, and find like-minded willworkers as allies in the struggle against the ignorance and dogma of the Atlantean orders. The Hidden Word’s discoveries lent weight to their theories as the first Wordsmiths began shaping their souls to match their knowledge of High Speech and their voices were truly heard for the first time. Even masters of the old orders were

impressed (and concerned) at the words of power rolling off the tongues of these rebellious new mages.

Although the Cryptologos learned that the Hidden Word was a source of power and influence, their true goal was always knowledge and understanding. They rejected the ways of the Diamond only because of their close-mindedness. So when the Nameless War came to an end and the Seers of the Throne offered an alliance, eager for the secrets the Cryptics and others had discovered and forged in the fires of conflict, most of the members of the Legacy refused. They would not turn their wisdom to domination and control. Some lore of the Hidden Word found its way into the Seers’ hands, and it is something the mages of the Legacy don’t like to discuss to the present day.

In the Free Council, the Cryptologos found allies and supporters for their theories and an environment where they could pursue their studies, seeking to reconstruct the First Language and, in the decades since, they have continued: seeking out ancient ruins, looking for tablets, carvings, crumbling scrolls and ancient, preserved texts. They collect songs, poems and lore, sifting through them for hints about words in High Speech, and they design elaborate programs intended to compare root-words from hundreds of languages in hopes of rediscovering lost elements of the First Speech.

Although the Hidden Words rejected Atlantean orthodoxy at their founding, they have taken on a strongly mystical bent of their own, their quest for the truth of High Speech consuming them. Many Cryptics believe that reassembling the scattered True Language is the key to bridging the Abyss and healing the rift between the Supernal and Fallen Worlds. Indeed, the Cryptics see that rift as a gulf of ignorance, a manifestation of the sundering of language that occurred in the Fall of the Celestial Ladder. While many Cryptologos maintain a fairly detached and scientific view of their research, others are fanatical devotees of the Hidden Word, believing that the final keystone in their search is the True Name of Creation, which will bring about a new age when it is known and spoken once more.

**Parent Path:** Mastigos

**Nicknames:** Cryptics, Hidden Words, Wordsmiths

**Appearance:** Avid readers and scholars, Cryptics tend to look the part. They’re typically bookish and look as if they spend a great deal of time indoors, although some adventuresome Wordsmiths are tomb raiders who don’t fit the stereotype. They’re most often well educated and certainly well-read. Spectacles are practically a part of the Legacy’s accoutrements, although not quite as commonly as they once were when Cryptics did all their reading and

writing by firelight. Academic styles of dress are fairly common, and you'll still find Cryptologos given to wearing tweed jackets and school ties.

More than appearance, what the Hidden Words tend to have in common is their sound: Wordsmiths tend to all be well-spoken and skilled in turning a phrase. They're not all great orators or singers (although many are), but they have a way of enunciating and speaking firmly and clearly. Of course, they also have large vocabularies, and many are overly fond of showing them off (while the rest know better and match their speech to the occasion).

**Background:** The Hidden Words most often come from academic or literary backgrounds, people most concerned with language and words. A love of language from an early age is one of their hallmarks, as is their tendency to Awaken through the medium of language. Some talented Cryptics recall understanding bits and pieces of High Speech even before their Awakening, regarded as no more than "baby talk" or glossolalia by others. Some pursued tantalizing hints of the First Language, discovering greater truths than they could have imagined, and all of the Hidden Words stress the moment when they wrote their names within the Watchtowers, usually their first true use of High Speech.

Most of the current generation of Cryptologos found mentors in the Legacy before or not long after Awakening, so they were taught the Legacy from the beginning. Others found their way to the Hidden Words from the ranks of the Free Council, with a small handful of mages drawn to the Legacy from the other Atlantean orders by the power of the Word. Similar to other Free Councilors, Cryptics tend toward a modern and what they consider "realistic" attitude about magic, the Awakened world, and mystic history. Just as language is a metaphor, so they tend to consider much of the occult symbolism of the mystic world a metaphor for greater truths, captured in the words of High Speech.

**Organization:** The Cryptologos are of an organized bent, perhaps one of the most organized Legacies associated with the somewhat anarchistic Free Council. The Assembly and Lorehouse systems currently used by the order came about with more than a little influence from the Hidden Words, and the Cryptics remain strongly

involved with both, since there are few things the Cryptics like better than a good discussion and collecting and organizing arcane lore. Likewise, Cryptologos are often found as emissaries or syndics for the Free Council, given their way with words, and they serve Assemblies as representatives and as counselors, providing advice and insight.

Within the Legacy itself, Cryptologos are true to the democratic ideals of the Free Council. Their cabals are most commonly found in urban areas in or around centers of learning, especially universities noted for the linguistic arts and sciences. Cryptics also crop up in the arts scenes of urban communities, particularly the open-mike coffeehouse culture, although not quite as often as they did in the days of the Beat poets. Hidden Word cabals allow equal opportunities to voice opinions, and the Wordsmiths all have opinions and the willingness to talk about them, usually at great length. This gives them a reputation for debating everything but doing nothing, at least until circumstances force their hand.

**Suggested Oblations:** Chanting mantras or songs in High Speech; piecing together translations of ancient and dead languages; reading great works of literature in their original language; singing songs or reciting epic poems (particularly from memory).

**Concepts:** Bookworm, coffee-house poet, diplomatic translator, linguistics professor, multi-lingual anthropologist or archeologist, orator, professional writer, singer-songwriter.

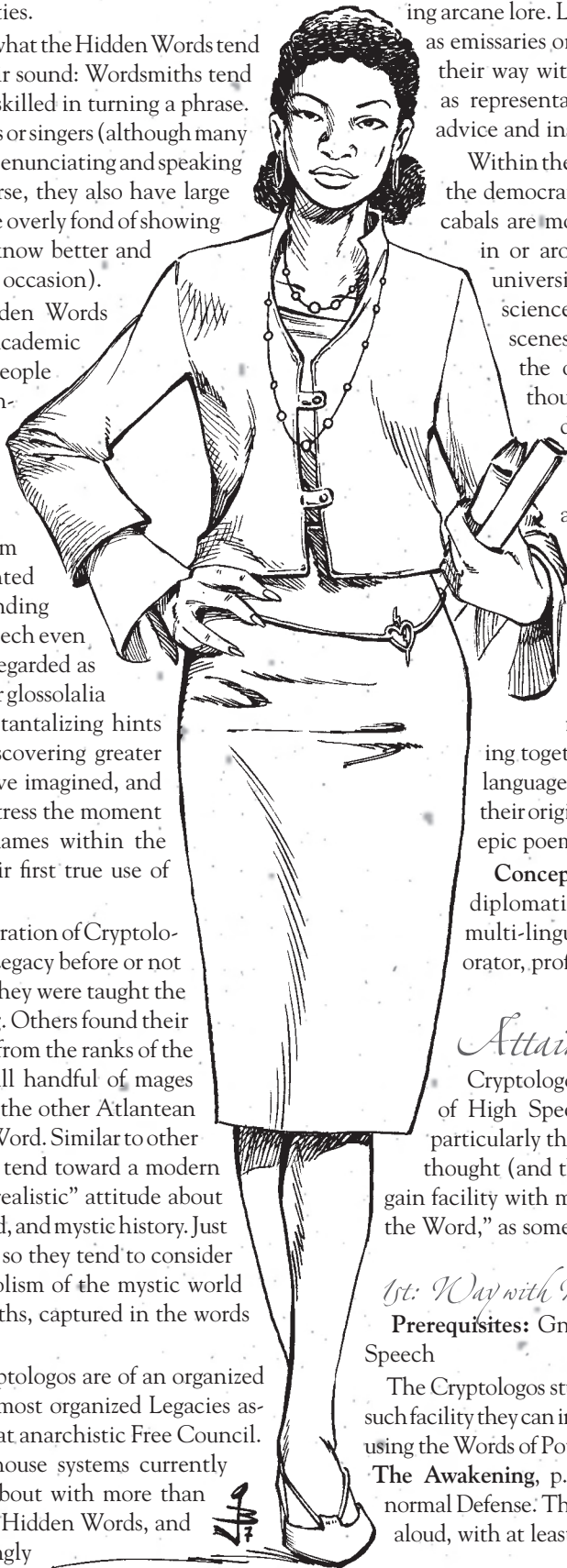
## *Attainments*

Cryptologos Attainments focus on their study of High Speech and its relationship to reality, particularly the relationship between language and thought (and therefore the Mind Arcanum). They gain facility with many aspects of language, "becoming the Word," as some describe it.

### *1st: Way with Words*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Mind 2, Academics 1, High Speech

The Cryptologos study and master High Speech, gaining such facility they can invoke words of power with ease. When using the Words of Power option for spellcasting (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 117), Cryptologos retain their full normal Defense. They must still speak the words of power aloud, with at least the volume of a loud whisper.





In addition, a Cryptologos can choose to forgo the normal +2 dice bonus for using words of power in hopes of achieving a “truer” speaking of the words, tapping directly into a primal power: the mage rolls Wits as a dice pool, with a 10 again re-roll, with each success counting as a +1 die bonus to the spellcasting dice pool. However, it’s possible for the mage to get only a +1 die bonus, or no bonus at all, in this manner, due to a slip or mispronunciation from the more traditional formulae.

### *2nd: Universal Language*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Mind 3, Academics 2, High Speech

The Wordsmith with this level of Attainment has such a deep understanding of language as to understand root concepts in *any* language. The mage has the benefit of the “Universal Language” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 213) at all times, with a dice pool of Intelligence + Academics + Mind.

### *3rd: The Hidden Word*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 7, Mind 4, Academics 3, High Speech

Cryptologos gain such a facility with High Speech that they can almost speak it fluently, or at least well enough to express more detailed concepts. In particular, they can speak the ur-language in such a fashion that Sleeper listeners actually *understand* it on a deep, root level (although still not on a conscious level).

A Wordsmith can use The Hidden Word to speak in language compelling to listeners, as the “Telepathic Command” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 216) except the mage must speak and be heard. The effects are otherwise the same, and the dice pool for the effect is Manipulation + Academics + Mind. Targets of The Hidden Word resist with a reflexive Resolve + Gnosis roll (meaning most Sleepers are easily influenced).

“For behold, we are the flesh made word.”

# IMAGINEERS

Two explosions created everything in the Tapestry. The first was the explosion of the Cosmic All, the *fiat lux* that brought Creation into being and made the Supernal and Fallen Worlds, back before the Abyss separated them and they were all a part of one Creation, one true world. But that explosion only made space and time, matter and energy. The second explosion came from the human mind, and it created everything else: language, tools, mathematics, art, dance, cities, laws, literature, science, technology, religion, poetry, war, history. It created *magic*. Everything in the world made by human hands, and human ideas came out of the human mind and soul, the human imagination.

After all, what is magic except the ability to imagine something that doesn't yet exist and make it real? The Awakened can do so directly, but Sleepers have to do it the hard way, and some Imagineers wonder who gets the better part of that deal; they admire fine craftsmanship, after all, and there's a great deal to be said for having to work for something rather than having it given to you. Still, the mages of this Legacy believe in using what you are given to its fullest extent, and in the magic of creation and imagination.

Although there have always been crafters with a touch of the arcane to them, the Imagineers trace their origins to the development of the science of psychology and the study of the mind. In particular, they owe many of their ideas to theories about dreaming, imagination and the universal unconscious. Young willworkers in the 19th century studied these ideas, and placed the mind at the summit of the mystic hierarchy. The Temenos, they claimed, was the source of all things that could be imagined, thus the entire contents of the mind was born there, and all creations of the mind had their roots deep in that realm.

If all things of the mind ultimately came from the Temenos, they reasoned, then that realm was a treasure trove of all that could ever possibly be imagined. It was simply a matter of exploring deeply enough to find what the dream consciousness of Creation had to offer, and to bring those nuggets of inspiration back and manifest them in the Fallen World, like divers plumbing the ocean depths for pearls and sunken treasure. The Imagineers swore not only to explore hitherto unknown realms of thought, but to bring them to the people.

While they earned praise for their bold willingness to explore the astral planes, the proto-Imagineers bought the scorn of the Atlantean orders with the coin of skepticism. For all the Imagineers' love of imagination and its wonders, they were materialists and dualists, dividing all Creation

into things of the First Creation (that of the formation of the Tapestry) and things of the Second Creation (the fruits of the imagination). More importantly, they placed most, if not all, occult and spiritual lore in the second category. Gods, spirits, eidolons, eikones, powers and principalities were all the offspring of human genius, the Imagineers said. Real and independent entities they might be (with an emphasis on *might*), but they originated in the womb of dreams, born out of human consciousness.

Such attitudes earned the Imagineers no friends within the Atlantean orders (the gods, for their part, largely remained silent on the matter). This suited the Dreamsmiths well enough, as they were more interested in exploring the potential of Creation, not cataloging and endlessly re-reading its past like the hidebound Atlantean orders. They joined the ranks of the new generation of willworkers in repudiating the orders, leading to the Nameless War. For their part, the Imagineers had little to do with the war, apart from providing aid and comfort to their allies.

Once the conflict ended, however, the Idealists were quick to surface from their explorations of the Astral depths to put forth some of the many ideas they discovered. They called for the new order to be founded upon reason tempered with imagination and a sense of wonder, and for the wealth of ideas to be shared amongst all. They were strong proponents for the Lorehouse system adopted by the Free Council, and gave freely of their stores of knowledge and inspiration (even if some of those ideas were a bit crackpot, even by Free Council standards).

Modern Imagineers often cite the Nameless War and the formation of the Free Council as a turning point in history, and point to the explosion of progress since. The vistas of the imagination have expanded, they say, and one day soon those borders will not only touch the edges of the Abyss, but pass over it, reconnecting humanity with the Supernal World.

**Parent Path:** Thyrus

**Nicknames:** Dreamsmiths, Idealists, Wonder-Workers

**Appearance:** Eccentric and individual tends to describe the Imagineers' choice of appearance, and it generally is a *choice* where they are concerned. Similar to many artists, they tend to be given to flamboyance, although some Dreamsmiths are so focused on their inner lives they neglect their outer beings: wearing whatever is at hand and paying little attention to the niceties of grooming, at least while they're working. Some Imagineers have hands (and clothing) stained with paint, ink or other artistic media, and many have the supple and dexterous hands of



artists. Still, the mind and the imagination are what matter most to their Legacy, so outward appearance is ultimately of little importance.

Imagineers tend to be enthusiastic, some even manic, when it comes to their explorations. They're dreamers and shapers, and love nothing more than spilling out new ideas and wonders. A few Imagineers are shy, hiding their imaginative light under a bushel, but most are eager to share all they have experienced and thought (often one and the same for them). Many do so through artistic media, ranging from drawing and painting to writing, music or film.

**Background:** Imagineers tend to come from one of two seemingly opposing backgrounds. On the one hand, there are the scientists and scholars of the mind, interested in psychology, psychotherapy, dream research and so forth. They seek the roots of human consciousness and inspiration, plumbing the depths of the Universal Unconscious to see just how far it goes. They're most interested in the interconnectiveness of the Temenos and what it means for the realms of thought, consciousness and imagination.

On the other side are the artists and dreamers, the visionaries who live much of their lives immersed in the Temenos, new ideas and inspiration constantly bubbling to the surface or dredged up from the depths. They're most drawn to the process of creation, bringing ideas into manifestation and, they hope, adding a bit more light to the shadows of the Fallen World. Their interest is in imagination as a magical tool, both literally and figuratively.

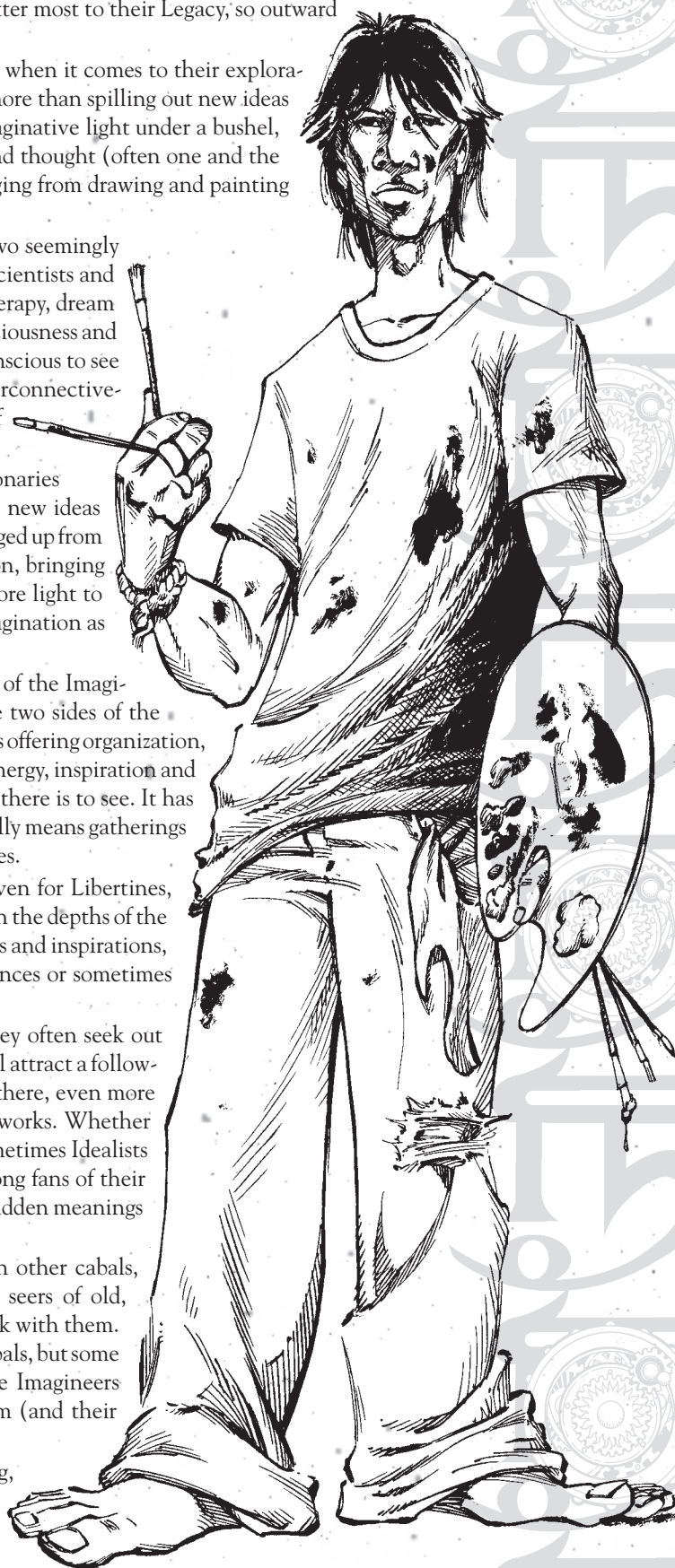
While there is some friction between the two aspects of the Imagineers, it is dynamic and creative for the most part. The two sides of the Legacy complement each other: the scientists and scholars offering organization, discipline and a solid foundation, while the artists have energy, inspiration and a willingness to go off in new directions just to see what there is to see. It has helped to keep the Legacy vital over the years, and it usually means gatherings of Imagineers are anything but dull academic conferences.

**Organization:** Imagineers tend to be independent, even for Libertines, each following their own particular vision or path through the depths of the Astral Planes. While they willingly share their discoveries and inspirations, they usually only form temporary groups, either conferences or sometimes followings based around the particular guide or teacher.

Still, Idealists need to *share* what they discover, so they often seek out audiences, and even the most independent Imagineer will attract a following sooner or later. Their work has a way of getting out there, even more so now with new venues and channels for imaginative works. Whether they're painting on street corners or blogging online, sometimes Idealists discover Sleepwalkers or even potential new mages among fans of their work, particularly the insightful fans able to pick up on hidden meanings or messages.

Some Imagineers think it's their duty to work within other cabals, offering them inspiration and guidance similar to the seers of old, bringing what they learn from their flights of fantasy back with them. They're most often found in like-minded Free Council cabals, but some find homes among mixed-order groups, especially those Imagineers who feel it's the other Atlantean orders that need them (and their inspiration) the most.

**Suggested Oblations:** Artistic brainstorming (doodling, sketching, free-writing, and such); handicrafts (from knitting and needlepoint to metalworking and whittling);



reading inspirational texts; telling stories (especially to an appreciative and imaginative audience).

**Concepts:** Alternative psychotherapist, bohemian artist, dream researcher, game designer, Renaissance Faire artist, street-corner painter, trance-channeler.

## *Attainments*

Imagineer Attainments focus on the connection between the mind and the Astral Planes (which are one and the same to some). They believe the Astral represents the inner depths of the imagination, but also the interconnectedness of all thinking beings. They go from more easily accessing the Astral in sleep or daydream meditation to the ability to work with their “imaginary friends” and even bring ideas and beings from dreams into reality.

Imagineer lore speaks of great masters of their Legacy who became so at home in the Temenos and the deepest parts of the Astral Realm they were able to transcend their physical being altogether. Some believe these masters — great scholars and artists all — became beings of pure thought and imagination after their physical deaths. While some Dreamsmiths have met such luminaries in their wanderings, who can say for sure whether they are the genuine article or just figments of their imaginations?

### *1st: Dreaming Doorway*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Spirit 2

Access to the Astral Planes and the ability to imagine or dream are the foundations of the Imagineers’ Legacy, the qualities separating intelligent and Awakened beings from all others. This level of Attainment allows Imagineers to enter the Astral Plane by meditating anywhere, not just within the bounds of a Demesne or Hallow.

In addition, Imagineers at this level of Attainment have the benefits of the Meditative Mind Merit (see the **World**

of **Darkness Rulebook**, p. 109) when meditating to enter or operate on the Astral Planes.

### *2nd: Meme Complex*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Spirit 3, Crafts 1

Imagineers at this level of Attainment roll Composure + Wits + Crafts when making Meditation rolls dealing with the Astral Planes due to their improved ability to visualize.

More importantly, Imagineers learn to recognize consciousness for the complex of interacting memes and personae that it is. This fractures the mage’s mind, granting the benefits of the “Multi-Tasking” spell at all times (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 211), allowing the Imagineer to perform three mental extended actions or two mental instant actions simultaneously.

This Attainment often manifests in the development of *daimons*, sub-personalities in the mage’s mind capable of carrying out mental tasks largely “on their own.” These daimons often have shadow names, and personalities, of their own, but they are not truly independent entities, simply aspects of the mage’s self.

### *3rd: Manifest Idea*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 7, Spirit 4

Imagineers of the third level of Attainment are true channels for the essences of ideas to manifest in the Fallen World. The Dreamsmith can grant the Possession Numen to a spirit (or “eidolon” or “ideoplex” in their parlance) just like a use of the “Spirit Possession” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 253) with a dice pool of Intelligence + Persuasion + Spirit. Some Dreamsmiths allow these beings to possess them, embodying that concept, while others act as “muses,” helping spirits of inspiration to possess others for a time.

“If we didn’t exist, we’d have to invent ourselves.”



## Techné — Magical Methods

The Free Council generally doesn't use outdated terms such as "spell" or "enchantment" for their magic. They prefer the term "techné," from the same root as "technique" and "technology." Not that Libertines confuse what they do with the fruits of mundane science and technology. If anything, they think the occult associations of the Atlantean orders are just as limiting as the vocabulary of science. What willworkers do is beyond the spells or charms of medieval magicians, and yet traditionalist mages insist on clinging to a worldview that's centuries out of date.

The magical methods of the Free Council can be summed up in "if it works, do it." Functionality is the sole measure of validity so far as Libertines are concerned, not tradition or occult symbolism or how things have "always" been done. It's the same attitude that sparked the Nameless War between mages more than a century ago and led to the founding of the Free Council as a place where the Awakened could throw off the burden of countless generations of tradition and find a new way of doing things, and they have.

The Free Council's willingness to experiment has given the order a substantial body of lore in a relatively short amount of time. At least part of this is owed to the modern world: Libertines and their order grew up in the era of the printing press, movable type, typewriters and, later, telecommunications. They shared their discoveries via letters, photocopied zines, small press publications, phone calls, e-mail and online newsgroups: things the other orders were slow to adopt in comparison to handwritten scrolls, folios and dusty books.

Libertines also adopted scientific methods, from experimentation to peer review, allowing them to speed up the process of building their own body of rites and techné. Whereas the other orders took generations to master and accept a rite as part of their body of lore, the Free Council took only a few years, and word of new techné spread fast.

## Rote Specialties

Libertines took the best of the magical traditions of their forbears and combined them with a vision and appreciation for the future. Their rote specialties reflect this attitude, adopting interests largely scorned by the other Atlantean orders as beneath them and finding magic in them. It took some time for rites to begin to emerge from the ashes of the Nameless War and the founding of the Free Council, but when they did, they emerged quickly and in large numbers.

Some point to the Free Council's facility in creating and sharing rites as an indication of the order's validity and

effectiveness; other mages turn up their noses at the Free Council's "mass production" of rites, in spite of the fact that the Atlantean orders have far more (but, then, they are *traditional*, and that's different).

### Crafts

The creations of humanity's hands are among the first acts of magic, according to the Libertines. There is an ancient tradition equating crafting with magic, as both are acts of creation, bringing something into being out of nothing, shaping and changing the world in accordance with vision and will. Still, to the Atlantean orders, mundane crafts have long been a "lower" order, disdained as a pale shadow of true magic. Not so for the Free Council.

Craft rites involve an understanding of how things are made, applying that knowledge to the process of making a spell quickly and efficiently. In addition to an understanding of the work that goes into making something, creating includes repetitive processes and using the right tool for the right job. Some Free Councilors say (only somewhat jokingly) that it includes knowing how to use an assembly line and "automate" certain processes in spellcasting. If nothing else, they enjoy the twitch it seems to produce in other mages.

Craft rites involve minute hand gestures to shape and mold the Imago of the spell in the mage's imagination, like the automatic motions of weaving, knitting, sketching or even typing. Indeed, some Libertines use small handicraft projects to conceal the use of these rites in public.

### Persuasion

As the creations of human hands are a kind of magic, so are the fruits of the human mind. Language is the first true "spell," as shown by the roots of the word itself. It granted humanity the magical power to communicate thoughts and ideas among themselves and build more complex concepts. Knowledge could be preserved and passed on without the need to rediscover it with each generation. With words also came the ability to play games with the truth and construct arguments and compelling tales.

For the Free Council, an understanding of language, and particularly of rhetoric, argument, and the ability of words to cajole and persuade, is an understanding of magic. For what else is magic but speaking to Creation in words it understands, persuading the forces of the Supernal World to descend and take shape, and cleverly flattering the Abyss to deflect its attention and its wrath.

Persuasion rites typically have Libertines whispering or muttering under their breath, or even just moving their lips and making slight gestures with their hands as if trying to sell someone on a particular course of action. Whereas they once tended to make Libertines seem spacey or even a bit crazy, the current generation has discovered that wearing a cell phone earpiece makes it easy for other people to overlook you muttering to yourself.

## Science

The two branches of “mundane magic,” craft and language, come together to form the third and greatest: science. The Free Council was largely founded on its members’ willingness to embrace the fruits of human genius as magical creations rather than trickery, pale imitations or true magic or, worst of all, unnatural abominations. The Atlantean orders disdained science and technology, considering such things modestly useful at best, but seeing no “magic” inherent in them. Certainly, there was no way the arcane arts could benefit from a greater understanding of science, they believed.

The Free Council has since proven that view mistaken, as Libertines have encoded scientific knowledge, understanding, and methodology into their rites. Their methods have allowed them to build a body of knowledge rivaling that of orders far older and their willingness to embrace new ideas, while also testing them with a dispassionate and objective eye, allowed the Council to extend the reach of magic into the realm of science.

Science rites involve the memorization and use of formulae, both mathematical and symbolic. The most typical outward manifestation of such rites is rolling the eyes up, as if in deep thought, as the mage recalls and works through the formula as “shorthand” for the rite’s Imago. Some also mutter parts of the formula or even trace parts of it in the air, depending on their facility for juggling symbols and processes in their heads.

## Magical Tools

The Nameless rebels quickly rejected the idea of using the traditional tools of the Atlantean orders. Instead, they adopted the tools of the brave new world awaiting them, the tools of science and enlightenment. Technology has been a part of the Free Council’s magic from the very beginning, and they use it as part of their spells. This approach has worked quite well; since magical tools are used to help reduce the possibility of a Paradox, it’s easier to use them amongst Sleepers without arousing suspicion. It’s no unusual to see someone fiddling with a PDA, laptop, MP3 player or the like, but people in flowing cloaks, waving swords, wands or amulets around are sure to draw attention anywhere other than a Renaissance Faire.

Virtually any technological device can serve as a magical tool, and Libertines have experimented with all of them at some point. For their purposes, “technology” must be self-powered, that is, it must run on its own in some fashion, whether springs, steam, internal combustion or electricity doesn’t matter, it’s the vital “mechanical force” that counts. These days, most Free Council technology is electrical, but there are still elder Libertines and old-school types who like clockworks or steam-powered gadgets.

A device’s mundane purpose tends to symbolize its use as a magical tool. For example, communication devices are ideal for spells of communication; Free Councilors hear the voices of the dead whispering over empty radio bands, and speak prayers to forgotten gods into their cell phones. They scry with flat-panel monitors and televisions tuned to empty channels. They invoke supernal fire with Zippos and supernal lightning with car batteries. Clocks and watches show their mastery of time, while global positioning system receivers and digital maps are tools for the Arcanum of Space.

It’s important to note, however, that the technology itself isn’t doing anything. It’s merely a symbol of potential. The magic is still a work of the mage’s will, regardless of the tool, and a vulgar spell is still vulgar, whether it’s worked in a magic circle drawn in colored chalk and powdered silver or on a modern laptop running virtual reality software. Libertines believe in the boundless potential of human inventiveness and technology, but they’re fully aware their techné goes beyond it to the Supernal Realms.

## Retro-Tech

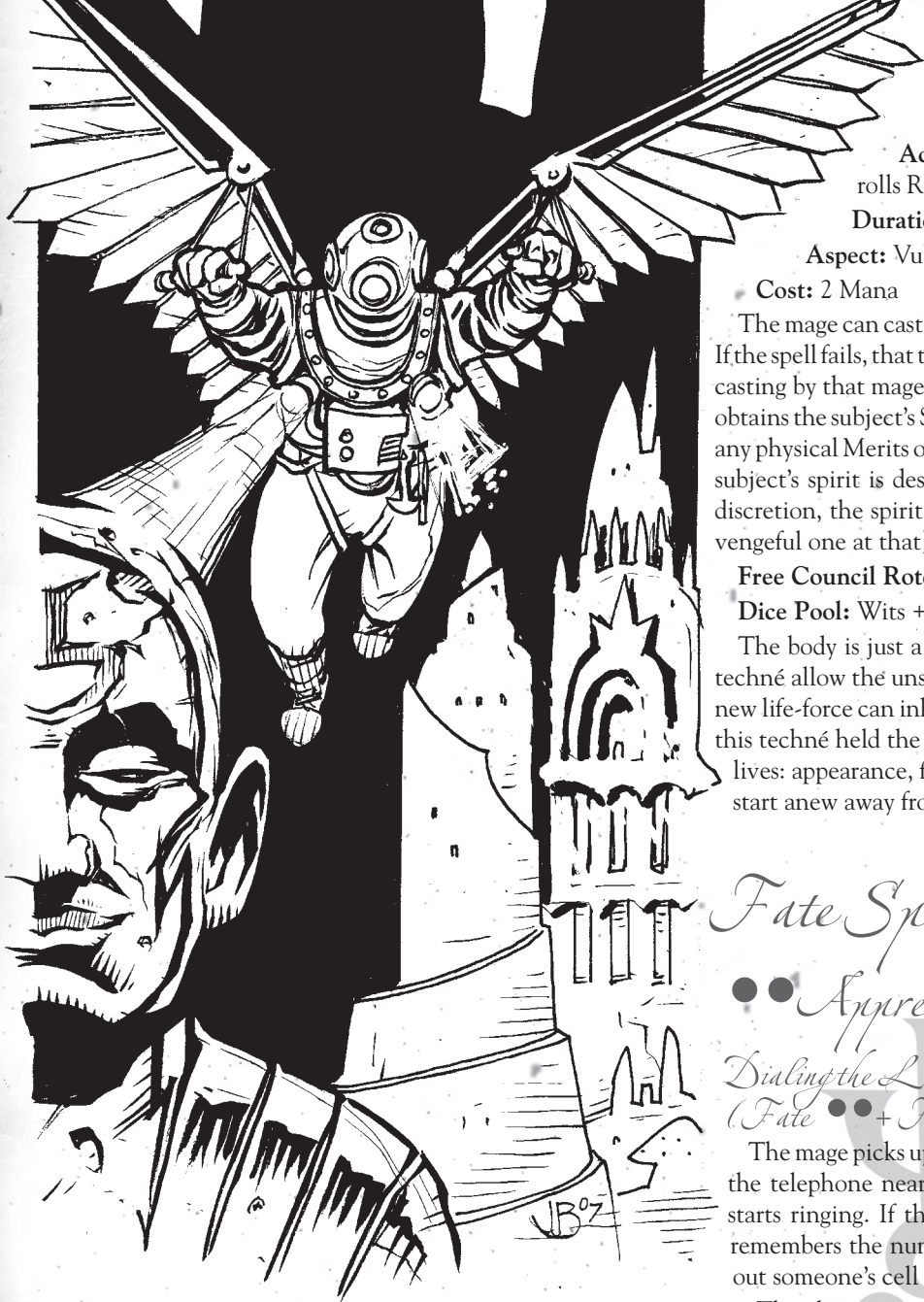
Not all members of the Free Council have an interest in modern technology. Some Libertines are fascinated with the technology of the past or, just as often, with technology that never really was, outside of speculative fiction and wild theories.

After all, when it comes to Imbued Items, the “technology” doesn’t really matter all that much, since it isn’t usually what’s getting the job done, it’s just a symbolic medium for the techné, the magic, that actually does the work. In that regard, a weird-science “radium gun” is just as good as a modern pistol.

The primary drawback with retro-tech is its tendency to cause Paradoxes, relative to coaxing similar effects out of more conventional technology that’s already part of the Fallen World. Thus, retro-tech using mages tend to be... eccentric. Other willworkers might say “crazy” for the retro-mage’s tendency to risk a Paradox just for the sake of harnessing the symbolic power. On the other hand, members of the Atlantean orders are not ones to talk, with their magical cloaks, wands, crowns and whatnot.

Still, there are those for whom only the “classic” style of steampunk clockworks and brass gears or sleek Art Deco retro-future gizmos will do. Since magic turns heavily on the mage’s state of mind, magical tools that help a willworker get “in the right mindset” are important, and retro-tech is alive and well in the Free Council.





**Action:** Extended and Contested; target rolls Resolve reflexively.

**Duration:** Lasting

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** 2 Mana

The mage can cast this spell on a given target only once. If the spell fails, that target is forever immune to any further casting by that mage (although not by others). The mage obtains the subject's Strength, Dexterity and Stamina, and any physical Merits or Flaws, retaining all other traits. The subject's spirit is destroyed although, at the Storyteller's discretion, the spirit may survive as a ghost (and likely a vengeful one at that).

**Free Council Rote:** Life-Transfer

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Science + Death vs. Resolve

The body is just a vehicle for the mind and spirit, and techné allow the unseating of an existing "occupant" so a new life-force can inhabit a body. For the Nameless rebels, this techné held the added benefit of erasing their former lives: appearance, flesh and bone, and allowing them to start anew away from the pursuit of their enemies.

## Fate Spells

### ●● Apprentice of Fate

*Dialing the Lucky Number*  
(Fate ●● + Forces ●● + Space ●●)

The mage picks up a telephone and dials a number, and the telephone nearest the person he wishes to contact starts ringing. If this spell is used on a telephone that remembers the numbers dialed, it is a good way to find out someone's cell phone number.

The ultimate target is under no compulsion to pick up the telephone, although most people do, and the telephone connection is completely mundane, so if the mage and target do not share a common language the spell is of little use. There is also no guarantee that the target will be the closest person to the phone — only that the *phone* closest to the target will ring — thus he may not answer.

This is not sympathetic magic, as the target is the phone system, which is being manipulated, not the remote person who will hear the telephone ring.

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Lasting

**Aspect:** Covert

One use of the spell allows only one phone call. It is, however, almost impossible for repeated use of this spell to become improbable. The caster is simply making a number of phone calls.

## Death Spells

### ●●●●● Master of Death

*Steal Body*  
(Death ●●●●● + Life ●●●●)

The mage rips soul from body and possesses the target's now-vacant form, leaving the victim and the mage's former body dead. The spell is a means of prolonging life and also of obtaining a newer, younger, fitter body. Some mages also see it as an opportunity to experiment: obtaining a body of a different sex, race or the like in order to see how "the other half" lives (and dies, for that matter).

**Practice:** Unmaking



### Free Council Rote: Cold Calling

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Crafts + Space

The trick isn't to tell the phone lines where to call, like you usually do. The trick is telling them who to call and then letting them do their thing. You lend them your knowledge of the Space Arcanum and let them work it out. Listen carefully and you can hear phones find each other.

### *Fate's Justice* (Fate ●● + Mind ●● + Time ●●)

"As a man sows, so shall he reap," the saying goes, and willworkers weave the threads of Fate to ensure such things come to pass. This spell preemptively invokes Fate to curse the subject of the spell immediately before the subject takes a particular action, usually a hostile action against someone (such as the caster). The power of the spell then intervenes to frustrate the attempt and bring ill-fortune on the would-be perpetrator.

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Resisted; subtract the subject's Composure.

**Duration:** Special

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** 1 Mana



Success works similar to The Evil Eye (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 151): subtracting dice equal to the caster's Fate dots from the subject's dice pool for the next action taken. Each additional success affects an additional dice roll. The effect begins immediately *before* the action (and therefore die roll) that triggers it.

**Example:** A hit man takes aim at a target, unaware that the mark is actually a mage protected by Fate's Justice. The Storyteller rolls for the spell, and it is successful, affecting the assassin's next two dice rolls and subtracting three dice (equal to the caster's Fate dots). This causes the intended shot to miss, and also makes the hit man fail his Athletics roll as he attempts to scramble down from the rooftop before he's discovered....

### Free Council Rote: Equal and Opposite

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Science + Fate

This techné treats the forces of Fate as any other set of opposing forces: push in one direction, and the opposing force pushes back in the other. The rote's "instant karma" effect appeals to the Libertine's sense of justice and equality.

### *Fortunate Timing* (Fate ●● + Time ●)

This spell shifts the threads of Fate into a "proper" configuration that allows the mage to experience a fortunate set of circumstances involving timing: the mage is in just the right place to meet someone, pick up a ride, prevent (or assist) some event and so forth. This spell involves a certain willingness to surrender to the moment, allowing Fate to take the caster where it will, although the spell ensures the circumstances won't be inherently dangerous or detrimental.

Repeated casting of this spell can tangle the threads of Fate to a degree, and may prevent the mage from ending up in the right circumstances (traffic messes up the timing of an important meeting, weather causes delays or prevents an event from happening, and so forth).

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

As with The Perfect Moment (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 152), this spell is more story-related than mechanical: a successful casting just ensures circumstances will be right for the mage to be where he or she is "supposed" to be, in the view of the Storyteller. This spell is license for the Storyteller to arrange the plot of the adventure to move along in the most expedient manner, even if the circumstances are somewhat improbable. After all, it's magic!

### Free Council Rote: Right Place, Right Time

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Persuasion + Fate

Sometimes it's all a matter of being in the right place at the right time, as Libertines know all too well. This rote enlisted the forces of Fate of the Free Council's side during



its formative period and helped ensure the order's survival (and that of many of its members).

### *Loyal Possession (Fate ●● + Mind ●●)*

Mages often become quite attached to certain possessions and want to ensure they don't become permanently lost. This spell helps to do just that.

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Lasting

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** 1 Mana

When cast on an item, this spell "attunes" it to the mage. If the two are separated without the mage's consent, forces conspire to return to item to its rightful owner. The "Loyal Possession" spell takes effect through a series of subtle turns of fate and slight of mind.

**Example:** Zeno's cell phone is stolen from him, but it has Loyal Possession cast upon it. So the thief accidentally runs into someone on the street and drops the phone into a trashcan without noticing. Later, a homeless woman fishes the cell phone out of the trash and carries it for several blocks. She leaves it in an alley behind a local pizza parlor. A kid working there comes out back to empty the trash and picks up the phone on his way back in. He idly wipes it down with a damp rag and sticks it in his pocket. A call comes in for delivery of a large sausage and mushroom pizza, and the kid wraps the phone up in a sheet of foil and sticks it into the pizza box without even thinking about it. The delivery guy takes the pizza to the customer's address, and when Zeno gets his dinner, he unwraps the foil to find his missing phone. "There you are," he says. "It's about bloody time, too."

The exact sequence of events is left to the Storyteller's imagination (with input from the caster's player, as desired). Sleepers can act as unwitting agents of a Loyal Possession without being consciously aware they are doing so, and seemingly "random" events can conspire to help get things done. Exactly how long it takes the object to get back to its owner depends greatly on circumstances: a small item could cross an urban area in mere hours, while a larger item could take days.

There are also a few limits on the effect. First, the spell doesn't work if the item's owner willingly gives it away (even under duress). So if you hand a Loyal Possession to someone, it's effectively "theirs," and the spell isn't triggered, but is actually transferred to the new "owner." This can be used to grant others Loyal Possessions, however.

Second, if the item ends up in the possession of an Awakened character, he can hold on to it so long as he keeps the item on his person. So if an Awakened enemy takes a Loyal Possession from you, for example, and keeps it in his pocket, it stays with him. However, as soon as the item is out of the Awakened character's possession,

it may try to find its way "home." So, if your foe happens to put the Loyal Possession down on a desk or side table, for example, the Loyal Possession might get picked up by a Sleeper servant or bystander, knocked out a window or into the garbage and so forth, slipping the net to start its journey back.

Finally, a Loyal Possession brought inside a ward (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 236) loses its "fix" on its owner and cannot continue to return until the item is brought outside the ward, and the item can't influence events to help bring it outside. It becomes "stuck" in the warded area. Short of undoing the spell, this is the surest way to hold on to a Loyal Possession that doesn't belong to you.

This spell is commonly imbued in certain valuable items, and a number of artifacts display similar capabilities (although artifacts are often more capricious about "ownership," sometimes just conspiring to seek a new and suitable "owner" when circumstances require it).

**Free Council Rote: What's Mine Is Mine**

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Persuasion + Fate

Some call the Libertines materialists for their fascination with technology, and it's true they do like their "toys." This rote is a helpful means of safeguarding the most valuable of those toys, especially ones that can do the mage harm, should they fall into the wrong hands.

### ●●● *Disciple of Fate*

#### *Shared Fate (Fate ●●●)*

Fate is used as an instrument of both justice and punishment. This spell braids the fates of two subjects together, such that the fate of one becomes the fate of the other. Whatever befalls one subject affects the other and vice versa.

In times past, this spell was used as a means of parley between willworkers, to ensure both parties honored a truce. This spell still sees some use in that regard, but is more a means of threatening an enemy and ensuring their cooperation.

**Practice:** Weaving

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** 1 Mana

The spell links two subjects (more with an additional Targets factor). Unwilling subjects get a reflexive Composure + Gnosis roll to resist. If the spell succeeds, the subjects are bound to a single fate for its duration. Effects affecting the Health or Willpower (but not Wisdom) of one subject affect the other by an equal amount. So, if one of the subjects suffers three levels of Health damage, the other subject does as well. Any Fate magic worked on one subject — for good or ill — also affects the other(s).

### **Free Council Rote: Instant Karma**

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Persuasion + Fate

"My fate will be yours," was a commonly heard oath from the Nameless, and they usually made good on it with this techné. While democratic ideals should be enough for a convocation of Libertines, sometimes they're not; in which case, this rote can help to ensure a degree of restraint and even-handedness.

## *Forces Spells*

### ●● *Apprentice of Forces*

#### *Aether-Net (Forces ●●)*

The mage can create a wireless Internet connection or cell phone connection where there is none, allowing such devices to work even in the absence of their normal network(s).

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** None

**Free Council Rote:** WiFi

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Science + Forces

Wireless service doesn't *quite* cover the world just yet, and even in places where it's ubiquitous, it's not always free. Free Council mages were quick to "crack" wireless Internet and cell communications in order to provide them with constant free and accessible service, making their cell phones, PDAs and laptops little more than talismans for the mystic "aether-net."

Note that this spell doesn't provide a network device with any capabilities it doesn't normally possess other than providing a free and open connection to the existing network. Still, the usefulness of searching the web, making cell calls and sending and receiving e-mail in the depths of a ruined temple or in an isolated locale shouldn't be underestimated.

#### *Circuit Television (Forces ●● + Space ●)*

With this spell, the mage can connect a television monitor to any camera that is nearly connected to a network to which the monitor is connected. This spell is almost always used with a computer connected to the Internet, because many monitoring cameras in the Western world are connected to an intranet that is connected to the Internet.

Although the camera is distant, the network is not, so this is not sympathetic magic. The spell also does not grant control of the camera, so the mage can only see what the camera is pointing at. This is not a Space portal; the

mage can only look in the same way that a Sleeper who is actually connected to the camera could look.

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert (if connected to the same network as the camera) or Vulgar (if one step removed from the camera itself, but still connected through things like power a neighborhood power grid)

**Cost:** None

**Free Council Rote:** Open Circuit Television

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Computer + Forces

Sometimes it's as easy as magically activating a webcam on some distant twig of a big sprawling network. Sometimes it's as complicated as drawing the video signal from the camera that sees it to the equipment that wants to. It's trickier, but these machines *want* to see and show. You just have to appeal to their natures.

#### *Electronic Eye (Forces ●●)*

This spell allows a mage to read information from magnetic and optical storage media.

**Practice:** Knowing

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Concentration

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** None

By touching a storage medium (or its casing, such as a computer hard drive), the mage can "read" its stored contents as if having access to a machine capable of reading it, such as a computer. The user reads the information at normal human speeds, just as if reading it from a computer screen or listening to it through a speaker. Information in the form of programming (computer code) is recognizable as such, and the reader can disregard it to skim for text and graphics information. The mage cannot "run" software, but can generally determine what it does by reading its code and making an Intelligence + Computer roll.

**Free Council Rote:** Data-Reader

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Computer + Forces

Electronic storage of information is quite useful, except when the machinery breaks down. This techné is an essential "backup" for a crashed drive or a damaged disk reader. It's also useful for accessing information the caster shouldn't be able to access at all or for finding "hidden" files on storage disks.

#### *Invisibility to Machines (Forces ●●)*

The mage becomes undetectable to electronic devices of all kinds.

**Practice:** Veiling

**Action:** Instant



**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert (if the mage simply passes by the electronic sensor) or Vulgar (if the mage interacts with objects while within the sensor's "vision")

**Cost:** None

The effects of this spell are similar to those of Personal Invisibility combined with Sound Mastery (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 160 and 170, respectively), except the mage is only undetectable with regard to electronic devices, such as video cameras, microphones, electric eye beams and so forth. So far as those machines are concerned, the mage simply isn't there, although the results of the mage's actions remain noticeable.

Although inferior to true Personal Invisibility, this spell is useful in situations where the mage simply doesn't want to leave traces behind. For example, someone under the veil of Invisibility to Machines could walk into a room monitored by a security camera, have an entire conversation with someone in that room (who would be unaware that the security camera cannot detect the mage) and depart, leaving no record behind. Someone watching the video footage (live or recorded) would be more likely to think the other person was lying or delusional than she would to believe there was an "invisible" person in the room with him, unless the mage did something else to give away his presence.

**Free Council Rote:** Ghost to the Machines

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Persuasion + Forces

This Free Council rote quickly found its way into the repertoires of other orders, once they realized its usefulness. The Guardians of the Veil have a similar one called Blinding the Machine, which uses Stealth in place of Persuasion (a metaphor for the difference between the Guardians and the Free Council, if ever there was one). Libertines never let the Guardians forget that the Libertines thought of it first, though.

### *Invoke Password (Forces ●●)*

The mage learns an electronic password or code.

**Practice:** Knowing

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Instant

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

By touching a machine and successfully casting this spell, the mage immediately learns the machine's password or passcode, if it has one. If the machine has multiple codes, the mage learns the one for the machine's currently active function. For example, if Invoke Password is cast while touching a computer, the mage learns the passcode to the currently open program window or function. If the spell is cast on an active alarm panel, the mage learns the code to disarm it, and so forth. If there are two or more equally

viable functions with passcodes, the mage learns one of them at random, along with what it accesses.

The caster must still have some means of inputting the code acquired with this spell. If the machine requires an input device (such as a keycard or transmitter) that the mage doesn't have, then the code itself doesn't do much good. The spell also doesn't provide passcodes that can't be entered by human hands; if the machine's *only* passcode is entered via encoded keycard, for example, then the spell tells the mage nothing.

**Free Council Rote:** Cracker's Code

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Crafts + Forces

Sometimes magic makes a more effective supplement to mundane skills; an Awakened hacker with a willingness to "cheat" can be a terror, as others discovered when the Free Council adopted the digital revolution as part of their own. The Atlantean orders have since learned to ward their computer systems, but Sleepers remain as blissfully unaware as ever.

## ●●● *Disciple of Forces*

### *Complex Transmission (Forces ●●●)*

Similar to Transmission (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 167), except the mage can send a complex audiovisual transmission.

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** None

**Free Council Rote:** MTV

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Science + Forces

It's short for "Mage Television," and Libertines like to claim they came up with the abbreviation first. In addition to the joys of pirate video broadcasting, this rote is useful for messing with live video feeds from closed circuit TV cameras and the like.

### *Stay the Invisible Fires (Forces ●●●)*

The mage creates an invisible shield against radiation. For the Duration, the mage is immune to the effects of harmful radiation and does not become irradiated, although other side effects can cause harm. So the mage could handle plutonium with bare hands without risk, but couldn't resist the heat of a nuclear reactor (and would want to be careful to wash off any radioactive materials before the Duration ended or before coming into contact with anyone else).

**Practice:** Shielding

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** 1 Mana (optional; extends Duration to 24 hours).

**Free Council Rote:** Radiation Shield

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Science + Forces

A Libertine's work often involves going to dangerous places and handling dangerous materials, and this techné helps to ensure such things are a bit less dangerous.

## ●●●● *Adept of Forces*

### *Invisible Fire (Forces ●●●●●)*

The mage strikes a target with a concentrated amount of radiation.

**Practice:** Fraying

**Action:** Instant and aimed

**Duration:** Lasting

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** 1 Mana (optional; makes damage aggravated)

Each success inflicts one level of lethal damage due to radiation burns. Invisible Fire ignores armor not specifically shielded against radiation or magic. Anyone with the protection of Stay the Invisible Fires is immune. One point of Mana can be spent to make the damage aggravated.

**Free Council Rote:** Rad-Blast

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Science + Forces

The Libertines weren't the first to think of using radiation as a weapon, just the first *magés* to do so. This techné is considered a weapon of last resort since it's dirty and vulgar, and tends to raise difficult questions.

### *Quench the Invisible Fires (Forces ●●●●●)*

This spell cleanses radioactivity from an affected area.

**Practice:** Unraveling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Lasting

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** None

Radioactive materials in the spell's area are instantly rendered non-radioactive (and therefore useless for any purposes relying on their radioactivity). This includes material irradiated by contact with radioactive materials.

**Free Council Rote:** Shorten Half-Life

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Science + Forces

While Libertines work with radioactive materials only rarely, this techné allows them to clean up after themselves quickly, leaving no traces behind.

## *Life Spells*

### ● *Initiate of Life*

#### *Forgo Rest (Life ●)*

An initiate of Life can overcome some of the weaknesses of the body, at least for a time. A mage using this spell can go without sleep for an extended period, with no impairment of faculties, at least until fatigue becomes too great. Mages find it most useful to forgo rest when they must focus their attention on a task for a long period of time.

**Practice:** Compelling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Lasting

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

Each spellcasting success allows the mage to go an additional six-hour period without sleep with no need for a Stamina + Resolve roll (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 180). The mage suffers none of the penalties for missed sleep during this time. The maximum this spell can put off the need for sleep is a number of days equal to the lower of the mage's Stamina or Resolve, after which the spell no longer works.

Once the spell ends, the mage suffers all the effects of any missed sleep and must make it up (an additional hour's sleep per six-hour period forgone using this spell).

**Free Council Rote:** All-Nighter

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Crafts + Life

Free Councilors often find it necessary to stay up all night (or for a few days, for that matter) to complete a particular project, and they don't necessarily want the jitters of caffeine or other stimulants interfering with their faculties. Some say this rote dates back to the Nameless War, when many Libertines were afraid to sleep at all, preferring to remain on their guard.

## *Matter Spells*

### ● *Initiate of Matter*

#### *Crafter's Eye (Matter ●)*

The mage can see any wear, flaws, breaks or damage to a particular object with an eye toward repairing it. Some mages liken this to comparing the object's present state to its "ideal" or original state of existence.



**Practice:** Knowing

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Concentration

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

Success allows the mage to know what, if anything, is wrong with the object and roughly what would be involved in fixing it (within the limits of the mage's Skills, such as Crafts and Science).

**Free Council Rote:** Kicking the Tires

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Crafts or Science + Matter

Often the most difficult part of effecting repairs is figuring out the problem. Whereas the "Diagnostic Scan" rote (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 195) informs the caster of an object's composition, this rote determines the object's status. In particular, the mage learns whether or not a piece of technology is functional, how functional (if so) and how damaged (if not).

## ●● *Apprentice of Matter*

### *Temporary Repair (Matter ●●)*

With a touch, the mage renders an inoperative machine functional for the spell's duration, so long as the reason the machine doesn't function is a matter of worn, broken or missing parts. So this spell won't make a machine run without fuel or energy or make a computer with corrupted software functional, for example, but will do things such as make a car with punctured tires or missing a sparkplug run or restore a jammed gun to working order. When the Duration expires, the machine returns to its former state, although the spell itself doesn't cause any additional damage apart from normal wear and tear.

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

**Free Council Rote:** Engineer's Kick

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Crafts + Matter

With a swift kick or thump and an exclamation like "Work!", the caster can bring otherwise dead machines roaring back to life. It's a short-term solution, but very useful in a pinch.

## *Mind Spells*

### ●● *Apprentice of Mind*

#### *Gain Skill (Mind ●●)*

The mage temporarily gains knowledge and use of a particular Skill.

**Practice:** Knowing

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** 1 Mana

The caster gains temporary dots in a particular Skill, chosen when the spell is cast, one Skill dot per success, up to a maximum of the mage's Mind Arcanum dots. Thus a mage with Mind 3 can gain up to three dots in a Skill using this spell. All the dots must be in the same Skill, and Skills cannot increase above five dots in this manner (but see the "Skill Mastery" spell for a version where they can).

While the spell is in effect, the mage has full normal use of the additional Skill. When the spell ends, the Skill dots, and any capabilities that came with them, disappear. This may even result in the mage no longer understanding his or her own work! Because this spell lasts for one scene, this spell is of only limited use in performing extended actions.

**Free Council Rote:** Fast-Learner

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Science + Mind

The days when a Renaissance Man could know everything there is to know are long past, and members of the Free Council know it. Still, that doesn't mean they can't fill in the gaps in their knowledge and experience from time to time.

Many contemporary Libertines believe this spell taps into the Astral depths of the universal consciousness to imbue the caster with knowledge imprinted there by countless other minds. Whether the spell touches upon morphic fields or the Akashic Records, the effect is the same.

### ●●● *Disciple of Mind*

#### *Bestow Skill (Mind ●●●)*

The mage temporarily grants knowledge and use of a particular Skill to another.

**Practice:** Weaving

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** 1 Mana

This spell works as Gain Skill except the mage can cast it on others to grant them additional dots in a particular Skill. Otherwise, the effects are the same.

**Free Council Rote:** Fast-Teacher

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Persuasion + Mind

While Libertines are fine with teaching what they know the old-fashioned way, sometimes there just isn't time to give loyal helpers or allies the instruction they need.

## ●●●● Adept of Mind Skill Mastery (Mind ●●●●)

The mage temporarily gains knowledge and use of one or more Skills.

**Practice:** Patterning

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** 1 Mana

This spell works as Gain Skill except Skills can exceed six dots, up to a maximum rating of the caster's Gnosis, and successes from this spell can be split among multiple Skills, rather than applied to only one.

**Free Council Rote:** Universal Knowledge

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Persuasion + Mind

This rote taps into the universal wisdom of the Astral Planes (or the Collective Unconscious, if you prefer), drawing upon the imprinted knowledge and memories of everyone who has ever lived to grant the willworker mastery of certain Skills. Some Libertines report momentary visions and flashes of memories not their own when using this spell, and some botched uses have even resulted in mages picking up foreign memories or personality traits permanently.

## Virtual Voyage (Mind ●●●● + Forces ●●)

The mage psychically projects into a virtualized realm of computer and communications networks. This techné is much as Psychic Projection (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 215) except rather than entering Twilight, the mage's consciousness travels into a representation of a computer network or networks in the Fallen World. The mage's virtual form has no Corpus, just a visualized virtual image that can be affected only by mind-affecting powers.

**Practice:** Patterning

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged  
(one scene)

**Aspect:** Vulgar

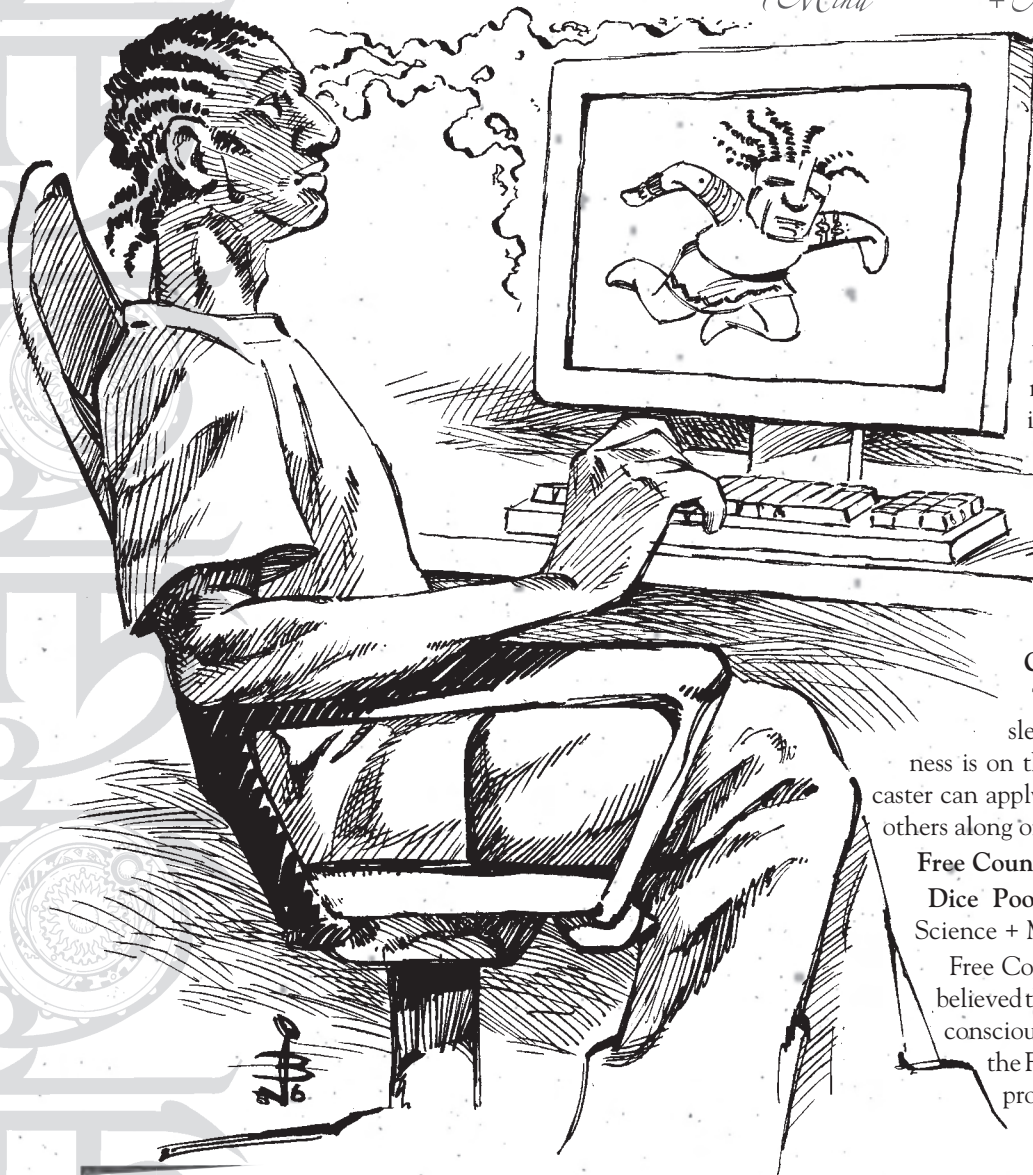
**Cost:** None

The mage appears to be in a deep sleep or trance while the consciousness is on the virtual voyage. If desired, the caster can apply an extra Targets factor to bring others along on the voyage.

**Free Council Rote:** Jacking In

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Computers or Science + Mind

Free Council "reality hackers" have long believed that this techné accesses a "machine consciousness" or a Twilight "shadow" of the Fallen World's computer networks, proof that the mundane works of





humanity have a kind of magic to them, and that there are deeper connections and mysteries for the Awakened to explore and understand. The rapid spread and growth of computer technology in modern culture has only made the techné more useful (and easier to conceal).

## Time Spells

### ●●●● Adept of Time

#### *Time Out of Mind* (Time ●●●● + Mind ●●●●)

The mage can enter a “timeless” state of mind wherein lengthy contemplation is possible in virtually no time at all.

**Practice:** Weaving

**Action:** Extended

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

This spell is similar to Temporal Pocket (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 265) except the spell only affects the mage’s mental state: the mage is able to think for an extended period of time “in between” moments. Successes are assigned to the spell’s Duration, affecting the *subjective* time the mage has in which to think. So, at a basic level, the mage can consider for up to an hour while no time at all appears to pass for everyone else. Additional successes increase this time as usual for a prolonged spell.

The caster under this spell is “inside” his or her own mind and has no resources other than what the mage can think or imagine. Still, the mage may be able to undertake and complete extended mental actions, appearing to accomplish them in just a moment’s time. This does not include extended spellcasting, as that is not a purely mental action.

**Free Council Rote:** Seven Thoughts in a Moment

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Science + Time

When a mage needs a “moment to consider,” this techné is just the thing, since it usually grants more than enough time to puzzle out a particular situation, giving Free Councilors a reputation for the ability to think of their feet.

### ●●●●● Master of Time

#### *Temporal Lifeline* (Time ●●●●●)

The mage forges a temporal connection with the moment of the spell’s casting and can later choose to return there with knowledge of what “happened” in the future.

**Practice:** Making

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Lasting

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** 1 Mana

The mage “fixes” a moment in time when the spell is completed. Thereafter, an invisible, ethereal “lifeline” connects the caster to that moment as it moves into the past. At any time thereafter, the mage can choose to return to that moment as an instant action, simply by willing it. This ends the spell as the temporal lifeline “snaps back” into the past and disappears. The Mana cost of the temporal lifeline cannot be regained so long as the lifeline exists.

The mage returns to the chosen moment and all the intervening “time” essentially never happened, although the mage remembers it as though it did. It can be considered a “possible” future in that the mage can take actions to change the outcome of events. So, for example, a mage who casts this spell before going into a dangerous ruin, then encounters a deadly trap, can activate the lifeline, returning to the moment before she entered the ruin, and make a different choice (assuming the trap wasn’t so sudden and deadly that the mage died instantly before she was able to use the lifeline).

Once Temporal Lifeline is cast, a mage can even use spells such as Temporal Pocket and Temporal Stutter to move forward faster in time in order to reach a particular future point, then “snap back” to the past using the lifeline.

It is impossible for the same caster to fix the “end point” at two temporal lifelines closer than 24 hours together or to have more than one temporal lifeline active at a time. Thus, after activating the lifeline and returning to the past, the mage cannot cast this spell again until at least 24 hours later.

**Free Council Rote:** Save Point

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Science + Time

Free Council legend has it that this rote was actually inspired by multiple-choice adventure fiction even before the advent of videogames, but the popular name has stuck. The rote — similar to many others in the Free Council arsenal — originated during the Nameless War with desperate measures taken by Libertine masters to ensure the survival of their movement (and themselves, of course).

## Enchanted Items

Although so-called technomancy is now fairly commonplace among the most recent generation of the Awakened, the Free Council was the order that first experimented with enchanting the fruits of humanity’s genius, seeing magic in items of technology, rather than “unnatural instruments,” as some more traditional mystics proclaimed them. While Free Councilors have their share of handcrafted or traditional

magical tools, their trappings are those of the modern world, as are the majority of their Enchanted Items.

## Artifacts

One might not expect to find many ancient Artifacts in the hands of a Atlantean order only a little more than a century old, but the Free Council has its share for a number of reasons.

First, Libertines are not necessarily opposed to the old ways of doing things, if they work, and Artifacts are valuable mystic tools. The Free Council would be foolish to overlook their usefulness and simply cast them on the rubbish heap of history. So they have a number of Artifacts passed down from the time of the Nameless War, along with others acquired in the years since.

That said, Free Councilors are also well known for their willingness to take the tried and traditional and incorporate it into something new. Free Council mages are infamous for their various experiments taking Artifacts and trying “update” them in various ways, from incorporating mystical metals and crystals into technological devices to digitizing arcane scrolls or even implanting artifacts into living creatures. Many of these ventures have ended disastrously, but the Libertines cheerfully acknowledge that exploration is a risky affair and then ignore calls to be more cautious in the future.

Finally, some technological Artifacts have shown up in the hands of Free Councilors and other mages, with no explanation where the Artifacts came from or who made them. The most commonly accepted theory is that information about their makers has simply been obscured or lost (as mages are a secretive lot).

More outlandish ideas about technological artifacts include the theory that they are examples of advanced, magically enhanced, technology from Atlantis or that they are somehow “filtering in” to the Fallen World from the Supernal Realms. Some traditionalists claim it’s preposterous that magical firearms or computers are coming from the higher realms, making snide jokes about magical factories and such, but they have no explanation for why it is so many modern mages see technological trappings in their initial Awakening to the Supernal Realms. As one Libertine put it, “If it’s ‘as below, so above,’ then why wouldn’t there be TV and WiFi in heaven?”

### *The Null Bomb* (●●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 4, Structure 10

**Mana Capacity:** None

The Null Bomb is a relic from a failed Libertine terrorist cell determined to combat the Seers of the Throne and the Silver Ladder in one devastating attack. The Null Bomb is, simply, a catastrophic Prime spell waiting to be triggered, a potential “dispellation event” on an unprecedented scale.

The whole of the Libertine extremist group credited with the creation of the Null Bomb — supposedly the original Liberati (see p. 62) — was the brainchild of a self-loathing archmage who left the ranks of the théarchs for the Free Council in search of some backward notion of redemption. This archmage, whose name goes unspoken to diminish his power, obsessively pursued knowledge of the Prime Arcanum in the hopes of combating the mistakes of his former brothers in the Silver Ladder. He believed that battles between the Ladder and the Seers of the Throne would lead to disaster for humankind and an end to earthly magic. He envisioned a preemptive strike that would create a null-magic zone across whole metropolitan areas — an anti-magic bomb, of sorts. The Null Bomb was created in 1985 to bring his vision to the Fallen World.

Rumors persist within Free Council cabals that one of the five Null Bombs (one for each point of the Pentacle) believed to have been created by the archmage for his guerillas was successfully detonated in an American city, silently and invisibly disenchanting miles of sanctums and mages (though of course which city was supposedly bombed varies with the speaker). Presuming that the Null Bomb even works, it seems unlikely that one could be detonated without word of its catastrophic effects spreading an unavoidable panic through surrounding Consilii. And so the Null Bomb remains more a thing of superstition and paranoia than a milestone in Pentacle history.

At least one Null Bomb is supposedly kept in a Libertine Lorehouse... somewhere. Two others were reportedly destroyed by the Guardians of the Veil in 1986 after being recovered by mages of the Adamantine Arrow. This leaves, by popular accounts, one Null bomb unaccounted for.

In game terms, the Null Bomb has one of two effects. Under the first option, it is a truly devastating object capable of rendering a wide area (probably no more than 10 square miles — still a serious threat) into a “magic dead zone” (per the “Dead Zone” spell, see **Mag: The Awakening**, p. 230), and so should only be brought into play as the goal or consequence of a story or chronicle. Alternately, the Null Bomb is a Mana-destroying weapon (again, as the “Dead Zone” spell) that does not prohibit spellcasting but does eliminate Mana from Hallows and mages alike. Roll the Artifact’s rating (eight dice); each success robs every mage in the blast radius of one point of Mana. Beyond that, the bomb creates a dead zone at least one square mile in area.

### *Dreamstone* (Artifact ●●●●●●)

Durability 6, Size 1, Structure 6

**Mana Capacity:** Maximum 11

These mystic crystals are said to come from the very depths of the Astral Planes, and may be made of crystal-



lized dreamstuff. They look like cloudy quartz crystals small enough to fit into the palm of the hand, and seem to faintly glimmer with an inner light.

A Dreamstone can attune itself to the Oneiros of a particular individual, either through meditation (and a single success on a Meditation roll) or simply by being in close contact with that person for a day or so, most commonly in a pocket or placed under the pillow or mattress before sleeping. A Dreamstone remains attuned to that person until it is attuned to someone else; meaning its owner must take precautions not to let the stone linger in contact with another person too long. Usually Dreamstones are “insulated” by wrappings of silk or kept in closed and silk-lined boxes when not in use.

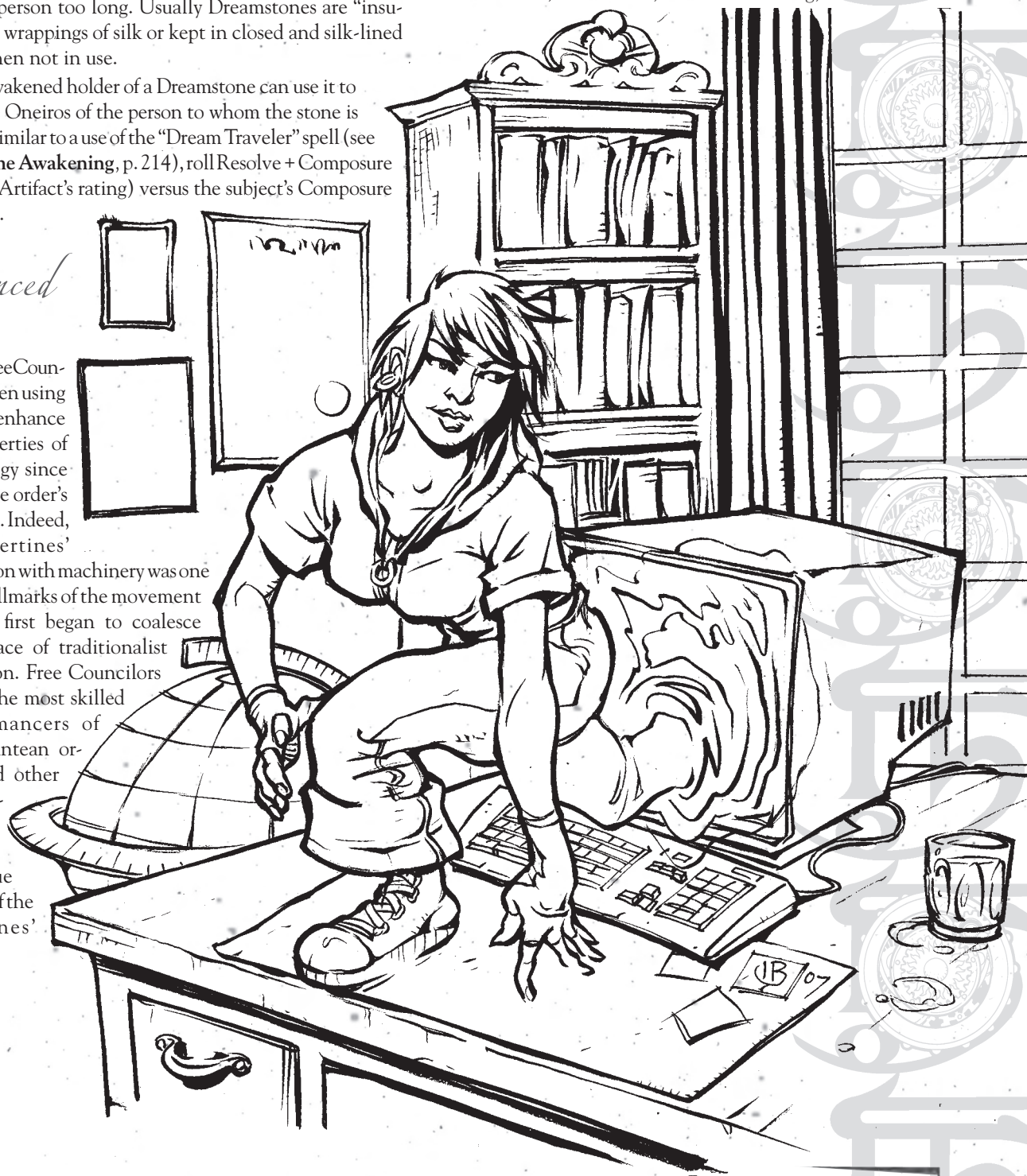
An Awakened holder of a Dreamstone can use it to enter the Oneiros of the person to whom the stone is attuned similar to a use of the “Dream Traveler” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 214), roll Resolve + Composure + 5 (the Artifact’s rating) versus the subject’s Composure + Gnosis.

## Enhanced Items

The Free Council has been using magic to enhance the properties of technology since before the order’s founding. Indeed, the Libertines’ fascination with machinery was one of the hallmarks of the movement when it first began to coalesce in the face of traditionalist opposition. Free Councilors remain the most skilled technomancers of the Atlantean orders, and other willworkers have learned the value of some of the Libertines’ “toys.”

## Computers

Numerology is one of the most ancient tools of magic. The ancients knew the power inherent in numbers, so it was only a matter of time before the fancy calculation machines invented mere decades ago drew the attention of willworkers. Indeed, many of the qualities of the pioneers of the computer revolution were those of the pioneers of the mystical revolution that brought about the Free Council, so they found much in common. Ever since the introduction of the personal computer, Libertines have experimented with them, with mixed, but often startling, results.



Enhanced personal computers — especially palmtops and laptops — remain hallmarks of the Free Council, practically badges of membership for some Libertines. The most common enhancements are system performance and memory, of course. Performance usually improves the machine's equipment bonus, while a Space effect can imbue a machine with essentially unlimited storage capacity (requiring Enhanced Item •••• for this benefit alone). The latter only causes Disbelief in Sleepers who become aware of the computer's full capabilities. With it, a mage can store entire libraries of information and search and access them with blinding speed.

## Vehicles

The time when the Arcana of Life and Space were the sole means of enhancing transportation has passed, and the Free Council has experimented with magically enhanced vehicles for years, often with some success.

Greater Structure and Durability are common for enhanced vehicles, especially those likely to see use in dangerous situations. Acceleration (+5 per dot), Speed (+10 MPH per dot) and Handling are the most common enhancements; Free Council daredevils often have motorcycles and cars able to outperform anything else on the road.

Of course, some mage-mechanics also imbue vehicles with properties beyond mere structure or performance, including things such as a perpetual fuel supply (Matter •••), self-repair capability (Matter •••••), driving on vertical surfaces (Forces ••) and even special shielding against magic (Prime ••).

## Weapons

Although the Adamantine Arrows first enhanced modern weapons such as firearms, Free Councilors were quick to introduce new innovations and win the approval of many Arrows in the process. Enhanced weapons usually pack a stronger punch (having an improved equipment bonus, leading to better accuracy and damage). Enhanced melee weapons sometimes have their Durability improved as well, but Libertines rarely bother with weapons that rely on brute strength and sheer durability.

## Imbued Items

The Free Council takes the fetishization of modern technology to all-new levels, sometimes making true fetishes out of everyday items most people now take for granted.

### Aether Goggles (••••)

While this type of item is sometimes an actual pair of retro-looking goggles, more often these days it is incorporated into a fairly ordinary-looking pair of eyeglasses (functional or decorative) or sunglasses. The “goggles” grant the wearer the benefits of the “Read Matrices” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 165). If worn by a Sleeper, the Aether Goggles invoke Disbelief, unless the Sleeper has reason to believe they're some sort of trick or special effect.

### All-Access Pass (•••••)

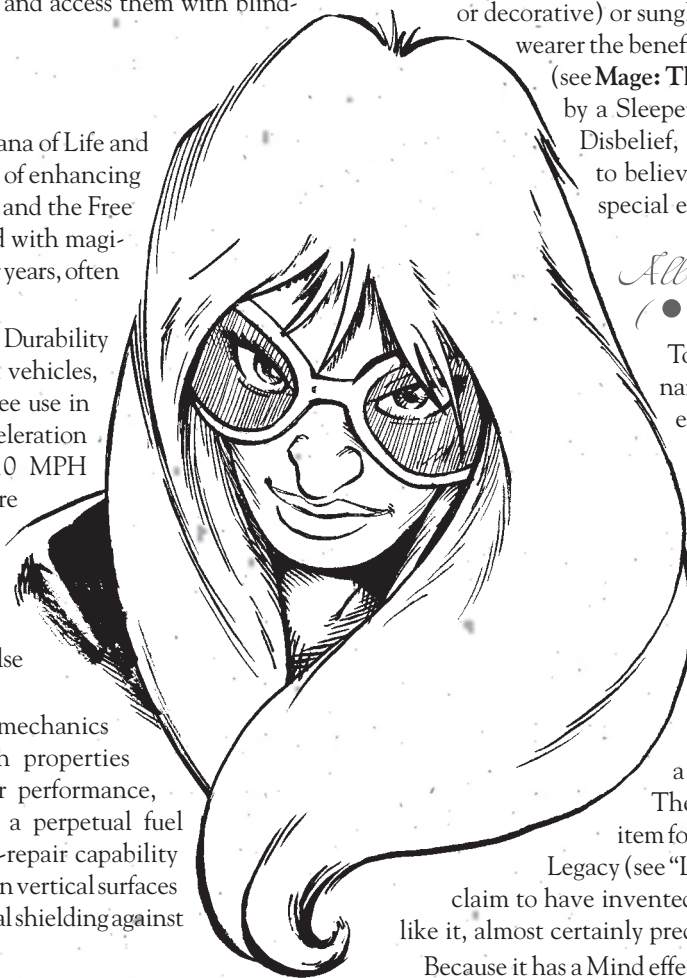
To the Awakened eye, this ordinary billfold has a piece of paper etched with faint Atlantean sigils, almost like an overlapping watermark, but otherwise blank. To the mundane eye, however, the All-Access Pass appears as whatever identification the onlooker would expect to see, so a bouncer or a checkout clerk sees a valid driver's license of legal age, while a security guard sees a clearance pass, and so forth.

The All-Access Pass is a common item for members of the Blank Badges Legacy (see “Legacies,” p. 92) and they often claim to have invented it, although it, or something like it, almost certainly predates them.

Because it has a Mind effect, the All-Access Pass doesn't fool mindless machines such as cameras, security scanners and so forth, and it's useless for overcoming locks and security systems (although you can use it to convince someone else to open them for you). A Universal Keycard (see later in this section) may do those things, and a combination of the two is a free pass nearly everywhere.

### Bottomless Bag (•••••)

For the modern mage, this item looks like a normal backpack, messenger bag, laptop case or handbag, but a Space effect such as the “Safe Keeping” spell (see **Mage:**





**The Awakening**, p. 240) creates a spatial pocket inside, capable of storing anything of Size 20 or less, so long as it can fit into the opening of the bag. The owner can access any of the bag's contents simply by reaching inside for the desired item. Regardless of how much the bag contains, it weighs no more than a few pounds.

Free Councilors once used bottomless "doctor's" bags, carpetbags and similar luggage to carry entire laboratories around. As technological tools and toys get smaller, these sorts of items are less necessary, but mages still have an amazing facility for accumulating material possessions, and this makes it easy to carry all of them around.

### *Ghost-Catcher* (●●●●)

This device is a metallic disk about a foot in diameter with a milky lens across the top. Thrown on the floor or ground under a ghost, the Ghost-Catcher emits a phantasmal light and draws ghostly ephemera down into the lens, where the ephemera is stored (causing the lens to glow faintly, with the glow increasing as more ephemera is stored).

The thrower makes an extended, contested action pitting his Dexterity + Athletics + 3 (the ghost-catcher's equipment bonus) versus the ghost's Finesse + Resistance. The target number is equal to the ghost's Resistance. Each turn, make a new contested roll. As long as the ghost-catcher wins, the catcher and the ghost continue to make reflexive, contested actions until the target number is reached, when the ghost is drawn into the device and trapped. If the ghost wins a contested roll, the escapes and the ghost-catcher loses any successes he had accumulated against the ghost.

Once trapped, the ghost remains in the device until deliberately freed or the device is destroyed (which frees all ghosts trapped within it). The Ghost-Catcher essentially functions as a Soul Jar for the ephemera trapped within (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 137).

### *Infinite Flash Drive* (●●●●●)

A small portable data storage device of the sort found on key rings and neck chains throughout the techno-geek world, this particular flash drive is imbued with a Space 4 effect that gives it essentially unlimited data-storage capacity. A drive just a couple square inches in size could store all the information in an entire network of supercomputers and still have room for all the bootleg music and porn on the Internet for good measure.

The primary limitations on the Infinite Flash Drive are the rate at which information can be written to it and how fast connected machines can find information on it. The drive is no faster than convention computer storage media, so copying information onto it takes time, a lot of time for a really substantial amount of information. Likewise, the more the drive has stored on it, the longer it takes for a conventional computer to locate any given directory or file. So, for practicality's sake, users don't usually put more than a few terabytes of information onto one of the drives.

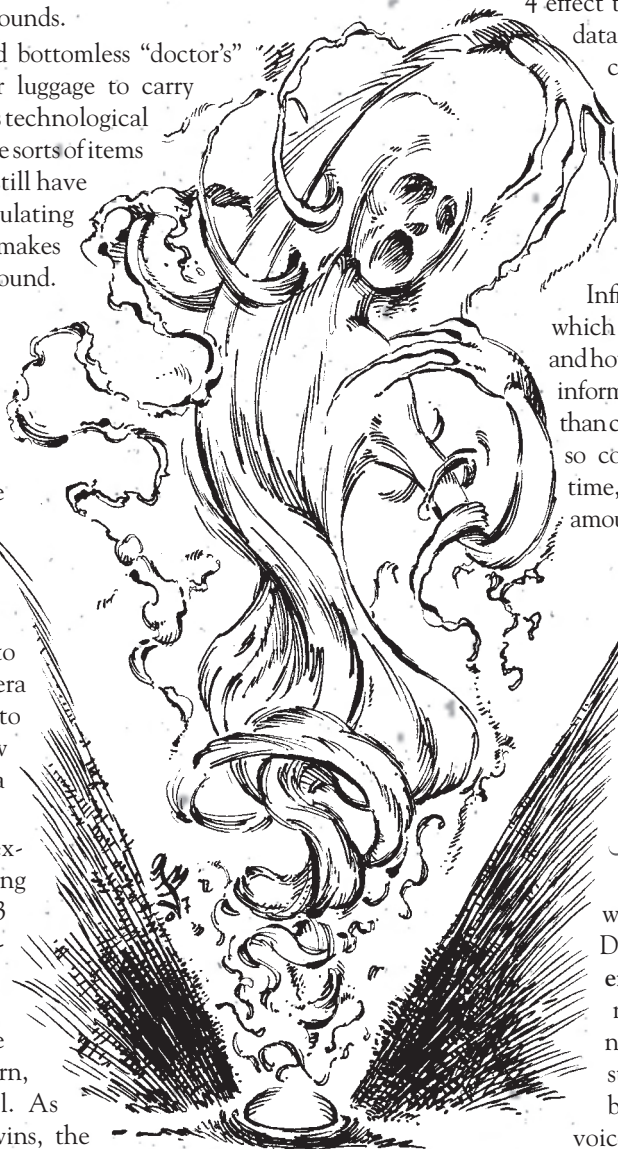
### *Necradio* (●●)

A radio or walkie-talkie imbued with the effects of the "Speak with Dead" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 138). Tuned to ordinary radio stations, the Necradio works normally. Tuned to a specific empty station, the Necradio picks up faint background static as well as the voices of any ghosts nearby in Twilight.

The device does not compel them to speak, but allows them to do so freely. Free Councilors sometimes use a similar device capable of speaking with spirits in Twilight while an Imbued Item ●●● version can do both. Some Libertines now have Necradios incorporated into cell phones or even wireless earpieces.

### *Network Card* (●●●)

This seemingly normal wireless antenna for a device such as a cell phone or computer is imbued with an effect similar to the "Aether-Net" spell (see "Spells"), allowing





it to function as if an open and active network were present, no matter where the device is. Free Council mages are well-known for their unwillingness to be “unplugged” from their technological toys and wanting them to work everywhere. With this option, they do.

### *Neverender Batteries (●●●)*

Who really pays that much attention to batteries? Usually the only time you notice them is when they’re *not* working. Some Free Councilors have created the enchanted batteries commonly known as “neverenders” among mages. Simply put, they draw on the unlimited power of the Aether, so they never run down and are always fully charged. Helps ensure your most important techno-toys don’t run out of juice at an inopportune moment.

### *Universal Keycard (●●●)*

This is a simple plastic card, the size and shape of an ordinary credit card, with a magnetic strip running down one side. The card may be a particular color and have an image, logo, or writing on it, but is just as often solid white or black. Some Universal Keycards have Atlantean sigils on them, allowing the Awakened to easily recognize them for what they are (which can cut both ways, as an Awakened foe can just as easily pick out a Universal Key).

When the magnetic strip of a Universal Keycard is run through a reader, it perceives the card to be a valid pass for whatever lock or security system the reader controls, from the staff room of a box store or a hotel room door to a maximum security prison or top-secret government facility. The card only fools card-readers: it doesn’t do anything about security measures such as palm or retinal scanners, much less visual inspection (although a Universal Keycard combined with an All-Access Pass item can assist in dealing with the latter; see above).

## *Phenomena of the Free Council*

Not everything in the World of Darkness is easily explained in terms of Atlantean magic, and so not every mystic object or unexplainable phenomena associated with the Free Council can be neatly categorized. Though the Free Council has mages investigating mysteries all across the planet in its name, not many of the puzzles encountered by its members are known only to the order’s voters. A few remarkable phenomena are uniquely associated with the order, however. Word of these oddities has spread through Libertine circles and become a part of the vernacular in many Assemblies.

It’s no coincidence that in all but one case, these phenomena stem either from the ingenuity of Free Council mages, the bold nerve of Free Council mages or both. These

legends reveal the spirit of the Free Council’s mages and their capacity to reach beyond their understanding (or, some would say, their moral right).

Your Free Council character has probably heard enough about all of these phenomena that she could recognize a reference to them in conversation or refer to them by name. Just how much about any one of these phenomena your character knows — like if they even actually exist — is ultimately up to the Storyteller. How much she believes is up to you.

## *The Libertine Android*

It’s a symbol of the Free Council’s vision and remarkable capacity to reach beyond its own understanding. No one fully understands how it works or where, exactly, it came from. It seems to have sprung forth from the imagination of a mage who has since disappeared.

He was called Henson. He took his shadow name from master puppeteer Jim Henson almost immediately after Awakening in 1980. Even before his Awakening, Henson the mage was interested in creating things that seemed real — that seemed alive. He was a sculptor, bending sheet metal around wire frames to create giant articulated structures. In those days, he designed only abstract shapes and unreal creatures. His first piece was “The Talking Triangle,” his second was “Two Starfish Fighting.” After that, he built bizarre animal shapes — seven-foot spiders and five-legged dogs — and left them to rust in his yard.

After his Awakening, all that changed. Henson became fascinated with the human form, which had been endowed with a new mythic quality in his mind since he had touched the Supernal plane. He quickly became involved with a Free Council cabal interested in the possibilities of furthering artificial intelligence and robotics through magical endowment. The mages labored in their studio commune through the night, welding, hammering and casting spells while Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* played in the background.

Eventually, the cabal’s studies took the various mages in different directions. Henson moved to a new city and started working alone in 1996. The local Pentacle mages in his new home saw him at Assemblies, but his appearances became more infrequent as time went on. He would show off new designs and sketches now and again — always riffing on da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man, usually focusing on elegant but elaborate images of sleek robotic men and women.

It was no secret that Henson wanted to build an artificial person. It wasn’t so well-known that he’d actually been trying. At first, no one knew he’d succeeded.

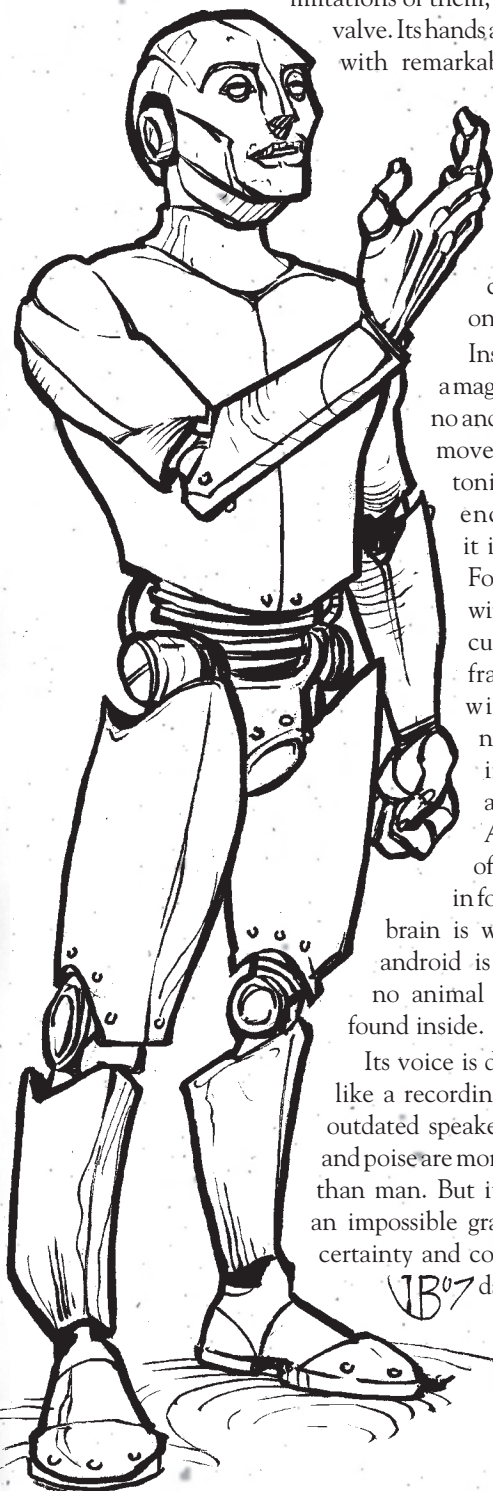
The so-called Libertine android — a name the Consilium leadership casually coined but that stuck fast — was discovered by Free Councilors who went looking for Henson after he’d missed three Assemblies. The android stood in the cellar beneath the converted mechanic’s shop where Henson kept his sanctum. When they found it, the mages



thought it was a mock-up, a life-sized robo-anatomical mock-up. Then it spoke.

It had been waiting, it said, “for some time.”

**Description:** On the outside, it's coppery and drab, as if it's made out of old pennies. It's rough, irregular metal complexion implies it's unfinished. Its eyes are smooth, featureless and fixed — part of its skin. Its nose has no nostrils. Its mouth is a static hole lined with what look like real teeth, but its lips are sharp and rough, seemingly chapped, and hard as copper. It has the dimensions of a fit man, but only the vaguest shape of musculature. It has no sex organs or imitations of them, only an open valve. Its hands are articulated with remarkable detail —



they shine like brass and appear to be the only truly finished components on the thing.

Inside it is clearly a magical thing. It is no android. Its parts move through astonishing Matter enchantments, it is powered by Forces. Copper wires imply a circulatory system, frayed speaker wires suggest nerve endings, but it's all symbolic. A cut chunk of amber stands in for a heart. The brain is wet clay. The android is life-like, but no animal parts can be found inside.

Its voice is dry and tinny, like a recording through an outdated speaker. Its posture and poise are more mannequin than man. But it moves with an impossible grace, with the certainty and confidence of a dancer.

**Background:** The story behind the Libertine android is still a mystery. Whether its current state represents something close to Henson's final vision is impossible to say. The notes found in Henson's sanctum are months, maybe years, out of date. Either his notes vanished with him, or the Libertine android is not actually Henson's creation at all. Perhaps it was conjured from nothing and entered the world exactly as it is now — though Henson's sanctum is full of components seemingly used in its construction. Perhaps, as some Free Councilors speculate, it is from the future or the past, summoned to the now by Henson.

Since its discovery, the Libertine android has become something of an accidental celebrity. Pictures of it were circulated by Libertine mages near the end of the 20th century — some can even be found on the Internet — though none of this easily available information proves anything other than the existence of a man-shaped sculpture. Many mages believe the android is a hoax or an elaborate trinket. Others celebrate it as a living symbol of possibilities. The name “Libertine android” is widely known within the order, though little beyond that is.

Since 2001, the android has been kept under lock and key by an American cabal of Free Councilors supposedly intent on studying it. Rumors persist that this is a polite front. It's more likely that the android is being kept under wraps by the Guardians of the Veil somewhere.

**Storytelling Hints:** Are the appearance of the android and the disappearance of Henson connected? It seems obvious that they are, but how can anyone be sure? Did Henson leave or was he taken? If he left, what other creations might he have taken with him and where did he go? If he's been taken, by whom?

In the end, the android is the only available evidence, and all it remembers is Henson going upstairs and never coming back.

Is it truly alive? Was it ever? Atlantean magic is unable to say with certainty. It's possible that the current Libertine android is what remains of an experiment involving Psychic Genesis (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 218) and the subtle persona that's left presents an illusion of intelligence and self-awareness. That the android is so difficult to analyze with magic may suggest that it is not a mage's creation at all but... something else. Who can say that the Free Councilors who have been able to scrutinize the android firsthand have been those best-suited to reach informed conclusions?

#### Traits

If the android exists in your chronicle, and if it is what they say it is, this is what its traits might look like:

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 5

**Mental Skills:** Academics 5, Computer 5, Crafts 3, Medicine 2, Occult 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Drive 1

**Social Skills:** Expression 2, Intimidate 3

**Merits:** Encyclopedic Knowledge, Iron Stamina 3, Languages: English, Spanish, French, Latin, Covenant Status: Free Council 1, Fame 1

**Willpower:** 8

**Initiative:** +10

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 15

**Size:** 5

**Health:** 12

**Attacks:**

Attacks	Damage	Dice Pool	Special
Pummel	2	10	—
Throw	—	8	2 yards/success

**Abilities**

**Armor 5:** His reinforced metallic structure, synthetic polymer skin and not-quite-mechanical mystically augmented parts give the android a remarkable resistance to physical attacks. Even in circumstances when his Defense would be reduced (for example, by multiple attackers), he is difficult to hurt. This resilience is described in game terms with five points of Armor.

**Inhuman Fortitude:** The android consumes no fuel. It breathes no air. It eats no food. It cannot be poisoned, starved or diseased. It requires no maintenance. Unless it is damaged, it requires no repair. In game terms, the android does not suffer wound penalties to its actions but neither is it capable of natural healing. Instead, the android absorbs Mana or Essence (whatever is available) from the surrounding area and uses that to reconstitute its structure through a kind of built-in Matter effect. One point of Mana or Essence is sufficient to heal one point of lethal damage or two points of bashing damage. Two points of Mana or Essence are necessary to heal one point of aggravated damage done to the android. Unless Mana or Essence is given to the android freely (by a mage or spirit spending points from her own Mana or Essence pool), the android can only heal at a Hallow or locus (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken** for more on loci).

**Prime Field (–5 dice):** The android's internal systems cause a kind of magical interference. Exactly why continues to puzzle the mages who've had access to him, but it seems to be a side effect of some kind of unexpected (and unwanted) mystical harmonics. (Another theory is that it is a result of the android's unique spiritual resonance.) Spells that target the android directly suffer a –5 dice penalty to their spellcasting dice pools.

**EMP:** The android generates a substantial electrical field around itself, whether it wants to or not. TV reception is bad in its presence. Wireless signals cut out. Cell reception is awful. With time, however, the android can harness this field to create an even more substantial output. This is similar to the Numen described in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, except the android requires to Essence or other mystic fuel to power the effect. Rather, the android's power

begins with a base dice pool equal to his Strength; this dice pool gains a +1 die bonus for every turn the android spends "charging up" his electromagnetic pulse, to a maximum of +5 dice. Once the desired charge has been achieved, the android must use an instant action to release the charge and activate this power. The android can store a charge for only two turns. After that, its next action must be spent to activate this power.

**See Forces:** The android sees the world as though it were always under the effects of a Forces •• "Mage Sight" spell. Though the android can also see the world as a normal human does, it must squint through the glare of mystic information it is always receiving. To it, we are underexposed shapes in a bright haze of blinding data.

**Pulverizing Blow:** Under normal circumstances, the android deals bashing damage with its unarmed attacks. The android can, however, cause its unarmed attack to deal lethal damage if it wishes. Every unarmed attack the android makes in this way deals itself one point of bashing damage. The android gains a +2 bonus on its dice pool to damage objects when using this ability.

**Vulnerability:** The android, despite its considerable defenses, is vulnerable to several kinds of attack or damage. Electrical attacks (whether caused by power lines or Forces spells) ignore the android's Armor. Technology specifically designed to cut through industrial metals—such as diamond-tipped blades and potent acidic compounds—may bypass some or all of the android's Armor, at the Storyteller's discretion.

#### The Android's Morality

If the android has any morality, it is a mystery to both its creators and its keepers. It seems to be completely amoral, but appearances can be deceiving. Attempts to understand the android's psyche and soul through Mind magic reveal that it is cold and impassionate, but cannot conclusively determine the morality (of Morality) of the thing. Is it literally soulless or is it a sociopath? Which is worse?

If the android is a moral creature, then it should have a Virtue and a Vice. Because the android is patient, resilient, stubborn and strangely incurious, Fortitude is its most likely Virtue; the android doesn't simply believe in its own validity, it does not harbor doubt. If it must re-evaluate its priorities or beliefs, it does so immediately, locks them in, and moves on. But its absolute pragmatism makes it unlikely it will ever call its own beliefs into question. Someone else would have to compel it to do so.

Because of the android's supreme stability and certainty, Pride might seem to be a fine Vice for it—but the android gains no comfort from its confidence. Instead, the question is what will the android do to distract itself, to patch its troubles, when it begins to confront its own immortality? It attempts to escape its own existence. It taps into the shallow imagination it has and revels in the faint masochistic qualities of possibility. Its Vice is Envy. It wants



to do what others do. It wants to sample what it doesn't have. This isn't Greed, because it has no desire to keep or protect these things. This isn't Gluttony because its appetite is short. When the android centers itself, it wanders our homes, it looks through our drawers and closets, it touches what's ours.

By default, the android is presumed to begin with immaculate Morality. That cannot last. The android is not innately good. It is innately virginal. What happens to its Morality in play depends on what choices it makes — and what actions the chronicle's characters ask it to take.

### Android... or Something Else?

Pandorans. If you have the rulebook for **Promethean: The Created**, you might suspect that the Libertine android has some connection to Prometheans or Pandorans. The simple answer is that, if you have **Promethean** (and maybe its supplement, **Pandora's Book**), then a connection exists between the android and the Pandorans who hunt their Promethean siblings. Once a Promethean comes within range of the android, its alchemical fires activate something sinister within the android — something it may choose to fight against or indulge.

Pyros feeds the android just as Mana and Essence do, except that the android takes Pyros from a Promethean just as a Pandoran. The Promethean doesn't have to give Pyros up as a mage must donate his Mana. And once the android tastes Pyros, the android cannot go back. Essence and Mana no longer do the android any good after that.

So what is the android? Is it a mockery of a Promethean Lineage or was it created by mages as the Free Council says? Does the android have Pandoran powers or not? The truth is not so cut and dry. The android might be the nasty precursor to a new kind Lineage of Prometheans that hasn't been founded yet — the Pandoran failure before the future success of some Free Council Dr. Frankenstein. The android might also be some one-of-a-kind fluke resulting from unlikely happenstance — maybe its Free Council builders unknowingly used parts from some dismembered Pandoran in its creation. It's up to you.

The android is really a question. It is an opportunity for you to ask exciting dramatic questions or important whole new storylines from **Promethean: The Created**. The android's game mechanics were designed and weighed using **Promethean: The Created** as the benchmark, but you clearly don't need to know anything about the powers of the Created to use the android in your chronicle. If you're not using **Promethean** in your World of Darkness, then you can just use the android as it appears here

and file it with the other unique and unexplained weirdness lurking beyond earthly understanding.

If all that doesn't interest you, it can just be one tough bastard for combative mages to terminate.

## *The Complex: Ruin of the Future*

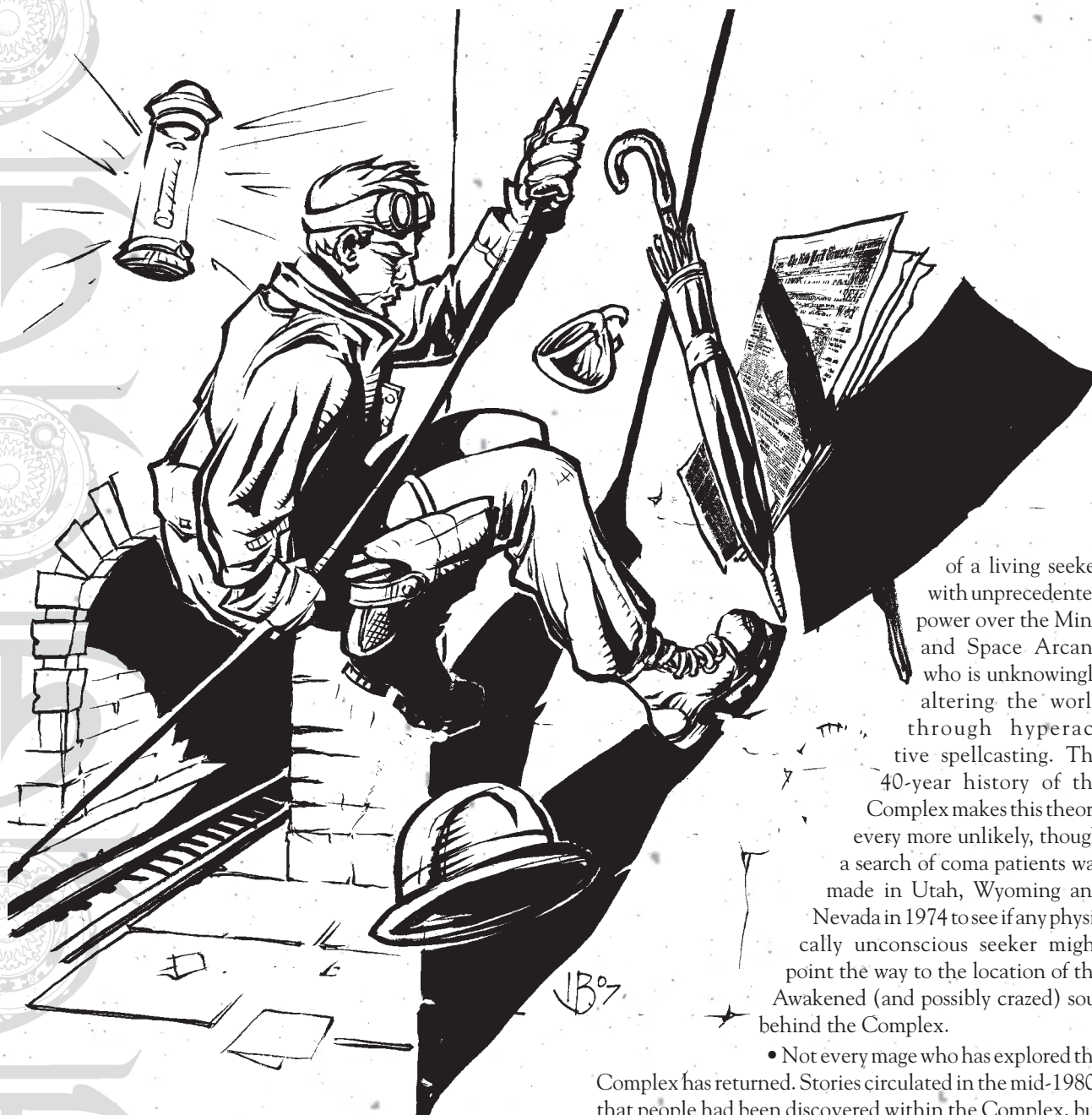
Somewhere in the American West, where the ground is riddled with missile silos like pores in the skin of the earth and the paved-over desert hides military testing grounds and nuclear secrets, a bizarre complex of concrete and metal sprawls beneath the countryside's cracked surface. It was not built, it was discovered. U.S. Army engineers supposedly stumbled on the place while building telecommunications bunkers (or, more likely, missile bases) in the 1960s, and were then quickly snatched and silenced by Guardians of the Veil who were monitoring their communications. Masked Guardians pulled strings in mortal minds to quietly move the Corps of Engineers' prospecting teams to a new and unremarkable location.

Then the Complex went missing. The two Guardians who had seen it defected to the Free Council and, astonishingly, the Guardians of the Veil did not try to recover them. Within the Free Council, the theory is that a deal was struck between the defectors and their parent order that they would protect the location of the Complex in exchange for the right to command Pentacle investigations there. Their defection to the Free Council was a means of gaining some distance from their old masters, as well as finding dedicated comrades to help them make sense of the Complex's amazing construction.

The location of this weird structure is supposedly kept at the Free Council Lorehouse called Silo 7 (see p. 58). Silo 7 and the Complex seem to have a lot in common, both historically and structurally, leading more than one Libertine conspiracy theorist to propose they are connected, whether in space or time. Some Free Councilors must know more about the Complex and why the order cooperates with the Guardians of the Veil to keep it secret — what could be so perilous that Libertine Archivists would actively hide the truth from voters?

A handful of theories about the Complex have leaked out of the investigating cabal over the years, usually as a result of members transitioning in or out of its ranks; it has been 40 years, after all, since the Complex was discovered. What basis these theories have in fact is anyone's guess:

- The Complex is vast and always changing. It branches out over an area of 60 square miles (roughly the size of Madison, Wisconsin), sometimes connecting to deep-bored passages under Silo 7. The corridors and chambers of the Complex change gradually, possibly in reaction to



planetary movements. It may be some kind of uncontrolled, perpetuating phenomena caused by an archmage with incredible skill with the Arcanum of Space.

- Equipment and diagrams within the Complex cover a bizarre range of styles, ranging from military industrial machinery and signage from the 1960s to equipment and schemata of no known provenance, blending obvious Chinese characters with cold war-era Russian graphics. Futuristic and unrecognizable equipment found (and since vanished) in the Complex has led some mages to speculate that the Complex is a Time-Space phenomena.

- The strange hybridization of languages and art styles within the Complex, and the dreamlike aura of the place's shifting landscape, caused an anonymous Libertine writer to suppose that the Complex is actually the construction

of a living seeker with unprecedented power over the Mind and Space Arcana who is unknowingly altering the world through hyperactive spellcasting. The 40-year history of the Complex makes this theory every more unlikely, though a search of coma patients was made in Utah, Wyoming and Nevada in 1974 to see if any physically unconscious seeker might point the way to the location of the Awakened (and possibly crazed) soul behind the Complex.

- Not every mage who has explored the Complex has returned. Stories circulated in the mid-1980s that people had been discovered within the Complex, but these accounts have never been officially verified. Since 1999, investigations in the Complex seem to have slowed, in fear that the constant vulgar magic at work there would provoke some disastrous Abyssal event. Still, somewhere underneath America, Libertine explorers venture into the Complex in search of its secrets.

## *The Arcane Capacitor Returns*

Dutch archaeologist Aldo Zeldenthuis claimed to have found it underneath a temple in Mexico in 1899. The details are sketchy, as Zeldenthuis exported the object for sale to private collectors on the black market and was never comfortable admitting his sins. Zeldenthuis first claimed the artifact was located inside a tomb, where the body should have been, beneath a Toltec temple, but changed



his story several times over the years. Between 1899 and 1911, he was pursued across the globe by mages in search of the artifact. People died for it. People killed for it. It Awakened Zeldenthuis.

So what is it? It is a rectangular block of greenish stone, roughly four feet high, with a tract cut into its top, which runs down into the object and then bends back to the top, like a deep “U” carved out inside of it. Across the four faces of the object were pictographs depicting what early observers described as “feathered serpents, warring priests and a great tree with vast roots running beneath the whole register.” Other images depicted in the pictographs include a rising or setting sun, a gathering of wise men and priestesses in ceremonial garb and “a whale.”

The art style of the carvings reminded one Libertine expert of an early Toltec style, which jives with Zeldenthuis’s earliest reports, before he started claiming the object was discovered in Guatemala or even Peru. Early analyses lead mystagogues and Libertines alike to search the ruins at Tula for further information regarding the Capacitor, but no additional finds were ever reported. Zeldenthuis never revealed the site of the tomb where he found the Capacitor.

After his Awakening, Zeldenthuis first speculated that it was some kind of Atlantean device intended for that very purpose. He later wrote, after joining the Free Council in 1903, that it was “a mystical capacitor, storing up the energies of Fate for release at moments of essential history.” Zeldenthuis maintained that his Awakening began the moment he found the object, but later claimed that his “true Awakening” happened on the last night of 1899, when the Free Council was formed.

Zeldenthuis was a weak historian, a terrible scientist and a lazy student of the Arcana. For years, he maintained strict control of the object, which he had dubbed the Arcane Capacitor, and only allowed fellow Libertines to inspect it in his presence. Only a handful of notes were smuggled out of Zeldenthuis’s sanctum, so little is known of the Capacitor’s true power outside of hearsay.

The Free Council’s surviving notes from the day reveal this much: Zeldenthuis was only one of a 12 or 13 people supposedly Awakened by the device. Mystagogues of the

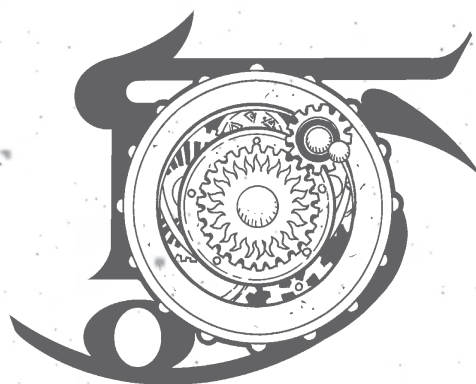
time theorized that the device was somehow storing Supernal power, possibly collected within it during the escape from Atlantis, and discharging it in the presence of fated subjects. Zeldenthuis later suggested that the appearance of the Capacitor triggered the end of the Nameless War and altered the threads of Fate to create the Free Council.

In 1911, word of the Capacitor reached a pylon of Seers of the Throne. Between June and November of that year, Seers or their agents made seven attempts to capture the Capacitor. A dozen Pentacle mages died keeping it away from the servants of the Exarchs. Some mages speculated that 13 mages would need to die in defense of the Capacitor, to balance the fateful accounts after the Capacitor’s 13 Awakenings. Unwilling to risk any more lives, Zeldenthuis chose to remove the Capacitor from the playing field. With a Time spell that must have been well outside his ability to perform, Zeldenthuis cast the Capacitor into the future. “We’ll see it again,” he wrote in the letter explaining his actions to the Consilium, “one day.” Zeldenthuis’s body was discovered with its heart cut out in a Mexico City hotel room seven days later; the heart was never found.

It’s been almost a century since the Capacitor vanished; either it has already arrived in the present or it has traveled a span of years no mage could command. Perhaps the Capacitor is sitting in another tomb somewhere, waiting to be rediscovered. Or perhaps the Capacitor’s own unique powers have propelled it further than any terrestrial mage could manage.

One day, when the world catches up to the date to which the Arcane Capacitor was banished, the fates of the Pentacle and Zeldenthuis’s artifact will collide again. Just where or when the artifact will reappear is a mystery, but handfuls of mages gather every year at Tula on November 11th, the anniversary of the Capacitor’s banishment, in case it should reappear. Doubtless, Guardians and Seers of the Throne watch in secret.

Some powerful wizard must have helped Zeldenthuis get rid of the Capacitor. Someone pushed the Capacitor into the future on Zeldenthuis’s behalf. That wizard, whoever he or she is, may be the only person who knows when the Arcane Capacitor returns.



# APPENDIX: THE LIBERTINE CHARACTER

*"Harmony of aim, not identity of conclusion, is the secret of sympathetic life."*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

In many chronicles, the most important representatives of the Free Council are the ones created and controlled by you — the players. Libertine leaders and opponents, Mentors and Retainers, may be a long way toward characterizing the Free Council in your chronicle, but the stories you tell are not ultimately about them unless they are the players' characters. Storyteller characters deliver vital exposition, and reveal secrets about the order's history in the World of Darkness and goals in the setting chosen for the chronicle, but these are not innately more important aspects of the order than those personified by the players' characters.

When you create a character who is a member of the Free Council, whether you're a player making a long-term protagonist or a Storyteller creating a supporting character for just one chapter, you are expanding the game world and broadening the limits of the order. This book might not dedicate a section to Libertine trash-miners who get mundane jobs with the city's garbage men so they can collect cast-off technologies and start an obsessively cataloged archive of potential sympathetic connectors, but if you — as a player or a Storyteller — turn that concept into a character and put it into play in your chronicle, then there it is. It's a part of your game world now and a part of the Free Council.

The Atlantean orders are not finite lists defining every idea at play in the world in advance of your every chronicle. They are meant to inspire you, to start the ball rolling. The Free Council isn't just a society of computer geeks and wizards with doctorates. Characters should be variations on an order's themes, not the answers to its admissions exam.

An order is a gameplay idea designed to facilitate the importation and exploration of ideas in your chronicle. The Free Council is a staging ground for character concepts that riff on the combination of old-fashioned occultist ideology and modern (or postmodern) trappings such as cutting-edge scientific breakthroughs and next-generation technology. Boil it down even further, and the Free Council becomes simply the order that boldly mixes old and new.

Avoid the temptation to smother either factor in that equation. Do that, and the idea loses its wonder. Wonder is at the heart of the Free Council.

## *Characters as Representatives*

When you create a character in any Storytelling game, you're also creating a part of the game world. If your character is a college professor, there must be a college somewhere near where the chronicle takes place. If your character is a mystic trash collector, there might be other mystic trash collectors in the game.

Invoking these people and places in the game world through your character can be helpful to the Storyteller or it can be a pain. If you bring in a wacky character concept, you undermine the game's feeling of wonder and danger. If you bring in a character whose whole reason for being is to hunt vampires with his awesome magic, then the Storyteller pretty much has to put vampires in the chronicle, whether she wanted to or not.

Thus, when you create a character, you're also making a statement about what you want to see happen in play. You're telling the Storyteller and the other players — explicitly or



implicitly — what you hope the chronicle will be about, at least in part. This is obviously true in a direct sense: you make a character who's a mechanic, and you hope cars play some important part in the stories you tell.

The same thing is true with themes. You might make a Free Council character because you want to tell stories that involve technological horrors or the wonders of human invention. You might make a Free Council character because you want to have a dramatic rapport with your friend's conservative *Mysterium* character. You might make a Free Council character because you want to use Mind magic as a metaphor for ideas you're studying in your psychology class.

Thus your character becomes a symbol in her own right. You might create a character who embodies the struggle of psychology to overcome mysteries of the mind (maybe she's an Awakened psychiatrist having trouble reconciling what she knows medically and what she sees with Mind spells). You might create a character who symbolizes the dangers of technological advancement without moral oversight (maybe he's a disturbed mage who tries to use scientific research to justify his immoral experiments).

Your characters aren't just representatives of the Free Council in your game world, expanding the definition of the order with every chapter they take part in. Your characters are also dramatic representatives of the themes you're passionate about, seen through the lens of the Free Council, and brought to life in the narrative of the game.

## *Science and Players*

Rather than trying to justify how spells work by explaining scientific principles, remind yourself that magic is magic and science is science. Magic doesn't necessarily excite molecules or split atoms to accomplish the same ends that science does — five dots in Forces lets you create a miniature sun but that doesn't mean it is scientifically identical to a star. It's magic.

Scientific authority is not necessary to be a powerful wizard, Free Council or no. Mages with physics degrees are not necessarily better with Forces than those without. The whole idea behind the philosophy of the Free Council is that scientific and technological knowledge broadens a mage's ideas about what's possible and helps him spot and recognize symbolic connections between the Fallen and the Supernal Worlds in even more places. The idea is not that only mages who are biologists can turn you into a frog. It's magic.

As mentioned before, symbolism is important in *Mage*. It makes crazy ideas like spells and spirits understandable to we who play the game. This idea of symbolism seeps into the game world, too, whether your character appreciates it or not. Far-out ideas (like most of those essential to understanding how magic works) are not necessarily easier for your character to understand than they are for

you. Your character hasn't read *Mage: The Awakening*. He might not have a real clear view of the essential principles behind spellcasting.

What your character knows is that, by holding his finger to his ear and tilting his head as if he had an ear-bud in, he can pick up radio signals even though he doesn't have a radio. Why is that? Is it because of frequency harmonics or the length of radio waves or something? Does your character even know?

It doesn't ultimately matter. It's not science. It's magic. Scientific knowledge only gives you and your character more fodder for creating evocative symbols. You use them when describing the actions your character takes. Your character uses them to get a sympathetic world to bend to his will.

How important is that symbolic action — a great rote mudra, by the way — to the successful casting of the spell? Very important. Not only is that finger-to-the-ear-motion magically symbolic in the fantasy world of *Mage*, it's dramatically symbolic in the real world where you're playing a game. It makes the utterly foreign action of casting a spell *feel* more authentic. It creates an image of your character in the mind of the other players — he's the guy in the blue windbreaker touching his ear and leaning over like he's taking a call in a noisy room.

## *Concepts*

Here's a host of character concepts for you to explore. Some of these are iconic, basic ideas that emerge obviously from the ideas of the order — practically the platonic Free Councilors, if you will. Others are wacky; maybe not the kinds of characters you'd want to play yourself, chapter after chapter, but the kind that make great Mentors, Allies, Contacts and Retainers. Some of these might suit Storytellers more than they suit players, but *Mage* plays out on a big stage, and there are no prohibitively strange roles if a player can bring them to life with humanity (and without annoying other players).

Not all of these concepts are going to be right for just any chronicle, obviously. The best character concepts are usually the ones that jive with the chronicle, so everybody's playing parts in the same big narrative machine. It's fair game to follow your imagination and create any character concept you like, but it's smart play to make characters that can fit snugly into the chronicle and become an essential part of the story.

## *How to Use These Concepts*

A character concept can start anywhere. It can begin with a mental image (the visual idea of a woman cautiously emerging from a computer monitor becomes "the digital witch"), it can begin with a personality sketch (the idea of

playing a character who has misinterpreted his Awakening becomes the “alien abductee”), it can begin with game mechanics (a desire to explore the Destiny Merit inspires a character whose life unfolds in the shadow of a fearsome future becomes “the future hero”). It’s all fair game. There’s no one way to arrive at a brilliant character concept. The play’s the thing, as they say.

Many of these concepts can easily migrate to other Pentacle orders as well. Follow them where they lead you. On the one hand, you want to exert creative control over your character, but on the other hand, it’s when a character starts inspiring her own decisions — starts sparking new ideas — that you know she’s come alive.

Rather than present a host of fully formed characters (which tend to feel like Storyteller characters when they arrive fixed in print like that), we offer the raw clay and essential ingredients you need to fire these concepts in your proverbial kiln.

### A Note on “You”

Throughout this section, the text refers to “you” as if “you” were the character being described. Obviously you, the reader, are not a time-traveling wizard or an arc-welding conjurer. This use of “you” is just a rhetorical trick employed to help you, the reader, imagine the role in play (and to save space in the manuscript). The best way to understand a character is to get into his headspace.

At the same time, “you” refers to you, the player, who will be turning one of these concepts into a fully formed character. Obviously the imaginary mage you create for the game does not “max out his Intelligence dots.” You, the player, do that. We trust you can keep all that straight, but just so it’s clear: You are not a wizard, and we both know it.

In addition to the root concept, each of the character sketches below offers some advice on how to build that character. This should tell you as much as if we showed you a Storyteller character with several dots in Medicine, while also going further than that. More than telling you what Skills the character might have, this tells you *why*. By stripping everything else away except for the essential traits for the concept, you’re left with just the vital goods, ready to be used as a non-combatant character or mashed up with another concept to create a complex and compelling villain.

These boiled-down concepts are like the essence of larger characters. Mix them, expand them, make them your own. Ideally, by getting your fingerprints on these ideas in this primordial state, they’ll feel more like your own when they see play.

### *Alien Abductee*

You saw a bright light. You felt yourself leave the Earth. You remember voices, strange faces and a weird vibrating hum. This pinkish-purple smoke was all around. It was very cold. The voices told you to write your name at the top of this dizzying pillar aboard their spaceship. The faces watched you do it. Beyond the smoke, you saw twinkling stars turning slowly around the axis of the tower where you stood. Then your abductors put something inside of you — they poured it in through your mouth and nose, filling you up inside. You thought you’d drown and die. Then you woke up in the grass of the empty lot behind your house. And when you opened your eyes, you could see the electricity running along the power lines like water on a string. You saw the waves of solar radiation rippling off the pink of the rising sun. You saw the sound of the birds singing on that power line. Nothing was ever the same after that — you’re not even sure if you’re really human anymore.

**Creation:** This is clearly a very intuitive character; somebody who relies on gut reactions more than reason. At the very least, this character doesn’t put a lot of trust in what people say is true, whether they’re scientists or Pentacle pundits. Making Resolve the stand-out Mental Attribute can describe that, but this character isn’t stupid either — he’s educated and imaginative — so to get enough dots to describe all that, make Mental his primary Attribute category. A few dots in Occult aren’t out of line, maybe with a Specialty in something like (Alien Abduction) or (Conspiracy Theories) to recognize his interests outside what’s mystical. Clearly, Forces is an important Arcanum for this character.

### *Alternative Physicist*

You don’t believe in magic so much as metaphysics. Everything that cannot be currently understood through physics can be made clear by exploring what the Pentacle calls magic, but what is really just a misunderstood dimension of the same universal laws that govern gravity and time. The Pentacle “wizards” of the Consilium would learn a lot from string theory. By understanding dark matter, we might all escape the risks of the Abyss. Why can’t anyone else understand this? It’s right there in front of us all.

**Creation:** The idea here is to explore what happens if you excel at the Libertine Skills of Crafts and Science without also valuing Persuasion. The alternative physicist may be brilliant, but he can’t get his considerable knowledge and profound ideas across to everyone who might benefit from them. Make Intelligence and Resolve the strongest Attributes, but consider leaving Manipulation at one dot. You might even have a high Presence or Composure rating, if the character is willful or up front, but keep dots out of Persuasion and Expression in favor of things such as Socialize (for grant money) and Empathy (“You’re not getting any of this, are you?”).



### *Arcane Programmer*

You're the skinny guy in the basement who keeps the tablet PCs and magical equipment working for the relic hunters. You're plugged into the phreaker scene, the online gaming scene and the so-called hacker scene. (Hackers aren't intruders, they're programmers — they hack together code.) You just can't tell anyone you talk to online that half the time you spend at the terminal you're writing code in an ancient and mystical dead language. More and more often, though, your work is left to go cold in the basement while you get dragged out by the order's explorers to help them tinker with the equipment they found in this old bunker.

**Creation:** This character's focused on function. His function to the cabal is clear. His function to you might be to provide an in to the weird mystical stuff that lets you make use of jargon you actually know from your time online. Computer is the obvious Skill here, while Matter is an essential Arcanum — lots of wondrous gadgets can be created by mashing two things together with Matter. With enough Resources to justify your equipment and a few dots in Contacts (Phreakers, Gamers, Hackers) to illustrate your social networking, you have a lot of flexibility left over to make this character stealthy, sexy, educated or tough.

### *Corporate Guru*

The future of the Fallen World will always be money. Corporations are the realms of the material future, and their skyscrapers are the towers of tomorrow. Liberty to you means free trade. Egalitarianism is a nice idea, but let us not confuse order with oppressive hierarchy — people should be free within their own class. The world needs leaders and servants, and while servants should get a vote, the minds at the top have the best view. Not everyone on the ground can appreciate how complicated it is to shape the business world to your will. Business is voodoo. It's an arcane art that, similar to religion and medicine in ages past, is occulted because it is complicated and dangerous to get wrong. Also, because it is much more lucrative if it has some mystique.

**Creation:** What if you agree with some of the Free Council's tenets but not all of them? What if the Free Council is not a perfect fit for you, just the best of the bunch? Not every mage can be a champion of the cause, and certainly not every Libertine is an egalitarian liberal. Free Councilors wear business suits in glass towers, just as the Sleepers around them do. This character must be valuable to the order to keep his colleagues from arguing with him all the time. So give him a lot of Resources and four or five dots in Skills such as Politics or Persuasion to map out his personal territory. The order's iconic Skill, Persuasion, is essential for negotiation, after all.

### *Cryptozoologist*

Not every creature on this planet can be understood through science. Not every creature on this planet can even be found and studied with science. There are things prowling the Earth that do not exist solely through natural evolution. Animals, too, Fell to this world from the Supernal. The touch of the magic leaves animals transformed. The meddling of mages has brought mythical beasts to life and then let them roam. You want to rediscover them. You want to see and touch the creatures you read and dreamed about as a child. One day, you will see a dragon.

**Creation:** The cryptozoologist is a character concept based on intent — playing this character tells the Storyteller, "I want to explore the world and find mythical creatures." So, assuming you'll be doing that, you'll want to be prepared with at least two dots in both Science and Occult. Consider Specialties in (Biology) and (Cryptozoology), naturally, and think about the Interdisciplinary Specialty Merit (see p. 132). Animal Ken, Survival, Stealth and Presence are important traits, while Life is your essential Arcanum. If the Storyteller's willing, put four dots in the Familiar Merit and characterize it as some minor cryptozoological specimen (a feathered snake or extinct owl) discovered on a previous adventure.

### *Digital Infiltrator*

You're part burglar, part spy and part saboteur — one of the Free Council's dirty little secrets. Soon, you'll be ready. Soon, you'll be traversing the world's fiber-optic networks and phone lines to reach distant enemies and lay the order's curses on them. The Column decides whom your enemies are, though, and you're not always clear on why this mainframe must be unmade or that executive has to have a heart attack. You trust the order because you want a better world. You've given up your freedom because, without the mages of the Free Council pulling the strings of Fate, there can be no freedom.

**Creation:** Take the ideals of the Free Council across the borders of the techno-thriller genre and bring an element of espionage to the chronicle. This is a concept that hinges on abilities beyond the grasp of a starting character, so you'll have to plan ahead if you want this concept for yourself. The "Jacking In" rote (see p. 112) requires Arcana that'll cost you some experience points, but put enough dots in them now and you're way ahead. Skills such as Stealth and Computer are vital for this character, but Weaponry and Subterfuge are good fun, too. To set up your membership in some select group taking orders from the local Column, put an extra dot or two into Order Status: Free Council and think about buying a Mentor. This concept is designed to bring questions of servitude and liberty into the chronicle, and a Mentor guarantees a Storyteller character close by to play out the moral debate with.

### *Epulitarian Saboteur*

Destroy the perpetrators of the Lie. Freedom is the one great natural resource of the Fallen World, and the agents of the Exarchs have all but succeeded in tricking humankind into destroying this precious gift. The Seers of the Throne use the world's vast multinational corporations to coerce humanity into eating its own young and shitting where it sleeps — and humanity does it. Humanity is enslaved by countless ubiquitous and symbolic artifacts exerting magical control over the Sleeper populace — dollar bills. Money is the mystic lash that has domesticated all humankind.

The glassy towers of commerce and industry are the Exarchs' outposts on Earth, casting shadows on the obelisks and capitol domes that symbolize liberty and equality. Those banal towers must come down. The chains of materialism must be snapped. The greedy executives who drink at the tit of the Seers should choke to death on their precious oil. The purpose of technology should be equality, whether it is the Internet that shares all our secrets or the bomb that destroys the slavers.

**Creation:** Here's a character who's ready for action, whether it involves a sniper rifle or a Molotov cocktail. This kind of passionate (and fanatical) operative is a terrific starting point for conflicts between factions within the Free Council. How far will your character go to stop someone who's supposed to be a comrade — who believes, on some level, that you and he are both right allies? What if this character is your character's Ally or Mentor? Will you support him just to maintain your relationship? At the same time, it's easy to either tone this character down for long-term play or to use this as the basis for a potential character arc — maybe your new Libertine mage used to think this way until his whole previous cabal was wiped out following someone's fanatical vision, or maybe this is the character your new Libertine revolutionary hopes, or is afraid, to become. It's a fair question: what kind of person turns so much of his attention to Firearms, Weaponry and death when the Awakening has given him so much power to create and transform?

### *Fortean Augur*

You've seen the signs. Phenomena across the globe are trying happening for a reason. They are part of a pattern the Pentacle mages aren't seeing because they won't take it all in at once, but the crop circles and the animal extinctions and the new viral plagues are all signs of a coming catastrophe. As the augurs of ancient Rome watched the birds for signs of divine feedback, you watch the Fortean phenomena for signs of celestial peril. Maybe the Exarchs are coming, maybe a new sundering of the Fallen World is imminent, maybe earthly spellcasting is polluting the mundane fabric of the material plane — whatever it is, it's going to get worse unless the Free Council can divine this forthcoming event and prevent it. Birds are dying in droves all over the planet.

**Creation:** This is a passionate, eccentric character good for monologues and fun to create dialogue for. Combine the Fate and Life Arcana to arrive at the kind of philosophical headspace you need for the Fortean augur, season with just enough dots in Science and Occult to fuel his panic and fill in some dots after Expression and Persuasion so people will hear what he's saying. If this character's doom saying is getting any attention within the order, give him a few dots in Status (maybe to reflect the attention and favor of a single high-ranking syndic who buys into his augury).

### *Future Hero*

**Destiny.** Other mages see they see it, this colossal destiny tying you to some great deed or event in the future of the order, but you don't. If anything, to you it feels like the threads of Fate have tied a noose around your neck. You're supposed to do this great thing, be this great man, but no one can say just what it is you're supposed to do, so how are you supposed to prepare for it? What if you spend your whole life learning how to fight and it turns out you're supposed to invent something? Are you just supposed to wait, then? Because waiting's the worst. Some days you wish this thing would just happen, good or bad, so you could stop holding your breath.

**Creation:** The Destiny Merit (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 81) is the hinge on which this whole concept turns. If you combine the Destiny Merit with the Free Council's fascination (or obsession) with the future, you end up with a great rock and a great hard place to put a character between. This is a great dramatic hook to hang a character on; it gives you flexibility in character creation (five dots of Destiny are all you need to fulfill the concept) and flexibility in play (10 dice per session from Merit is a huge boon). At the same time, you've given the Storyteller some great dramatic tools, starting with your bane and continuing on through all the imminent prophecy tropes that run through fantasy and horror tales. This can also provide a solid link between your character and the rest of the troupe's; each can stake out his own opinion of your character's situation, whether it's that of the jealous rival or the faithful mentor.

### *Humanist Muse*

You can defy reality, but only humankind can redefine it. The secret weapon that the Atlantean survivors had in the Fallen World was always humankind. This, of course, is why the Exarchs work so hard to keep humans sedated. A mage can alter reality in a moment, but it is never so lasting as the gradual and monumental changes mortals make to the world — or the changes that the Awakened work through humans. Every mortal who is Awakened is endangered, but every mortal who is inspired to change the world is a new hope. By steering the course of human history, the Free Council will not build a new Atlantis: the order will inspire the Sleepers to do it. That is the



true essence of the Awakened City — it is a place that Awakens all of humanity into a new age, not a place the Awakened will erect.

**Creation:** This character is a spy in a cold war with the Seers and the Guardians of the Veil. The battleground is humanity. The prize is an eternity of magnificence. This character requires Presence and Manipulation, with which to stir humankind, as well as Persuasion, Crafts and Science to help the architects of tomorrow arrive at their bold new ideas for the future. A Merit such as Vision (see p. 133) or Destiny (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 81) can help any character shape the world. This is a good concept for motivating other characters, whether he's used as a Storyteller-character Mentor or as your own character in the chronicle. Though this might seem like a boringly rosy character, tough choices and great challenges lay ahead for this one: Will you sacrifice a vulnerable Sleeper to keep the character away from the Seers of the Throne? What if someone doesn't *want* to follow your vision, will you rob people of their own freedom for the sake of completing your vision of the future? This character isn't a muse, he's a manipulator who is, for better or worse, using people for the sake of his own goals. Reconcile that with the Libertine manifesto, one chapter at a time.

### *Machine-Shop Miracle-Worker*

You're no college mage. They call it your sanctum, you call it your garage. There you are, a greasy king, dressed in coveralls and crowned with a stained bandana, holding court with the finest machines devised by the only force on Earth greater than magic: human ingenuity. Machines are your subjects, and you are their savior. You lay on hands, and they heal. You commune with them and hear their confessions. Instead of dipping your hands in holy water, you clean them with a linen rag. You are the ambassador to the machines, because no one knows how to talk to them better than you. Your cabal is your conduit to the rest of the world of the Pentacle, because you don't know how to talk to them at all.

**Creation:** This character exists at the strange intersection of the Matter and Spirit Arcana (so any Path except Moros or Mastigos is a fine choice). Despite considerable magical talent, this character is more mundane than Pentacle in his day-to-day life, so Free Council mages are his ideal buddies.



Skills such as Crafts and Drive are essential, while Wits and Dexterity are good for spotting and fixing problems. A Merit such as Informative (see p. 131) helps this character converse with spirits even if he's not so good at conversing with people. A down-to-earth character like this can be a great starting place for a new **Mage** player, and his position as a mage's mechanic puts him in a great spot to receive potential story hooks — every other story a mage can bring a broken MacGuffin in to be fixed. This is also a great Ally, Contact or Retainer for any mage with a car.

### *Radio Wise Man*

From across the night you speak, and they listen. Through the power of your will, your words become waves. Through the power of their technology, they are transformed back again into your message for Awakened and Sleeper ears alike. You sit on the hood of your car, smoking cigarettes and whispering into the radio waves that crosshatch across the sky. You are the ultimate radio pirate, soliloquizing through exhaled smoke on gin-scented breath. You talk to people on the train, you interview passersby, you make conversation with the strangest of the strangers in the all-night restaurant and you broadcast it all so that everyone in this city knows what it's really like here. You broadcast it through sorcery in hopes that anyone in the world above will hear it, too, and remember that there is still life down here on Earth. You broadcast it all in metaphors so the Awakened hear more than you say, and you broadcast it all loud enough that the Sleepers might awaken.

**Creation:** Manipulation, Expression, Persuasion and Forces are how you work your magic. Your voice is your best tool, and your will is made manifest through your words. You are the ultimate radio pirate. You would be a wizard even if you weren't a mage, because you're changing the world around you with words of power. If you think you've already caught on in this city, put a dot or two in Fame to represent your well-known voice. (Don't apply the Merit's effects if you don't speak during a scene.) This mage dwells uneasy at the intersection of Fame and Occultation, though — the cost of being heard is your sympathetic vulnerability. You embody a thematic modern conflict: celebrity versus freedom.

### *Stunted Prodigy*

You're the dysfunctional kid with the scary intellect. The doctors thought you were autistic — and maybe you are — but most of your troubles actually stem from your Awakening at a very young age. The weight of phenomenal power at such a young age means you'll never have the foundation of a normal mortal life to keep you grounded. At 15, you've been a mage longer than you were a Sleeper. The Fallen World hardly felt as if where you belonged before. Now it hardly seems real or relevant compared to the possibilities of the Supernal. You came to the Free Council because they were the order working closest to the doctors conducting your tests, so they found you first.

**Creation:** It's called “min-maxing” — the skewing of a character's traits to maximize some ability at the expense of things he should realistically have — and while it can ruin the suspension of disbelief or just seem crass, it can also be twisted to serve valid dramatic character concepts. In this case, we have a character so magically adept that he is dangerously out of sorts when dealing with mundane situations. This character can be a cautionary figure representing what happens when power gets out of control, and he can foreshadow what other characters will become in time. To make this a playable character, spend six of your Merits dots to get Gnosis 3 (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 66). This character is an aesthetic match for the Free Council if only because the image of the boy in a hospital gown and electrodes in a florescent-white observation room definitely speaks to the mood of technology smothering wonder.

### *Tech Journalist*

Your business card reads “Tech & Media Editor,” but you think of yourself more as an anthropologist living among a brilliant but isolated people: the Sleepers. Your cover job is as a reporter for some bleeding-edge tech rag, but your real mission is to investigate, analyze and record everything you can about Sleeper tech for the benefits of your colleagues at a Free Council Lorehouse. In part, this is to keep the order up-to-date on the breakthroughs of the Sleeper world. In part, this is to keep an eye out for magical components in Sleeper technology — the Seers of the Throne sometimes use technology as a vessel for spells that subjugate the masses, while rogue Libertines may undermine the order's credibility or stability by meddling too much in mortal affairs.

**Creation:** This concept hangs on an action — reporting — so the character has to be built to do that. Social Attributes should be primary, not just for talking with interview subjects but for keeping your real identity disguised. (Sometimes, this takes you skirting dangerously close to Seer slaves.) Wits is important for picking up on people's subtle signals (and for eyeballing the presence of magical meddling in Sleeper tech). Mental or Social Skills could be primary, as long as you have a professional rating in Expression (and maybe Empathy, too). You need to know Crafts if you want to know technology. Investigation is an essential part of good journalism. A dot or two in Status can represent press credentials, and Contacts are a terrific help. The Mind Arcanum might be cheating, but it gets you right to the bottom of most stories, while Matter and Forces let you look at new technology with better-than-human eyes.

On top of all that, this character concept imports a few conflicts into the chronicle and implies a certain kind of action. For this character to be useful (and for the player to have any fun), investigations should be a meaningful part of the chronicle. Subplots involving secrets behind



Sleeper technology can help bring together a cabal of mages from multiple orders (a Libertine to seek it out, a Guardian of the Veil to cover it up and a mystagogue to put it all to use for the cabal).

### *Techno-Archaeologist*

You're not looking for ancient technological relics. You're trying to keep old technology from sinking into the silt of history. You travel to important sites in 20th-century technological history — Los Alamos, Kennedy Space Center, Chernobyl — to recover technological artifacts that would otherwise be lost and record what you can about what you find. Life in the ancient world was slowly forgotten, and the biggest central lesson in archaeology is that we should strive not to forget who we are and who we have so recently been. Plus, as both an archaeologist and a mage, ever wary of attacks through sympathetic magic, you're sure it's a terrible idea to leave so much shit laying around. In the hands of your cabal's enemies, derelict technology is a threat. In your hands, it's an asset.

**Creation:** This character is focused on action and motivation — what you do is what you are. Dots in traits such as Wits, Academics and Investigation are obvious choices, while dots in the Space and Matter Arcana make it easy to find and recover what you're looking for. This concept also makes a great Ally or Mentor for a player's character, though, as he can provide important clues or deliver potential story-causing objects into play. This character might be a protagonist or antagonist in a chronicle about exploration (substituting real or imaginary government labs and military bases for Atlantean ruins), or he could be the agent of a player's character in a chronicle about Pentacle intrigue (perhaps mirroring the space race).

## *Merits*

### *Area of Expertise (●●)*

**Prerequisite:** Resolve ●● and a Specialty in the appropriate Mental Skill

**Effect:** Your character is uncommonly focused on a particular area of expertise. By purchasing this Merit, your character essentially doubles his Specialty in a particular Mental Skill, so that he gains a +2 dice bonus from that Specialty rather than the usual +1. This Merit can only be applied to one of the character's existing Specialties. This Merit can only be purchased once per character.

**Drawback:** A character with this Merit cannot have any other Specialties in the same Skill as Area of Expertise. Thus, if this Merit is purchased for the Automobiles Specialty of Craft, the character can never have any other Specialties in that same Skill.

### *Crafter's Sense (●●●)*

**Prerequisite:** Craft ●●● and a Specialty

**Effect:** Your character has an intuitive sense of her craft, born of experience. Good decision-making is habitual for her when it comes to her work.

This Merit grants all the benefits of the Common Sense Merit (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 108) but only regarding actions dealing with the character's Craft Specialty. The dice pool for the reflexive action to check the character's "common sense" is Wits + Crafts (instead of Composure). At the Storyteller's discretion, this "gut check" roll can be used to gauge the target number of successes on an extended action using the subject Specialty, in addition to all the normal uses of the Common Sense Merit.

If a character has both this Merit and the Common Sense Merit, each may be used once per chapter.

### *Manifestation Machine (● to ●●●)*

**Prerequisites:** Awakened and Familiar ●●●

**Effect:** Your character has an object with an unusual spiritual quality that facilitates his familiar's manifestation in the material world. Some mages describe this quality as being like an antenna that receives the familiar's spiritual "signal," while others suggest these objects actually reach into Twilight and serve as "hand-holds." Whatever the cosmological truth is, the effects are undeniable.

Each dot in this Merit grants your character's fetch a +1 die bonus on manifestation rolls within about 10 to 15 yards. The object has a Size equal to its Merits dots or larger. Even if the Manifestation Machine is a stella the size of a car (or is actually a car) it cannot be worth more than three dots for the purposes of this Merit.

You must work together with the Storyteller to determine what this object is. In general, assume a Manifestation Machine object has Durability and Size equal to its dots and Structure equal to twice its dots.

Outside of the Free Council, these kind of "spiritual receivers" are also known as Twilight buoys, spirit flags, fetch channels and myriad other names, any of which are suitable substitute names for this Merit as well.

### *Informative (●● or ●●●●)*

**Prerequisites:** Wits ●● and ●● in the appropriate Skill

**Effect:** Your character may not be much of a writer or public speaker, but get him talking about his work and he becomes downright erudite. Your character can use the dots in one of his Mental Skills, up to a maximum of the dots in this Merit, in place of Expression to lecture, write papers or otherwise inform an audience. Your character's performance may be dry or routine, but it will at least be clear and absorbing.



You must specify the Mental Skill to which this Merit applies when you purchase it. You can purchase this Merit multiple times, selecting a different Mental Skill each time.

### *Interdisciplinary Specialty (●)*

**Prerequisites:** ●●● in two Skills and a Specialty

**Effect:** Your character makes sense of the world through interdisciplinary thought. She sees metaphorical connections between different fields of study and, through those connections, achieves greater comfort and success more easily in both.

This Merit lets a character duplicate her Specialty in one Skill with another Skill. For example, a Medicine Specialty in Anatomy could be duplicated under Weaponry to describe a character's deadly precision. Or a Craft Specialty in Motorcycles could be duplicated under Drive to reflect a character's honed experience. The character must have three dots in both Skills used by this Merit.

**Note:** Because the Storyteller judges access to any Merit on a case-by-case basis, the application of this Merit is left deliberately vague — it essentially saves a player an experience point in exchange for adding cohesion to her

Specialties. Individual Storytellers must decide what Skills are suitable to be paired through this Merit based on the background and nature of the character involved. Some combinations (Anatomy as a Specialty for Weaponry, for example) will seem appropriate in some cases and inappropriate in others.

### *Make Do (● to ●●●)*

**Prerequisites:** Wits ●●● and ● in the appropriate Skill

**Effect:** Your character has some experience working under sub-optimal conditions. With poor tools or the wrong tools, she can change a tire, repair a roof or perform an emergency tracheotomy. When you purchase this Merit, assign it to a particular Skill (e.g., Make Do: Crafts). Reduce all penalties stemming from poor or inappropriate tools by the number of dots you have in this Merit. You still must need and have *some* kind of tools to attempt the action (you can't patch a tire or perform a tracheotomy with your bare hands), but you can scrape by with poor substitutes using this Merit. Note that this Merit does not add dice to your pool; this Merit negates penalties.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times to apply to multiple Skills.





### *Rational Explanation* (●●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Resolve ●● and Science or Academics ●●●●

**Effect:** Your character relies on rational thought, reason and his education to make sense of a frightening and irrational world. When required to make a Resolve + Composure roll to resist fear, panic or some other mental breakdown in the face of the supernatural, the character may gain an edge from the reliability of reason. When spending a Willpower point to augment such a Resolve + Composure roll, the character may substitute his Science or Academics dots for the +3 dice bonus he would typically gain. If the Willpower point is spent to increase Resolve or Composure for the purpose of subtracting from an aggressor's dice pool, this Merit increases the +2 dice bonus to +3 for a ●●●● Skill or +4 for a ●●●●● Skill. Specialties do not alter these effects.

This Merit can only be purchased once for any character. It must be linked to one Skill — either Science or Academics — when it is purchased and cannot be changed thereafter.

### *Scientist's Sense* (●●●●)

**Prerequisite:** Science ●●● and a Specialty

**Effect:** Your character has an intuitive sense of her scientific discipline, born of experience. Good decision-making is habitual for her when it comes to her work.

This Merit grants all the benefits of the Common Sense Merit (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 108) but only regarding actions dealing with the character's Science Specialty. The dice pool for the reflexive action to check the character's "common sense" is Wits + Science (instead of Composure). At the Storyteller's discretion, this "gut check" roll can be used to gauge the target number of successes on an extended action using the subject Specialty, in addition to all the normal uses of the Common Sense Merit.

If a character has both this Merit and the Common Sense Merit, each may be used once per chapter.

### *Vision* (● to ●●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence, Wits, Resolve or Composure ●●●●

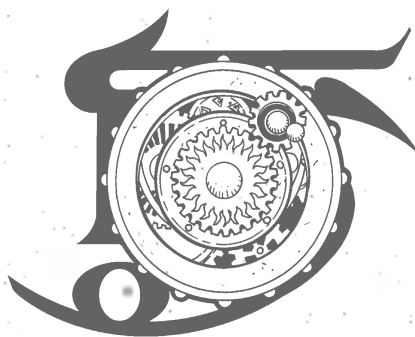
**Effect:** Your character has vision. He is capable of visualizing his wants with great clarity and knows how to use that vision to guide his work. A character with two or three dots in this Merit has vision on a smaller scale — he sees his sculptures, inventions or performances with unusual clarity. A character with four or five dots in this Merit has a uniquely vivid vision of whole worlds. Whether he uses his vision to paint, to govern or to achieve some other aim is up to him.

The character's vision helps him accomplish his goals. Essentially, this Merit gives a skilled character a chance to gain more than the usual +3 dice when he spends Willpower. By spending a Willpower point, your character can reflexively rely on his vision to "assist himself" on any extended action he performs, whether it's drawing the plans for a building, sculpting a statue or speaking in front of an audience (see "Teamwork," p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). The character rolls Vision + an appropriate Skill, and each success is added as bonus dice to the next roll on the extended action:

Your character may substitute his dots in Vision for either an Attribute or a Skill when rolling to assist another character on an extended action. The Storyteller has final say on whether a given trait can be replaced, however. Vision may be no substitute for Strength when lifting a boulder.

Willpower points spent to activate this Merit don't grant any of the usual effects of Willpower points; they simply allow the character to use the Merit. This Merit does not enable a character to spend more than one Willpower point per turn.

Though a character may be said to have gained this Merit through supernatural means, Vision is not in itself a supernatural power. A character's vision for the future may be the result of some supernatural experience or may simply be the product of a profound imagination.





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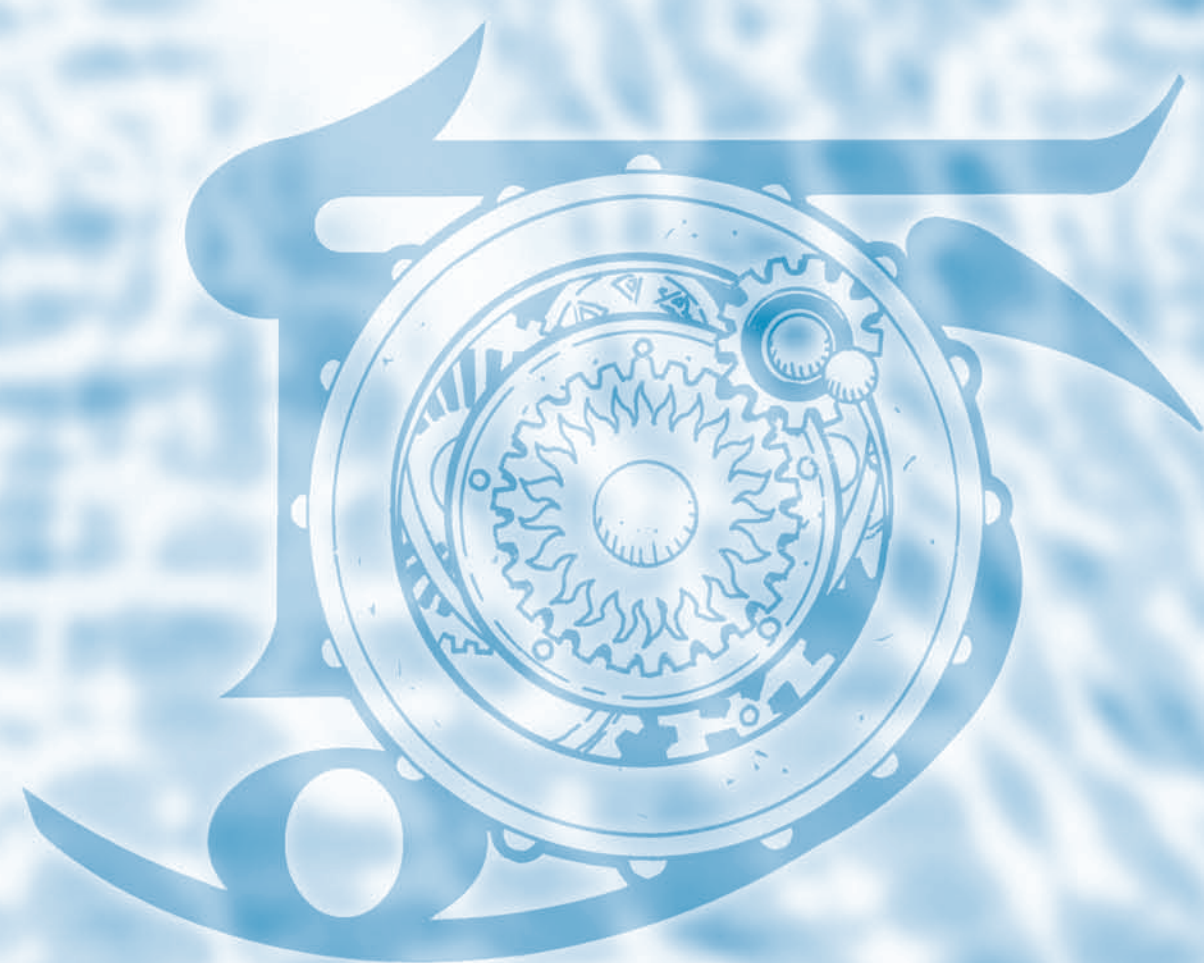




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