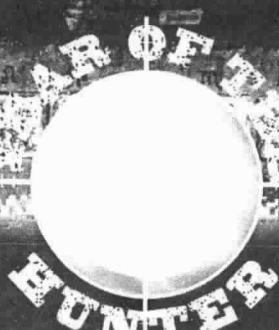
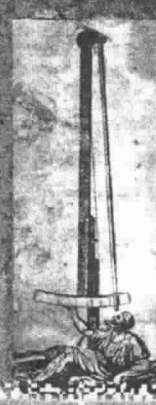
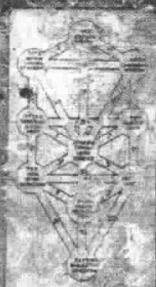
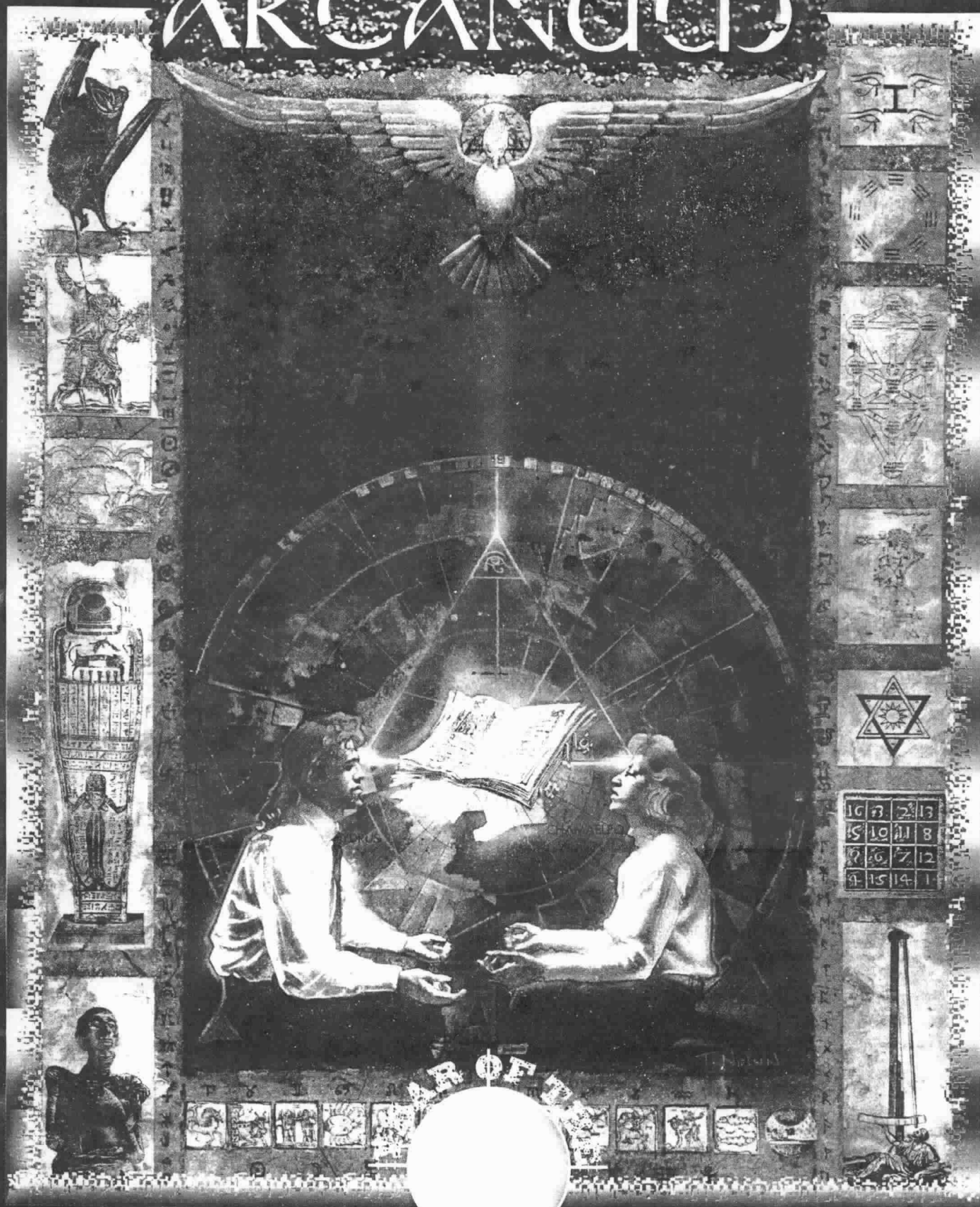


HALLS OF THE ARCANUM



HAELS OF THE ARCANOUM

Pilgrims of the Glittering Path

By James Estes

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Special Thanks To:

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Author's Dedications and Thanks

I would like to thank a number of people, starting with Terry Kevin Amthor, who helped me get my foot in the industry door.

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My gratitude also goes out to my Brothers from the Xi Stimac pledge class of Delta Lambda Phi, who helped me learn the meaning of Brotherhood and the Bond.

Thanks are particularly due to Thomas Walker, for his usual support and encouragement (and tolerance!) during the writing of this book.

Finally, **Halls of the Arcanum** is dedicated to my parents, George and Evelina Estes, for starting me on the Journey and encouraging me along the way. It all started with the *Great Books* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. With love and gratitude, your son.

HALLS OF THE ARCANUM

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Prelude:

Fragments from a Diary of an Unnamed Scholar

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own home, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, "What shall I do?"

— John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*

I am an old man now, my bones dry and brittle, about to snap under the pressing weight of my discoveries. Some critics have warned that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing: I would posit that more knowledge is a terrifying thing. I have spent much of my life in the Arcanum, cloistered away in this monastery, dedicating my life to the pursuits of the arcane. While those of my generation are prepared to retire, surrounded by the love and support of family members, I am alone, with only the company of others like myself — the numb comforting the numb. The Arcanum is my family now, and I must wonder if it was worth the cost. My eyes are dim from reading, my hands ache from writing, and I see a brood of vipers in my family's very den.

I first joined the Arcanum as a ruddy-faced youth, fresh from years of schooling in England's finest institutions. I was

nursed on Greek and Latin: Odysseus was my father, Athena my mother, Aeneas my brother. I always thought that when I entered university, I would begin formal training in the Classics, for an academic career of teaching and research in the literatures of Greece and Rome.

When my formal studies began, however, they took a new direction: A fellow student introduced me to Persian and Sanskrit, and my imagination was rekindled. The sacred texts of Iran and India were opened to me; the Avestas and the Vedas were my new den, the *Mahabharata* and the *Persian Epic of Kings* my new playground. I began a comprehensive study of the myths and epics of the Indo-European heritage. My mind was voracious, my intellect expanding beyond bound.

I learned then that my talent for languages was rare; what took others years of study took me only months, sometimes even weeks. Gaelic, German, Catalan — by the time I earned my doctorate, I could have taught in almost every language programme at Oxford or Cambridge. With language comes thought, and with the acquisition of these languages I studied their cultures, their beliefs and mythologies. My pursuits were fickle, yes — one day I was inquiring into the rituals of the Scythians and the Medes, and another day I sought to understand the mythology of the Celts. I searched for links between the thoughts and languages of otherwise disparate peoples, and glimpsed an element of universality through them all, a phenomena which has largely gone unnoticed or ignored.

(I must confess briefly that the languages of the Far East, strangely, held little appeal to me. Although my Mandarin and Tibetan were adequate, I felt little need to study the cultures of these regions. But I digress.)

It was because of my linguistic dexterity that I first came to the attention of the Arcanum. Having just graduated, I was facing the grim task of seeking employment. My fluency in a passel of tongues offered me prospects as translator or teacher, but I felt that my destiny lay elsewhere. It was, in fact, one rainy Sunday afternoon, as I was contemplating my options (which thus far were none) while sipping tea in my garden-view window, that I heard a knock on my door. My visitors were two of my former professors, scholars in Old Persian and Sanskrit.

We spoke for hours, the gray afternoon sliding gently into the soft sable night. I joined the Arcanum that evening.

Oh, the years of exploration and adventure! Voyagers abroad, my fellow Journeymen and I traveled the world. One month in Cairo, another in Lima; we were a happy band of scholars and investigators. Ascending the mist-shrouded Andes or burrowing through ancient cavedwellings in Cappadocia, debating philosophy or reading ancient texts to all hours of the night — these were the happiest times of my life.

But such happiness could not live forever. Our lodge eventually grew apart: some colleagues embarked upon personal quests, and devoted less and less time to cooperative efforts, while others retired to raise families, and still others died.

What did I gain from this? I have uncovered the truths behind so many events commonly overlooked, and I have learned things lost to human history. I have read the Poison Book, and have learned the secret of the White Tower. I know the truth behind the massacre of 30,000 Calvinists by the French crown on St. Bartholomew's Day. I know why the hearts and bodies of the Hapsburgs are buried separately in the Loretto Chapel. I have seen what secrets lie behind

the ruins of the ruins of Allegri's Miserere, and I have seen the fate of the Arcanum, and what riddles lay locked in the eyes of Notre Dame.

How sad the many years of study and travel, much of which proved ruinous to my health, to learn that the truth which I so eagerly sought could be found within me. The experiences which defined my life, however powerful, however utterly real and significant (and frightening in light of what contemporary man believes to be "the real world"), are meaningless. True, I have seen and understood much beyond the pale of commonly accepted world views. I have dined with magi and seen the fay folk dance by moonlight. I have learned that death is only a milepost on the highway, and not a terminus. But these experiences were ultimately tangential to my true quest.

The soul is cloaked by a lifetime of experiences and encounters which serve not to enrich this essential core of humanity, this fragment of divinity, but rather to shadow and obscure it. Only by cutting through the many layers of facades and imposed ideologies that develop through time may we come face to face with our true selves. Both the Journey and the destination can be painful, but the specific path one travels is of little import. Whether one chooses the shamanic practices of tribal societies, the meditations of Orthodox monks atop Mount Athos, or the clinical processes of modern psychotherapy, the final goal is the same: to learn how to slice away the many layers beneath which the soul is buried. This is a painful process, for we build these layers to protect ourselves from the truth, a truth which is more painful, at times, than fiction. "The truth hurts" is a profound statement, though it is bandied about as a trivial cliché.

I look now at my own home. The Foundation House of the Arcanum is honeycombed with hidden passages — as many secrets as may be found in the Arcanum itself. And what of these secrets? The Arcanum is dedicated to the unraveling of mysteries, but what other truths is it hiding? Is this where the questions begin, or where they end?

I am an old man now, too old to begin another quest, and I have learned much, perhaps more than I was meant to know. Some dismiss my musings as the prattling of a doddering old fool — but they are more the fool for believing so. I will let the secrets come to me, or they are unworthy of my attention. I see new generations of scholars preparing to embark upon the Journey, and I fear for, as well as envy, them. They are about to undertake the greatest quests anyone can imagine. Though some will fall by the wayside, others may eventually achieve their goals. And some may learn, as the Sufi parable teaches us, that in all our searchings ultimately we are the sought and Heaven the seeker.

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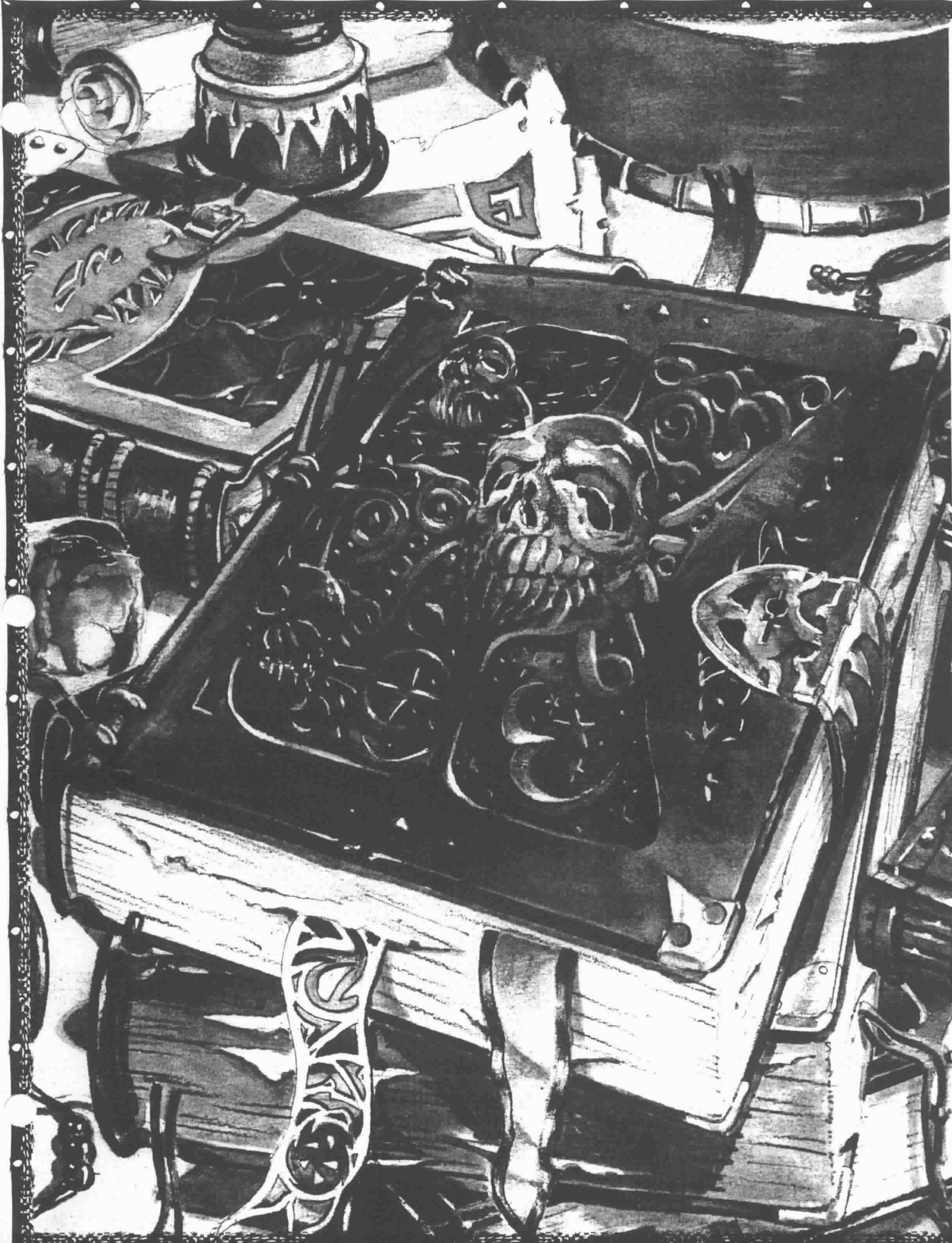
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Introduction

There are some areas of the human mind, and indeed of the world we live in, that were never meant for investigation. There are always those who delve into the darker worlds of knowledge, and many pay with their sanity for their interest...

— Intro to *Hayward Sanitarium* (A Last Minute Productions audioplay)

Halls of the Arcanum is a book — or, more properly, three books — detailing the organization known as the Arcanum, a mortal society dedicated to the pursuit and acquisition of arcane knowledge.

The Arcanum's goal is both academic and religious; it exists in the middle-ground between mystic quest and scholarly activity. Its members (over 500) come from all walks of life, but it is known to attract intellectuals: linguists, archeologists, philosophers, historians, etc. But no matter what the profession or avocation of its members, they are united by a common purpose: the search for enlightenment.

We live in a sanitized world, where the true meaning, the richness of life, is stripped away by the antiseptic nature of contemporary society. The Arcanum looks back to a time when the cosmos held some significance; everything had a purpose, nothing was coincidental, and the world was a representation of the divine. For some, this means the investigation of supernatural mysteries long ignored by common man. For others, it means the quest for immortality and purification: the Philosopher's Stone, Excalibur, Shamballah.

How to Use this Book

Halls of the Arcanum is divided into three sections:

- The first book, **The Neophyte's Guidebook**, is a basic discussion of the Arcanum — its history, its politics and its members.
- The second book, **The Journeyman's Guidebook**, presents information about creating Arcanum characters, as well as prominent individuals that beginning Arcanists may one day meet.

• The third book, **The Mystagogue's Guidebook**, hints at some of the Arcanum's mysteries. Many of these suggestions are deliberately left sketchy to subvert player foreknowledge. Even so, this book is designed for Storytellers, and players are advised not to read it.

Theme

To the seekers of the Arcanum, knowledge is its own reward. The thrill of uncovering a vampire's daily habits far outweighs the risk or implied monetary value that might come with that knowledge.

Learning, however, does not always equal wisdom. With such knowledge comes pride, often foolish — sometimes fatal. This pride blinds the seekers to the dangers not only without, but within. There are forces working inside the Arcanum, guiding it like some pawn of unknown purpose. The things its investigators uncover may be turned against them someday.

Mood

The Arcanum is not a combat corps; its methods and adventures are far more subtle than the average Ascension conflict. Arcanists, moreover, are often in the dark about many of the things they seek to uncover: they know little of the fierce games the supernaturals play, or of the stakes involved. Still, the echoes of those conflicts are felt in the investigators' discoveries. Imagine, if you will, searching in dim light for a precious treasure you know to be just out of reach. The mood of Arcanum adventures should be apprehension mixed with wonder. The tales of Lovecraft, Derleth, Poe and Campbell sum up this heady brew quite well.

Enter, observe, and wonder.



Book I: The Neophyte's Guidebook

Chapter One:

The Way of the Pilgrim

(Joining the Arcanum)

*We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further: it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea,
White on a throne or guarded in a cave,
There lives a prophet who can understand
Why men were born; but surely we are brave,
Who make the golden journey to Samarkand.*
— James Elroy Flecker

Istanbul, Turkey

The Kapali Charshi, the Grand Covered Bazaar, was crowded, but this was not unusual. No one seemed to mind the fact that elbow room was at a premium; as long as you didn't hit your neighbor with the heavy bundle you were carrying, everyone was satisfied. But it was thinning now, the afternoon siesta beginning to draw the shop keepers and tourists away from their stalls and booths to the comfort of their homes and hotels, a warm meal and a soft bed.

They met their contact in the Covered Bazaar, as she had instructed them. Sipping thick-brewed Turkish coffee, the young woman had been waiting; she turned her dark, guarded eyes in their direction and gestured for them to sit with her. A small boy came almost immediately, bringing more coffee in intricate demitasse cups.

"You brought what I asked of you," she said in her thick accent. It was less a question than a statement.

Helen nodded, and withdrew a small bundle from her backpack. She slid it over to their contact, without removing her hand from the package. John glanced around uneasily. This looked too much like a drug transaction, and

he did not want to spend any time in the Turkish prisons-of-ill-repute. He'd seen *Midnight Express* one too many times.

The Gypsy reached expectantly for the bundle. Helen's hand pressed down on it quickly. "Not yet," she said in Turkish. "Where is our information?"

The woman reached beneath her shawl. John tensed, his fingers inching closer to the handgun he had concealed. Oh God, a shoot-out in a public place at midday, he thought. *I'm never going home.* A sheen of perspiration beaded on his forehead.

The Gypsy laughed at John, a light-hearted trill with a slight note of mockery. She withdrew her hand from the shawl, clutching a folded piece of paper between her fingers. She flipped it open to reveal an address. "This is your next destination." The woman slid the paper across the table to Helen, who reached for it eagerly. John glanced over her shoulder to read what was written: the address was only a few blocks away.

He looked up. The Gypsy was gone, along with her payment.

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*
— Robert Frost, "The Road Less Traveled"

Dear Mr. Lewis:

I am delighted that you have taken up my offer to pursue full membership in the Arcanum. The research you have undertaken as an Associate of the Arcanum has been of great value to us; your contributions to the discipline are both noted and appreciated. (The fact that we are both Cambridge men might, I admit, cause some small bias in my evaluation.) I can offer my assurances that your association with the Arcanum will be invaluable to you.

From our earlier correspondence, you already know of my respect for your work in early modern European history. Although I confess that I disagree with a few of your interpretations, I cannot fault your scholarship or your intellect. I believe that in time, you may modify your views. I came to many of the same conclusions you did at the beginning of my academic career, but Time has a way of changing things.

I have watched your career develop over the past year, and more importantly, I have seen some of your personal growth as well. I believe that you no longer view knowledge as merely the accumulation of "information," a commodity to be bartered or purchased in today's quantified information society. It is apparent from our recent conversations that you have begun to understand knowledge's intrinsic value and innate importance. It is my own belief that the search for knowledge is a sacred quest, a path which is a rough, but in the end rewarding, Journey. As a new member of the Arcanum, you yourself will soon embark upon this Journey.

You will learn much about the Arcanum and the world on this Journey. This is no mere formal proceeding; the Journey itself is as real as the destination. There are, however, a few things you should understand:

- The Arcanum is not simply a scholarly society; it is a fraternal organization dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of wisdom. As such, we are bound by certain rules and philosophies.

- After your Induction, you will be a Neophyte, one who has begun the Journey. Your role as Neophyte is that of a student: you shall learn our history, our means of operation. You will only learn, however, what we show you; there is much that we cannot reveal until you are ready.

- The Neophyte is mentored by an Elder Brother. I shall be such to you. I am here to act as Guide, as well as to Guard you. As a Neophyte, you do not have a full voice in the Arcanum: I will speak for you. Likewise, the wishes of the Arcanum will be revealed to you through me. The importance of trust in our relationship cannot be more greatly stressed.

- You will be Tested throughout the Journey. Some Tests will come from the Arcanum, planned encounters to

see whether you are truly the caliber of person we can count on. There will be other Tests of character, however, and these will be spontaneous. If you believe in coincidence, then you may discount them; they will, however, be real Tests.

- You are never alone on your Journey. In addition to my guidance, there are other Neophytes who will join you. Regard them as your family; they will be your companions on your Journey, and you shall come to count on them for your very life. Never dismiss the bond that will develop with your associates, for they will be your Brothers and Sisters.

- Once you begin the Journey, you truly cannot turn back. The road you will embark upon, though unseen by many, is quite real, and when you set foot upon it, it will forever change the way you see the world. Many will fall by the wayside, unable to complete the Journey, but even so their lives will never be the same.

Some of what you learn will push the boundaries of your world view. If I may use the metaphor of a tapestry, your world view will slowly unravel. At the end of the Journey, however, you will have developed a new perspective, one much richer than you would otherwise have known, with a broader variety of threads and a greater multitude of colors than you can now imagine.

I will call you soon so that we can schedule our first meeting together. In the meantime, feel free to call on me for any reason at any time.

Yours,

Geoffrey Truesdell

Journeyman & Elder Brother

The Arcanum

Washington Chapter

TO: Geoffrey Truesdell

<gtruesdell@pico.gtown.arcanum.com>

FROM: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>

RE: The Arcanum

I received your letter yesterday, and I'm writing to thank you for your invitation. I have valued our correspondence and communications, and I believe that joining the Arcanum will be a positive step for me, both professionally and personally.

I am somewhat confused about this "Journey" you keep referencing. I realize that you're speaking allegorically, and not in terms of a real trip — although I would like to visit "HQ" in London! — but your meaning is unclear.

I had always thought of the Arcanum as a clearinghouse of sorts, a professional society for those of us with interests in the more... arcane? unusual? ...facets of history. I realize that it sponsors incredible scholarship and research into fields that are typically neglected by most institutions of higher learning, and that this material is exclusively the province of full members of the Arcanum.

My decision to join the Arcanum may not be quite so noble or high-minded as you believe. As an Associate, I have only marginal access to research materials, and limited contact with the Arcanum; I felt that by-becoming a full

member, or "Journeyman" to use your parlance, I would have available to me the whole of voluminous research in which the Arcanum has been involved. I did not request to join based on any deep "spiritual" conviction, as you seem to imply.

I'm actually a little nervous about the way you discuss the Arcanum; you almost make it seem like a religious order of some sort.

Well, I'm only expressing these fears so that we may start out with no misconceptions. You did say that I will need to realize the importance of trust, and I wish to be completely honest with you. If you have any questions, feel free to write or call.

Later.

TO: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>

FROM: Geoffrey Truesdell

<gtruesdell@pico.gtown.arcanum.com>

RE: The Arcanum

Jonathan, do not worry.

I did not misunderstand your motives for wishing to join the Arcanum. What you spoke of is quite common; many of our members begin as Associates, performing limited research for us in exchange for either monetary payment or similar services rendered in turn. I am fully aware of your stated reasons for wishing to join the Arcanum.

However, we have spoken often, and many times I have "seeded" our conversations with various statements or viewpoints primarily as a means of testing your ideology and personal philosophies. At the risk of sounding pretentious, I believe I may have figured out a few details of your personality to which you yourself are still blind.

There is much, much more to the Arcanum than you are now aware of. Some of this shall be taught or revealed to you throughout your period as Neophyte; the rest you shall simply learn from experience.

Everyone's schedule has been coordinated, and the Induction date is now set for 1 October, at 7 p.m. Park your car on the street and meet your fellow Neophytes at the gates; you will be summoned when we are ready.

BTW — I am advising you, as I have your fellow Neophytes, to begin a Journal. You are embarking upon a Journey, and you should record your thoughts as you progress further and further along the path. (Remember, after all, that the terms "journal" and "journey" share the same etymological root.)

Yours,

GT

TO: Geoffrey Truesdell

<gtruesdell@pico.gtown.arcanum.com>

FROM: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>

RE: Stuff

>>>However, we have spoken often, and many times I have "seeded" our conversations with various statements or viewpoints primarily as a means of testing your ideology and personal philosophies. <<

Crafty devil!





Well, this all sounds fascinating. I'll see you soon.

Jonathan

The Journal of Jonathan Lewis

1 October 1994

Tonight was my Induction into the Arcanum. I'm not quite sure what to make of it.

To begin: I followed Geoffrey's instructions, and arrived at 7 p.m. I couldn't see much of the House, hidden as it was behind enormous vine-covered walls; in any of my dealings with the House, in fact, I've always met Geoffrey at a library or coffee shop, but I've never set foot on the grounds.

Regardless, I met my fellow "Neophytes" while waiting:

Nahar Khan, a Bengali-American woman in her late 20s, is a licensed psychologist as well as a practicing parapsychologist. Her primary interests are split between the "unexplored dimensions" of the human mind and "paranormal activities," by which she is referring to ghosts and hauntings.

I asked why she joined the Arcanum. She came to their attention a few years ago when she created the Foundation for Paranormal Studies, a small private organization dedicated to the research of "the psychic and paranormal." The FPS managed to attract a number of like-minded researchers, and started an annual journal (*The Proceedings of the Foundation for Paranormal Studies*), but unfortunately the foundation lacked the funding to grow.

A few months ago a researcher for the Arcanum contacted Nahar to discuss the possibility of her joining the Arcanum and conducting research on its behalf, while the Arcanum privately funds the FPS and its journal — provided that Arcanum research was never released. Facing little more than bankruptcy and a scholarly dead-end, Nahar enthusiastically agreed to join.

William Barron, a friendly but somewhat reserved man in his early 20s, is a linguist who claims to be fluent in Sanskrit, Coptic, Persian, Syriac, Aramaic, and Arabic — "in addition to 'a passel of classical and modern European languages.'" Also an Associate member of the Arcanum, he has assisted them with translations of numerous manuscripts recently uncovered in the Middle East. I was greatly surprised when he revealed that most of his training was through independent study; he never finished his undergraduate degree in English, having found most academic study to be too regimented and constrictive.

Paul DeLevie was an unusual fellow. I wasn't sure what to make of him: tall and easy-going, he seems as rugged and "outdoorsy" (to use the vernacular) as they come. He identified himself as a jack of all trades and "a reservoir of manly knowledge," and although the last comment was said tongue-in-cheek, I don't think he was lying. He finally revealed that his training was in engineering, but that he had been hired by the Arcanum on other occasions as a "special consultant," though he would not say specifically what he consulted them on — probably "tough-guy" things. Whatever.

So it appears Geoffrey was right: what I had expected to be a scholarly society was a gathering of individuals with their own unique talents and skills. "Everyone has something to contribute," Geoffrey remarked to me later that night.

But contribute to what exactly?

Finally, a young lady opened the gates for us; she was dressed in a formal business suit, her dirty blonde hair drawn back from her rather pretty face. Before we could say anything, she spoke:

"I am the Gatekeeper. Are you prepared to begin the Journey?"

"Sure," Paul said, the first to speak. I shrugged, and the others nodded assent.

"The Gatekeeper" escorted us through the entranceway. The Chapter House was an elegant brick Edwardian manor, beautifully lit. We were led in silence down the driveway to the house's main entrance. As we walked, Paul pointed out things I never would've noticed: cameras, alarms, and other rather extreme security devices craftily hidden throughout the grounds. He was shushed by the Gatekeeper — whether because his casual chatter was spoiling the decorum, or because such equipment should not have been so easily spotted, I don't know.

We climbed the steps to the smallish front porch, where the front doors were opened by a tall, imposing man in a severe gray suit, who looked as though he should be protecting the President, not answering doors for scholarly societies. Paul leaned over my shoulder and whispered, "If you bet that he's armed, you'll win."

As our group moved through the foyer, I had a chance to peek around: the parlors on both sides of the entrance were elegantly appointed, and lit only by candles (although I saw light switches on the walls). We were taken to a set of double doors that stood closed before us.

The Gatekeeper gestured us aside and came forward to open the doors. Beyond the entrance, I only saw darkness; the dim candlelight from the parlors did nothing to penetrate the shadows that lay within.

The Gatekeeper, her back to us, called into the darkness: "The Neophytes are prepared to begin their Journey. Who will guide them?"

"I will," answered a voice from within the chamber, which I immediately recognized as Geoffrey's. His figure appeared from out of the darkness, faintly illuminated by the candle he had just lit.

"Geoffrey Truesdell, will you be the Elder Brother for these Neophytes?" the Gatekeeper asked.

"I will," Geoffrey repeated.

Our Gatekeeper stepped aside, and Geoffrey approached. I saw then that he wore a tuxedo, with a black mantle on his shoulders. A blue sash crossed his breast, and on the sash was pinned a small silver owl. "Neophytes," he said, impassively, "the Journey awaits. Are you prepared?"

"Yes," we said almost in unison. (It was kind of bizarre, actually).

The rest of the ritual seemed fairly standard — invocations of "the Creator" (Geoffrey never said "God"), vows of secrecy and silence, obedience to the mission and regulations of the Arcanum, etc.

We were each awarded with a small silver owl pin, similar to Geoffrey's. Geoffrey said that the Owl was the symbol of the Arcanum. According to Christian tradition, the Owl is a sign for bad and evil things: blindness to faith, the ensnaring of souls, the devil, witchcraft, you name it. The Arcanum keeps with a more classical interpretation of the owl, a creature which hunts its prey at night, and which sat upon Athena's shoulder: "the Owl and the Arcanum," according to Geoffrey, "are both hunters of the hidden, whether it be prey or knowledge. Do not be mistaken, we are not armchair scholars. We actively pursue the truth, in whatever form it takes."

Motives

7 October 1994

We gathered on the second floor of the Chapter House in Georgetown, where "Elder Brother" Geoffrey Truesdell will hold weekly meetings to discuss the history and beliefs of the Arcanum. The library covers almost the entire second floor of the house, and is filled with an incredible collection of tomes. Geoffrey told us that many of the books had been

Publications

Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum

The Arcanum started an annual journal, the *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, in 1912; this periodical highlights the year's best scholarship in the history of the occult sciences. The articles are carefully written and edited to conform to the scholarly standards of any academic journal, and do not reveal any of the Arcanum's particular biases or activities.

The submissions are subject to peer review and criticism; once a piece is accepted, it is then scrutinized to make sure that any knowledge or research which is not yet widely known — meaning, not yet released outside of the Arcanum — remains that way: the Arcanum reveals its secrets only when it is ready to do so.

Sometimes individuals who are not members of the Arcanum submit articles for publication; although the Arcanum prefers sponsoring and supporting its own scholarship, it will not ignore the efforts of others.

Arcanum Press

The Arcanum also began its own private imprint, dedicated either to releasing important new pieces of scholarship or keeping in print classics in the occult sciences. It publishes, on the average, two books per year. Each volume is clothbound and Smyth-sewn, utilizing acid-free paper and conforming to international printing standards of durability and permanence. The Arcanum Press has been working for over seven years on the production of a large multi-volume Encyclopedia on the occult sciences.

Both the APA and the Press are published and edited out of offices in London.

The Syllabus, c. 1878

1. The Arcanum is an organization dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. We, the members of the Arcanum, seek our own enlightenment and the enlightenment of our Brothers and Sisters, and ultimately wish to aid in the enlightenment of all humanity.

2. The Arcanum posits that there exists another world, one in which the supernatural and mythological teachings of the Ancients bear truth. We believe that this world conjoins with our own, and that it is our duty to understand its secrets. We shall seek this knowledge in the places of mystery, through the pages of history, and in the lore of all peoples. As the Ancients understood, so, one day, shall we.

3. The Arcanum believes that only through scholarship and learning can one separate fact from fiction, and can mere superstition be shown from supernatural truth. Myths and folklore speak of higher truths, and it is through diligent study and investigation that these higher truths may be revealed.

4. The Arcanum exists to learn, not to manipulate. We are objective observers, and not judges. The Arcanum does not evaluate the "morality" of the supernatural simply in light of the fact of its existence, nor does it take action against the supernatural based upon any predetermined system of ethics.

5. What the Arcanum studies and learns, it does so for its own benefit. The resources of the Arcanum are not to be shared with anyone outside the Arcanum, nor shall the precious knowledge earned by our studies be spread without the consent of the Executive Committee. When it is time, we shall teach others; for now, it is our duty to safeguard this knowledge, to protect it from a humanity that is not yet ready to receive it.

recovered from "the Boston fire," which we would learn about in time.

I took some time to survey the library; its organization made some sense, but I wasn't able to fully piece together the scheme. Although I've never had any professional library training, it doesn't take much to figure out most library classification schemes; even if I can't anticipate where a book may be placed, I can usually understand the scheme *ex post facto*.

Not so with this library — books of seemingly no connection were placed side by side. For example, one entire cabinet contained books on linguistics and magic theory. I pointed this out to Geoffrey, who indicated that the library used a uniquely modified medieval scheme shared by all Chapter Houses of the Arcanum. The scheme was first used in the Axis Mundi, the Arcanum's central library in London, and it has never been changed.

"Grammar and magic belong together," according to Geoffrey, "because they were both related; they were associated with education and learning."

Barron, our linguist, chimed in then: "Their etymological histories even bear this out: reference *grammar* and *glamour* in any good dictionary."

"Why not change the scheme to something more... universal?" Nahar asked.

Geoffrey replied, "Our scheme may seem arcane, and it is. However, this system works on a number of levels, addressing higher truths that are not always evident in contemporary divisions — or more precisely, fragmentations — of knowledge.

Geoffrey eventually began our introductory session. He said that our training would be run very much like a graduate seminar — at which William visibly winced. We would all be given the same packet of readings dealing with particular periods in the history of the Arcanum, and we would then be assigned individual areas to discuss. Each week, we would read the common materials, and make presentations based upon our independent research.

Most of the common readings were photocopies from notes compiled by Seneca Hunt, the recently deceased historian who had begun researching a thorough history of the Arcanum. He had only gathered marginal notes and basic materials — including primary research from journals and correspondence — before he suffered a heart attack. (Geoffrey said that no one had been chosen yet to replace Hunt, an expert in Elizabethan studies, in his work.)

Mission

Our first session was a discussion of the basic structure of the Arcanum, a society just over 100 years old that is dedicated to the research and study of somewhat esoteric fields. All members of the Arcanum are guided by a loosely defined set of principles, which were established in 1885, and have been modified slightly through time. The last official revision was in 1978.

The Arcanum is known to the academic community, but only as a scholarly society. The more personal interests of the Arcanum's members, and the views officially endorsed by the Arcanum's leaders, are not revealed to the general public.

Recruitment

We also discussed the Arcanum's recruitment methods. The methods vary from place to place, but a few common themes emerged. Typically, when potential recruits are discovered, they are first offered Associate status, so that time and further contact may allow for a more careful determination of whether the individual truly merits membership.

When enough potential members are recruited (at least three, normally), then a new Neophyte class is established. A Neophyte's training may vary somewhat from Chapter to Chapter, but it typically lasts for about two or three months.

Associations

Many Arcanists are also, by nature of their occupation, members of other professional societies and organizations. Arcanists always keep an eye out for potential recruits among these various groups. An individual's membership in the Arcanum is typically not considered a secret issue, and Arcanists are often approached by colleagues interested in the possibility of joining our fellowship.

The Arcanum also uses its annual proceedings as a means to target possible recruits. Even if an article is not deemed worthy of publication, it may still alert the Arcanum to the existence of an individual with common goals, who could prove a valuable resource for the Arcanum as well as benefit from it himself.

The Arcanum's Hierarchy

Associate: This category includes junior scholars, researchers or investigators who wish to work with the Arcanum, but not be fully bound by its dictates. Associate Members do not receive the privileges accorded to full members, including access to many of the Arcanum's resources, holding offices, etc.

Neophyte: Neophytes are those who have decided to embark upon the Journey and become full members of the Arcanum; many of them began as Associates. Neophytes are viewed as those who seek enlightenment, and not just research; as such, they are always assigned a mentor, a senior member of the Arcanum who guides them along their path. They are allowed access to Arcanum literature and resources, but only at the discretion of their Elder Brother. Neophytes are often treated as "children" by other members of the Arcanum — they are to be seen, not heard.

Journeyman: Those who successfully complete the period as Neophyte, which is concluded by examination and ritual, go on to the next level of Journeymen (or Journeywomen, as female members have begun to call themselves) and are considered full members. They are granted all the rights and privileges thereunto. Journeymen often address each other as Brother or Sister, whether this developed from the fraternal model of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day (the occult fraternity from which many of the Arcanum's founders hailed), or more ecclesial models, is not known, but the earliest members of the Arcanum are seen in their correspondence to use "Brother" as a standard vocative.

Elder Brother: This is an honorific title, one granted to members who have shown themselves to be of good counsel and temperament, and have often been called upon for advice on any number of matters. Most Neophytes' Mentors come from this rank of distinguished members.

Women were inducted into the Arcanum as early as 1893; after an initial period of treatment as less-capable members, they soon achieved equal consideration from members. Many women have been granted the title and responsibilities of Elder Sister.

Publications

Most within the Arcanum are voracious readers, and they keep abreast of the professional reading in their fields: journals and new books attract most attention, since magazines are normally deemed "too mundane" and lacking in sophistication. Individuals who publish articles of note may be contacted by Arcanum recruiters for personal interviews.

The Internet

The Arcanum is now exploring a new medium of communication: the many listserv and Usenet discussion groups to be



found on the Internet, a system which links up businesses, universities, and organizations across the world. Individuals who might have valuable things to say and lack the proper forum for communication suddenly have a chance to be heard, and there are a number of discussion groups dedicated to the scholarly study of the supernatural.

Unfortunately, giving everyone a voice often means everyone has something to say, and wading through the daily swirl that accumulates on the Internet is a daunting task for any potential recruiter.

But at least a few new recruits have been found through the Internet, and this forum has not yet been totally discounted. Some in the Arcanum are actually thinking of establishing a public Arcanum-list, serving a function similar to that of the *Annual Proceedings*, and also using it as a means to observe possible recruits.

Observers & Professional Contacts

Frequently, new members are found through the regular business of the Arcanum. More than one member started as little more than a witness — or even a victim — of an occult event or paranormal phenomenon, and ended up becoming more and more involved in a particular investigation. By the end of the investigation, these individuals may be approached regarding membership, particularly if the individual has been shown to have some psychic or other paranormal talents, which are always welcome.

Other Contacts

Of course, a common means to discover potential recruits is through informal contact. Arcanists will often come into contact with likely prospects in the course of daily business, or through coincidence. For example, a member may learn that one's cousin is studying Islamic mysticism, or that a childhood friend has become a private investigator. These leads are often approached individually, and may be given a job as an "independent contractor." If their services are considered valuable, then they are approached about Associate status, and so on.

Membership

The Journal of Jonathan Lewis, 21 October 1994

The Arcanum is more than just a scholarly society: it draws upon the work of historians, philosophers, genealogists, psychologists and parapsychologists, private investigators, and a variety of other professionals, without regard to academic credentials, how much one has published, or how many languages one can read. Certainly, these are all important factors, but there is much more to life than the Ivory Tower.

In rereading these notes, I have to wonder: am I just repeating what I heard Geoffrey say, or am I starting to buy into his line?

The Foundation House

The Arcanum's Foundation House is in England, "near London." (Geoffrey would not be more specific.) The Grand Chancellor, the director of the Arcanum, resides there, and it is from London that the Executive Committee runs the

business of the Arcanum. A number of Journeymen have their permanent residence in the Foundation House, and engage in full-time sponsored research as Fellows of the Arcanum, typically utilizing the Axis Mundi.

"Axis Mundi" is not just a boastful title; this library is one of the most complete and comprehensive libraries dealing with the history and manifestation of the arcane, be it Renaissance alchemy or contemporary parapsychology. The library itself predates the founding of the Arcanum, Geoffrey said, but we would learn more about that later, when we discussed "our" history more thoroughly.

Chapter Houses

The Arcanum is spread out across the globe, like a magnificent spider web, with a "port of call" on every continent, in a number of major cities. These ports of call are Chapter Houses, micro-headquarters to which local Arcanists report or turn for support. The administrator of each Chapter House, or Chancellor, makes regular updates of his Chapter's activities to the Foundation House. Various members of a Chapter House might have different duties, e.g., Financial Officer, Secretary, Serjeant-at-arms (in charge of the Chapter's security), etc., but the organization often varies from place to place, "according to local custom," as Geoffrey puts it; in other words, each Chapter has some autonomy in deciding its own leadership and management, but the Chancellor ultimately makes final decisions (and takes the heat if something goes wrong).

A Chapter House is an Arcanist's visible link to the Foundation House and the Grand Chancellor. Every Arcanist is ultimately attached to a particular Chapter House; this affiliation provides us with a number of benefits: at the very least, we are given a place to receive mail and messages, a computer for e-mail and word-processing (some computers at Chapter Houses have more advanced set-ups for research and telecommunications), a library in which to study at any hours of the day or night — the Chapter Librarian also acts as a liaison to the Axis Mundi, and can sometimes request that books be sent between Chapters — and a place to call when "in need."

In need of what? I wonder. I assume extra funding, research, etc.

Larger Chapter Houses can also provide lodging for Arcanists, although there is typically a waiting list since there tend to be fewer rooms than there are Arcanists. Chapter Houses will also sometimes arrange lodging for visiting Arcanists — either on the premises, if possible, or at nearby hotels — for a short duration.

All members of the Arcanum must be officially "posted" to a Chapter House near their home of residence; even if they do not live in the immediate vicinity of the House, they are still registered there. Transfers can be requested in writing, and are usually approved, but some Chapter Houses have more Arcanists than they can hope to reasonably support.

The Georgetown Chapter House is the primary American Chapter House. All other American Chapter Houses

report to the Georgetown Chancellor, who in turn reports to the Foundation House.

Colonies

The next administrative unit is called a colony. According to Geoffrey, colonies are typically Chapter Houses-in-training. They are usually a gathering of Arcanists working in an area together, but without any real autonomy: they have no independent funding, and they have to report to the nearest Chapter House. Colonies are treated as Chapter House extensions. If a colony exists in an area long enough, and the area proves a regular demonstration of "supernatural activity," colonies may be given Chapter House status.

Members may work independently, but the Arcanum has long supported the idea of Arcanists working together. If the issue is merely a matter of research that can be conducted in a library, then of course a single individual is all that is necessary — although the more, the merrier, in my opinion.

Lodges

However, according to Geoffrey, "field research" — and I assume he means investigations of alleged hauntings and other paranormal occurrences — is typically accomplished in groups: this is to provide witnesses and assure safety. Often Arcanists will choose to operate regularly with a collection of peers. Such alliances are called lodges.

Lodges are often formed as classes of Neophytes grow together; for this reason, Neophytes are rarely chosen independently: they must learn that trust and cooperation are necessary elements in the Arcanum. Geoffrey pointed out that if our class remained for the entirety of our program, we would most likely end up acting as a lodge.

"Even if we have such radically different interests?" Nahar asked. "A Renaissance historian and a parapsychologist?"

"Indeed, in spite of such disparity," Geoffrey assured her. "Like any friendship, you will come to recognize common elements, and you will learn what your individual strengths and weaknesses are, and how they can blend into a much greater sum. Lodges are rarely groups of people with exactly similar interests; such homogeneity is stifling. Certainly you will make allies in your own related fields, but you will come more and more to depend upon your lodge. Even when you give up the more investigative phase of your career, and your lodge brothers and sisters move on, you will still remain in close contact."

Some Chapter Houses are so small, they contain only one lodge; other, more influential Chapter Houses may have anywhere from two to five lodges in operation.

Lodges typically have some measure of autonomy; while they must abide by the Syllabus and report all their findings to their Chapter House — which, in turn, sends monthly updates to the Foundation House — they are normally free to determine the course of their own research and investigations.

Colleges

Geoffrey's previous discussion of the Arcanum's structure dealt exclusively with the hierarchy of the society, from HQ down to the little lodges. But there are other groups, as well, which cut across the various administrative units. Although officially Colleges, these units sometimes take other names, such as "Programmes" or "Divisions," depending on the whim of the members.

Colleges represent the various interests of the Arcanum; anyone can apply to form a new unit, although the Executive Committee has final approval. Typically, a College (or similar unit) must have a minimum of six members.

Colleges provide a means for scholars of the same discipline to communicate with each other. While lodges are groups of people who operate together, their bonds tend to be experiential and emotional rather than intellectual. They live and work together, but they may actually pursue very independent goals. Colleges may meet regularly (as possible), correspond, teleconference, put out newsletters, and do whatever they choose to keep in touch.

These Colleges play a major role within the Arcanum: they help determine research needs, including the allocation of budget and resources. Although the units themselves do not have the ultimate word — such decisions being within the province of the Executive Committee — their voices are an important factor in the Executive Committee's decision-making processes.

Each College is chaired by a "Dean," who handles any administrative concerns. Periodically — about once each season — the Deans meet for a Senate, in which they update each other on the research and activities of their particular divisions. Yes, these amount to little more than boasting sessions. However, the Senate also meets with the Executive Committee, which then determines what future budgetary needs will be.

There are many Colleges within the Arcanum, but the most prominent ones are the Colleges of Thaumatology, Egyptology, Parapsychology, Shamanic Studies, Lycanthropic Studies, the Division of Extra-Terrestrial Studies, the Hermetic Studies Programme and the School of Mythoarchaeology.

Membership in any College is voluntary, but only College Members may apply for the research grants and fellowships which are sometimes made available with College funds.

Chapter Two: The Darkling Road (The World Within and Without)

*Saloman hung down her head
Laid bare her heart for the world to see
She craved for intimacy
Through darkened doors
Her aspect veiled with indecision
Gazed out to sea
She craved lucidity
— Dead Can Dance, "Enigma of the Absolute"*

Part One: History

In the Beginning...

Correspondence of Benjamin Holmscroft, 31 October 1885:

Dear Sir:

Our many correspondences in the past have proven you to be an insightful and well-reasoned gentleman with concerns not unlike my own.

I have been in touch with you and a number of our colleagues to discuss the nature of occult learning as it is now generated. We are all, it would appear, dissatisfied with the breed of occult societies of which we have either been members ourselves or have had contact with. While the exercise of imagination is a valid endeavor, particularly as a means to break free of the rigid pursuit of knowledge which is the hallmark of our present society, this process should be well-tempered, and not cultivated to grow like weeds in a cognitive garden. Too

many occultists or esoterists of our day have fallen victim to fanciful imagining, and have not learned to root their beliefs in valid paths of enlightenment. An exotic medley of heretical Christian teachings and Sanskrit philosophy do not, alas, a spiritual discipline make.

Even worse than this trivialization and absurdification of the esoteric are the self-aggrandizing tendencies of so many alleged occultists. While the esoteric path may indeed engender the development of genuine paranormal abilities, whether psychical or magical, these should not be the goal of any spiritual path. All too many individuals, alas, have become wrapped up in the quest for personal power that such philosophical teachings often promise.

A third dilemma which has become rather apparent is the scarcity of genuine instruction in these fields. We have all, at one point or another in our lives, been subject to the teachings of individuals not qualified for the title of "master" which they claim for themselves. Whether such individuals were deluded or dishonest is irrelevant at this point; the line between *fakir* and



fake is too easily crossed, and many innocents have been led astray in consequence.

Surveying the scene as we now have it, it would appear that I am presenting a most bleak picture: the world of the esoteric is filled with delusional, ill-intentioned, power-hungry people. I have certainly learned this from my own fruitless days with the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day. Such, I fear, is the truth we must contend with; but it is not the only possible truth.

I have come to realize, from my own experiences and through the experiences of others, that there is much that can still lie unexplored beyond the veil of the mundane world. What I propose is rather simple: as I have learned from my experience, so others have learned. What knowledge I lack, another might teach me, as I may be able to impart to others what they seek to know.

Let us gather, and form a new society; one patterned after many other societies, but based upon the mutual acquisition of knowledge. Let us instruct each other; let us walk the path to illumination together, and pave the way for others who come behind. Let our intellectual scrutiny be far-reaching, from the scientific to the literary, from the mundane to the celestial, from the normal to the paranormal. Let us initiate our own Orphic mysteries. Let us delve into the secrets of the universe.

I am inviting you, and a number of our colleagues, to meet with me next month, the date to be mutually agreed upon. We will gather at my estate for a weekend of symposia and dialogue. I hope that you will accept my offer — if not to join us in future fellowship, then at least for this preliminary gathering.

I pray I have not misjudged your intentions, and if I have, gentle sir, please pardon me; I meant no insult.

In the hopes of a positive answer, I remain

Yr. most humble & obedient servant,

Benjamin Holmscroft

Vannever Hall, London

From the Diary of Winthrop Murray:

24 November 1885: I met Holmscroft per his invitation, at his manor in London. Ten other individuals were present for the occasion.

Holmscroft's is a large and venerable manor. He referred to it as his family home, but something about his claim struck me as perhaps a bit specious. He was very much at home in the manor, and the house showed signs of a long, unbroken occupancy, with a distinctly traditional feel. But family? No. I could not finger the cause for on my suspicions, but I've learned to trust my intuition, however illogical or even ridiculous its notions may at first appear.

Prior to dinner we were all shown to our rooms — the manor is inestimably large and could easily lodge scores of people without difficulty — and we were left to relax and mingle amongst ourselves. The French occultist Etienne DuLac was there, as was the Reverend Jebediah Spector Brown, an Anglican clergyman who is a scholar in the ways of the Undead. Brown is a quiet, God-fearing man with some hidden purpose. I do not like him.

Also present were the American thanatologist Jonathan Kelvin, and the poet Liam McPhee — why that arrogant Irish bastard was invited is beyond me, but I trust that Holmscroft had his reasons. There were a handful of others, none whom I knew.

Holmscroft mentioned that some of those invited had refused to attend, for reasons which he would not divulge.

After dinner, which was quite a sumptuous feast, we all retired to his library — a more magnificent collection of books in one man's house I have never seen! — at last to discuss Holmscroft's proposal.

Holmscroft was correct in assuming one thing at least: we all felt those of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day and other such "occult fraternities" to be a bunch of carnival-costumed fools who would not know real magic if it thrust itself in their faces — which it often has. All their posturing has revealed itself to be the juvenile ravings of decadent poets and would-be cognoscenti, disenchanted with sterile reality, yet obviously unprepared for the reality they pretend to seek. Those who remained with the Order after Holmscroft quit three years ago were able to verify that the Order has not progressed in its search for knowledge, but instead indulges in yet more fanciful imaginings. The Reverend Brown was not a member of the Order. Claiming that such occult trafficking was not his forte, the Reverend made his discomfort — or even antipathy — toward the modern-day ritual magicians quite apparent.

Those of us present at the meeting have had our own experiences, enough to know that there is much more to the "world of shadows" — a term which Holmscroft used, and I suspect he meant more than just Plato's Allegory of the Cave — than most believe. Brown was quite convinced of the existence of vampyres, an assurance which could not be easily swayed. I myself have conversed with one fellow who claimed to be an immortal from the lands of the Nile; he revealed to me much of the workings of his sorcery. I offered this tidbit to the group, and was answered with not a single note of mockery or even doubt from any of my listeners. McPhee has been said by some (including himself, in typical Gaelic humility) to have the blood of the faeries in him; he looks to be in his very early 20s, but is well into his late 40s. His behavior is sometimes inexplicable, and his poetry does have an otherworldly quality to it.

I took the time to observe Holmscroft during the conversation that ensued. In person, he is not very different from the way he comes across in his correspondences, and I found him to be much as others have described: at times aloof, at times warm, but always keenly observant, rather like a hawk. After his initial discussion — and I believe monologue might be a more appropriate term for it — he contributed little to the conversation; but still it seemed that he was orchestrating its direction through his occasional artfully placed questions or comments. For all appearances a mere observer, he was truly the one in charge. Often, he would fix his penetrating gaze upon a speaker, as if he could see through their exterior to read the person's soul; but always his own expression remained serene, implacable, revealing nothing of his thoughts. At times, his silence and his predatoriness struck me as owl-like; only later did I notice that a large black statue of an owl sat on the table beside him.

We agreed — after much heated debate, and one characteristically Irish outburst by McPhee — that we should join together to free ourselves from the childish phantasies of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day, and use our shared resources to more fully explore the truths buried in the hidden world. The cooperation and support of many like minds shall take us much further than we have come through our individual efforts.

Influential Societies

The Hermetic Order of the Rising Day

One of the many occult groups that came to life in the late 19th century, the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day — or the HORD — was short-lived and remained obscure throughout the duration of its existence. In its time, however, it boasted some of Britain's most distinguished occultists and scholars of the arcane.

Founded in London in 1879, the HORD sought direct and pragmatic occult knowledge, primarily as manifested in ritual magic. The organization alleged that it was in possession of the secrets of the Rosicrucians. Any such mention of this enigmatic Brotherhood was bound to draw the curious, and thus a number of individuals were attracted to the HORD. The group claimed for itself exacting standards of research and knowledge, and created a very formal hierarchy, clearly differentiating it from the plethora of spiritualist societies currently in existence. By 1882, however, HORD had become little more than a mockery of magical ritual, its members dressing in outlandish garb and repeating nonsensical phrases that "resonated with the harmony of the spheres."

In 1887, with the founding of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, yet another society that claimed to have inherited the Rosicrucian tradition, the HORD faded into obscurity. However, many of its members migrated over to the Golden Dawn, bringing with them the HORD's scholarly standards and hierarchic structure.

The majority of the early founders of the Arcanum were disgruntled and dissatisfied members of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day (and later on, refugees from the Golden Dawn as well). The structure and many beliefs of the Arcanum, although much broader than the HORD, bear a discernible similarity to its progenitor.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

The Rosicrucians

Part I: *The Fama Fraternitatis*

The Rosicrucian Brotherhood was a secret society which traced its origins to the theological and intellectual upheaval of the late Renaissance and the Reformation. The Rosicrucians are often cited as the founding source for many of the occult groups that were created from the 19th century to this day; claims to possess the "secrets of the Rosicrucians" were a common trademark for these organizations.

The earliest document that has been associated with the Rosicrucians, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, was circulating in Germany in 1610, with the first printed edition appearing in 1614. This publication enjoined readers to reform the world; those who truly desired membership would be recognized as the Rosy Cross Brotherhood.

The *Fama Fraternitatis* cites Christian Rosenkreutz as the founder of the Brothers of the Holy Cross. The document narrates his life and details the early history of the Rosy Cross Brothers. It is the major reference on the known or alleged works of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

Holmscroft played a key role in arranging this agreement. At his suggestion, we shall call ourselves the Arcanum: a hidden thing, a profound mystery, an alchemical secret of nature. After further deliberation, we drafted the mission statement of our new brotherhood, which henceforward shall be called The Syllabus.

Notes of Seneca Hunt, Arcanum Historian:

The Arcanum was founded on 24 November 1885 by a small collection of disillusioned occultists and esoterists, many of whom had previously been members of the once-prominent Victorian occult fraternity Hermetic Order of the Rising Day (HORD).

Many members of the HORD were dissatisfied with the organization's belief system. One such dissident was Benjamin Holmscroft, an Englishman whom even now few of his peers would claim to know well. He quit the society after five years of membership, and retired to mull over the state of things. In the following three years, he withdrew from the rest of society, maintaining frequent correspondence with the few other occultists whom he felt he could trust.

Finally, in 1885, he invited them to discuss the formation of a new society, dedicated to a scholarly pursuit of the occult, the esoteric, and the metaphysical, free from the delusions of the HORD and other such groups. The majority of his correspondents accepted the invitation, and met with him at Holmscroft Manor; after one long evening of discussion (and apparently much argument), this cabal agreed to form the Arcanum. The majority of that weekend was dedicated to the establishment of the tenets of the Arcanum and the ensuing binding rules that would be called the Canon. The French occultist, Etienne DuLac, disagreed with a number of the proposed tenets, and

angrily withdrew from the fellowship. He resurfaced ten years later in Morocco, siring a society of his own, one much smaller and even more secretive than the Arcanum.

Most importantly, the members of the new Arcanum agreed that their purposes would best be served by a full sharing of resources. They deposited large amounts of money in a variety of trust funds, and Holmscroft himself offered his manor — which he originally alleged to be his family home, though later research has proven this to be untrue — to the new society to serve as the Foundation House. Within several months, most new members moved into Holmscroft manor, establishing a community for the purpose of mutual scholarly support and encouragement.¹ They had agreed to join their library resources as well; the manor already had a most expansive collection of its own, and this repository, combined with the libraries of the other founding members, produced one of the finest scholarly collections on the occult and the esoteric in the entire world. The library was so impressive that it was ultimately christened the Axis Mundi.

The Diary of Winthrop Murray, 1 December 1885:

Finally, after many grueling hours of meetings and discussions, we agreed upon the formal structure of the Arcanum. Our goals include the ultimate expansion of our society beyond London — after all, a number of the Arcanum's founders do not even reside in the United Kingdom — to all of Europe and even beyond the continent to America and elsewhere. We estab-

¹The only exceptions to this were the clergyman Brown, who preferred to live in the rectory at St. Basil's, in London, and those founders who lived outside the United Kingdom.



lished that Holmscroft Manor would be the foundation of the entire society, while its tendrils would snake out into smaller houses across the world. The first few houses have yet to be established, but candidates include Dublin (as suggested by McPhee, of course), Budapest, Paris, Boston, and Istanbul. Unfortunately, until the membership of our Arcanum increases, such broad plans cannot be put into effect.

On the issue of membership, our "founders" now officially include:

Benjamin Holmscroft, of London
Jebediah Brown, of London
Roger Corwin, of Salisbury
Peter Harker, of London
Stewart Heath, of Manchester
Winthrop Murray, of Kent
Liam McPhee, of Dublin
Jonathan Kelvin, of Boston, U.S.A.
Massimo Linarelli, of Rome, Italy

DuLac, of course, left us in a huff, while George Kenealy and Thomas Sullivan ultimately turned down Holmscroft's offer. Upon reflection, it seemed to amuse Holmscroft that there were nine founding members of the Arcanum; whatever the significance of this was, however, he would not reveal. We have not yet decided whether there are to be varying levels of membership status, as is common in other occult fraternities.

It was ultimately decided that each member would undertake administrative responsibilities in addition to their personal goals. Holmscroft, of course, was unanimously voted the director. I volunteered to be secretary, as writing is second nature to me. Some members chose to direct various academic disciplines: McPhee showed an interest in faerie lore, Brown had already proven interest in vampyre study — although his fascination seems to me to be more of an obsession than an intellectual curiosity — and Kelvin has expressed interest in the study of hauntings and ghost lore.

Unfortunately, Linarelli and Kelvin chose not to join us at the Manor, but rather preferred to return to their homes. They are willing to travel on the Arcanum's behalf as often as necessary, however, and both would like to see Chapters of the Arcanum established in their homelands. They also graciously offered to provide lodgings for any Arcanum members traveling through their countries.

Brown seems to prefer his Episcopal residence to that of the manor, claiming that the manor made him uneasy — "too much witchery," I heard him mutter once. The rest of us have agreed to make the move to Holmscroft's manor as soon as feasibly possible. Since I currently maintain residence at a gentleman's club, I will be able to move to the manor quite easily and expeditiously.

Notes of Seneca Hunt, Historian:

In early December of 1885, the formal structure of the Arcanum was decisively established. A number of options had been considered:

Ecclesial: Some members believed in a strong hierarchy based upon the Episcopal model, complete with the adoption of clerical titles. This was originally considered because of the sacred quality of knowledge and the quest for enlightenment.

Fraternal: The majority of the Arcanum's founders had come from the HORD, and of course it was not unusual to suspect that this would serve as an organizational model. Most such societies, whether the Freemasons — and to deny the occult origins of this group is facile — or the HORD developed a progression of stages of membership,

often called degrees. For some, however, such a structure was too stratified, and not conducive to the sense of cooperation that Holmscroft hoped to facilitate.

Collegial: This model was based, obviously enough, on the models of higher education which most of the founders had passed through.²

Professional: This model was based upon the formation of professional societies, with a board of directors and an executive officer. However, an exclusively "professional" model was much too staid and sterile for an organization that is dedicated to self-advancement.

Ultimately, it was decided that a combination of the above models worked best. For example, while the various degrees of the fraternal model seemed appropriate, the excesses to which some organizations took this system were to be avoided. The Arcanum was to be a brotherhood of scholars, a hermetic university, and a professional society all at the same time. The

²Interestingly enough, Holmscroft was privately educated, and never attended any of the higher schools. At least, he never indicated such a background, and no research has uncovered records of a Benjamin Holmscroft at any educational institution anywhere, in Europe or America.

The Rosicrucians

Part II: Christian Rosenkreutz

Christian Rosenkreutz, attributed with founding the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, was born in 1378 to a family with a noble title but little money. By age five, he was placed in a monastery, where he studied both Greek and Latin.

Christian and another monk took a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; his companion died in Cyprus, and Rosenkreutz went on to Damascus alone. Skilled in healing and medicine, Christian soon came to the attention of the wise men of Damascus. Abandoning his earlier itinerary, he took up the study of science and mathematics, and ultimately decided to seek the very source of Arabia's arcane sciences: the city the sages named Damcar.

Arriving in Damcar, Rosenkreutz found himself not only welcomed, but expected. He remained in this city — which still has not been identified in any historical records — and learned of the many secrets of the Ancients of Damcar: sacred mathematics, physics, alchemy, and the teachings found in the *Liber Mundi*, or Book of the World, a text said to contain the secrets of the universe. While in Damcar, he met members of the Prieuré de Solomon (so named because they were founded on the site of the Temple of Solomon), descendants of a group of knights that had broken from the Knights Templar in the early 14th century. These white-mantled priests claimed to possess many secrets, and they revealed them to Christian.

After his sabbatical in Damcar, Rosenkreutz journeyed to Egypt, then Morocco. He studied the metaphysics of Hermes Trismegistus, and learned the Kabbala of the Jews. Throughout his travels, Rosenkreutz encountered many who regarded study and the exchange of knowledge as crucial for the advancement of humanity.

Returning at last to Europe — first Spain, then Germany — Rosenkreutz found his new wisdom to be an object of hostility and mockery. Ultimately, he decided that humanity was not yet ready for the moral and philosophical reformation which he had hoped to inaugurate, but he did not wish to abandon all that he had learned and accomplished. He decided to record his knowledge and secret it away until the world was ready. Rosenkreutz recruited three boyhood friends from the monastery where he grew up, and formed a new semi-monastic order, the Brothers of the Holy Cross, which was dedicated to both healing the ill and leading others to enlightenment.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

fellowship would be administered by an Executive Committee, and final authority rested with the Grand Chancellor, who was granted near total decision-making power.

The nine founders of the Arcanum decided to act as the Executive Committee for the body, and Holmscroft was asked to take the position of Grand Chancellor.

Although there were no new members of the Arcanum as of yet and the Executive Committee was composed of leaders with no one to lead, Holmscroft was secure in his conviction that the Arcanum would, in time, grow.

The First Ritual

The diary of Winthrop Murray, 25 December 1885:

It is a well-known fact that rituals exist to serve many purposes. On the social level, the practice of rituals helps to maintain a sense of continuity, a feeling of tradition: as we do now, so have our forebears done, and shall our successors do. Ritual is a visible link between generations.

Many truths are symbolically expressed through ritual, for these simple acts may often clothe the ideals and beliefs of an organization. Ritual is the vehicle through which man may travel beyond the realm of his immediate experience.

Holmscroft knew these things when he created the Rituals of the Arcanum. I fully suspect that the Rituals he presented to us had been in practice since long before the formation of the Arcanum. I saw much that had been adopted from the HORD's system of rituals, but much of what Holmscroft initiated was of origins unknown to me. Holmscroft, when questioned, answered with complete candor that these rituals had descended from the Mysteries of Eleusis and Orpheus, from the sacred cults of Isis and Osiris. This, of course, must have been some fabrication — or perhaps embellishment is a more appropriate term? — on his part, for such rites were oral, and have been lost through time.

Regardless, Holmscroft has insisted that the Rituals of the Arcanum remain oral as well; it is unlawful to write them down or repeat them outside of their context. Tonight he shall officiate at the first Ritual — our initiation into the Arcanum. Thus we shall become something more than merely an intellectual venture.

26 December 1885

I write this after having returned from our Initiation: a truly moving and powerful event; I would almost believe the Muses themselves were invoked this night.

Brown, however was absent; whether he had Yuletide activities to attend to, as would be expected of one of his office, or whether he refused to participate in a clearly pagan activity, has yet to be seen.

On a lighter note: Holmscroft announced that news of our venture has been spreading through the occult community, and a number of other scholars and students have expressed interest in joining our fellowship.

The Early Years

From the Papers of Seneca Hunt, Historian:

The first fifteen years of the Arcanum were marked by a slow but steady increase in membership. More than a few of

The Mysteries

The Mystery cults of the Classical period — the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries, the cults of Isis and Mithraism — flourished between the sixth century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. They spread across Europe, from Greece to Italy and even into the Near East. These cults bore a number of themes in common and drew many followers.

The very word, "mystery," comes from these cults: *mysterion* [*mysterion*], meaning "secret rite" — such knowledge that could only be revealed to an initiate. These secrets often included dramatic initiation rites, most of which trumpeted the symbolic death and rebirth of the initiate. Mystery cults were paths of ecstasy, which filled emotional and spiritual needs often left unfulfilled by the civic rituals of Greece and Rome. These cults promised immortality, and even resurrection from the dead — themes more fully developed in later religions. (In fact, Christianity itself was once viewed as little more than a Near Eastern mystery religion.)

The mystery religions of ancient Greece believed there were three types of knowledge: *mathesis* [*mathesis*] (knowledge which can be learned), *gnosis* [*gnosis*] (a recognizable or experiential knowledge), and *pathesis* [*pathesis*] (suffered knowledge). Mystery religions attempted to experience all three forms. Many rites had both exoteric aspects for the populace at large, and esoteric elements, revealed only to those trusted few who had been sworn to secrecy. The role of secrecy in mystery religions cannot be overemphasized: all initiates were obligated to take a vow of silence, and no records exist of any violation of these oaths.

The cults themselves eventually died out, and many of their mysteries died with them. There are some rumors, however, that these religions have survived to this day, practiced in complete secrecy by a select few — but this cannot be verified.

In the course of this research, I came across a single reference to the White Veils of the Temple, a small sect of priests who lived in the Holy Land in the time of Solomon (10th c. B.C.). This obscure following is believed to have been an early predecessor of the mystery cults, but unfortunately no other material about them could be unearthed.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

these members were eminently qualified scholars. More importantly, some new members were not mere scholars but also occult practitioners: quite a few, in fact, possessed strong psychic talents or even dabbled in the magical arts. Holmscroft actually went out of his way to recruit such members, though whether this was for his own purposes or for the benefit of the Arcanum was not at that time clear.

The Diary of Winthrop Murray, 15 March 1886:

All goes well. We are beginning to attract more and more qualified candidates, and the knowledge base of our cabal grows steadily. Our membership is now just over 25. We have even been contacted by two women who desire to join our fellowship as well — a notion that I find absurd! Even more absurd, however, is Holmscroft's apparent inclination to initiate them into the Arcanum.

The Reverend Brown continually grows more distant. His attendance at our biweekly business meetings is sporadic at best, and he rarely participates when he does attend. Though

Holmscroft has spoken with him at length about this, he has been unable to resolve things. I believe he is still vexed about Brown's absolute refusal to participate in our Rituals, even though Holmscroft has amended the wording of the invocation of the Deity so that any Christians among our group will not be unnecessarily offended.

24 November 1886

This day marks the completion of our first year in existence. In retrospect, we have made great strides: we are now 48 Journeymen strong, with a full 29 of these residing at Holmscroft Manor. We have an additional five Associates.

Holmscroft's role is evolving. He has ceded all financial management to the Executive Committee and our new Treasurer. The only activity which is still very much in his province is membership. Otherwise, he can usually be found sitting in the library, reading through the research and writings of our members.

His leadership, though understated, is still a strong force in the organization. Although he never coerces or demands, and always takes into account the will of the society as a whole, Holmscroft is clearly the one in charge. Little transpires without his knowledge or approval: though it may not appear at first to be so, he is almost always proven to have had a hand in everything that occurs in the Arcanum.

A case in point: Last month, Massimo Linarelli, our Italian Journeyman, was in private communiqué with a French Catholic clergyman in Rome who appears to be an expert on demonology. Linarelli was privately considering him as a candidate for membership in the Arcanum. He claims to have spoken to no one about his intentions, until he received a telegram from Holmscroft:

The priest is with the Society of Leopold. Attempting to infiltrate. Do not offer membership. B.H.

Linarelli approached me about this, quite perplexed as to how Holmscroft could know of his intentions and the priest's possible affiliation. I, of course, had no answer.

Our society now represents quite a diverse array of fields of expertise:

Brown is the most knowledgeable about vampire-related issues. Some of our members scoff at him, accusing him of falling victim to Christian paranoia and arguing that that any vampire tales must surely be allegories. Brown, however, remains steadfast in his claims.

My own training is in Egyptology. My interest began with Egyptian magic, and this has since broadened to the study of ritual magic all across the world. I have been researching the theory and practice of magic as it has developed throughout history.

McPhee is well versed in the faerie lore, though one can never be sure whether he truly believes faeries exist. McPhee himself is rather fay: while no one doubts his sincerity, there may be occasion to question the persistence of his convictions.

Jonathan Kelvin is quite the expert on the Afterlife, and has embarked upon a scientific study of hauntings and related phenomena. I do wonder, however, whether his obsession with "after-death" stems from a personal fear of death, and where this may ultimately lead him.



Roger Corwin has been actively collecting lore on lycanthropy from all across the world. The majority of his accumulated knowledge relates to werewolves. Corwin, ever the alienist, believes that lycanthropy is merely a psychiatric condition in which the victim suffers delusions of transformation into psychotic monsters capable of great crime. The fact that there have been no witnesses to the phenomenon, while there have been many witnesses of random individuals going berserk and mindlessly attacking others, lends some testament to this notion. Irregardless, Corwin is a thorough scholar, and has traveled extensively in his search for some evidence that will disprove his theory.

Holmscroft, typically enigmatic, seems to know much but offers little.

On the other hand, I must admit that I have seen scant evidence of anyone progressing on this "journey to enlightenment" which Holmscroft spoke of so eloquently. While I can hardly expect to see any real physical manifestations, and such progress is usually a subtle development, it seems that the majority of our members are more concerned either with the operation of the Arcanum or with their own academic research. Little "new ground" has been broken; we appear only to be collecting what research has already been written, and discussing theories that have already been proven. Still, the Arcanum is only in its infancy, and it must learn to crawl before it can tread the difficult journey ahead.

15 January 1888

We learned today the reason for Brown's absence from our last regular meeting. A representative attempted to visit him at St. Basil's in London, but was informed that he had moved out, suddenly and without explanation, the week before.

Holmscroft is quite incensed — in fact, I have never before seen him in such a state. In private conversation, he confessed to having long suspected the clergyman's motives, but he allowed him to remain for his contributions in the area of vampire lore. Holmscroft described Brown as one who does not scare easily — in fact Holmscroft has never detected any trace of fear in him.

We cannot believe that his departure was forced upon him; it was inarguably one of his own choice. This can only mean that he was simply using us for his own purposes and has now proceeded along to another part of his plan, whatever that might be.

A Time of Growth

Correspondence of Jonathan Kelvin to Benjamin Holmscroft:

15 July 1888

I'm so glad that we have agreed that it is time for the Arcanum to move globally. However much I enjoy the trips to England for our meetings, I often feel at a loss here in America. How soon before other Houses will finally be opened? The Manor, of course, shall always be the Foundation House of the Arcanum.

I am particularly grateful to you for having chosen me for directorship of the Boston Chapter. I shall endeavor to follow the example of your leadership.

The Rosicrucians

Part III: The Brothers of the Holy Cross

Christian Rosenkreutz and the first Brothers of the Holy Cross, ready to begin their work, retired to a temple which they named the Domus Sanctus Spiritus. They collected a library with resources on virtually every subject of the arts and sciences. This done, they decided to separate and travel the earth, healing the ill for no pay or profit. They agreed to reunite once a year at the Sanctus Spiritus on the "Day of C" — the date of which is unknown, but is suspected to be the Christian feast of Corpus Christ, which takes place on the Thursday after the eighth Sunday following Easter — in order to renew their bonds. The identity of the fraternity was to remain secret until the brotherhood received a sign that it was time to reveal itself. For decades, the brothers quietly performed their duties.

According to the *Fama*, Father Christian died in 1484 at the age of 106: "oppressed by no disease, which he had neither felt in his own body nor allowed to attack others, but summoned instead by the Spirit of God." Father Christian was buried by two of his followers, who swore never to reveal his burial place.

In 1604, several Rosy Cross brothers, including the author of the *Fama*, found a concealed door at a hidden location — probably Germany. Inscribed upon the door was a Latin phrase: *Post Centum Viginti Annos Patebo*, or "after 120 years I will reappear."

Behind the door was a seven-sided vault, with an altar in the center. The room was brilliantly illuminated, although there was no known way for sunlight to enter it. Each of the seven walls contained many compartments, all of which held wondrous things: copies of all the order's books, the *Vocabularium* of Paracelsus (a Swiss alchemist, born a good decade after Father Christian's burial), the journal of Father Christian's life and travels, as well as mirrors, bells, and lamps.

Beneath the altar itself was the body of Father Christian: "fair and worthy ... whole and unconsumed." Father Christian's hands clasped the *Liber T* — described in the *Fama* as the Rosicrucians' "greatest treasure next to the Bible."

The brothers sealed the vault, confident that this was the augury needed to announce their presence to the world.

The Rosicrucian heritage has been trumpeted by a score of occult societies, many of which incorporated the Rosy-Cross theme into their name or symbol. They have all proven fraudulent, and most scholars doubt the veracity and integrity of the *Fama*, claiming it is little more than Reformation propaganda — echoing the Catholic critics who derided the Rosicrucian movement from the beginning.

There are many within the Arcanum, however, who believe that the *Fama* spoke either allegorically, or even literally; that somewhere lies the undisturbed tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz, and that the Wise Men of Damcar still teach their secret lores.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

By the way — Peter Carroll, an agent of mine, claims to have seen J.S. Brown in New York. I am investigating this.

Yours,

J.K.

1 August 1888, telegram:

Peter Carroll is now missing. J.K.

From the Papers of Seneca Hunt, Historian:

The second and third Chapters of the Arcanum were established in 1888. During the fall, Holmscroft and other officers traveled to America to preside over the opening of the Boston Chapter. Kelvin was appointed Chancellor of the Chapter, five Associates were initiated as Neophytes, and three new Associates were appointed.

Kelvin and Holmscroft had worked together in the preceding months to ensure that the second chapter of the Arcanum would be worthy of the honor. The organization purchased a large Colonial building from a group of Freemasons in financial distress: this became the offices and library of the Boston Chapter, while the residence adjoining it, also included with the purchase, became the domicile for the chapter members.

The third chapter was opened later that winter in Vienna. A magnificent Baroque structure became the joint office-cum-residence of the Vienna Chapter. Roger Corwin, whose research inevitably took him to the Germanic countries, was appointed Chancellor, while four newer members relocated there as well. Two Austrians were initiated as Journeymen, and a new class of Neophytes (four at first, though one withdrew two weeks after the initiation) joined the chapter.

The years 1889 – 1900 marked the first great expansion stage. Although more Chapter Houses were established in later years, those founded during this period have proven to be the most influential in the Arcanum's history. Houses were opened in both Europe and the United States.

Although the Arcanum was founded and managed primarily by Britons, it was not limited to the British Empire. In addition to the Chapter House established in Vienna, the very heart of the Austrian Empire, a House was opened in Paris. The opening proved to be quite a spectacular event, as befits the City of Lights. A series of other Chapter Houses opened across the Continent in quick succession: Berlin, Prague, Budapest, and St. Petersburg. The early philosophy of the Arcanum was to root its Chapter Houses into places of political and intellectual weight; the early European Chapter Houses tended to be in magnificent buildings, often enormous Baroque homes or medieval estates. This proved unfortunate during the war years of the 20th century, as such properties were often seized by the government or simply destroyed in the course of the conflict.

Closer to home, a Chapter House was opened in Dublin, and Liam McPhee was chosen to serve as Chancellor — to no one's surprise. Massimo Linarelli pushed for a House in Rome, but his arguments went unheard. Holmscroft was most likely wary of maintaining a presence so close to the headquarters of the Catholic witch-hunters known as the Society of Leopold.

Progress was slower in the United States. The Boston Chapter House thrived, and plans were made for Houses in

Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, although these took longer to establish.

The expansion of the Arcanum was somewhat limited by the Victorian mindset of that period. Few Chapter Houses were opened in South America, Asia or Africa. Although Holmscroft did appear to have an interest in spreading out to other regions, he could find little administrative interest or support. He had the authority to open Chapter Houses at his discretion, but was wise enough to know that they needed dedicated Journeymen in order to thrive, or simply survive. The Arcanum certainly had scholars interested in these more remote areas, and some members did travel to such locations, typically residing in cities where the British Crown was firmly rooted, such as Baghdad, Cairo or Calcutta. However, few formal Chapter Houses were established during this period.

By the late 1890s, the leadership of the Arcanum was slowly changing. Of the original nine members, two had died of natural causes, one died mysteriously — his body found in a London alley — and one had retired from the Arcanum's activities. The Committee included the following original founders: Holmscroft, McPhee, Linarelli, Murray and Kelvin. Many newer members preferred to join the Executive committee only for a few years, ultimately stepping down to return to research and study.

The Boston Fire

From the correspondence of Jonathan Kelvin to Benjamin Holmscroft:

15 July 1910

Benjamin:

I write this at dawn, after a lengthy and disturbing discussion with Journeyman Robert Brooks. Allow me to start at the beginning:

My monthly reports have kept you relatively up-to-date on the activities of Brother Robert, but should the details have slipped your mind, I shall summarize.

The smaller towns of Massachusetts have particularly old and confusing histories, often tangled with the dark thread of witchcraft: Robert Brooks, one of our newer Journeymen and a native of this city, is convinced that there is much witchcraft practice still going on in New England. It has long been his opinion that the witch trials of both our country and the Old World were not based entirely on paranoia and superstition, but that there were some grains of truth to the accusations. Furthermore, he maintains that dark cults still thrive in this area. He was intent on gathering proof.

After some months' persistent research, Mr. Brooks not long ago managed to make contact with a society that claims to routinely commune with a dark deity — whom they say is not Satan nor any other Luciferian entity, but is equally powerful — in order to offer blood sacrifices. More important than these particularly grisly details, Brooks' contact reported that this "entity" has displayed a remarkable range of superhuman powers, including the ability to merge with the earth itself. Brooks hoped to "join" this cult, for the purpose of learning more about the supposed deity, and in the hopes of determining whether there is any supernatural verity to these reports.

Mr. Brooks effectively "disappeared" a few weeks ago in an attempt to infiltrate the society. He indicated that he would initiate contact as soon as he was able: he feared that upon announcing his intention to join the cult, he would be shadowed for a short time, and he did not wish to reveal his ties to the Arcanum.

I had retired to my study late this evening to work on some private research — as you know, positions of leadership often leave one little time during the day for personal projects — and ultimately fell asleep at my desk, when a frantic knock on the door roused me. A quick glance at the mantel clock showed it to be five o'clock in the morning.

Answering the summons, I found Robert Brooks and our night Steward; Brother Robert was pale and weak, his clothes torn and bloody, and he reported that he had an awful tale to tell. I poured him some brandy as the Steward went for medical assistance and a secretary to record the transcript of Brother Robert's tale, which is here recorded (in a somewhat abridged form) for your benefit:

"I was successful in joining the cult, which I was told took the name the Children of Hecate; they claimed to worship none other than the undying goddess of hidden magic. The cult currently numbers eleven members, mostly men. One member had recently 'quit' the Children — it was implied that she lost interest in it, but I fear now that something far more terrible was involved — and I was offered her place. I planned to attend four meetings, and if nothing of import or value occurred, I would find a way to extricate myself from the society.

"I was present for two of their weekly meetings, held in a remote grove outside Boston; there, I and the other followers engaged in little more than ritual debauchery. The Children of Hecate claimed that sex magic was one of the most powerful forms of magical practice, and their activities were designed not to satisfy the loins but to temper the soul for the work that would be done. My disappointment was nearly as great as my disgust for the random carnality of the event.

I attended the third meeting — earlier this evening — expecting more of the same. It began accordingly, and proceeded apace to another night of ritual fornication, men and women coupling madly with whomever was their assigned ... 'ritual partner.'

In the midst of all this, however, the ground literally shifted beneath me, and within mere seconds, an ebony-skinned woman had risen through the earth to join me and my ritual consort in our activities. All the other Children of Hecate broke off from their coupling, quite literally a *coitus interruptus*, and encircled me, my consort, and the Dark Lady.

"I was already amazed and terrified at the woman's ability to rise from the earth: she was not merely covered by a light scattering of dirt, but truly broke free from the ground. But her beauty was overwhelming, and incomparable; I could scarcely resist the desire to look at her, touch her, taste her.

"As this *ménage à trois* continued, the encircled cultists began a low chant. It was some bastardized Greek, but I confess I was too ... preoccupied ... to pay attention to the words. The name Hecate was repeated in the refrain, though, and it was apparent that this Dark Lady was their Hecate. Soon, they were all engaged in yet another orgy, and the Dark Lady roamed about the group, taking her pleasures with whomever she chose.

"It was at this point I realized that I was bleeding: a number of her love bites drew blood, but I was so enrapt in the pleasure of it all that I must not have noticed. Across my body were little gashes, where she bit into my flesh.

"I turned and saw her bent over another of her followers, suckling from him and obviously giving intense pleasure. And then, she looked up, and..."

For the record, I would like to add that at this point Brother Robert wept inconsolably. When he finally calmed, he continued his narrative.

"Her love bites were not mere tuggings of flesh: Hecate was biting into her followers and drinking the blood that sprang forth. Her victims' pleasure was orgiastic. Other Children waited, begged to be chosen next, or lay there, spent in their sexual frenzy. Her strength was enormous: she would pick up even her most ungainly followers and carry him in her arms, with no more difficulty than a mother might hoist her child.

"Stifling the scream which was begging to erupt, I crawled to my clothing; under cover of night, I fled through the woods, and finally made my way back here."

This obviously bears further investigation.

Yours,

J.K.

P.S. I have more disturbing news to report before putting this in the morning mail. One of our Journeymen was on the widow's walk last night, engaged in some astronomical observation, and he detected a number of individuals roaming through the grounds. Examination this morning revealed several sets of footprints; it is possible that Brother Robert led the Children to our door. I shall have to consider security for our house.

The Journal of Winthrop Murray, 17 July 1910

Tragedy.

Jonathan Kelvin telephoned to inform us that the Boston Chapter House has been destroyed in a conflagration. Much of the library was destroyed, but our Brothers and Sisters valiantly braved the flames to rescue as many books as could be saved; it is estimated that over 500 books were destroyed, including almost 100 rare works. In addition, the Chapter House's archives were destroyed.

The fire, incidentally, also claimed three lives.

Kelvin feels the "Dark Lady" was at fault; he spoke with Holmscroft at great length, but little more has been revealed to us.

1 August 1910

The Boston event has forced us to consider the issue of security, a matter which we had never taken very seriously in the past. Considering ourselves to be scholars and mystics, we believed that we were free from any real danger. We have learned better now.

After serious consideration, the Executive Committee has at last declared that each Chapter House should appoint one of its members to the position of Warden, the primary administrative duty of which will be to maintain the House's security.

This decision to implement security measures is one that has long been under consideration, but too many of us felt that as gentlemen and women of erudition and enlightenment, such a banal matter was beneath our concern. The tragedy in Boston has taught us a valuable lesson.

* * *

From the Papers of Seneca Hunt, Historian:

In November of 1910, the Arcanum finally opened two new Chapter Houses in the United States: San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. The development for the Houses had been underway for a number of years, particularly as U.S. interest in the Arcanum — and the Arcanum's interest in the U.S. — grew. Plans were made for a grand celebration of the new American expansion.

Their opening, however, so close on the heels of the Boston fire, was shadowed by tragedy. The Chapter was to be rebuilt, but this required time and money that had not originally been included in the budget, progress on the two new American Chapter Houses being too close to completion. A new House was under construction for the Washington chapter, and a relatively new building would be purchased for the San Francisco location.

The Arcanum still arranged to hold a celebration at each new Chapter House, on 24 November — the anniversary of the Arcanum's founding. Members of the Executive Committee

Benjamin Holmscroft

Little can be said with any certainty about Benjamin Holmscroft, the enigmatic founder of the Arcanum. Lacking any physical records of his life, one can only make assumptions as to his age at death: he indicated that he was 33 years old at the founding of the Arcanum, in 1885; this would make his 62 when he died in 1914.

No records of Holmscroft's birth or education have ever been found, nor has anyone who knew him prior to his brief foray into the HORD in 1879. He is remembered by HORD associates as a strong figure, who was not easily swayed by the volatile temperaments of many of the organization's members. His primary interest was the teachings of the Rosicrucians, and when it became apparent that the cult was a fraud, he left disillusioned. He retired to his family estate in London and kept in touch with only those few colleagues whom he considered to be of a like mind.

Even when he formed the Arcanum and was surrounded by a large circle of colleagues and friends, few could claim to know him. Winthrop Murray, his Secretary, was most likely the closest to him, but little remains of Murray's prodigious writings.

Contemporary chroniclers of the Arcanum indicate that Holmscroft appeared to be in his mid-to-late-40s when the Arcanum began. He was stubbornly reluctant to allow photographs to be taken of him; although a few pictures are said to exist, these have disappeared into the bowels of the Foundation House's archives.

For a man said to look much older than his reported age at the founding of the Arcanum, he also allegedly appeared much younger than his reported age at his death. He was described as looking "not much older than 40ish" when he was last seen in public, in 1911.

Winthrop Murray and Clifford Parker, then Grand Chancellor, witnessed Holmscroft's death. His wake was closed-casket, as per his request. Journeymen from across the world attended the funeral, held in the private cemetery behind the Foundation House.

Winthrop Murray, the first Secretary of the Executive Committee, and Holmscroft's personal Secretary as well, was the Chancellor's closest colleague. Murray's extant writings deal almost exclusively with the history of the Arcanum. He was known to be a dedicated diarist, but his personal writings did not survive his death, only four months after Holmscroft's burial. Murray's funeral was a quiet, private affair, although he too was buried in the Arcanum cemetery.

— Private research of Jonathan Lewis



(except Holmscroft, Murray and McPhee, who became more and more reluctant to leave their own Houses) visited each new House, and took this opportunity to make a startling announcement: having analyzed the surge of interest in research in the United States, the Executive Committee had elected to grant the American Chapters their autonomy. The Boston Chapter already enjoyed some measure of independence, and with the development of several more Chapter Houses, the Committee determined that it would serve the organization to establish a central Chapter House in America. Jonathan Kelvin would be given jurisdictional authority over the United States.

Even more surprising was the announcement that Jonathan Kelvin would be moving to the Washington Chapter House. This new House would thus become the most important in the country.

Kelvin, it should be noted, never quite recovered from the Boston fire. Although he was not physically harmed, and his managerial skills never faltered, he was obviously disturbed by the events. He intensified his research into thanatology and afterlife beliefs, and became ever more reclusive.

The Thule Gesellschaft

Adolf Hitler proved a particular threat to the Arcanum, and the Arcanum's greatest loss came at his hands.

The Arcanum knew of Hitler's obsession with the occult and his involvement with the *Thule Gesellschaft* (the Thule Society, a group of German nationalist-mystics), and this gave many reason to worry. The organization wisely maintained its low profile, and some Arcanists infiltrated the Thule Gesellschaft in order to gather information. The Berlin Chapter, unfortunately, had a few National Socialists — or rather, "loyal citizens" — in its midst, and these ultimately contacted Hitler, revealing to him the Arcanum's presence and their mission into the heart of Germany.

Needless to say, Hitler was more than happy to have another group of occult scholars volunteer its services — particularly one with the resources of the Arcanum. The entire Berlin Chapter House thus came under Hitler's control: everything that belonged to the Arcanum in Berlin became the property of the Nazi party, and the German Arcanists were conscripted into their service.

The Arcanum reacted swiftly: loyal Arcanists removed what they could of the Berlin Chapter's private records. Unfortunately, there was not time enough to rescue everything, and Hitler was left with a veritable gold-mine of occult research at his disposal.

Other Chapter Houses under Germany's control also took action, as the news spread through their information channels. Anything of value was spirited away from the Vienna and Prague Houses almost overnight; when Germany encroached upon France's borders, the Arcanum removed the Paris Chapter House's resources as well. These never traveled far — usually to basements and attics of those secretly allied to the Arcanum — but they stayed out of Germany's reach.

The Berlin House was ultimately destroyed in the final years of the war. After it was all over, and the city was divided, the Arcanum decided not to rebuild.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

The World at War

From the Papers of Seneca Hunt, Archivist:

The years encompassing the two World Wars proved to be as dramatic for the Arcanum as they were for the rest of the world.

Benjamin Holmscroft died in 1914, with the beginning of the Great War. After the opening of the three new American Chapters in 1910, he retired as Grand Chancellor, and a new candidate was chosen from among the Executive Committee. In the years prior to Holmscroft's death, he had become almost entirely a recluse; he was not seen by anyone other than the new Grand Chancellor, or Winthrop Murray, who remained Holmscroft's private assistant.

By 1915, the leadership of the Arcanum had almost entirely overturned; it is surprising to some that the tenure of the founders lasted almost thirty years — an impressive period indeed.

The First World War sparked some real tension within the Arcanum, as many Chapter Houses fell on opposing sides of the battle lines. The Houses of Prague, Berlin and Vienna were hardest hit, as they were located in what the rest of the Arcanum considered to be "enemy territory." Though political issues were for the most part kept out of Arcanum discussions and operations, nationalistic sentiments are difficult to resist. Furthermore, with all of Europe ignited by war, much of the Arcanum's research and "field work" came to a standstill.

The loss of the St. Petersburg Chapter House in 1917 was a disheartening blow. Enemy soldiers seized the House itself and destroyed most of its records and books. The Russian Journeymen either fled the country — taking with them what books or research they could — or were killed in the process. It is not known how many materials were destroyed, and how much fell into the hands of the new Soviet leaders.

The Second World War proved even more catastrophic. The Foundation House — along with the rest of London — lived under the looming threat of German bombs, while a number of Chapter Houses fell into Nazi territories. Many of the Arcanum's Journeymen found their investigative and research skills to be useful in the war as well, and either enlisted or served in Intelligence for the Allies. The majority of members, whenever possible, continued their work as usual.

The first half of the 20th century, in spite of the many political changes that affected the Arcanum, was also one of the most fruitful periods for research and exploration: the world literally opened up, as membership expanded and new frontiers were broken.

The Cold War

The dramatic political changes brought about by both world wars threw many Chapter Houses into chaos. The Arcanum began a new expansion phase after the War years, deciding that while well-established Chapter Houses were important, the network of the Arcanum should be more broadly based, in order to change with the changing world.

Chapter Houses were not abolished, but a new classification was invented: Colonies. These were groups of Arcanum scholars who worked together in an area that lacked the full financial or administrative support of the Foundation House. Colonies typically had little funding, and no permanent prop-

erty in the Arcanum's name. They flourished in a variety of cities across the world, foraying into regions not yet explored, including previously unexplored parts of Africa and South America, and finally venturing into the Far East. Places that had been informal homes to Arcanum scholars and had frequently been centers of scholarly activity — Hong Kong, Calcutta, etc. — finally received official status.

The "Colony" concept had actually existed for quite a while, though it had not been recognized officially. The lack of an Arcanum Chapter House in an area did not necessarily mean that that area did not receive attention; frequently, Arcanists who lived in these places would open their homes to visiting colleagues. Likewise, the Arcanum had actually maintained such unofficial centers in Rome, Istanbul, and other places where it proved difficult to establish a formal Chapter House; these, however, were covert in nature and virtually unknown to most members. With no property or formal holdings in the name of the Arcanum, colonies could appear or disappear overnight. The "Colony" category, it turned out, was just old wine in a new skin.

Colonies were also good testing grounds for future Chapter House sites. Indeed, some areas that were given colonies finally earned the coveted Chapter House status.

The Arcanum in the Modern Day

The Arcanum has changed little from its earliest conception. Although administratively the organization has had to adapt itself to changing times, its core mission remains unaltered. It has learned from experience, to be sure, and has made some changes in order to allow for growth. There are at present approximately 300 Journeymen and women of the Arcanum, and another 200 Associate members — loosely allied researchers and investigators who aid the Arcanum in its mission.

Journeymen of the modern day are inheritors of the mission of the first Founders of the Arcanum. We are proud to call ourselves Journeymen, to know that we share the Rituals of Holmscroft and Murray, that we walk the same road.

The shadows beckon; let us enter and learn.

— Lecture notes of Geoffrey Truesdell

Part Two: The World of Shadows

Would you like my mask?

Would you like my mirror?

Cries the man in the shadowing hood.

You can look at yourself

You can look at each other

Or you can look at the face of your god.

— Loreena McKennitt, "Marrakesh Night Market"

"Why does the Arcanum study the supernatural?" Nahar asked.

Geoffrey looked at her, thoughtfully. *Always the simplest questions are the most profound.* "We study the supernatural because in it we may find the keys to the nature of man." He saw her cock an eyebrow, ever so slightly, and he corrected himself: "The nature of humanity."

He continued. "What is the world in which we live? If, as Plato would have it, we are in a cave, and we see only the

shadows of reality flickering on the wall, then it is our duty to learn the entirety of the cave and those things which cast the shadow, as well as the source of the light itself. And, if I may go one step further, we should study that which is hidden in the shadows, that which is not immediately apparent." He could see he was losing the Neophytes.

"Nahar, why do you study the paranormal?"

She stared contemplatively at the table-top for a few moments, as if divining an answer from the intricate swirl of the wood-grain surface, and then looked up. "Because it represents a higher reality to me, something which is too often ignored. I am not content with gauging only what people have done, but would seek to know, rather, what they are capable of, even if previously unimagined."

Geoffrey nodded. "So you study for your own advancement."

"Right," she agreed. "And ultimately, to use what I learn to benefit others."

Curriculum of the Enigmata

A number of mysteries, whether enigmatic places or unusual events, perennially catch the attention of Arcanists. Recent symposia and seminars have included the following topics:

Damcar, the City of the Ancients

Damcar, the missing city of the Ancients who instructed Christian Rosenkreutz, is a perennial favorite. Damcar is believed to be more than just a "lost city," — it is believed to be a hidden but thriving place, where the Ancients still teach their mysteries, a Shangri-La of occult knowledge and wisdom.

The Arcanum actively solicits any information on the possible location of Damcar. Any Arcanist who comes across references to it in any of their investigations or research is required to report such information to the Grand Chancellor immediately.

The Wise Men of Damcar, who instructed Christian Rosenkreutz, were said to practice magic, and some within the Arcanum see Damcar as a refuge of magic; if this city can be found — somewhere in Persia or Arabia, most likely — then these mystics may have much to offer.

In the 1920s, the Arcanum sponsored one trip to the deserts of Arabia, following what they believed were clues to the whereabouts of Damcar. The expedition never returned.

The Lost Colony

Another perennial favorite is the mystery of the Roanoke Island and the Lost Colony, the first English colony established in the United States.

Roanoke Island, part of North Carolina's Outer Banks, was settled in 1587 by explorer John White, who brought 120 men, women and children with him from Plymouth, England. Governor White left his colony in the autumn to return to England for supplies and to transport more colonists, but was held up by the Spanish Armada and was unable to return until 1590.



Upon his return, White found the colony deserted, the settlers disappeared. The only clues were the words CROATAN, CRO, carved into trees near the abandoned village.

The fate of the colonists remains a mystery, although Arcanists, scholars and scientists all have their theories, most of which involve the missing colonists joining up with friendly Native American tribes. A number of members suspect that something more was involved — just what, however, they have yet to agree on.

Alchemy

The first point: Alchemy is not merely a superstition-laden predecessor to chemistry. Alchemy is a science, but a sacred science, with roots in both metaphysics and the natural sciences.

The second point: the main function of alchemy is not to change lead into gold. While some alchemists ("puffers" or "charcoal-burners" as they were known) were concerned with this more base application of its principles, the art and science of alchemy is neither limited to nor defined by this singular goal.

Alchemy is the science of immortality, wherein the physical is understood to be a manifestation of the spiritual. The crucible is the human soul; the act of transmuting lead into gold represents the perfection of the human spirit. Alchemy is one of the traditional western sciences, practiced by both Christians and Muslims. The tradition is also taught in the East, in China and India. Even to this day there are still many who claim to be practicing alchemists.

Alchemy has long been an area of focus among those who study the occult. Allegedly, the science was known to Christian Rosenkreutz. The Arcanum's founder, Benjamin Holmscroft, was also said to have some interest in alchemy, though most doubt that he was actually a practicing alchemist.

There are those among the Arcanum who attempt to study this art, but thus far have had few important successes. If there are true Alchemists, they remain hidden from view.

Poltergeists

One must be careful to distinguish between poltergeist activities and classical hauntings.

The term poltergeist, meaning "noisy ghost," refers to unexplainable noisy rattlings, movement of objects (from furniture to knickknacks), and other such disturbances. However, most poltergeist incidents, upon examination, seem to occur in the vicinity of a young man or woman who lives or works in the affected area. In these cases, the poltergeist is in fact the psychokinetic manifestation of a turbulent mind — and what adolescent mind is not turbulent? Poltergeist phenomena is typically short-lived, while true hauntings may go on for years, decades, or centuries.

It is not uncommon for Arcanists investigating a possible haunting to turn their notes over to psi researchers when they realize the true nature of their case. Unfortunately, the individuals responsible for the poltergeist usually do not develop full-fledged PK abilities.

Of course, some poltergeist activity has been proven to go on for years, still centered on one person, and whether this is the case of a possessive spirit or an unrefined and uncontrolled PK ability is not always clear.

"That is what the Arcanum does, multiplied a thousand-fold. We are not just historians, nor are we just parapsychologists, or private investigators. We are all of the above, working in concert, and teaching each other what we can."

"So why bother learning about 'vampires,'" interjected Jonathan, "assuming I even acknowledge that they might exist, that is."

Geoffrey said, "Call it one part scientific altruism, learning for its own sake, and one part selfishness. If we seek to unlock the keys to the past, then who better to speak with than one who lived through it?"

"Perhaps I should break this down a little more categorically," he said, sensing his pupils' internal struggles. "Let's start at the beginning..."

Lesson 1: Places of Mystery

Dolmens, enchanted isles, ley lines, lost lands, abandoned cities, mythical temples — all these have fired the imaginations of the Arcanum's investigators and researchers from the organization's inception. If humanity once possessed a secret knowledge which is now lost, it is most likely to be found in the ruins of our ancestors.

Many Arcanists are archaeologists and cartographers of the mythic, seeking out those historic places that have ever been surrounded by mystery. Some are content to research areas that are commonly known, but may still hold the keys to further mysteries: Mohenjo-Daro, the Great Pyramids, the stone circles, Tikal, Petrus, Masada and other points across the globe. Arcanists believe the mysteries of the Ancients may be found here.

Other Arcanists explore an even more mythic landscape, searching for lost lands and vanished civilizations: Damcar, Atlantis, Shamballah, the Hollow Earth, Lemuria, Mu, Lyonesse, the Hyperborean continent, White Cathay, Camelot, the kingdom of Prester John, and more. These places, spoken of only in lore and occult speculation, are often the focus — nay, even the obsession — of many an Arcanum scholar. They are more than the key to ancient mysteries: they are the treasure box.

Mysteries of Space

The very concept of "alien visitors" has in the past met only with derision in the Arcanum, though at present this atmosphere has begun to change.

From the beginning, a few Arcanists toyed with the notion of extraterrestrial visitors, but neither their concerns nor their suggestions were given much heed. During the 1970s, when the world seemed to be in a "UFO heyday," interest in the topic peaked. However, there was soon a backlash against the perceived fad, and interest waned dramatically.

Within the past few years, interest in the extraplanetary has slowly been on the rise again, and the subject has finally been given some respect. Unfortunately, the Arcanum has been unable to prove anything decisively about visitors from space. The official line is, for now, UFOs are just that — *unidentified* flying objects.

There are rumors that we secretly court astronauts and NASA scientists, and that the Arcanum's photo-archives contain numerous satellite-photographs of both the earth and distant locations in space, but these rumors are typically discounted as the wishful thinking of conspiracy-theorists gone cosmic. In any case, we know links exist between the otherworldly, the mundane, and the just plain lost. It's our job — our *quest* — to uncover those links and find the pattern.

Lesson 2: Items of Power

Arcanists constantly collect lore and study or search for on relics of the past and of legend — Excalibur, the Grail, the

Hermes Trismegistus

If you possess true knowledge (enough, O Soul, you will understand that you are akin to your Creator).

— Hermes

From the journal of Jonathan Lewis:

"Who is Hermes Trismegistus?" Paul asked.

Geoffrey left our conference table momentarily and returned with a series of books, which he identified as the *Corpus Hermeticum*. "Hermes, the Greek messenger god, became transformed early in the Christian era — the 2nd century, to be more precise — to something far greater: Hermes Trismegistus, or Hermes the Thrice-great."

A number of magical writings are attributed to Hermes — or to Thoth, as he was called by the Egyptians. These writings vary little from the countless other magical papyri popular in Egypt during the time of Christ, but they are among the most important documents in the history of European occultism.

"These Hermetica were given a place of prominence in the Renaissance revival of pagan magic, and Hermes Trismegistus is often a symbol of the occult tradition. The Hermetica serves as the root of most occult philosophies in the West, and is made of tracts on alchemy, astrology, magic, and correspondences, or 'occult sympathies' — secret links between seemingly disparate facets of creation."

William, our friendly neighborhood linguist, chimed in here. "And, of course, when we speak of something as hermetically sealed — or airtight — we are drawing on the Hermetic tradition, and the belief that Hermes invented a magic seal that kept things airtight."

"Oh," Paul said. "So you're saying that Hermes invented Tupperware?"

Philosopher's Stone, the Ark of the Covenant, and more. Those Arcanists who seek these items do so religiously, more wandering mystic than researcher, and they are admired (if sometimes avoided) for their dedication.

The Arcanum has managed to collect many smaller relics, items that have been important or which have some supernatural connection: the medicine pouch of a famous shaman, the skull of a gargoyle, and other similar pieces — but for the most part regards these as tangential evidence. They provide some proof for the higher truths which the Arcanum seeks, but the true relics are those truths.

Lesson 3: Magic

Magic is real, but it is a minor and rarely seen phenomenon. Many within the Arcanum — particularly *thaumatologists*, those who study the history and theory of magic — believe that magic was once a potent and thriving force in our world. These thaumatologists argue that much evidence exists of magical activity occurring throughout the Middle Ages, evidence which cannot be summarily dismissed as mere superstition. Records indicate that there were thriving communities of individuals who were believed by the general population to work magic.

The medieval wizards, according to chroniclers, worked together under a compact, and named their alliance the Order



of Hermes — no doubt in reference to Hermes Trismegistus. The magi of this Order were often publicly acknowledged by local townsfolk as sorcerers and wizards, and the Arcanum has uncovered many vignettes about their encounters and adventures.

However, according to the theory of the thaumatologists, magic — in its most powerful form — disappeared from our world soon after the Middle Ages; multiple theories have been advanced to explain this, from astrological conjunction to astronomical phenomenon to the will of the Creator. The communities of the Order of Hermes disbanded or died slowly of attrition, and no further proof of magical activity on such a widespread scale has been found.

Many within the Arcanum have dedicated their lives to the rediscovery of this lost magic. The Arcanum has gathered countless tomes on magical theory, compendia of incantations and rituals, and more, and some members have even dabbled in the practice of thaumaturgy.

Make no joke of this: magic is real, and we have those in our midst who can prove it. However, even the smallest of magical effects may take years of study and hours of application, and the acquisition of such skill is often seen as pointless.

One of the most perplexing characteristics of magic is that it simply cannot be proven to total skeptics. Experiments and experience have repeatedly shown this to be true; any time magic is attempted before a genuine skeptic, it inevitably fails. Although there are cases in which it *has* been performed successfully in the presence of self-professed skeptics, these examples do not invalidate the theorem, but rather cast doubt on the witness's alleged skepticism. Many claim to be skeptics simply because they fail to acknowledge their own secret beliefs.

Thaumatologists have begun to study magic in primitive societies. They seek to answer the question of whether magic has declined in certain cultures, particularly "primitive" cultures which operate within a non-scientific world-view. The magic of the Kahunas, of Santeria, and the shamans of the numerous tribal societies are currently objects of serious investigation. Many of these cultures believe magic to be the operations of spirits, which shall be discussed elsewhere. In addition, thaumatologists are investigating the practitioners of Wicca and the alleged ritual magicians of today, seeking to determine whether these are the heirs of the magical tradition.

The magic which we do possess has its merits, of course, as it may sometimes prove useful in the course of difficult field research. Even more important, however, is what this magic represents, for it is the only existing evidence of something far greater, which is now lost to us.

The "Wise Men" of lore — fakirs, holy men, magi, and others — all probably were practicing magicians. Some may still exist hidden away on remote mountain tops, but for now they remain undiscovered.

Lesson 4: Miracles

Closely related to the study of magic is the study of miracles.

The question, of course, frequently arises: what is the difference between magic and miracles? Are they not both characterized by the supernatural manipulation of the natural world? Though each has been so described, there is, of course, a primary difference between them. Miracles occur through the

will of God, while magic operates by the will of man. According to traditional hagiography, God cannot be compelled to work miracles, thus such phenomena are never guaranteed to come about when needed.

Magic, although it involves an alteration of the natural system by supernatural means, is more akin to a science. It has rules, restrictions, requirements, and a set formula and procedure which must be followed in order for it to succeed. Of course, it is the will of the magician that causes it, but unfortunately — or fortunately, God bless our souls — magic does not simply operate according to the Mage's whim.

Wherever there is news of a reported "miracle," the Arcanum sends its scholars. These "miracles" are catalogued and, if possible, verified. We are reluctant to believe that the hand of God is behind every unexplained act; on the other hand, we are, in some cases, willing to accept the possibility of divine intervention.

Humankind is now past the Age of Miracles. While we are constantly receiving reports of appearances of the Virgin or other religious figures, these too often prove to be little more than religious hysteria. Faith healing is often psychosomatic — or fraudulent.

It has been argued by some that the true power behind miracles comes equally from the hand of God and the mind of the believer. Simply put, disbelievers are unable to perform miracles, even if they were inclined to do so.

Unfortunately, the general consensus is that miracles, like magic, are a thing of the past.

Lesson 5: Spirits

A number of cosmologies depict an intermediary world, one between Heaven and Earth, which is filled with all manner of creatures. This collection of beings falls under the general designation of spirits.

Spirits, as we refer to them, do not include the souls of the dead; we differentiate here between spirit-workings and spiritualism.

Traditional cosmologies depict spirits as basically neutral entities; while some may be more malevolent than others, and some may be regarded as beneficial, we prefer to avoid the distinctions of "good" and "evil."

Arcanum Journeymen have traveled across the world in their search for genuine shamanic experiences and spirit lore. We have studied Candomblé in Brazil and Voodoo in Haiti; we have visited countless medicine men and women of the Native American tribes. More than a few of our members have actually been apprenticed to shamans and priests of these cultures. What begins as research often becomes a true vocation. Some shamans' apprentices return to the Arcanum, bringing us their new knowledge and abilities; but many ultimately leave the Arcanum, as their Journey leads them down a new path.

While we mourn the loss of members in this fashion, we honor the road they have chosen in their personal quest for enlightenment.

Lesson 6: Demons

We must first make a clear distinction between demonology and demonolatry. Demonology is the study of demons and demon-worship, while demonolatry is the worship of demons.

The Arcanum acknowledges the existence of demons and devilish spirits. While we prefer to remain neutral, free of the considerations of "good" or "evil," we still accept the traditional classification of demons as destructive spirits. While not all members of the Arcanum follow one of the Abrahamic traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — we feel that "demons" are not solely a Western conception. Many Eastern traditions speak at great length about the nature and existence of demons, and while not all of them are considered evil *per se*, they are still dangerous creatures.

A number of demonologists exist within the Arcanum, and the Axis Mundi has a collection on demons and demonology that we believe rivals the Library of the Society of Leopold in Rome.

Demonology is a field fraught with difficulty, of course; demonologists ultimately come into contact with those who worship the Infernal, and such individuals can be... dangerous. Likewise, demonologists have at times, in the course of their research, come to the attention of those entities they study.

On the other hand, demon and devil worshippers present themselves as fascinating case studies. They often engage in the most extreme behavior only to draw attention to themselves, and when given the opportunity, they will demonstrate their supernaturally gifted prowess — particularly if it can be used to terrorize or victimize someone. They typically possess a whole range of unusual abilities, and many interesting investigations of demon-cults have been recorded in our archives.

As far as engaging in demonolatry, I can only say this: it is a dark and deadly path, and should be avoided. It is one of the few activities for which the Arcanum will expel a member.

Lesson 7: Psychic Phenomena

Psychic research is a relatively new field in the history of the occult, "psychic phenomena" previously having been lumped together with magic and miracles. It is only in the 19th century that the field of "psychical studies" came about as an attempt to scientifically quantify the paranatural abilities of humankind. One of the earliest organizations to formally study psychic phenomena, the Society for Psychical Research, was founded just before the Arcanum in 1882, in London. A number of our own early members received their training and introduction to the subject matter in the SPR.

Much of what falls into the current category of psychic abilities, or *psi* (as parapsychologists prefer to call it) includes behaviors and activities that might in earlier days have been considered magic or witchcraft: psychokinesis (or PK), telepathy, clairvoyance, and a whole range of other talents. As such, the history of *psi* is difficult to gauge effectively, and is not a field that has been given much attention.

The nature of *psi*, however, is of great interest to the Arcanum. A number of Arcanists dedicate themselves to the study and development of *psi* talents, and have established programs for *psi*-testing.

Incidentally, more than a few Arcanists have been proven to possess some measure of *psi*-talent. Our founder was the first to consider actively recruiting members of the Arcanum based simply upon their psychic talents. While we have heard rumors — and seen some proof — of individuals who are powerful psychics, the majority of our members have only minor talents,

skills which prove useful in field research. True psychics are almost always welcome within our ranks.

We have not been very successful, however, either in attracting truly powerful psychics or in developing already existing psi-talents.

Lesson 8: Ghosts

Restless dead, avenging spirits, haunted houses and more: the Arcanum has long had an interest in spiritualism and the study of ghosts. From the beginning, Jonathan Kelvin, the first American Chancellor, amassed a great deal of data on the rumored hauntings and ghost-sightings he learned of in his studies.

Ghost lore is international, and hauntings are among the easiest supernatural phenomena to investigate. Haunted houses (and if I might add a linguistic note, the words "haunt" and "house" come from the same Indo-European root word, *thei*) do not go anywhere, and it is a simple matter to set up operations in them. Unfortunately, very few of the hauntings we have investigated have proven to be true cases of the phenomena.

The study of hauntings is one part science, one part history. Arcanists who engage in "ghost-hunting" often tinker with a wide spectrum of electronic devices, designed for the purpose of "recording" ghostly activity. Likewise, they must be skilled researchers, able to compile current and historical data about both the location allegedly haunted and any residents or occupants of the site. The key to knowing who a ghost is, or was, is often a vital element in the attempt to make contact.

Of course, ghost-hunting has its own share of dangers, particularly when the haunting spirit is vengeful or capricious.

Our investigators have been tricked, attacked, and on occasion, even possessed.

Lesson 9: The Undead

The discussion of the Undead often poses a problem for Neophytes. While many individuals are willing to accept the possibility that magic exists (or existed), that miracles are real, and that spirits and demons are verifiable entities, the mere suggestion of vampires is often too much of a stretch for the imagination. I personally believe that this is because recognizing the existence of vampires also involves coming to accept our own precarious place in the world. Humans have long believed themselves to be at the top of the food chain, and it can be threatening to be displaced by creatures even more powerful.

Let me begin by saying this: the Arcanum knows for a fact that vampires are real.

Our first expert on vampire lore was the Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Jebediah Brown. He is better known for his treachery, but to his credit, I will add that he was the first to contribute to our understanding of vampires.

Our files have countless records of vampire contacts and sightings, and we have in our annals eyewitness testimonies of the incredible supernatural abilities of the Undead. We also have... acquired... some records of the activities of the Society of Leopold, which keeps detailed reports on every witch-hunt in which it is engaged.

Our investigators have, on more than one occasion, observed one of the Undead in action, and we have catalogued many of their powers. The Undead almost always possess tremendous strength, speed and endurance; many have also



demonstrated individual abilities, ranging from shape-shifting to telepathy.

The origins of vampirism are not known. It is believed that vampires are at least as old as humanity, and some posit that vampires may even predate the human race; other Arcanists disagree, pointing out that most vampires can be proven to have been humans at one point, and as such, cannot "predate" humanity.

It is believed that vampirism is spread much like a virus or plague — sharing the blood of a vampire may lead to contraction of the infection. Some humans, for example, do not display the full range of vampiric abilities; these are most likely individuals who contracted only a lesser form of the disease, while other individuals suffer the full condition of vampirism. Those who contract a minor form of the disease, for example, are still mortal and can be killed through a number of methods — not that we have done so, mind you! — and can move about unhampered by daylight. These "lesser vampires" are often perform services for the true vampires.

We have also catalogued a number of ways in which vampires can be destroyed, although their destruction is not our mission. We know, for example, that sunlight and fire are anathema to the Undead, and driving a stake through a vampire's heart will slay it as well. For reasons unknown, some vampires seem immune to the powers of the cross and other holy symbols, while others will flee in terror. It is possible that only those vampires who were religious in their human incarnations will be affected by sacred objects.

There is, of course, an inherent danger to this line of study. We, as mortals, are basically an element of the vampiric food chain; these creatures subsist on us. Furthermore, vampires are a secretive group, and for good reason — they realize full well that the mortal world would not condone the existence of such predators. Arcanists who study the Undead world of vampires tread a path as dangerous as the demonologists.

For this reason, we know very little about vampire society — it cannot easily be infiltrated. This is the greatest loss; for we could learn so much of history from the Undead! We look forward to the day when we can approach a vampire in peace and study what he or she can teach us.

On the other hand, a movement is rising within the Arcanum, initiated by members who believe that our scholarly interest in vampires is immoral. The Undead, to these Arcanists, are the ultimate fulfillment of predatorial instinct combined with human malevolence, and their very existence endangers all of humanity. If we have catalogued their inhuman activities — which we have, and they are many — and we allow vampires to exist, then we are accomplices to genocide.

Lesson 10: The Undying

There are among us a group of immortals whom we know very little about, though what we do know is quite fascinating. For lack of better appellation, we simply call them The Undying Ones, or the Undying.

Our knowledge of the Undying comes from two sources. The first is Winthrop Murray, the Egyptologist who served as Benjamin Holmscroft's secretary. A number of Murray's extant writings refer to a collection of Egyptian immortals, who live in

a constant cycle of life-decay-rebirth: a very tangible form of reincarnation. The second source is in fact one of these beings.

This individual — who refuses to give his original name, or even a current pseudonym, but allows us to call him "Jacob" — first visited the Foundation House in 1889. He met with Winthrop Murray and Benjamin Holmscroft; although the meeting was private, some notes have been released into the records. Jacob insists that he was born approximately 100 years before Christ; he, and others like him, were magically transformed via a mysterious ritual unknown to them — and now lost entirely — into a state of immortality; their bodies constantly live in a constant cycle of decay and renewal, and between each phase, their spirits roam through the spirit world. He claims to have been witness to many significant events, from the Crucifixion to the crowning of Charlemagne. After he gave his testimony, he bid Murray and Holmscroft farewell. Whether they believed his tale, or whether his testimonies were considered those of a madman, is not known.

He returned again in 1899, appearing no older than before. He met with the Executive Committee, and then Holmscroft and Murray privately.

"Jacob" returned again in 1909, still looking just as youthful. He conferred with anyone he had met before, and again with the Executive Committee. Of course, by this time, some credence was lent to his allegations. He never again appeared openly to the Arcanum, although some suspect that he maintained frequent correspondence with Winthrop Murray.

In these meetings, he reportedly discussed current events, and sometimes he would draw them back to historical antecedents. He rarely discussed elements of his society, and he avoided discussion of other supernaturals. Holmscroft and Murray left records of their private meetings with "Jacob," but we suspect that they are incomplete.

The opportunity to discuss history with these Undying, of which we hope to avail ourselves one day, would prove extremely valuable.

Lesson 11: Werereatures

Many are the creatures that change their skins; werewolves are not the only shapeshifters known to the Arcanum.

The first Arcanum scholar to study lycanthropy lore, Roger Corwin, was a psychiatrist — or an "alienist" as the profession was known in his day — who felt that lycanthropy was purely a psychiatric condition. At some point later in his career, however, he "changed tracks," and came to regard it as a very real phenomenon.

We have uncovered many records of lycanthropic activity — eyewitness accounts, correspondence, and other documents — but none are recent. It is possible that at some point in the past, there were a multitude of lycanthropes. This would explain the preponderance of late medieval folklore about the werewolf. But now? There have been very few eyewitness accounts of werewolves; the creatures are most likely dying off, the last of a wild herd.

We have a few theories regarding lycanthropic origins and behavior, based upon the scant few eyewitness accounts we do have in our records.

Although the origins of lycanthropy are a mystery, two hypotheses predominate. The first is that werewolves and other shape-shifters are actually another species entirely, one that is neither human nor beast, but somewhere in between. As such, they may in fact predate humankind, and thus have existed in the shadows of human society since its beginnings.

Another hypothesis is that lycanthropy, like vampirism, is contracted like a plague. The famous "werewolf's bite" theory is common, but those who study the lore of lycanthropy do not find it entirely satisfactory. If anything, the "werewolf's bite" will simply leave a corpse, and not an incipient lycanthrope, if one believes the accounts of these creatures' ferocity.

Some scholars have actually proposed capturing a lycanthrope for the purposes of experimentation. This has, thus far, been denounced as inhumane and inhuman activity; although the Arcanum does not have a formal statement on vivisection, the Grand Chancellor has always come down hard upon any rumblings of scientific experimentation on live victims.

As for other werereatures, the lore of other cultures, from traditional Japanese to native American to South Asian, mentions coyote folk, fox people, and cat-creatures. Some within the Arcanum have begun to explore these areas as well. As with werewolves, however, few can report having seen such a being in its full glory.

Lesson 12: The Fay

Liam McPhee, one of our founders, and the first Chancellor of the Dublin Chapter House, was the first Arcanist to delve deeply into faerie lore. According to his contemporaries, Liam was always an odd fellow, but his research in faerie lore was impeccable.

Let me start with etymology: the homonyms "fey" and "fay," although similar, are not interchangeable. "Fey," from Middle English *feye* and Old English *fæge* mean "fated to die," "marked by a foreboding of death," and from it, "marked by an otherworldly air; visionary." "Fay," from the Middle English *faie*, and the Old French *fæe*, means "an elf or fairy," or "resembling an elf."

The majority of what we know of the fay folk comes from Celtic mythology and Irish and English folk tales. Many in the British Isles still believe in the fay folk, but we have no evidence for their existence. It is quite likely that if the fay people ever did exist, it was in the distant past.

When Liam McPhee began his study of faerie lore, he was very much a singularity in the Arcanum. Only a few other scholars in the years following McPhee — whose disappearance was as dramatic and enigmatic as the rest of his life — have taken the mantle that he lay down.

In the past decade, though, there has been a revival of the study of faerie lore; the sudden interest in the fay folk must have some significance in and of itself, but what? We cannot yet guess.

A number of our modern scholars also tie together similarities between the Celtic tales of the fay and other cultural stories of like-creatures. Only recently have we begun to see the fay folk as a more global phenomenon; although treated differently by different cultures, there is still a common thread between all the tales of otherworldly folk that coexisted with us, helping or harming us according to their whims.

Lesson 13: Other Creatures of Legend

The Arcanum takes rumors or reports of sightings of legendary creatures very seriously; many an Arcanist has dedicated his or her life to the pursuit of any one such mythical creature. Whether these are ancient legends or modern urban rumors — unicorns, the yeti (Tibetan for "demon of the snow"), the Loch Ness monster, sea serpents, deformed radiation monsters, what have you — the Arcanum has field researchers scattered across the globe investigating.

These mythic beasts, like the werereatures, are elusive in the extreme; although field reports do indicate occasional contact with bygone creatures, we still have little material proof of their existence — a horn here, a hoof there, a collection of photographs and videos that could just as easily be trickery — but the eyewitness accounts of members throughout our history indicate that some creatures of legend undoubtedly exist. Some, I have heard, have forbidding aspects and dark purposes. Ours is a risky quest, and many hunts for mythic beasts end in mysterious disappearances or incurable madness.

Lesson 14: Mortals

We are not the only mortals who seek to explore the world of shadows, to delve into its many mysteries, and to solve its riddles. Other groups exist as well, with the same purpose, but sometimes with far different goals. Never quite allies, often antagonists, these are groups with whom we share much in common; perhaps this is the reason for our antagonism.

In addition to the many mortal societies which gather themselves into cults, venerating whatever supernatural entity has presented itself to them in exchange for a little secret knowledge or inhuman power, there are other organized forces which must be faced.

Les Frères de la Rose Croix

Our own origin is tied closely to the formation of the Brothers of the Rose Cross, as this fraternity calls itself. Founded in Morocco in 1893 by Etienne DuLac, the French occultist who refused to participate in the founding of the Arcanum, it is a highly secretive group of visionary mystics who care less for scholarship and study than they do for the mystical experience.

DuLac was unwilling to cooperate as an equal with so many others, so he formed an order that would be utterly subservient to him. Some critics of the occult say that people turn to the occult to fulfill some need for power and control; if this theory is true, then it reached its fruition with DuLac and his followers.

Many of the Frères' goals are the same as the Arcanum's: both organizations seek enlightenment and wisdom. However, where the Arcanum does so through discipline and self-determination, the Frères are not above thievery and chicanery. The Arcanum reserves its knowledge and findings until mankind is ready, while the Frères care little for anyone outside their secret society. Some believe that the ultimate goal of the Frères is to locate Damcar and plunder its secrets for their own gain.

The Frères is a small society, numbering less than 100 followers across the entire world; its headquarters are unknown, but we suspect that the order is centered in Morocco, where the Brotherhood first appeared. Its beliefs — or what little we truly know of them — are a syncretic blend of Sufism and Rosicrucianism. While the Rose Cross Brothers should be

working together with the Arcanum, too often we are in competition, and dangerously so.

The Society of Leopold

The Society of Leopold is the oldest organization in the world dedicated to the study of the supernatural and the occult. It presents itself as little more than a clearinghouse, a source for research on occult lore, much like the Arcanum, but its goals are far more ruthless.

The Society represents the modern-day heir to the Inquisition of the 13th century, having adopted its goals and motives. No longer concerned with heretics, it seeks the elimination of all supernaturals from the face of the earth, believing them to be creatures of the devil.

Inquisitors tend to be rather apocalyptic, and act as though they are soldiers in a new crusade. This makes them very dangerous. To date, they have not initiated any conflict with the Arcanum, but they have little reason to suspect us of anything. They are not aware of the fact that we encourage the study of magic. Should they come to realize this, they will no doubt find fault with us.

We have it on good authority that the Society has engaged in many successful witch-hunts — or *autos-da-fé*, to use their parlance — and that each of these is carefully documented. While we mourn the meaningless violence they have committed in the name of a higher being, their data is probably very revealing. A few of their records have come our way, and the information in them is only a hint of the amount of material secreted away in the Society's holdings.

The Society of Leopold represents perfectly the reasons why the Arcanum does not wish to reveal our precious knowledge until the world is ready: there are too many latent Inquisitors — those who would merely take up the torch and sword, instead of the lamp of truth.

Bear in mind, as well, that the Society of Leopold is not the only group of witch-hunters in existence, nor are all witch-hunters members of any organization. Of the latter, we hold particular scorn for the Reverend Jebediah Brown, who used our resources to further his own private, hidden crusade against the supernatural.

The Order of St. Hermes

This little-known order began within the Church of the Middle Ages, and consisted primarily of Benedictine monks dedicated to keeping the knowledge of antiquity — particularly alchemy — alive in a time of relative ignorance. With the Reformation, the Order broke off from the Church. Composed entirely of heterodox Christians who have elevated Hermes Trismegistus to sainthood, the Order believes that Christ's Apostles were all alchemists and that the Gospels (which the Order numbers at six, not four) are alchemical manuals. Most members are believed to be practicing alchemists.

The Order of St. Hermes maintained two monasteries, both of which are alleged to have fabulous libraries, jewels of learning in all of Christendom. Unfortunately, the library of one of the monasteries, in northern Italy, burned to the ground in a horrible accident in 1327. Although the Society of Leopold maintains that the events that occurred had nothing to do with them, and that the only Inquisitor present, Bernard Gui, was not a member of their Society, some in the Arcanum still suspect

they had a hand in the disaster. The location of the second monastery is a secret, but we suspect it to be in the Al Jabal ash Sharqi mountains of Syria.

Journeymen have met with members of the Order on occasion, but ideological differences often keep them from working closely or for very long. Still, a glimpse at the library in Syria would be worthwhile, if the occasion ever arises.

Gypsies

What can be said about the Gypsies? Much.

What can be verified about them? Little.

Gypsies are an enigmatic, nomadic folk, and we believe that they hold many secrets close to their heart. That which we seek, they seem intuitively to *know*. However, they are not allies in our quest for truth and understanding.

Do not be mistaken — they are not our opponents either. They are more impartial observers, witnesses to us and our activities, and — if an oxymoron may be used — silent commentators.

We have long felt that there is much to be learned from the Gypsies, but they refuse to teach us. What one Gypsy will tell an investigator one day will be contradicted the next by another. They enjoy misleading us and taunting us with what they know and what we desire.

We have also courted them, hoping to encourage at least one Gypsy to join us; this way, perhaps we can form bonds of trust, and share our secrets.

Crucible Genetics Amalgamated

It might seem unusual that I refer to this company, a little-known pharmaceutical manufacturing firm. However, I end my discussion with CGA as a warning of what the unchecked quest for knowledge can be like when combined with a personal obsession.

Crucible Genetics Amalgamated does more than merely produce aspirin-free pain relievers or try to create the perfect garden fertilizer. CGA is the descendent of a biochemistry company created by a religious zealot who has turned to science to further his own goal: the ultimate annihilation of the supernatural from the earth. Not content with the conventional lore with which the Arcanum deals, he embraced modern science instead. CGA routinely hunts supernaturals — or alleged supernaturals — and exposes them to an array of scientific experiments, including torture and vivisection. The founder of CGA was none other than the Reverend Jebediah Brown, who allegedly has also used the results of his experimentation to further his own life span.

Much of our information comes from our own attempts to infiltrate CGA. Many Arcanists died in these missions.

There is another warning which you should heed — CGA seems closely tied to the Arcanum in ways we still cannot fathom. It is possible that CGA has spies in our midst. More than one of our investigations has ultimately been ruined — conditions destroyed, research stolen, investigators harassed, etc. — by CGA technicians.

This is the possible price of our Journey: assault, ridicule, disappearance or worse. It is not an easy road we carve through the forest of blindness. Still, for all its perils, the Journey, I feel, is all the sweeter for the constant search for light.



Chapter Three: Through a Glass, Darkly (Politics and Workings)

Jesus said: Blessed is the lion which the man eats and the lion will become man; and cursed is the man whom the lion eats and the man will become lion.

— The Gospel of Thomas

From the journal of Jonathan Lewis, 10 December 1994

It has been two and a half months since my entry into the Arcanum, and my mind is afire.

So much has transpired in these past weeks. Can it really have been only ten weeks since I first met my fellow Neophytes? I feel like I've known them forever, like they have always been a part of my life; I can scarcely remember what my life was like before we were brought together. We have been through so much: the weekly seminars at the Chapter House, a road trip to Philadelphia — I still have to transcribe the voice-diary recording I made of our weekend in that allegedly haunted house. No, strike "allegedly" — something was there; I am sure that I perceived a powerful presence hovering somewhere just beyond the periphery of my five senses.

And the camping trip, in which we huddled together in the dark hills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, relying upon

Paul's know-how to build a fire and set up camp. I was so angry when Geoffrey drove us into the mountains, and then ordered us out of the car and took off, leaving us stranded until the next morning. We knew we were going for a "retreat," but we expected a log cabin, not a makeshift tent.

What were those howls we heard that night? Surely they could not have been mere wolves.

But I can see now the purpose behind these activities: they taught us our strengths and our individual capabilities. Nahar, always the quiet, contemplative one, took charge in the Philadelphia House, while Paul demonstrated both his intelligence and common sense in the mountains. (I did not know that he habitually traveled with two concealed firearms, either, until that night.)

But now? We face initiation this month. What will it be like?



Politicking in the Arcanum

FROM: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>

TO: Nahar Khan <khan@kahuna.fps.com>

RE: Politics in the Arcanum

It looks like your Parapsychology conference has kept you in Richmond longer than you had expected. Since you missed tonight's class, I'm forwarding to you a typescript of my notes. If you have any questions, please call.

begin text

Geoffrey: Up until now, I have been speaking of the Arcanum as a unified front. At this point in time, as your group has forged a bond and you have proven some sense of commitment to what the Arcanum represents, I feel that it is time I taught you a little about the real inner workings of the Arcanum.

You have already learned of the various divisions within the Arcanum, such as Chapter Houses and Colleges. Unfortunately, there are less formal — and frequently frowned upon — divisions as well, which represent the various ideologies with which Arcanists may ally themselves. A partial list follows.

Seekers

The "Seekers" are Arcanists who emphasize the "personal enlightenment" aspect of their job. For them, everything becomes a quest for the Holy Grail or the Philosopher's Stone. However, they trivialize anything that

does not fall within the realm of what they consider to be "the sacred." While their convictions are certainly noble, and deserving of some respect, the Seekers are often viewed as little more than religious madmen or wandering mystics, with their own enigmatic agendas.

Templars

These Arcanists merely take the name of the venerable Knighthood; to the best of my knowledge, they haven't the audacity to claim any historical link to the Knights of the Temple.

The Templars feel that the basic mission of the Arcanum is sound, but the Syllabus is in error in one respect: the relative "good" or "evil" of the supernatural is worthy of consideration. If something is judged to be evil, then it should be destroyed; otherwise we are ourselves evil for allowing it to exist.

They do, of course, speak from a viewpoint that is not entirely without merit. When good people allow evil to continue, they argue, they become participants in that evil. However, these self-professed Templars appoint themselves as judges, and in truth are little better than the Inquisition.

The identity of the Templars is unknown: they communicate through untraceable faxes, e-mail, and public postings, daring the Arcanum to reform before reform is forced upon it.

Progressivists

To quote one notable Progressivist: "The Arcanum is full of crap. It is an antiquated neoVictorian/pseudo-occult/secret-society, good old boys lounging in wing-chairs puffing on cigars while reading some nice little Latin text and pretending to be better than everyone else.

"We should do away with the Victorian dressings of this little 'gentleman's club,' and reform it in line with a progressive 1990s institution. We have had enough of the secrets and the decrees-from-on-high."

Unfortunately, the Progressivists do have some justification for their radical beliefs. For example, while lodges and Chapter Houses have some autonomy in their Investigations, every now and then, a fax or phone call will arrive from the Executive Committee, insisting that a certain case be dropped — usually based on the argument that the case is "trivial" or an "extravagant waste of funds" or for some other spurious reason. The Arcanum is not an open society, and there are secrets buried within its vast corridors.

On the other hand, I am opposed to the radical destruction of the social order the progressivists threaten; I prefer to see the corrections come from within, slowly and surely.

*** end text ***

An interesting anecdote to follow this:

At the end of class, I overheard William and Geoffrey talking. William said "What about the White Monks? What political faction are they?"

I've never seen Geoffrey look so angry; his hands started to tremble and his face reddened. (You could almost see the steam rising from his starched white collar.) "How did you hear about *them*?" he said.

William looked surprised, and then pulled a folded piece of paper from his briefcase. "I received this in the mail." Carefully unfolding the sheet, he revealed large hand-scrawled writing on Arcanum stationery:

BEWARE THE WHITE MONKS

Geoffrey's eyes almost popped. "There. Are. No. White. Monks." he said. "They are a myth, a rumor concocted by those who see occult conspiracies everywhere and secret masters behind everything. Forget you ever received that propaganda."

Interesting, huh?

15 December 1994

I just spoke with Geoffrey. The news is incredible.

The Grand Chancellor has invited our class of Neophytes to the Foundation House for our Initiation. The Neophytes of other Chapters — I recall hearing mention of Seattle and Chicago — will be present as well. It appears that this year has seen a larger class of Neophytes than any other in the past decade; over 30 new Arcanists will be initiated.

Not only are Arcanum operatives arranging incredibly cheap airfare, the Georgetown Chapter is paying for half of it. I'm sure I can scrape up the difference, and we're leaving just before Christmas, so those of us in school — either





teaching or studying — can finish their academic requirements.

At least on the plane I can catch up on my Arcanum readings, which I missed thanks to the academic senate I had to attend...

Atlas of the Arcane

TO: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>

FROM: Nahar Khan <khan@kahuna.fps.com>

RE: The "Atlas of the Arcane"

Jonboy:

Here's the transcript from the class you missed. It is more or less what Geoffrey said, although I couldn't help but add my own comments in brackets!

Traditional Geography

The Arcanum uses a somewhat arcane [and rather archaic] geography, which considers the Holy Land to be the center of the world: all lands and countries east of Jerusalem are the Orient, and all nations west of Jerusalem are the Occident.

This geography is frequently disputed by newer members, who prefer more inclusive terminology, such as "Asian" over "Oriental," and would rather have a world-view which is not so dependent upon the Holy Land. Furthermore, such a division is nonsensical, splitting some territories apart into "Oriental" and "Occidental" sectors. [speaking as an "Oriental," I agree!]

However, the Executive Committee has remained firm in its conviction that this geography, established with the creation of the Arcanum, shall remain fixed.

The Holy Land

The Holy Land is a region that comprises parts of Palestine and Israel, including Jerusalem. There are many Arcanists who seriously question this religiocentric focus on the part of the organization, which will refuse members on the basis of their religious conviction; but for the time being, it looks as though there will be little change.

The Holy Land's only Chapter House is in Jerusalem; it was established within the Arcanum's first 15 years of operation, and has attracted scholars whose primary interest is in the mysteries of the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures. [I'd say that this is just a little Judeo-Christocentric, wouldn't you?]

The Occidental Houses

The Arcanum has spent the majority of its funds on and given most of its attention to developing houses in the Occidental world; of these, it has historically focused on Europe and America, although the Order's spheres of interest are expanding daily.

The British Isles

England is the spiritual and physical home of the Arcanum. The Foundation House is located some 100 miles

north of London, in the Fens of Cambridgeshire. A separate Chapter House in London, located in a large and elegant Georgian Townhouse, controls the business end of the Arcanum's workings. On those rare occasions when the Executive Committee meets with non-Arcanists, they come to this Chapter House, which is listed as the Arcanum's business address.

There are other Houses in the British Isles, of course: the Dublin Chapter has attracted a number of scholars interested in the lore of the fay folk, and various colonies or lodges have investigated the Arthurian tradition, along with other aspects of Welsh and Celtic lore, ever hoping for clues to such mythological treasures as Camelot, Excalibur, and the tomb of Arthur — which one Arcanist claims, prior to her disappearance, to have found. [And think of all the ghosts wandering around, too...] The many mysteries of Britain are waiting to be solved, from the lost Isle of Lyonesse to the mysteries of Stonehenge and the secrets of the Druids.

The European Continent

The earliest expansion of the Arcanum was across Europe, with the founding of Chapter Houses in Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Prague, and other important cities. Progress across the continent has been slow, but sure, with the establishment of Chapter Houses in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Madrid, Stockholm and other prominent cities.

Rome, it turns out, has always had a Chapter House, but a very secretive one: no roster can be found of its membership, and on paper it simply does not appear to exist. But various Arcanists claim to have met operatives for the Rome House. The Rome Chapter must, of necessity, operate in secrecy: the presence of the Society of Leopold, headquartered there, is considered a threat by many in the Arcanum. [That wouldn't be because they are a bunch of religious fanatics, now would it? Of course, the Arcanum doesn't have much room to talk sometimes....]

Most of the European cities have their own mysteries and occult traditions; For example, a number of occultists and alchemists flocked to Prague during the 16th century, attracted by the generous coffers of Emperor Rudolf II, whose personal inclinations leaned toward the arcane. Some still consider Prague to be a "metropolis of alchemy," albeit now in a very secretive manner.

Many American Arcanists ultimately wish to be posted to European Chapter Houses, as their research often draws them to the Old World. European Arcanists live conveniently close to the heart of the subjects they research.

North America

The next big phase of expansion was in North America. The oldest Chapter Houses on the continent are in Boston and San Francisco; after the Second World War, a new spate of North American Chapter Houses opened as well, including a few Houses in previously ignored Canada.

North American Arcanists historically focused on American occult history, particularly that of the colonial years, or evidences of hauntings or psychic activity; the Boston House, even after its rebuilding, was a strong center

for research in the New England area, which has a whole history of its own. Those Arcanists who researched magic and alchemy were ultimately drawn to Europe, where the recorded history of such activity is obviously much longer.

This continent is also becoming the focus of research on Native American mythology and lore, as more Arcanists are beginning to appreciate the wisdom of tribal peoples. The New World has many secrets of its own which have yet to be uncovered. The powers of the Hawaiian Kahunas, Zuni fetishes, Kachina dolls, and other such objects of mystery are all drawing the attention of curious Arcanists.

The Mexico City Chapter House is quite prominent, coordinating research activities for all of Central America and the Caribbean. It is particularly important for scholars of Mesoamerican history, mythology, and folklore; the mysteries of the Aztecs and the Mayas are slowly being uncovered and pieced together, and Arcanists have found some evidence that the shamanic practices of the Maya peoples may still exist to this day. The Mexico City Chapter House has many lodges and colonies extending outward, looking into the Santeria cults of Mexico as well as the Voodoo practices of Haiti.

Occidental Africa

The Arcanum has been present in Egypt almost from the time of the society's founding, when Winthrop Murray, a prominent Arcanum Egyptologist, purchased a townhome in Cairo. After his death, he willed his house to the Arcanum, and they turned the property into a Chapter House. That House was one of the few early Occidental Chapters established outside the European-American hegemony, and it instantly attracted Arcanists studying ancient Egyptian magic, Coptic rituals, and the mysteries of the pyramids. Likewise, a small Chapter House in Alexandria has been working to uncover the lost secrets of the famous Alexandrian library.

Since the 1950s and 1960s however, Colonies or Chapter Houses have been springing up across the continent, reflecting the Arcanum's growing interest in sub-Saharan Africa: targets that have been expanded recently include Kinshasa (Zaire) and Lagos (Nigeria). Arcanists are no longer looking for "lost Roman outposts" — not that they may not still exist, according to some — but instead are studying the native mysteries of the Continent, such as Great Zimbabwe.

South America

The chief Chapter House in South America is in Lima, Peru; this House sponsors countless expeditions to Macchu Picchu. The lost sacred mysteries of the Incas have attracted many an Arcanist since the House's establishment in the 1960s.

Due to its relative proximity, the Lima Chapter House also coordinates research trips to Easter Island, where Arcanists try to piece together the lost culture that placed the enigmatic statues the Island is famous for.

Many would-be shamans seek to uncover the secrets of the emerald forest, and the Arcanum's scholars are there as

well, studying among the Guarani and other native peoples of South America.

The Oriental Houses

Houses in the Oriental sector have historically been less wealthy and not quite as populous as their Occidental counterparts. However, the current Grand Chancellor, herself an Orientalist, has worked to increase funding for and attention to the Oriental Houses — much to the dismay of the Occidentalists, and to the delight of the traditionally neglected Orientalists. [Jon, I guess I'm probably an Oriental Occidentalist :P]

The Middle East & Oriental Africa

This region has always been a thriving center of research activity for the Arcanum. It is also, unfortunately, an area of incredible political instability. The Baghdad, Riyadh, and Tehran Chapter Houses have been undercover for quite a while, and have only minimal staffing. Mesopotamia is the very cradle of civilization, and the secrets of the Ancients are believed to be buried beneath these sands. Persian and Arabic legends and folklore are rife with tales of sorcery and the djin; the very term, *Magus*, is ultimately of Persian

The Foundation House

From the Private Notes of Jonathan Lewis
Vannever Hall

What was it — I paused to think — what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered.

— Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"

The manor on the Fens of Cambridgeshire which became the Foundation House of the Arcanum was originally called Vannever Hall. Benjamin Holmscroft claimed that it was his "family estate": this turned out to be a bit of an exaggeration on Holmscroft's part, or, if you prefer, an outright lie.

Research undertaken in the early 1930s proved that Vannever Hall was originally built in 1605 by Sir Thomas Scott, a reclusive aristocrat who was an avid collector of history and geography. He did not marry, living instead with a bachelor companion, Andrew Saint-George, who is reported to have traveled widely and been interested in the "historie and languages of the ancients." Built on one of the few natural islands of the Fens of north Cambridgeshire, Vannever Hall was a secluded and forbidding estate.

The two associates disappeared in 1612 on a trip to the Holy Land; Vannever Hall and all its properties were deeded to a young gentleman of London, Bryon Hartswicke, who subsequently took up residence in the estate. Little is known about Bryon Hartswicke, who was reportedly also a recluse. After a number of years in Vannever Hall, he closed up the manor and sailed across "the Orient" — sources did not specify exactly where — until he took ill and died; his burial place is not mentioned.

There are no later details on the history of Vannever Hall until Benjamin Holmscroft's first recorded appearance, in 1879, when he joined the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day. It effectively disappears from history for some 250 years. In legal documents, the manor is still called Vannever Hall, but this name is typically eschewed by Arcanists, who use the more familiar "Foundation House."

The Axis Mundi

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore...

— Edgar Allen Poe, "The Raven"

The Axis Mundi is the true heart of the Arcanum's Foundation House. Covering a major portion of the second floor of the manor, it rivals many college libraries: its collection numbers over 75,000 volumes and 15,000 manuscripts. The library is not contained in a single room, but is spread out over a dozen, a sequence of irregularly shaped chambers, one after another, filled with books and volumes from floor to ceiling. The Axis Mundi is an eidolon of scholarship and learning.

The Axis Mundi retains the traditional wooden card catalog that most libraries have now replaced with cold plastic and glass computer terminals. The collection is organized according to the classification scheme created by Benjamin Holmscroft; it is by this scheme that the library's original holdings were arranged (although the library itself was much smaller then, having been renovated and expanded recently), and it was this scheme that Holmscroft insisted be used for future acquisitions: "It speaks of many truths, on many levels."

It is here that most of the Arcanists could be found, deeply involved in their varied studies — scribbling at any of the enormous ornate worktables, or reclining in one of the numerous leather wing-chairs or couches scattered about the library. The collection includes volumes on the occult, the supernatural, and the paranormal, in addition to core reference works on history, religion, philosophy, geography, science and linguistics. One room of the library, adjoining the Librarian's office, is a climate-controlled vault which houses the many rare books and manuscripts in the Arcanum's collection.

Only Arcanists are allowed access to the library. On some special occasions books may be sent to other Chapter Houses, but never through regular mail; they are carried via courier to their destination, and returned in the same manner. The Library is open 24 hours a day, with either the Librarian or any of his assistants on staff. As with many special libraries, Arcanists are instructed to leave any bags or similar belongings in the antechamber before the library. Only pencils and notebooks (or laptop computers now) may be taken inside.

One room of the library is dedicated to preserving the many old texts which the Arcanum has come to own; while many of the older printed books and hand-written manuscripts are actually faring rather well, books from the early 19th century — with the advent of machine-made paper — are becoming victims of the "slow fire": acidity and deterioration. The Arcanum's preservationists work constantly to restore damaged volumes and preserve those in danger, sometimes finding it necessary to scan the books onto microfilm. The option of scanning onto laser disks is now being considered as well.

origin, after all. Arcanists still seek the alchemists and astrologers that live in the Zagros Mountains, although they rarely return satisfied.

Ethiopia, thought to be the possible home of Prester John, as well as the source of legends of the Ark of the Covenant and countless magical papyri, has also been a favored site for research, though it, too, suffers great internal instability.

Asia

Asia was somewhat a *terra incognita* for the Arcanum. To be sure, various Arcanists from the society's founding onward have had an interest in Oriental studies, but the foundation as a whole neglected traditional Southeast and Far East Asia. Since the 1960s, however, more scholars have turned their eyes eastward, and full Chapter Houses have been opened in Bombay, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other cities of note, where once there had only been informal centers of study.

The Far East is rife with material that has yet to be fully explored. Chinese alchemy is finally receiving the attention of those who had previously only been interested only in Classical western alchemy. The powers of Chinese *qigong* masters, the mysteries of *feng shui*, or Chinese geomancy, the secrets of Tibetan adepts, Japanese folklore, and the many worlds of Asian philosophies and mythologies are finally receiving the attention that many feel they deserve. The snows of the Himalayas are said to conceal much.

Southeast Asia is likewise rich with mystery: the Indian alchemists and *fakirs*, the secrets of the Vedas, Hindu ascetics and holy men. The Arcanum does not study these not as anthropologists or historians might, but rather views them as real phenomenon, providing clues to great truths. The teaching of magical incantations was never stigmatized in India the way it was in the Christian west, and many see the Indian occult tradition as the greatest and longest-lived system on the earth. [I'll bet that there isn't a colony or even a lodge in Bangladesh, huh?]

Australia

The Arcanum's presence in Australia is rather new, with the establishment of Colonies and Chapter Houses in each of the nation's territories or states. The Arcanum has relatively little interest in Australia, however, except for those few Arcanists who have begun to study the complex cosmology of the Aborigine, particularly the mythology of the Dreamtime.

end text

Well, Jon, there it is. Enjoy. There's a test next week, ha ha.
love,
nk



The Foundation House

24 December 1994, London

My God, it is incredible. I have returned home.

My first sight of the Foundation House will be burned forever into my memory, like a searing brand on a fatted calf: as we traveled along the uneven country road, we saw it in the distance, turreted and spired, lit up like a beacon in the fog-curling dusk, a refuge for travel-weary souls. As we approached, its gray stone towers loomed over us, a comforting monolith in a penumbral sea of mist.

We have just arrived at the Foundation House of the Arcanum. I have been to the Fenlands of Cambridgeshire, of course, but I had never seen the Foundation House before. And yet, I almost feel as if this were my birthplace, and that I truly belong here.

Although we were all exhausted from the long trip — D.C. to New York, then on to London, and then by private car to the Fens — we readily agreed to a tour of the House. Our tour, however cursory, was still incredible.

The size of the Foundation House cannot be exaggerated, and it cannot be emphasized enough: we were told that the Foundation House has 100 rooms, and I believe it. Our host escorted us through the major parts of the House, pointing out details of various wings or rooms as necessary.

The first floor of the House contained offices, a chapel, a kitchen and pantry facilities, and two dining halls, as well as a number of small, formal rooms and a larger common room — the Great Hall — and servants' quarters and other utilities which we did not, of course, see.

The second floor houses the Axis Mundi and the Librarian's office, as well as private study rooms and meeting chambers, and a computer center specifically designed for researchers' use. In addition to its own Internet node, the center has dial-in access to a number of online research services, from OCLC to RLIN, as well as the great national libraries of the world, from the National Library (of Britain) to the Library of Congress. The House's many seminar and conference rooms can also be found on this floor.

The third and fourth floors contain the sleeping quarters of resident Arcanists and guests. The hallways here stretch onward for some distance, their gray interiors broken only by the repetition of wooden doors that lead to the private quarters. The rooms here are not simple bed-chambers: some are entire suites, and are larger than many small apartments.

There are also a number of "outbuildings": a small facility with laboratories, a few garages, etc. I hope to walk the Maze tomorrow.

I'll just bet this place is crawling with secret passages, some of which probably haven't ever been found. Who knows what these stone walls conceal? And of course there are crypts and cellars, as well as the attic — which I heard mentioned, but which was not on our tour. I must sound paranoid.



Initiation

*The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.*

— J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Road Goes Ever On"

I am, even now, sitting before a window, overlooking the Hedge-Maze and gardens that occupy the back property of the house: with the advent of winter, the gardens are now brown and dead, but I can imagine how beautiful they look in the spring. I feel as though I have stepped into another world, another age. I am drawn to the Maze — I hope I can walk it tomorrow.

I just finished drinking a late herbal tea with my fellow Neophytes in a fourth floor lounge, and I had a brief opportunity to meet the Neophytes from other Chapters. They seem like a nice group of people, and I look forward to working with them in the future. One Neophyte told me he had heard that Geoffrey was to be our Mystagogue in the Initiation — the one who would initiate us into the secrets of Arcanum.

The Initiation is tomorrow. I wonder what to expect. I look forward to the day with a sense of drowsy anticipation, as the heavy burden of our long travel finally begins to take its toll. My chamber is cold and drafty; the fire in the hearth does little to dispel the chill settling in my bones.

I am drawn to the Maze. I hope that I can walk it tomorrow.

I was walking the Maze, naked, my feet sluggishly trudging through the white snowy blanket that covered the ground. It was daylight, although the barren gray sky offered no warmth or comfort. In the distance, I saw the Foundation House, its towers rising through the mists. How did I come to be here, in the Maze?

I continued through the Maze, turning right and turning left, ignoring some intersections as if I knew the path before me, my feet frozen, my body shivering from the chill. Finally the Maze broke, and I stood not behind Vannever Hall, but at a precipice: behind me the maze was gone, and there was only a wasteland.

Overlooking the precipice, I knew this to be a dream; the ground shrank below the cliff-face, dark and far away.

Knowing that I could only go forward, that behind me lay the wasteland, I stepped off the precipice, expecting perhaps to find solid footing in the thin air.

I plummeted, and I screamed.

Then the Owl came, flying to me. Surely it will rescue me, I thought.

Its talons and beak tore into my flesh, rending and biting. My blood poured freely from my flayed skin. The pain was overwhelming. Still my mangled form plummeted.

"What do you seek?" the Owl asked.

"The Answers!" I cried back.

"What do you seek?" the Owl repeated. Still I fell, the ground no closer, but my fear growing. The Owl bit into my mouth, tearing my tongue from me.

"What do you seek?" the Owl said, again.

"The questions," my tongueless form cried back.

And then I was the Owl, and I flew...

When I awoke, I was naked, in a coffin. I could scarcely move and could not see, but I knew that it was a coffin. I tried to knock at the wooden covering, to claw at the sides, but I could barely move in the tight space.

What had happened? Had our tea been drugged? What time was it? Where was I?

The lid of the coffin was lifted off, and I stood in relative darkness — I could see that I was in a large cavern, filled with black-mantled men and women of the Arcanum. I was on an isle of sorts, with the other Neophytes; we were all similarly unclothed. The isle was surrounded by water, its languid surface reflecting the many lit tapers held by the ritually garbed Arcanists who stood on the opposite shore.

On our isle were two more Arcanists, opening the coffins and freeing my brothers and sisters. When we all had emerged, one figure stepped forth from the crowd across the water.

"New Brothers and Sisters of the Arcanum, you have died and been reborn. Now cleanse yourselves and join us." It was Geoffrey, and he pointed to the waters before us.

Hesitant lest it be too deep, we all plunged into the surface. The water came up to mid-breast on me, and we waded across, some of us helping those who were still too dazed. We had probably been drugged.

Emerging from the cold waters, we were greeted by Journey-men with warm Turkish towels to dry us, and thick mantles to garb us.

We are the Arcanum.

We hunt the Night.

We seek the lost knowledge, the hidden things, the secret ways.



Book II: The Journeyman's Guidebook

Chapter Four: Character Creation

All has reached perfection, and becoming a true person is the greatest perfection of all. It takes more to make one sage today than it did to make the seven of Greece. And you need more resources to deal with a single person these days than with an entire nation in times past.

— Balthasar Gracián, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*

The Ethiopian Highlands:

Her fingers bled, shoved into the tiny crevices that furrowed through the rock surface; looking down briefly, she estimated maybe a hundred-foot drop.

"You all right?" Keith called from above.

Looking up, Christine tried to see her partner; instead, all she got was an eyeful of sunlight overhead, her associate's form barely eclipsing the bright glare. Sweat rolled down her face and into her eyes, the hot salty liquid momentarily blinding her. "M okay," she called back. "How much further?"

"Just a little bit," he replied overhead. Same old answer. "We're almost there."

"Join the Arcanum. See the world. Go rock-climbing. All this for a long-lost church," she muttered to herself. It's not like anyone forced her into it, she would be the first to admit, and she was secretly excited at the prospects. But this sort of stuff happened only in movies. At least her colleague was better prepared for the task; without his skills, she'd still be at the bottom, looking up.

This was going to be a very long day.

*We are pilgrims on a journey,
We are trav'lers on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.*

— Richard Gillard, "The Servant Song"

Arcanists are mortals, and should be created using different guidelines than standard Mage characters; although "mortal" themselves, the Awakening alters a mage's life in countless ways. Roleplaying mortals is also discussed in *Ascension's Right Hand*, *Hunters Hunted* and *The Inquisition*, supplements for *Vampire: the Masquerade*. Members of the Arcanum (and other mortal characters) are created using the same general method as all Storyteller game characters, but the point allocations are different, and non-mages do not have access to the Spheres.

Storytellers and players should always consider the following rules as guidelines. They are meant to be aids to storytelling and character creation, not straitjackets. Character concept is always more important than mechanics. While the rules should not be arbitrarily ignored or discarded, don't let them interfere with solid character creation; Storytellers should be willing to give some leeway for good character concepts.



Character Creation Outline

Step One: Character Concept

- Choose Concept: What did you do before joining the Arcanum?

- Choose Motivation: Why did you join the Arcanum?

Step Two: Select Attributes

- Prioritize your three categories: Primary 6, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3

- Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Stamina & Dexterity

- Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation & Appearance

- Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence & Wits

Step Three: Select Abilities

- Prioritize your three categories: Primary 11, Secondary 7, Tertiary 4

- Choose Talents: What you can do naturally

- Choose Skills: What you are trained to do

- Choose Knowledges: What you have studied

Step Four: Select Advantages

- Choose Background Traits (5)

Step Five: Finishing Touches

- Record Base Willpower (3)

- Spend your 21 Freebie Points to purchase Merits & Flaws, to improve Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds or Willpower, or to purchase Numina

- Figure out Personalalia: Appearance, Home, etc.

Creation

Step One: Character Concept

Character creation should always begin with a sound concept. It does not have to be very detailed at first; details develop with the creation process. It should, however, be strong enough to carry the character through the rest of the creation process. Concept is the kernel of your character.

Concept

Character concepts include your character's personality, Nature, and Demeanor, as discussed in *Mage*. Many members of the Arcanum will be scholars, but not all of them need be. The Arcanum does not recruit scholars and researchers exclusively: anyone who has been touched by the supernatural or the World of Darkness may join, from college students to lawyers to social workers. Any of the sample Concepts listed in *Mage* are suitable for Arcanum characters.

Motivations

Why is your character a member of the Arcanum? What is it that makes her seek out the mysteries of the unknown? The Arcanum is, in many respects, a cloistered society, shut off from the rest of the world; why does your character choose to belong to such a closed society, and one with such arcane interests? And don't forget — sometimes those interests can be very, very dangerous.

The Arcanum's roster is made of seekers and wanderers, scholars and visionaries, scientists and mystics. What is it that ultimately drives anyone to seek the unknown? A sense of longing, perhaps, or a desire to understand? Each member of the Arcanum will ultimately have his or her own answer, and you should give some thought to this when creating a character.

Personality Archetypes

Arcanist characters choose Natures and Demeanors, according to *Mage*. However, since their Avatars are rarely Awakened, they do not choose Essences.

A number of Archetypes are appropriate for members of the Arcanum: the more scholarly, investigative types might choose Architect, Curmudgeon, Judge or Traditionalist. Those with a more religious or mystical orientation might choose Loner, Fanatic or Visionary. These are only suggestions — scholars might be Bravos, religious mystics may be Jesters, etc.

Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Although both mages and Arcanists are mortal — more or less — Arcanum characters start with fewer Attribute points than do *Mage* characters.

Attributes are broken into three categories:

Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina) are those which govern a character's muscle power, speed, dexterity, and endurance.

Social Attributes (Charisma, Manipulation, and Appearance) control a character's appearance and social skills.

Mental Attributes (Perception, Intelligence, and Wits) represent a character's mental abilities, memory, perception, and cognitive faculties.

Arcanists start with one free dot in each Attribute — the minimal rating possible. The player then rates her character's Attributes (into Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary); this ranking determines point allocation. Your mortal starts with 6 dots for Primary Attributes, 4 dots for Secondary Attributes, and 3 dots for Tertiary Attributes.

Arcanists are a varied lot. While most will, undoubtedly, have Mental Attributes as their primary characteristics, other Arcanum characters may have Physical Attributes, or even Social Attributes as Primary. The Arcanum is careful to recruit a mixed batch of individuals, and likes to have such variety operating together in lodges; the palsied old scholar observing werewolves in the forest may very well need the protection of a burly young man.

Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Abilities must be prioritized according to Talents, Skills, and Knowledges. Once again, though, initial point values are different; Arcanists start with 11 dots for Primary Abilities, 7 dots for Secondary Abilities, and 4 dots for Tertiary abilities.

Common Abilities: Knowledges are often Primary Abilities, but the Arcanum is diverse, and contains more than just scholars. Common Abilities include Research, History, Theology, Languages, various Sciences, and Cryptography, as well as the new Knowledges introduced in the "New Traits" section.

Step Four: Advantages

Mere mortals are the weaklings of the World of Darkness, lacking access to Spheres, Disciplines, Gifts, or any such intrinsically powerful abilities. However, Arcanists do have a few benefits of their own, which may aid them in their quest for knowledge, and protect them along the road to understanding. These benefits are called Numina, and represent the manifestation of a partially awakened Avatar. Numina is purchased with "Freebie Points," discussed elsewhere.

Backgrounds

Every mortal character gets five points to allocate across the various Background Traits. Based upon your Chronicle, some Backgrounds may be limited; your Storyteller will let you know if this is the case.

Background Changes for the Arcanum

Some Backgrounds listed in *Mage* are obviously irrelevant to Arcanists; other Backgrounds require some explanation or modification. Details can be found under "New Traits," later in this chapter.

Step Five: Last Touches

In the final stage of character creation, a player determines his Arcanist's Willpower and Humanity ratings, and gets to spend "Freebie Points" on Merits, Flaws and Numina (see below).

Willpower

An Arcanist's base Willpower is three; it can be raised by spending "Freebie Points," at two Points per Willpower dot.

"Freebie Points"

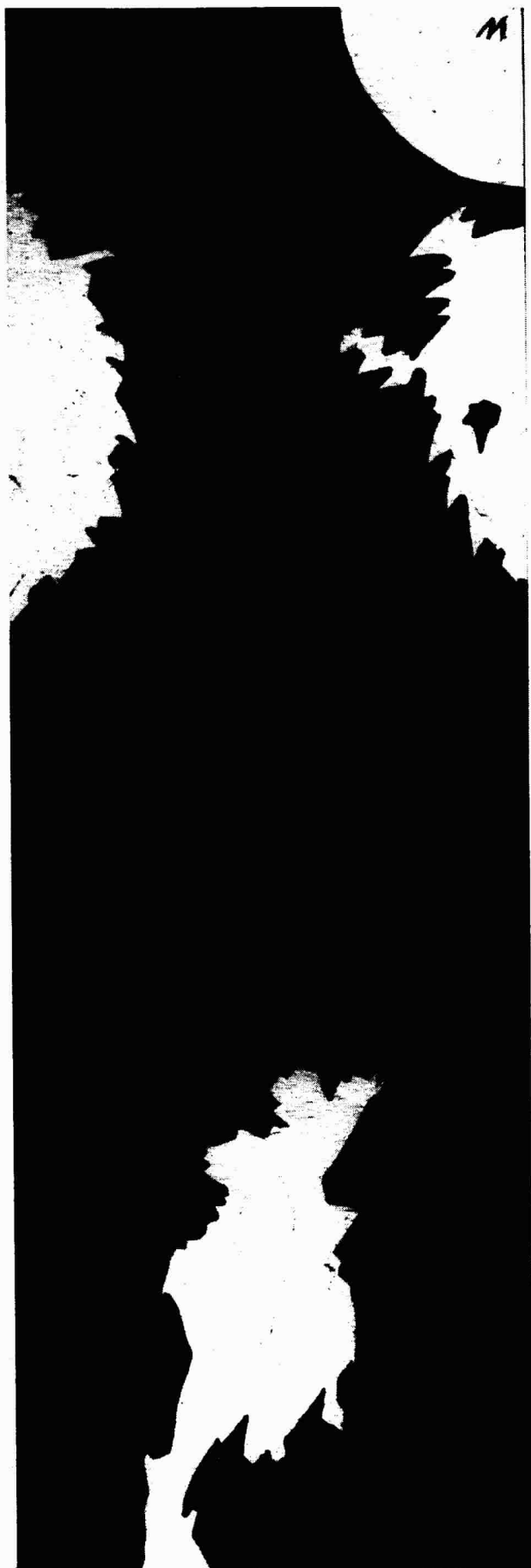
Mortal characters start with 21 "Freebie Points," which can be used to purchase Merits & Flaws, or to raise Traits (Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds). Attributes cost five points a dot, Abilities cost two points a dot, and Backgrounds cost one point per dot. These "Freebie Points" can also be used to purchase Numina, as discussed elsewhere.

Merits & Flaws

Merits and Flaws were introduced in *The Book of Shadows*; these Traits add further depth to characters, as well as some unique abilities and limitations. Merits and Flaws are purchased with (or their values added to) "Freebie Points." Merits and Flaws are optional; a Storyteller may disallow them for whatever reason. She may also allow them, but severely limit those which will be available in her game.

Many of the Traits listed in *The Book of Shadows* are available to Arcanists as well; those designed for mage characters, such as Blatancy or Chantry Politics, are obvious exceptions. Certain Merits or Flaws may even be common for Arcanists, such as Higher Purpose or Concentration.

Some new Merits and Flaws are offered under "New Traits," later in this chapter.



Personal Background

Finally, you must breathe some life into your character; if you are working from a strong Concept, then this should be a relatively easy task. You should consider your Arcanist's Appearance, Allies (Major and Minor), Specialties, and important Equipment.

Lodge

You should also give some consideration to your character's lodge, the group of allied Arcanists who research and investigate together. How long have you been working together? Is this your first lodge? How do you feel about your fellow Arcanists? What relationships, rivalries or romances might be operating within the group?

Prelude

Mortal characters, including Arcanists, do undergo a Prelude just as other characters in Storyteller games. This will give you an opportunity to consider and reconsider various facets of your Arcanist, and give you a feel for playing your character. A good Storyteller will find ways to tie your character's Background, Merits and Flaws, Lodge, and motivations together in her Prelude. The following questions should be considered and answered by the end of your character's Prelude. If, for some reason, your Storyteller does not run your character through a Prelude, then do it yourself, using these questions as a guideline.

- **What was your life like before the Arcanum?**

What was your daily existence like? What was your occupation? What were your dreams? In short, you should consider the character's life before becoming an Arcanist — was she always a dreamer of lost lands and hidden temples?

- **What was your first encounter with the Supernatural?**

What was your first brush with the unseen world? Were you visited by the ghost of a long-dead relative, or did you see the fae folk dancing in the woods? Was this before you joined the Arcanum, and was this a compelling reason for you to join it? You should consider how the character first became aware of a world long denied or hidden to the common folk. It need not have been an unpleasant event; supernatural occurrences may be as pleasant (if a bit unsettling) as they are unpleasant.

- **Were you a lone researcher before joining the Arcanum?**

Were you recruited early in your career? Did you find them, or did they find you?

- **How did you join them?**

What drove you to seek to uncover the mysteries of the world? This may have been the same event as your first supernatural encounter, but it may also have been different.

- **What are your attitudes toward the Arcanum?**

Is it too traditional (meaning: old fashioned) or is it right on course? Do you think it may be a little too secretive? Do you think it should be more secretive? How do you feel about the Arcanum in general?

Character Journals

So rescue yourself from these general themes and write about what your everyday life offers you; describe your sorrows and desires, the thoughts that pass through your mind and your belief in some kind of beauty — describe all these with heartfelt, silent, humble sincerity and, when you express yourself, use the Things around you, the images from your dreams, and the objects that you remember. If your everyday life seems poor, don't blame it; blame yourself...

— Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

Members of the Arcanum are on a threefold Journey: physical, spiritual and mental. It is not uncommon for them to keep a diary or journal of their daily activities, which contributes to their growth both as an Arcanist and as a person.

Players: you are encouraged to keep a journal of your Stories: describe what happened, and what it means to your characters. These don't need to have great literary merit, nor do they have to be lengthy treatises. Put as much time into it as you can; it should be a pleasurable, and not a burdensome, process. In the long run, rereading the past adventures and reflections of your character will make her Journey that much more real and meaningful.

If players manage to keep a Journal of an entire story, then generous Storytellers might be persuaded to award an additional experience point for the time and effort.

• Where is your Chapter House, and how did you join it?

Is the character part of a new Chapter House, or one with a long-established history? How do you get along with the others there?

• What was your Induction like?

Was your Mentor kind and generous, or did he treat your relationship as formality at best? Did you study for only a short amount of time, or were you forever deemed ineligible to graduate?

• Are you a member of any factions or sects within the Society?

Do you have any particular ideology that allies with other factions, or are you a generalist, trying to stay as mainstream as possible? Do you belong to any of the Colleges?

• Do you attempt to lead a normal life?

Do you pretend to live a normal life as part of the mundane world? Is your involvement in the Arcanum kept secret from your family? Some thought should be given to whether the character has devoted the whole of her existence to the Arcanum, or whether her involvement is a limited activity. The difficulties of attempting to live a normal life separate from that of a full-fledged Arcanist are obvious. Those who want to retain at least a semblance of normalcy had best remain Associates.

• Who are the people in your life, outside the Arcanum?

Who are your family, friends, lovers, etc.? What are they like, and how do you relate with them today? How do they view your career choice? Do they think you're insane? Do they worry, or are they even aware of what you do? Did

your father introduce you to his "friends?" Was your grandmother "in the know" about the shadow world? Were you intrigued by some attractive person who led you either to the Arcanum or to an as-yet unexplained experience which started you on your Journey? Every person we meet makes some kind of contribution to our lives. Who influenced you, and how?

New Traits

The following Traits are treated like other new Abilities, Merits, Flaws and such from **The Book of Shadows**; most Traits in that book may be chosen as well, if applicable. Some of these listings modify existing Traits, to reflect the difference between Arcanists and regular Mage characters.

Abilities

New Talent: Lucid Dreaming

You are the master of your own dreams and visions. At lower levels, you have some control of dream recall and initiation. At greater skill levels, you can attempt to gain conscious awareness during any of your dreams with a Perception + Lucid Dreaming roll (difficulty 9). Success allows you to consciously control your own actions; you can even try to manipulate your immediate dream surroundings (difficulty 6+). This Talent can also be used while in trances or while meditating: it allows you to enter the borderlands between waking and dreaming, where reality and phantasm intermingle. This is a useful tool in puzzling through riddles which you're trying to solve, understanding visions, etc.

- Novice: You can try to remember with detail and clarity a previous dream.
- Practiced: You can try to bring upon a dream of your own choosing.
- Competent: You have limited control over your own dreams.
- Expert: Your dreams are familiar territory to you, and you frequent them for subconscious understanding, and advice from your "inner self."
- Master: You know the byways of the dreaming, which sometimes seem more real than the waking world.

Possessed by: Shaman, Dream Researchers, Idiot Savants, Artists, Latent Psychics

Specialties: Dream control, waking from nightmares, visionquesting, dream combat

New Knowledges

Arcanist characters do not have access to the Cosmology Knowledge at character creation, and only a rare few Arcanists will ever learn it. This reflects an important fact which Arcanum players must keep in mind: no matter which Storyteller games you are conversant with, your Arcanist character will not know any "inside information" about the World of Darkness! What she knows will be limited to the Arcanum's teachings, her personal experiences, the Occult Knowledge, and what the Storyteller tells her.

Instead of the Cosmology Knowledge, however, many Arcanists learn Mythology Lore (below). Other types of Lore (Kindred, Garou, etc.) are secrets *tightly guarded* by the respective creatures; the Camarilla and Garou tribes have very strict rules against revealing these facts to humans, *especially* to members of the Arcanum! Arcanist characters should not be allowed to purchase any of these Lores during character creation, and may only learn them through exposure to the truth (assuming they survive the experience!).

Lore: Arcanum

You know the history of the Arcanum, from its founding to the present day. You know about the group's leadership, activities, history and beliefs. It is recommended that all starting Arcanum characters have a minimum of one dot in this Ability.

- Novice: You know the basic facts.
- College: You have learned a few unusual details of interest.
- Masters: You are well-versed in the history of the Arcanum
- Doctorate: You know as much as most learned Arcanists
- Scholar: You think you know all there is to know about the History of the Arcanum

Possessed by: Arcanists, Vampires

Specialties: History, Rites, Organization, Regulations

Lore: Mythology

Mythology is the study of hero and god stories of particular societies. Myths, like legends and fairy tales, are stories which give societies their sense of reality and meaning. The concept of "myth" is relative; what is "myth" to one society is truth to another.

- Student: You've read a myth here and there.
- College: You understand the meaning of a few myths.
- Masters: You are well-versed in many mythologies.
- Doctorate: You understand oft-unseen patterns.
- Scholar: Joseph Campbell.

Possessed by: Anthropologists, Mystics, Storytellers

Specialties: Creation Myths, Cosmologies, Eschatologies, Soteriologies, Navajo, Celtic, Persian

Lore: Supernatural

Much of what the Arcanum teaches is speculation, not the "truth" as the various constituents of the World of Darkness know it. Even those Arcanists who eventually



learn more about the supernatural do not necessarily share their information: everyone has their secrets.

The collected tomes of the Axis Mundi are not brimming with accurate truths. Nor are Arcanists immune to the Garou-induced Delirium, vampiric Domination, magickal manipulation, fae enchantment or ghostly possession; these factors alone limit the scope of many Arcanists' insights. Not that occasional madness or amnesia deters these seekers of shadow; still, it does put a damper on their research.

Those players who want their characters to be well-schooled in a number of related fields should start with Occult or Occult Sciences and slowly build up their Supernatural Lore through personal experience. This should be hard, but not impossible, to accomplish.

Occult (Arcanum addendum)

Remember that the "occult" is a very inclusive field: the Occult Knowledge need not necessarily be limited to vampires, ghosts, or other seemingly-malefic creatures. It merely represents a secret tradition, knowledge that has been lost or is unknown by modern humanity.

New Occult specializations include:

- Lost Civilizations (e.g., Atlantis, Mu)
- Relics (e.g., Excalibur, the Holy Grail)
- Numinous sites (e.g., Stonehenge, Delphi)
- Legendary creatures (e.g., the Yeti, Unicorns)
- Ancient texts (e.g., Tablets of Mu, Chronicles of Enoch)
- Cults or Secret Societies (Rosicrucians, Templars, Assassins)

Occult Sciences

The sciences that fall under this rubric represent fields of learning with regard to the western occult tradition, particularly the "secret tradition." These disciplines are believed to contain clues to the mysteries of the universe. Knowledge of any of these sciences includes a history of the field, and basic understanding of the symbolism, language, lore and mysteries associated with it. Some sciences (e.g., alchemy) may be aimed toward producing specific, tangible results; however, scientific knowledge remains in the realm of the theoretical — the knowledge alone will not produce said results, though it may prove a good starting point.

A number of disciplines fall within this category. Briefly described, these include:

- **Alchemy:** the method of transmuting metals and the human soul. The techniques of alchemy are described more fully elsewhere in this book; it is also described as a Knowledge Trait in the *Players Guides for Mage and Vampire*.
- **Astrology:** the method of divining the influence of the heavens on the earth, particularly human personalities. Astrology Knowledge is described with more detail in the *Players Guide for Mage and Vampire*.
- **Gematria:** the method of divining hidden meaning from names and words, particularly by converting words into a numerical equivalent. This science is often used in

conjunction with sacred texts, particularly the Bible and the Quran.

- **Numerology:** the method of determining the essence of an object or name by reducing it to its numerical meaning; everything is a number, and this number is a key to understanding it and its future.

- **Sacred geometry:** the method of divining secret knowledge from the dimensions and shapes of both man-made and natural structures, including the human form. The builders of the pyramids and the gothic cathedrals are said to have been masters of sacred geometry.

Occult sciences are often used in conjunction. For example, a team of Arcanists examining a hidden chamber beneath Chartres Cathedral may require knowledge of sacred geometry (to analyze the chamber's layout), astrology (to understand the astrological symbolism on the mosaic ceiling), and alchemy (to perceive the alchemical symbolism of the bas-relief on the surrounding walls).

- Novice: You understand very basic concepts.
- College: You have had some instruction in the field.
- Masters: You have a comprehensive grasp of the discipline.

Reading Old Manuscripts

"Well then: you've just found a hand-written book buried in a hidden cellar of a German castle, one which claims to instruct the reader on how to find the ancient city of Damcar. The book is clearly in Latin — a language you studied for eight years between high school and college. So you'll just flip it open, and start reading, right?"

Wrong.

Most people who study classical languages read them in very sanitized form; they typically learn one variant of it, and the text is nice and clean in a language primer. Most people who study Greek learn Classical Greek, for example, and may be very unfamiliar with the sudden multiplication of prefixes found in Byzantine Greek. Likewise, most Latin students study classical Latin, not the medieval vulgate.

Furthermore, languages may vary according to region and period. Alphabets may be a little different; spellings may change, and grammar will not always be consistent. Early Greek, for example, was written all in capital letters, with no spaces between words and no punctuation.

LOOKING LIKE THIS WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO READ DON'T YOU AGREE?

Now, add to this the difficulty of using old and crumbling texts, and you may find yourself in quite a quandary.

Storytellers may choose to apply the following difficulty modifiers to any skill roll involving the reading of old manuscripts or books:

- | Modifier | Situation |
|----------|--|
| +1 | language variant is unknown (e.g., Byzantine vs. Classical) |
| +1 | language variant is obscure (e.g., 6th century Greek in Syria) |
| +1 | uses variant forms of producing letters |
| +1-3 | text is in disrepair |
| -1 | for every dot of Paleography that is possessed |

The base modifier is 6, and should never be made easier. These difficulty modifiers are cumulative: a Latin text in a decaying codex written in an obscure variant of 12th century Latin would bring the difficulty from 6 to at least 9. Even if the researcher is a skilled enough paleographer and can bring the difficulty back down to 6, she should prepare for a very long reading session and a lot of aspirin.



RM

- Doctorate: You know things that are not written.
- Scholar: You are a master of things hidden and arcane lore.

Possessed by: Hermeticists, Scholars, Kabbalists, Ritual Magicians

Categories: This Knowledge must be chosen separately for each category of Knowledge: Alchemy, Astrology, Gematria, Numerology, and Sacred Geometry.

Parapsychology

You are familiar with the scientific study of the paranormal, from theory to application. You know the basic methods, techniques and equipment used in parapsychological study. Unfortunately, your field tends to be viewed with disdain in most academic communities.

- Novice: You understand the very basic concepts.
- College: You have had some formal instruction in the field.
- Masters: You have a comprehensive grasp of the discipline.
- Doctorate: You have accomplished much research and contributed to the field.
- Scholar: You are a recognized authority in the field.

Possessed by: Parapsychologists, New Agers, Amateur Ghost Hunters

Specialties: Hauntings, psychic powers, ley lines

Paleography

The science of reading ancient manuscripts (primarily Latin and Greek) and assigning an origin to them. Paleography may also be used to determine if a manuscript is a

forgery. Note that this Knowledge does not give you the ability to read Greek and Latin — you must purchase those separately! With Paleography, however, you can try to read texts in their original form, not cleaned up and presented in easy textbook fashion.

- Novice: You can try to read a difficult document.
- College: You can identify basic elements of the manuscript.
- Masters: You can guess the approximate century and region of the manuscript's production.
- Doctorate: You can pinpoint when and where the manuscript was written.
- Scholar: You know almost certainly everything there is to know about the document, including production materials and perhaps even who scribed it (assuming it isn't already indicated).

Possessed by: Professors, Antiquarians

Specialties: Greek (Homeric, Classical or Byzantine), Latin (Classical or Vulgate)

Note: Variants of Paleography which should be chosen separately include Bibliography (the study of the printed book), Diplomatics (the study of documents), Epigraphy (the study of monumental engravings), and Sigillography (the study of seals and sigils)

Sacred Scriptures

You have studied religious scriptures extensively; based upon your particular inclination, you may have studied

them in their historical context, or as direct divine revelation. You will have to choose this Knowledge separately for each broad Scriptural category.

- Novice: You quote freely, but not accurately.
- College: People ask you questions you can answer.
- Masters: You are not just well-read in the scriptures, but about them as well.
- Doctorate: You possess a wide body of knowledge in the sacred scriptures.
- Scholar: You have read meanings never before considered or discovered.

Possessed by: Witch-Hunters, Scholars, Believers

Categories: Islamic (*Qur'an*), Christian (*Old Testament*, *Apocrypha*, *New Testament*), Jewish (*Torah*), Hindu (*Rig Veda*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad-Gita*), Zoroastrian (*Zend Avestas*)

Backgrounds

Allies

Arcanists often live rather insular lives with little room for friendships outside their fellowship. Arcanists do, however, meet many people in the course of their studies and explorations, sometimes aiding them, sometimes asking them for aid. These ties are often binding and long-lived. Such Allies will almost always be mortals, though supernatural Allies are possible.

Allies do not just appear at your every beck and call, but they will aid you as best they can; naturally, they will expect the same from you. It bears noting that the various supernatural societies know of the Arcanum and would be very angry at any "cousin" who slipped secrets to some Arcanum dweeb. Garou have been known to kill such informers (and the Arcanists) when they discover such treachery. The vengeance of Kindred whose secrets have been exposed could turn a hardened researcher's hair stark white.

- One Ally, of moderate power.
- Two Allies, or one more powerful Ally.
- Three Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power.
- Four Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power.
- Five Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power.

Arcane

It is rare for a mortal to have the Arcane background; unless they are partially Awakened — having one of the three Numina — they cannot choose this background.

Artifact

Artifacts are items which are strong in supernatural potency. This Background Trait allows you to begin play with an Artifact in your possession. Either it was a family heirloom, or a Mentor in the Arcanum bequeathed it to you, or you found it early in your career and the Arcanum has not yet requested it. The Storyteller should create something suitable for you; although you should feel free to make suggestions, the final decision is up to the Storyteller, who will also determine the item's value. Characters cannot





create their own such relics. Truly mythic Artifacts, e.g., Roland's sword Durandal or the chalice of Kai Khusrau, are the objects of great quests and cannot be purchased with this Trait.

Sample Artifacts are included in Appendix Two: Artifacts, and the books **Hunters Hunted** and **The Inquisition**. Storytellers are advised to be careful when allowing players to purchase Artifacts; the Storyteller who distributes these items too freely deserves every headache she will undoubtedly incur as a result.

- A minor Artifact (Mentat Stone)
- A useful Artifact (Shadow Cloak)
- An Artifact of significant power (Faerie Ring)
- A much-sought Artifact mentioned in many legends (Silver Chalice)
- An Artifact of incredible power (Crusader's Sword)

Contacts

You know people from many different walks of life, and they comprise a system of information and aid that could come in very handy some day. You may have met these

people through the Arcanum, or they may have been colleagues before you joined the organization—fellow graduate students, faculty, etc.

You can count on Contacts for accurate information. Minor Contacts may be found in any reasonable location: various universities, libraries or research centers across the world. Major Contacts should be described as complete characters. If you wish to get in touch with a Minor Contact, roll your Contacts rating (difficulty 7); each success means you have gotten in touch with a Minor Contact. They will not just willingly offer information, however: you will need to entice it out of them, or offer a trade.

- One Major Contact
- Two Major Contacts
- Three Major Contacts
- Four Major Contacts
- Five Major Contacts

Library

Arcanists often devote their entire lives to research, and build up tremendous libraries over the course of their

careers; those who live near Chapter Houses with long-established and well-developed libraries do even better. Arcanists who have to research a particular fact in libraries have their research efforts reduced by this Background.

- Difficulty reduced by 1
- Difficulty reduced by 2
- Difficulty reduced by 3
- Difficulty reduced by 4
- Difficulty reduced by 5

Mentor

Your Mentor — your Elder Brother or Sister — is the person who initiated you into the ways of the Arcanum. The higher your Mentor's rating, the more influence she has among other Arcanists, and the better your initial reputation. A low Mentor rating could equally mean a powerful Mentor who is not often available to help you.

Resources

(from The Book of Shadows)

The Arcanum may provide housing and a small allowance for its new members — typically no higher than a rating of one dot. Anything more must come from a member's family, another job, or some other source of income.

Status

A character's reputation in the Arcanum depends upon a number of factors: scholarly efforts (including publication history), apparent intelligence, Chapter membership, lodge history, etc. The higher an Arcanist's Status, the better she is treated by other Arcanists; likewise, it enhances her dealings with the leadership of the Arcanum when attempting to procure funds or justify the accidental destruction of a company car.

- Known
- Creditable
- Respected
- Admired
- Revered

Merits and Flaws

The following new Merits and Flaws are available to Arcanists and other mortals.

Isolated Upbringing: (2 pt Psychological Flaw)

From your childhood, you were raised in the Arcanum; your parents were both Arcanum scholars, and you practically lived in a Chapter House, having little contact with the "real world." Unfortunately, you have only limited understanding of the mundane world, and whenever you are in a non-Arcanum setting, you have a 1 die penalty to all social skills.

Iron Will (from the Players Guide): (4 pt Mental Merit)

This Merit costs one extra point (for a total of four) for an Arcanist's immunity to Dominate or Thaumaturgy.

Natural Leader: (1 pt Aptitude Merit)

You are a natural born leader. While not everyone will simply surrender authority to you, they will consent to "follow your lead." Reduce the difficulty level of any situation directly related to leadership by 3.

Light Sleeper: (1 pt Physical Merit)

You need less sleep than other mortals: you can function quite well on four hours a night. If the Storyteller imposes penalties on other mortals for sleep deprivation (one or two dice penalties are suggested), then you are exempt. Needless to say, this allows you to accomplish a lot more with your daily activities, regardless of whether you are an Arcanist or a freelance writer.

Aging: (3 pt Physical Flaw)

You are not as spry as you used to be; any one Physical Attribute score (your choice) must be lowered by one point. This Flaw may be taken once per decade above forty years old.

Research Grant: (2 pt Social Merit)

You are the recipient of a prestigious Research Grant from some university or research center, which frees you from the burden of a regular job. The Grant provides a minimal stipend (\$1000 a month in most cases), as well as credentials which will allow you into a number of exclusive libraries and research centers across the world.

Arcane Heritage: (2 pt Social Merit)

Your bloodline has been gifted in the eyes of the Arcanum. You might have had a distant ancestor who was said to be the village witch, or your grandmother was one of the fae, or lycanthropy may be said to run in your blood. Whatever the case may be, the Arcanum believes that your bloodline is gifted, and that you may one day pose a danger as well ("The sins of the Father," after all...). Even if your heritage has no other effect on you, in terms of Merits and Flaws, Attributes, or otherwise, you are well-received by other Arcanists.

Supernatural Merits and Flaws

The following Merits and Flaws are particularly rare, even in the Arcanum. Your character should not become a walking compendium of Supernatural Merits and Flaws; for Arcanum characters, however, the suggested limitation of one or two Supernatural flaws is raised to three or four, at the Storyteller's discretion. Regardless, the Storyteller has the right to determine the amount and potency of such Traits.

Supernatural Companion: (1-5 pt Merit)

You have a friend who is a vampire, werewolf, fae, mummy, or other such creature. This does not mean that you are privy to their secrets, however — only that you have somehow met and befriended them. The Arcanum should probably remain in the dark about this, and your companion's own associates may not necessarily know or approve. Arranging communication or meetings may be difficult. You may occasionally call upon your companion for assistance, but the opposite will be true as well (see "Allies"). Although you can determine the basic nature of the Companion, the Storyteller will create the character, and



will not reveal its full capabilities to you. The more powerful the friend, the higher the cost of the Merit.

Innocent: (1 pt Merit)

You are always thought of in the most positive light, unless evidence exists to prove otherwise. If you do something wrong and the act is not easily attributed to you, it will most likely be blamed on someone else. This does not mean that you *are* "an innocent" — it just means everyone *thinks* you are.

Burning Aura: (2 pt Merit)

Your aura, no matter what color it takes, is unusually brilliant to those who can see it; you are practically a beacon among other mortals, burning with a mystical fire. Even those who cannot see auras are immediately drawn to your presence. Some supernaturals will find this a positive aspect; others, particularly vampires, may likely be hostile to you. Many will believe you to possess great power (regardless of whether you truly do), and will be appropriately respectful of you.

Psychic Awareness: (3 pt Merit)

You have an intuitive awareness of psychic activity. Even if you yourself display no other talent, you can determine if any psychic phenomena have recently been operating within a 10-foot radius; this includes the vampiric Discipline, Auspex. How much you determine about what is or was in use depends upon the number of successes rolled on Perception + Occult

Numina and the Arcanum

Oh, thrice blessed the mortals, who, having contemplated these Mysteries, have descended to Hades; for those only will there be a future life of happiness — the others there will find nothing but suffering.

— Sophocles

Many Arcanists have developed some Numinous abilities; in fact, the Arcanum sometimes seems to go out of its way to attract members who possess such gifts.

While various Journeymen may conduct experiments involving Numina, the Arcanum itself does not offer formalized "training" in Psychic Phenomena or in Hedge Magic. Mentors may be found within the Arcanum who might be willing to teach a new student; the trick, however, is not just getting someone to agree to teach you, but finding someone who will admit to how much they actually know. Many Arcanists join with their own agendas; while loyal to the Arcanum, they will not willingly put all their cards on the table.

It is not known exactly how many practicing hedge wizards (who do not consider themselves as such, obviously), alchemists, or psychics there are within the Arcanum. Alchemists are the most secretive lot, since their very art is one couched in cryptic symbolism and hidden lore.

True Faith

O ye who believe! When ye go to war, hold firm and invoke Allâh much, that ye may be successful.

— Qur'ân, viii. 45

Faith is the living, breathing heart of a religious tradition. Faith can inspire, it can motivate, it can breathe life into the ailing soul. Of course, Faith in the hands of the narrow-minded can be dangerous; for these individuals, it seems to also compel judgmental and even destructive behavior. Faith is a force which may either create, or destroy.

Very few within the Arcanum will have a Faith score, and even fewer will have a score above one. Although for many the Arcanum is almost religious in nature, True Faith requires a wholehearted commitment to a religious life.

This Trait runs on a scale from one to ten; most characters, mortal or otherwise, will have a zero rating in Faith. Faith costs seven "Freebie Points" per dot for mortals at character creation.

The Effects of Faith

True Faith has a multitude of effects at even the lowest levels. At its minimum, it can be added to a character's Willpower rolls. In times of great need, if a character is entirely out of Willpower points, she may call upon her Faith: Faith points can be substituted for Willpower points. When her Faith points are all gone, she's entirely out of luck.

Faith points lost in this manner are regained by acts of religious devotion. If the use of Faith as Willpower was successful, then lost Faith should return almost as easily as lost Willpower. If the use of Faith as Willpower was a failure, the character might seriously question her own beliefs. This has rich roleplaying possibilities.

The use of Faith as a weapon, both offensive and defensive, is particularly valuable against supernatural creatures. Its effects vary from the subtle to the splendid; in some cases it is predictable, but it is never mundane, and never taken for granted.

Each dot of Faith may be used as a die of counter-magick. Likewise, a character with Faith may repel a vampire by rolling her Faith against the vampire's Willpower; each success indicates another step back which the vampire must take. For a detailed treatment of Faith, including more specific uses against vampires and other supernaturals, see Chapter Five of *The Inquisition* and Book One of *The Book of Shadows*.

(difficulty 8). A single success might inform you that some talent had been used nearby, while five or more would give you an impression of a long-departed psychic, including her strength, mood, and intent at the time.

Soothing Voice: (3pt Merit)

Your voice is calm and soothing, almost entrancing. You may add two dice to all rolls that directly include use of your voice — singing, preaching, leadership, etc.

Precognition: (4pt Merit)

You occasionally have glimpses of the future. Although these visions ordinarily come unbidden, you can, on occasion, attempt to see things on your own initiative. The Storyteller will usually let you know when you have such a vision — essentially it is a good technique for Storytelling. You can try to seek out such knowledge by rolling Perception + Meditation (difficulty 8), at a cost of one Willpower point; in this case, the clarity of the vision depends upon the number of successes. A botch indicates a misleading vision or interpretation of future events. Either way, visions are not necessarily guarantees of future events or actions, but just reflect probable outcomes. Divinatory aids, e.g. Tarot cards, scrying pools, etc., lower the difficulty to 7, but take a full half-hour at least.

Clear Sighted: (5pt Merit)

You can see through all levels of Kindred Obfuscate, Chimerstry, and other related Disciplines or Gifts, with a Perception + Alertness roll against the opposing power's level + 3.

Supernatural Enemy: (1-5pt Flaw)

Due to an incident in your past, you have an enemy who is a vampire, werewolf, or other such devilish creature. It will not be a constant threat, but it will appear to bedevil you and your companions. The more powerful the enemy, or the more frequent his appearance, the more powerful the Flaw. You must determine who your enemy is (although the Storyteller will create him), and how you became enemies; this can easily be worked into your character's Prelude.

Offensive to Animals: (1pt Flaw)

For some reason, animals cringe from your touch, and are uneasy in your presence. Perhaps you have been touched by something in the course of your arcane research, or perhaps they just dislike your smell. For whatever reason, animals are jittery around you. You have a two die penalty in any actions involving animals.

Numina

If your Storyteller permits it, your mortal Arcanist may also use "Freebie Points" to purchase a variety of supernatural abilities open to humans; these Special Advantages are grouped together under the loose category of "Numina." Although rare, they are not unheard of in the Arcanum's ranks.

Numina are broken into three broad affinities:

- **Hedge Magic:** A static form of magic without the flexibility or power of True Magick. Hedge Magic is broken into various Paths, each of which represents a different focus; one such Path includes Alchemy, which is discussed in this book's Appendix.

- **Psychic Phenomena:** These are the various abilities of the trained and focused mind, from Telepathy to Telekinesis. A number of Arcanists have at least some psychic talent.

- **Faith:** With Faith, a believer can move mountains: it is the full manifestation of Heaven, working through the hands and soul of the faithful. Some Arcanists possess True Faith, but it is rarely developed to any degree.

The three Numina Affinities are treated more fully in *Hunters Hunted* and *Ascension's Right Hand*.



Chapter Five: Trav'lers on the Road

"Perhaps I know more about these pursuers than you do. You fear them, but you do not fear them enough, yet. Tomorrow you will have to escape, if you can. Strider can take you by paths that are seldom trodden. Will you have him?"

— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The common image of the Arcanum — among those who know of it — is a company of befuddled reclusive old scholars. While there is some element of truth to this stereotype, it is hardly representational of the entire membership of the Arcanum.

The foundation was begun by proper Victorian gentlemen, it is true, and it does cater to a scholarly attitude. However, it serves the needs of many people and draws upon a wide variety of talents to fulfill its missions. Some people approach the Arcanum for membership; others are approached themselves.

Some members are "mere" scholars, while others possess unusual abilities.

The following chapter presents seven templates for Storytellers and players to use, either as beginning characters or for "inspirational" purposes — to give an idea of the types of people who might join the fellowship. The character statistics can be modified as the Storyteller sees fit.

Following the Templates are descriptions of five notables within the Arcanum, individuals of current importance who might play some part in a Storyteller's chronicle.

The Aspirant

On my first pilgrimage I saw only the temple; the second time, I saw both the temple and the Lord of the temple; and the third time I saw the Lord alone.

— Bāyazīd al-Bistāmī, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā*

Quote: I seek the hidden places; the sacred is everywhere, but concealed behind the veil of mundanity, which I strive to pierce.

Prelude: Since your childhood, you have felt a sense of longing, a desire for something *other*. At first, this desire was for things common and trivial: new friends, a new school, new playthings. As you grew, your desires changed: you began to seek the perfect companion, the perfect job; there was always something missing from what you had.

You matured, though, and you began to learn that what you desired was wholly Other, something you could not possibly find in the material world: you sought the kiss of the Sacred, the touch of the Divine. Your search began while in college, as you took courses in mythology, religion and philosophy.

When you graduated, you prepared to shock your parents with your announcement that you were forswearing graduate school in favor of traveling the world. You were prepared to be thrown out and disinherited; abandoning material goods was the first step, after all. Instead, your parents just shrugged — they were, by now, used to such eccentric behavior from you, and they had decided there was nothing to be done about it.

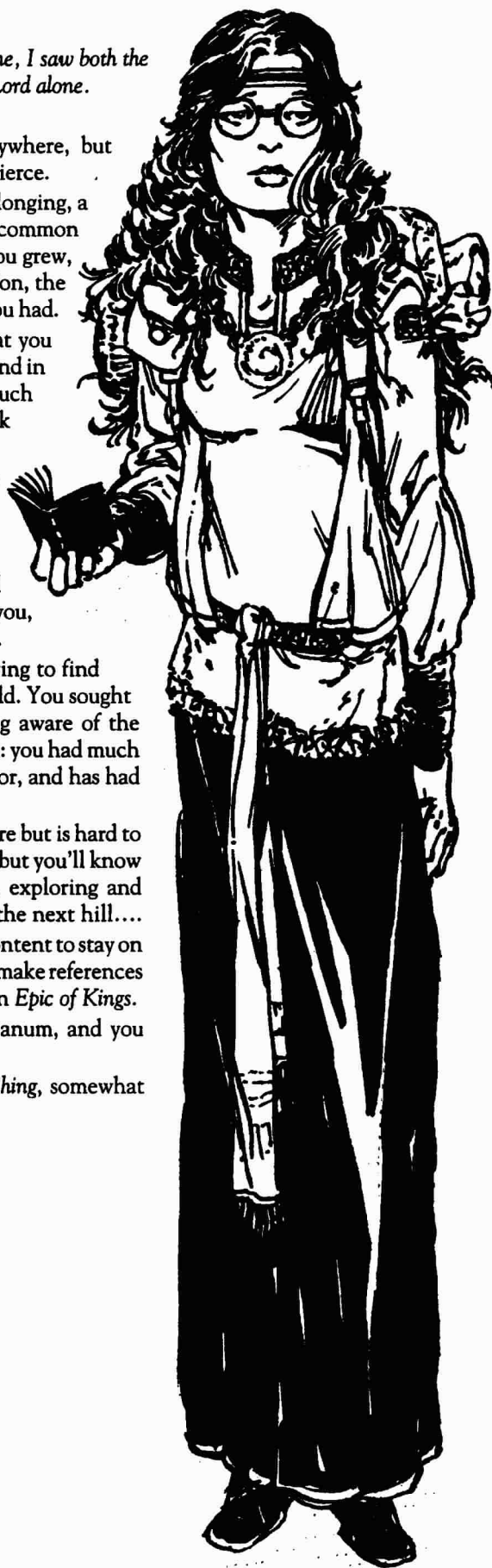
You traveled across Europe, North Africa, and Asia, trying to find fragments of the divine seeded in the mythologies of the world. You sought the mythic sites and secret places, in the process becoming aware of the Arcanum. When you asked to join, you were eagerly accepted: you had much to offer them. Your Elder Sister has been an incredible mentor, and has had much to offer you as well.

Concept: You seek the sacred, which is hidden everywhere but is hard to find. To be honest, you're not quite sure what you're seeking, but you'll know it when you find it. Until then, you will travel the world, exploring and learning the meaning of life. It always seems to lie just over the next hill....

Roleplaying Tips: You are intellectually restless, never content to stay on one topic too long. You like to quote from obscure mystics and make references to lesser-known mythologies, like the *Shahnamah*, the *Persian Epic of Kings*.

The Arcanum: There is much hidden within the Arcanum, and you appreciate that. You will learn its secrets too, one day.

Equipment: Notepad, a battered copy of the *Tao Te Ching*, somewhat ragged clothes, Birkenstocks.



WILLS OF THE WARRIOR

Name:
Player:
Chronicle

Nature: Visionary
Demeanor: Deviant
Concept: Aspirant

Motivation:
Chapter:
Lodge:

Attributes

Physical

Strength 00000
Dexterity 00000
Stamina 00000

Social

Charisma 00000
Manipulation 00000
Appearance 00000

Mental

Perception *secrets* 00000
Intelligence 00000
Wits 00000

Abilities

Talents

Alertness 00000
Athletics 00000
Awareness 00000
Brawl 00000
Dodge 00000
Expression 00000
Intuition 00000
Intimidation 00000
Streetwise 00000
Subterfuge 00000

Skills

Drive 00000
Etiquette 00000
Firearms 00000
Leadership 00000
Meditation *tai chi* 00000
Melee 00000
Research 00000
Stealth 00000
Survival 00000
Technology 00000

Knowledge

Computer 00000
Cosmology 00000
Culture 00000
Enigmas 00000
Investigation 00000
Law 00000
Linguistics *(see below)* 00000
Medicine 00000
Occult 00000
Science 00000

Advantages

Other Traits

Mythology 00000
00000
00000
00000
00000
00000
00000
00000
Languages:
-French 00000
-Arabic 00000

Background

Mentor 00000
Resources 00000
Allies 00000
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00000
00000
00000
00000
00000
00000

Merits & Flaws

Numina

00000
00000
00000
00000
00000

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty
5TR+3	Staff	4

Health

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -2 ☐
Wounded -3 ☐
Mauled -4 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Experience

--

Bibliothecary

*What wild desires, what restless torments seize
The hapless man, who feels the book-disease.*

— John Ferriar, "The Bibliomania"

Quote: You think this text is authentic? Ha! You obviously can't tell a forgery when you see one. Look — this typeface wasn't designed until four years after the alleged publication date!

Prelude: When you were a child, your parents bought the "Great Books" series. Perhaps even better than the information they contained was the way they looked to your infant eye: so pretty and shiny, with matching covers and gilt-edged pages.

Your tastes have matured greatly since then, and your convictions are now more refined. But your basic tenet — one not often agreed with or appreciated by your colleagues — is that the form a book takes, its *artifactual* nature is as important as the material within it.

Your education was broad-based and liberal, concentrating more on the role of books and literacy in culture and history than on the content of specific texts. You wonder, for instance, how many people truly appreciate the impact of the printing press, which allows for the widespread dissemination of thought and ideology, on the Reformation.

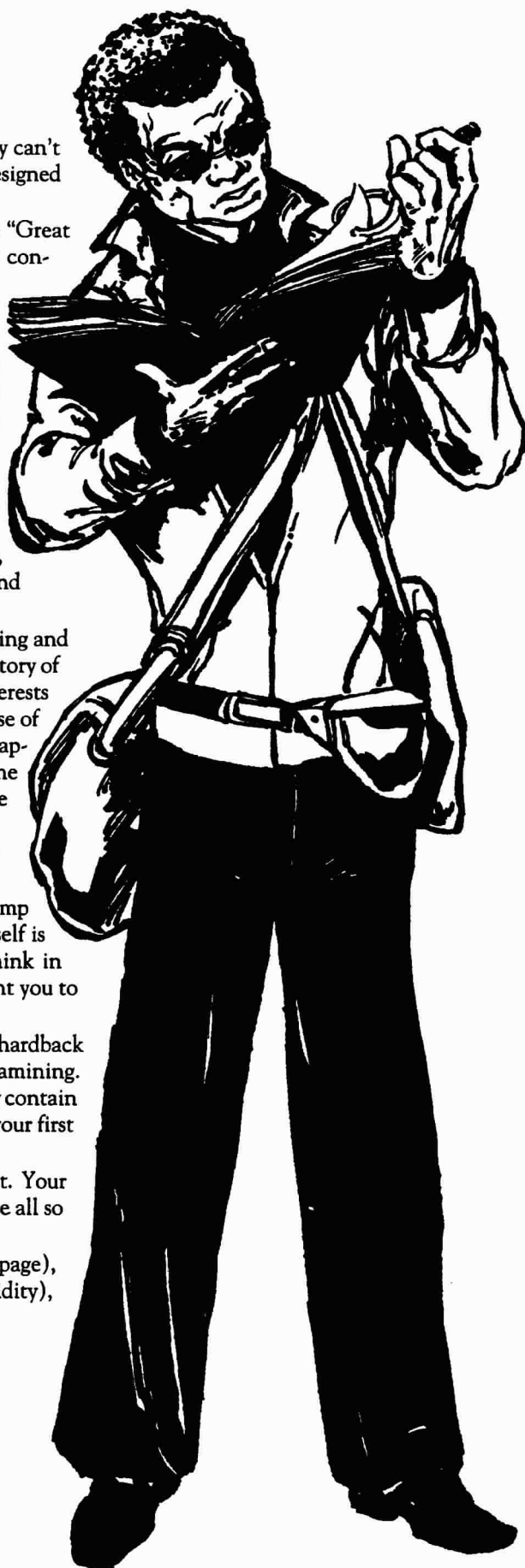
After your undergraduate education, you studied bookbinding and conservation, and became an expert in book analysis and the history of book production from the beginning of the print era — your interests do not lie as much with hand-written manuscripts. It was because of your trade as a book analyst and conservator that you were approached by a local Chapter House of the Arcanum to verify the authenticity of a particular text. This happened more and more frequently, until finally you were intrigued enough to join the Arcanum yourself. Since then, you have had occasion to see books that are beyond your imagination....

Concept: Books mean more to you than people. You will jump at the chance to see a new variant of a text, even if the text itself is rather mundane. Your academic training has taught you to think in broad intellectual terms, while your technical training has taught you to see things with a more careful eye than most.

Roleplaying Tips: Never play without a book in hand (a hardback preferably), which you are constantly flipping through and examining. Show real excitement only over books, not so much the ideas they contain — which may be exciting in and of themselves, but will not be your first interest.

The Arcanum: You're still not sure how you feel about it. Your association with it has proven to be valuable, but its members are all so — weird.

Equipment: Vernier calipers (for measuring thickness of a page), magnifying glass, metric ruler, pH pen (for measuring paper acidity), penknife.



CHARACTER SHEET																				
Name:		Nature: Fanatic		Motivation:																
Player:		Demeanor: Critic		Chapter:																
Chronicle		Concept: Bibliothecary		Lodge:																
Attributes																				
Physical		Social		Mental																
Strength	●●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○○															
Dexterity	●●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○○															
Stamina	●●●○○○	Appearance	●●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○○															
Abilities																				
Talents		Skills		Knowledge																
Alertness	●●●○○○	Drive	●●●○○○	Computer	●●●○○○															
Athletics	●●●○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○○	Cosmology	●●●○○○															
Awareness	○○○○○	Firearms	●●●○○○	Culture	●●●○○○															
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●●○○○															
Dodge	○○○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Investigation	●●●○○○															
Expression	●●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○															
Intuition	●●●○○○	Research	●●●○○○	Linguistics (see below)	●●●○○○															
Intimidation	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○															
Streetwise	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Occult	●●●○○○															
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Technology	●●●○○○	Science	●●●○○○															
Advantages																				
Other Traits		Background		Merits & Flaws																
	○○○○○	Resources	●●●○○○																	
	○○○○○	Library	●●●○○○																	
	○○○○○		○○○○○																	
	○○○○○		○○○○○																	
	○○○○○		○○○○○																	
	○○○○○		○○○○○																	
Languages:	○○○○○		○○○○○																	
-Latin	○○○○○		○○○○○																	
-French	○○○○○		○○○○○																	
-Greek	○○○○○		○○○○○																	
Numina		Willpower		Health																
	○○○○○	● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○		Bruised ☐																
	○○○○○	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □		Hurt -1 ☐																
	○○○○○	Combat		Injured -2 ☐																
	○○○○○			Wounded -3 ☐																
	○○○○○			Mauled -4 ☐																
	○○○○○			Crippled -5 ☐																
	○○○○○			Incapacitated ☐																
Faith		<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Damage</th><th>Weapon</th><th>Difficulty</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>4</td><td>LT. Pistol</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>		Damage	Weapon	Difficulty	4	LT. Pistol	6										Experience	
Damage	Weapon	Difficulty																		
4	LT. Pistol	6																		
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○																				
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Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

Motivation:
Chapter:
Lodge:

Physical

Strength _____ ●●○○○
Dexterity _____ ●●○○○
Stamina _____ ●●○○○

Charisma_____●●○○○
Manipulation_____●●●○○
Appearance_____●●○○○

Perception _____ ●●●○○
Intelligence _____ ●●●○○
Wits _____ ●●○○○

Talents

Alertness	_____	●●●●●
Athletics	_____	●●●●●
Awareness	_____	●●●●●
Brawl	_____	●●●●●
Dodge	_____	●●●●●
Expression	_____	●●●●●
Intuition	_____	●●●●●
Intimidation	_____	●●●●●
Streetwise	_____	●●●●●
Subterfuge	_____	●●●●●

Drive	●●●●●
Etiquette	●●●●●
Firearms	●●●●●
Leadership	●●●●●
Meditation	●●●●●
Melee	●●●●●
Research	●●●●●
Stealth	●●●●●
Survival	●●●●●
Technology	●●●●●

Knowledge

Computer	00000
Cosmology	00000
Culture	00000
Enigmas	00000
Investigation	00000
Law	00000
Linguistics (see below)	00000
Medicine	00000
Occult	00000
Science	00000

Other Traits

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	00000
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	00000
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Languages:	00000
-Latin	00000
-French	00000
-Greek	00000

Background

Resources	●○○○○○
Library	●●●●○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	●○○○○
	○○○○○
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Merits & Flaws

Numina

_____00000
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Willpower

● ● ● 0 0̇ 0 0 0 0 0

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty
4	LT. Pistol	6

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-2	☐
Wounded	-3	☐
Mauled	-4	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

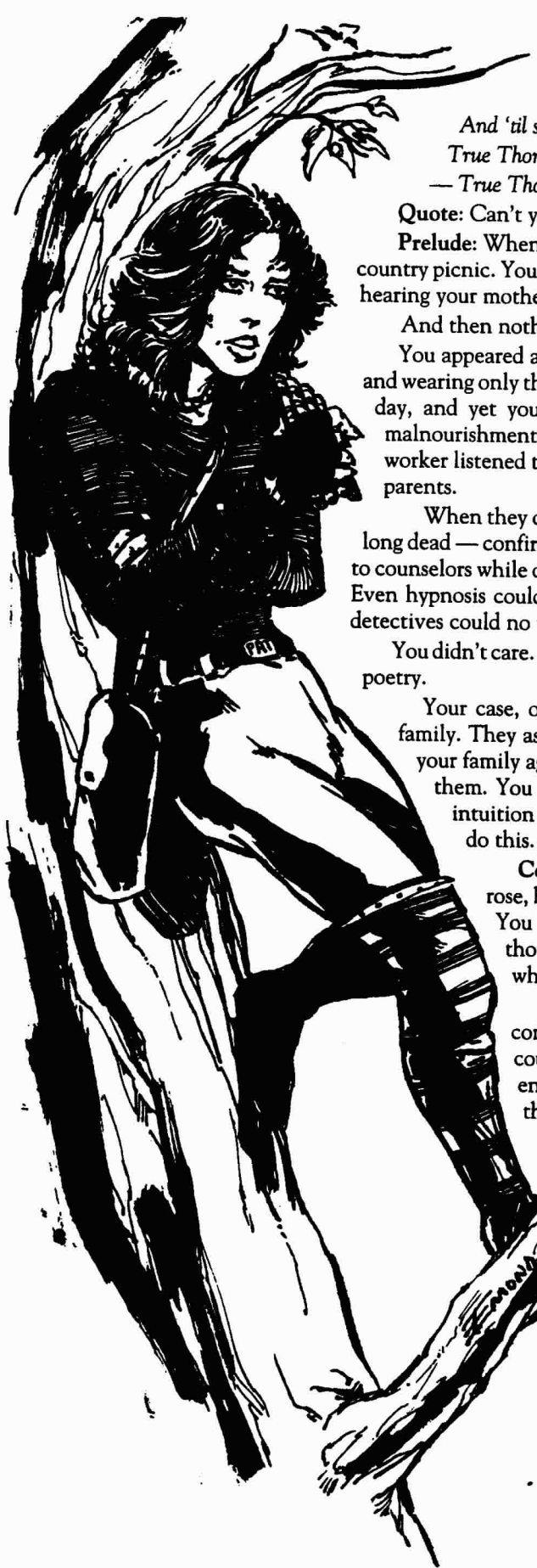
Experience

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Faith

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)



Fey Poet

*He has gotten a coat of the elven cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,*

*And 'til seven years were past and gone,
True Thomas on Earth was never seen.*

— True Thomas, or Thomas of Erceldoune, Scottish-English border ballad

Quote: Can't you hear the music playing? In the distance?

Prelude: When you were a child, almost a teen, you went with your parents on a country picnic. You recall laughing and running through the trees, and you remember hearing your mother call out, "Be careful!"

And then nothing.

You appeared again across the country, seven years later, without identification and wearing only the barest scraps of clothing. You could remember nothing past that day, and yet you were a tall, handsome youth, without the slightest trace of malnourishment or abuse. You were taken to a homeless shelter, where a social worker listened to your story, and with some appropriate disbelief, contacted your parents.

When they came to the shelter, your parents — who had by now believed you long dead — confirmed your identity, and joyfully took you home. They brought you to counselors while detectives set about once again to determine where you had been. Even hypnosis could not produce any recollections of those missing years, and the detectives could no more trace your fate than they had before.

You didn't care. You were content to sit up at night, watch the starry sky, and write poetry.

Your case, of course, made the newspapers. The Arcanum contacted your family. They asked to continue the research abandoned by the detectives, and your family agreed. Intrigued by these strange investigators, you asked to join them. You have since amazed them with the bits of arcane knowledge or intuition you casually toss off, and you delight in their reaction when you do this.

Concept: Your attention span varies: you can stare for hours at a rose, but will listen for only a few moments to someone's conversation. You are curious about your past, but you feel strangely content, as though you will learn in due time what you had forgotten. Until then, why worry?

Roleplaying Tips: Make people think you're flighty — inane comments, short attention span, etc. You're not really flighty, of course, you just have a different way of dealing with things. You are entranced by natural beauty and physical sensations. Every now and then, say something enigmatic. Act both young and old.

The Arcanum: Some of its members are nice, but they're not very much fun to be around. They don't like to just sit and enjoy things. They always have to *analyze*. Blech.

Equipment: Diary (with many poems), drawing pad, recorder (the wind instrument, that is, not the mechanical device), dagger.

Hermetic Scholar

I have seen the Green Catholic Lion, and the Blood of the Lion, i.e., the Gold of the Sages, with my own eyes, have touched it with my hands, tasted it with my tongue, smelt it with my nose.

— Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum Aeternae Sapientiae*

Quote: [enigmatic silence]

Prelude: You've been fascinated with tales of the occult and the arcane since you were a child. Your parents were a little frightened of this: at the very least, they feared that you were just weird; at worst, they fell victim to paranoia and imagined you sacrificing animals in your backyard.

It was never quite that bad: you did have a voracious imagination, reading about the pyramids one day and alchemy the next. It also inspired you to begin to study history and other languages, in order to supplement your own pursuits. Unfortunately, your resources, limited to the public library, were not terribly erudite. You decided that when you went to college, you would attend a university that had a large library and was located in an urban metropolis, so you had other libraries and bookstores to explore as well.

When you were finally enrolled in college (*a history major?* groaned your parents), you found a suitable vehicle for your interests. While in your second semester, you discovered a previously unknown used book shop tucked away on a narrow side street, and your life subsequently took a dramatic turn.

You entered the shop, ignored the clerk, and strolled about, finally locating the occult section. It held the usual claptrap, but you perused the shelves nonetheless, hoping to find something interesting.

"What you seek is not here," said a voice behind you.

Turning, you saw a tall white-haired gentleman, draped in a thick black winter coat, his hand on a sturdy cane. A kook, you decided.

"You seek the Philosopher's Stone," the man said again, this time stating your name. "I am here to guide you."

The gentleman took you home; at first you feared — or hoped for — a romantic tryst, but instead he showed you his library, which contained more occult tomes than you had ever imagined to exist. He began tutoring you in the Hermetic sciences, and encouraged you to remain in college even though you were now ready to drop out. You learned many secrets from him.

One day he disappeared, his library left empty. You have no idea what happened to him — all that was left was a note, in your name: "Seek the Arcanum. Follow the Owl," with an address and phone number.

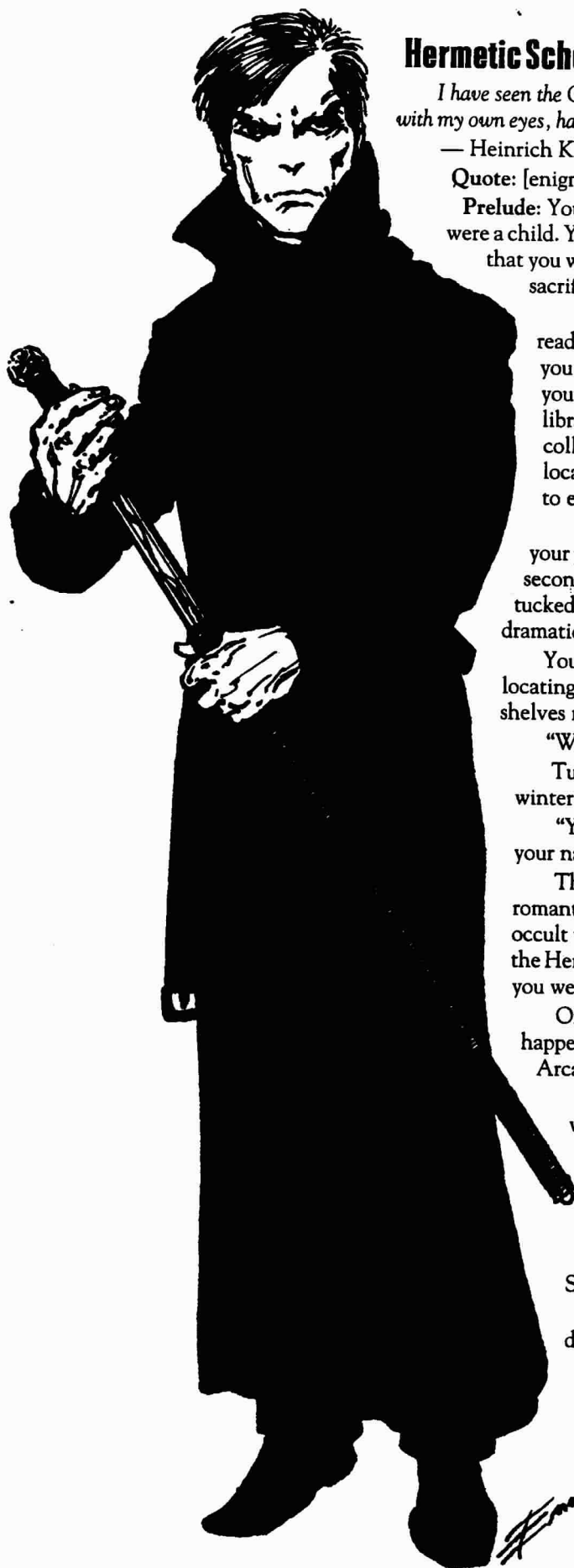
Although the Arcanum had no idea who your mentor was, it welcomed you into its folds. You "follow the Owl" now, gladly, although hoping to discover both your Mentor's whereabouts and the secrets you never learned.

Concept: You are young and inexperienced, but quite knowledgeable. You are a tad bit arrogant, believing your areas of expertise to be the Supreme Sciences, but this is only a product of your youth. Still, you show wisdom beyond your years.

Roleplaying Tips: Say little, and only things of import; when you do speak, people will listen.

The Arcanum: It is using you, you are convinced, but you are using it too. Will you be able to get out before it is too late?

Equipment: Alchemical laboratory, your mentor's sword-cane, black overcoat, occult library.



Psychic Investigator

We live in the midst of invisible forces whose effects alone we perceive. We move among invisible forms whose actions we very often do not perceive at all, though we may be profoundly affected by them.

— Dion Fortune, *Psychic Self-Defense*

Quote: Yeah, it is fairly clear here: there are many spooks, and they're pretty pissed off at *something*.

Prelude: The case was simple: you had the culprit in a corner, he had dropped his gun and kicked it away just like you told him, and his hands were raised. You were just waiting for back-up.

And then a noise from behind...

... and a fire in your head...

... and you awoke in the hospital four months later, emerging from a coma.

Your culprit had an accomplice, who apparently struck you in the head with something heavy. You almost died. You knew this before the doctors mentioned it; you recalled hovering over the emergency room, and seeing other sad-looking spirits also floating about. You almost found peace, but then something drew you back to your body.

Only now, things are very different. You can still, with some effort, see the many types of spirits that move across the world. Something awakened a new sense in you, but you don't like it; there are times when your new-found vision asserts itself beyond your control, and the spirits appear more real than the "real world" does.

You were kicked off the force — you never should've told your partner what you thought you could see — and your case hit all the tabloids. "Ex-Cop sees the Dead!!!!" But that's how the Arcanum found you, and now you work for them. You find that your investigative and law-enforcement skills are just as valuable in the Arcanum as they were in the police force.

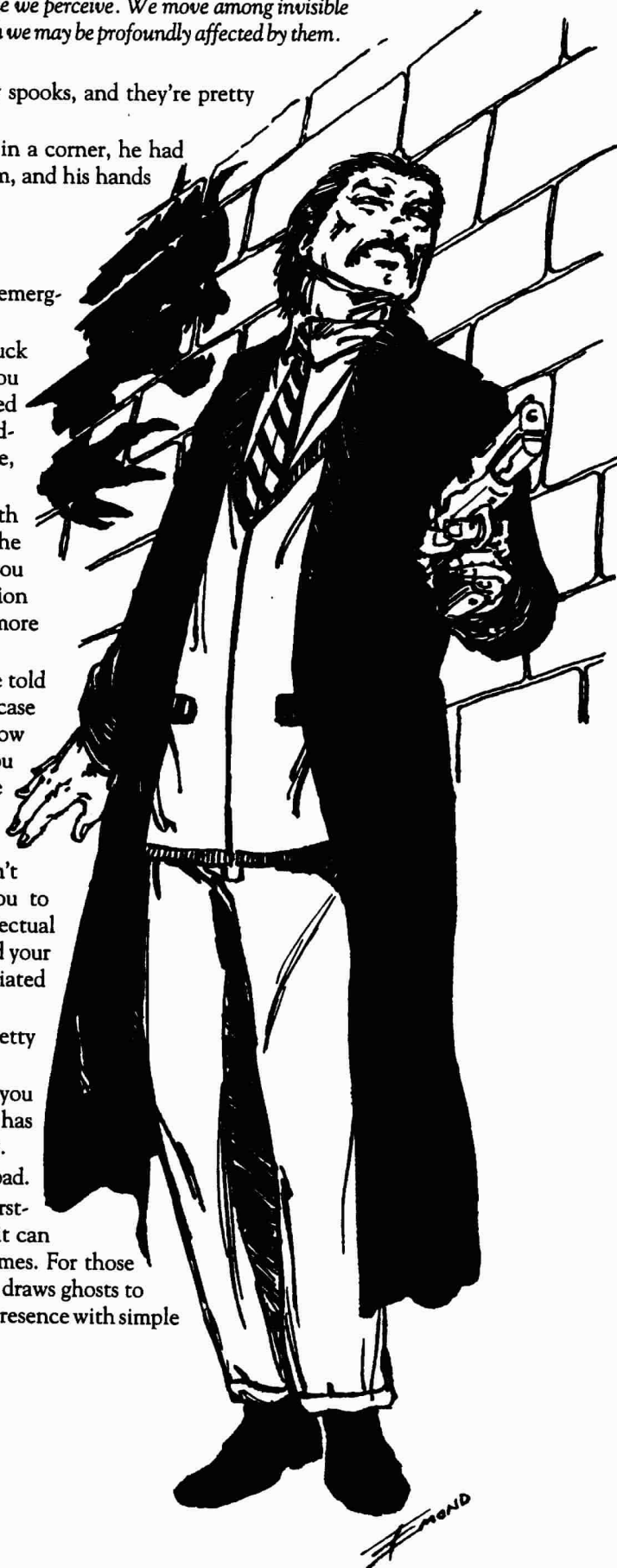
Concept: Tough-as-nails street cop, who normally doesn't buy occult malarkey. Your experiences have forced you to broaden your horizons, however. You lack some intellectual refinement, the occult sciences hold no appeal for you, and your "technical vocabulary" is pretty slack, but you're appreciated nonetheless.

Roleplaying Tips: You're calm under fire, but still pretty unsettled by your new abilities.

The Arcanum: It provides you a home, and it accepts you for what you are. You are loyal to it for these reasons; if it has its secrets, that's fine. You don't have to know everything.

Equipment: Beretta Centurion 9 mm, trench coat, notepad.

Note: Your use of Ephemera does not require any first-level rituals, only a brief bit of concentration. However, it can overwhelm you, and you lose control of your ability at times. For those without *Ascension's Right Hand*, this Hedge Magic Path draws ghosts to you and allows you to sense them (and sometimes bar their presence with simple folk rituals).



Notable Persons

These larger-than-life Arcanists are known throughout the fellowship for their contributions and high-ranking position. Investigators who wish to make a good impression should be familiar with these scholars' works, and may even make their acquaintance if circumstances permit. These are the prime movers of the Arcanum and wield influence beyond their personal reach.

Jermyn Talbot

This elderly gentleman is one of the world's preeminent Indo-European linguists; his mastery of a dozen languages — and fluency in a dozen more — in addition to his skill in the field of linguistics make him one of the most sought-after scholars in the world. He can, with minimal thought, identify previously unknown correspondences between seemingly disparate languages, and establish possible theories for the connection.

However, since his Initiation into the Arcanum, fresh after graduating with his doctorate, he has dedicated his services almost exclusively to the foundation. On some rare occasions, he has assisted individuals outside the organization, but this was usually at the request of the Grand Chancellor.

Dr. Talbot seeks to reconstruct "the primal tongue," the protolanguage now commonly labeled proto-Indo-European, seen to be the ancestor of a large number of European and Asian languages. He believes that the true form of this language will reveal some clues to the most sacred ancient mysteries; if



Curriculum Vitae: Jermyn Talbot

Education:

B.A., University of London, Linguistics (London, England, 1942)

Ph.D., Oxford University, Linguistics (Oxford, England, 1948)

Academic Experience:

Instructor (Latin), School of St. Anne-on-the-Hill (Oxford, England), 1943-1949

Instructor (Greek), School of St. Anne-on-the-Hill (Oxford, England), 1946-1949

Tutor (Persian), University of London, 1966-1968

Arcanum Experience:

Journeyman, London Chapter House, 1949-1968

Chancellor, London Chapter House, 1958-1968

Dean, College of Linguistics, 1956-1960, 1973-1985

Publications:

"The Primal Tongue and its Significance," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. XLIV (Winter, 1956)

"Beyond Proto-Indo-European," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. XLIV (Winter, 1956)

"Sanskrit Inscriptions in a Celtic Barrow: the Implications," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. XLIV (Winter, 1956)

language controls thought, as he argues, then reconstructing the Ancients' linguistic paradigm is the first step to unraveling the origins of the sacred mysteries.

It has always been his opinion that any scholar worth his merit — no matter what his field of inquiry — will know Greek and Latin. He unsuccessfully attempted in the 1970s to lobby for a regulation requiring all Journeymen to know Latin. He has only recently come to accept the fact that fewer and fewer students study this language. Nonetheless, should you call upon him, be prepared to face a conversation in Latin or Greek: "They're no more dead than I am!"

Although originally attached to the London Chapter House, he spent many years traveling through Europe and Asia. He finally settled into the Foundation House for further study and some teaching.

Lynne Stanhope

Miss Stanhope had hoped that her career as a journalist would be off to a fabulous start with a job at the *Financial Times* or the *London Times*; instead, after months of fruitless job hunting, she finally landed a position at the *Daily Mirror*, one of England's more sordid tabloids (as if there could really be any other type). Nonetheless, she diligently performed her duties, reporting on every royal scandal and bizarre incident to which she was assigned.

After three years of unsatisfying journalistic experience — during which, on and off, she would attempt to begin writing her *magnum opus*, the subject of which has yet to be resolved — she was contacted by a gentleman who claimed to be possessed by the spirit of his long-dead abusive father.



Although she could not condone journalistic investigation into something so patently absurd, she was nonetheless curious enough to do some background investigation on the history and beliefs of "possession," in the process, she came in contact with various scholars who directed her to the Arcanum.

The gentleman was later convicted of child abuse — still claiming that his father was at fault — while Lynne became a close associate of a number of Journeymen, actually assisting them in some of their research endeavors. Within a year after contacting the Arcanum (which now has psychiatrists and parapsychologists working on the case of the unnamed convict), she was offered the position of managing editor of the *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, a job she cherishes. She works closely with the Editorial Board to maintain the journal's high standards.

Curriculum Vitae: Lynne Stanhope

Education:

B.A., College of St. Paul and St. Mary, Journalism (Cheltenham, England, 1988)

Arcanum Experience:

Journeyman, London Chapter House, 1990-current
Editor, *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, 1991-current

Publications:

[too many to list and mostly irrelevant dreck anyway, omitted here for space purposes.]

Helga Sørensen

Helga Sørensen is a tribute to self-education. She never sought further education after high school, instead marrying a merchant in her hometown of Oslo, Norway. However, her parents had raised her to appreciate the value of learning and education, so even though she could not continue her formal schooling, she still spent as much time reading as she could find reading, in between her busy duties as wife, mother, and homemanager.

Helga frequently visited her grandmother, who was wise in the ways of many things; grandmother warned her to ever be mindful of witches and ghosts, and taught her the lore of the Otherworld. Helga believed everything her grandmother said, for the old matron was neither insane nor a liar. The warnings and precautions were not just anti-pagan superstition, either; her grandmother had a bit of the "neopagan" about her (although she would not have known the term, and would have laughed at the silliness of the label), and spoke from much wisdom.

Helga's children grew up and moved on to England and America, and her husband died a fairly wealthy old man. The business he began had prospered, and Helga was left with a sizable inheritance with which to take care of herself. She decided to attend the University of Oslo, and registered for a course, but withdrew after the first session: there was nothing there that she did not already know. She continued her private readings, although she would often join discussion groups sponsored by the University.



Curriculum Vitae: Helga Sørensen

Education:

Course work at the University of Oslo (Oslo, Norway, 1990-1994)

Arcanum Experience:

Associate, Oslo Chapter House, 1991-92

Journeyman, Oslo Chapter House, 1992-current

Chancellor, Oslo Chapter House, 1994-current

Publications:

"Magic in Norwegian Folk Traditions," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXXI)

"Witchcraft in the Kalevala and other Finnish Literatures," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXXII)

Sørensen was approached one day by members of the Arcanum, who wished to speak with her about her knowledge of witchcraft. Entertaining her visitors over tea and cookies, she also enlightened them with much of her lore. The visitors came again the next week, and the weeks following. She joined the Arcanum soon after — at 61, one of the oldest Neophytes in the Arcanum's history. She advanced through the ranks quite rapidly, and was eventually appointed the Chancellor of the Oslo Chapter House. Helga is still contacted by Journeymen who seek information on witches and witch cults, particularly in the nations of Norway, Finland and Sweden.

Although she is still predominantly self-educated, Helga has taken further classes at the university to increase her linguistic skills and improve her scholarly writing. Although she is not concerned with academic credentials, she does not like her writings to seem amateurish in their tone or content.

Helga cherishes her background as a mother and wife, and is always a splendid host to any Journeyman who visits the Oslo Chapter House. Many Journeymen travel there seeking her knowledge, but are often more in need of her mothering, instead. She willingly provides both.

Aside from her habit of smoking cigars and her low-level diabetes, she is in otherwise splendid health for her age. She credits it to clean living and a now much-improved diet, as well as visits from her grandson in America.

Sandeep D'Souza

One of the intellectual luminaries of the Arcanum, D'Souza currently holds the Chancellorship of the New Delhi Chapter House. His intellectual career has taken him across the world, and it will surprise no one if he is chosen to be the next Grand Chancellor.

Sandeep was born in New Delhi; although his family was unable to afford college, his grades in school were high enough to earn him a scholarship to Harvard University. His studies began in intellectual history, but slowly coalesced into the more tightly defined field of occult history; his learning is comprehensive, encompassing the scope of linguistic, religious, and



historical studies. His many books and articles on occult theory and history are part of the academic canon; it is through these writings that he came to the Arcanum's attention.

Dr. D'Souza has observed that the syncretism of the occult has borrowed much from Asian philosophy and mythology, but has not come to appreciate it on its own. While it is easy to speak in terms of "karma" or "chi," too often these ideas are appropriated while the remainder of their respective traditions are ignored.

D'Souza's current duties include a position as editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopaedia of the Arcane*, the 14-volume compendium of the occult and supernatural, which is slowly nearing completion. He has the highest standards for the publication, and it promises to be a landmark in scholarly publishing.

Curriculum Vitae: Sandeep D'Souza

Education:

B.A., Harvard University, History (Cambridge, Mass., 1965)

M.A., University of Wisconsin, Asian Studies (Madison, Wisc., 1969)

Ph.D., Columbia University, History (New York, 1975)

Academic Experience:

Instructor (Sanskrit), University of Wisconsin (Madison, Wisc.), 1966-69

Assistant Professor (Asian History, Sanskrit), Columbia University (New York), 1975-1976

Associate Professor (Asian History, Sanskrit), Columbia University (New York), 1977-1979

Professor (Asian History), Columbia University (New York, Sanskrit), 1980-1984

Arcanum Experience:

Journeyman, New York Chapter House, 1983-1985

Journeyman, Calcutta Chapter House, 1985-1988

Journeyman, New Delhi Chapter House, 1989-current

Dean, College of Oriental Studies, 1985-1988

Chancellor, New Delhi Chapter House, 1992-current

Editor-in-Chief, *Encyclopedia of the Arcane*, 1988-current

Publications (selections):

"Sanskrit Magic Invocations," *Journal of Intellectual History*, 43:1 (January, 1967)

"Alchemy across the Himalayas: Chinese-Indian Transmissions," *Bulletin of Asian Studies*, 14:4 (December, 1968)

"Victorian Occult Syncretism and Oriental Sources," *Journal of Victorian Studies*, 28:3 (September, 1969)

"The Crime of Orientalism," *Bulletin of Asian Studies*, 15:2 (April, 1969)

"Pre-Islamic Persian Alchemy," *The Orientalist*, 35:4 (November, 1973)

"Alchemy in Asia: New Perspectives," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXVII

Rasayana Today: Alchemy in Modern Southeast Asia. London, Arcanum Press: 1989.

Curriculum Vitae: The Rev. Montague Winters

Education:

B.A. Liberal Arts Program, St. John's College (Annapolis, MD., 1979)

M.A., Religion, Princeton University (Princeton, N.J., 1982)

M.A., History of Science, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass. 1984)

D.Div., Westminster Theological College (Boston, Mass., 1989)

Academic Experience:

Instructor (Church History), Westminster Theological College, 1985-86

Instructor (Theology), Westminster Theological College, 1988-89

Arcanum Experience:

Associate, Boston Chapter House, 1992-93

Journeyman, Boston Chapter House, 1993-current

Dean, College of Hermetic Studies, 1993-current

Publications:

"Christ: the True Philosopher's Stone," in *Episcopal Studies*, 29:3 (October 1991)

"The Order of St. Hermes and Post-Reformation Esotericism," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXXII

Montague Winters

The Rev. Montague Winters is one of the preeminent scholars of the Hermetic tradition. Although ordained an Episcopal priest, he is also an avidly-avowed practicing Hermeticist; he feels that Christianity and Hermeticism are not irreconcilable, and it has long been his personal and professional quest to prove this. The fact that his intellectual inspiration, the Dominican philosopher Giordano Bruno, was burned at the stake for heresy in 1600 does not give him a persuasive advantage when dealing with other churchmen.

Montague's interest in religion began early in his life; although he long suspected that he was headed toward ordination, he still felt as though something was missing from his own spirituality. He credits his initiation into the Hermetic tradition to "a stranger in a park," who approached him by name and "spoke to [his] soul."

Montague pursued religious education — biblical studies, homiletics and theology, a course of studies befitting any up-and-coming cleric — but always managed to maintain his own arcane interests as well; he claims that he was a practicing alchemist by the time of his ordination. More than once, he has been reprimanded by the Episcopal Church for his more heterodox views and pronouncements; his reprimands are what ultimately brought him to the Arcanum's notice. However, he prefers to "work" in complete privacy, and he has yet to take on a student or apprentice, although many hopefuls have approached him.

Regardless, his expertise in the Hermetic tradition — particularly how it intersects with esoteric religious studies — is, without a doubt, unparalleled.





Book III: The Mystagogue's Guidebook

Chapter Six: Behind the Veil

*Yet mystery and manifestations
Arise from the same source.
This source is called darkness.
Darkness within darkness.
The gateway to all understanding.
— Lao-tzu, Tao Te Ching*

Germany:

It had taken three hours to get this far, and that was three hours too long. Getting lost on that country road didn't help any — the castle was not on any map they could find, and no one they asked, it seemed, was willing to help them.

Finally, they found a school-boy who would lead them for money. The tall, bright-eyed blond did not seem to share any of the other villagers' fears or reluctance to discuss the ruins: until they'd met up with Josef, the travelers had been unable to find anyone even willing to hear mention of the castle. —

Phil, at the wheel of the Jeep, did not seem to mind having taken on the role of chauffeur for the trip, and handled the rough terrain admirably. Lydia was silent, dragging contentedly on a cigarette in the back seat.

Terrance's dissatisfaction with this course of the trip was made evident by the stream of profanities that spilled from his mouth. "I still don't understand why the Committee sent us here instead of any of the German Lodges. This isn't even our case or anything." He was fuming, and his ire was beginning to strain his voice, making his next stream of profanities sound that much more unpleasant..

"We're almost there," Josef said, his big dumb smile unchanged. Riding shotgun, he pointed ahead down the road. "Very soon..."

*Turning & turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold...
— W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"*

Players, take note! This section is intended for Storytellers only. The information contained herein details some of the secrets of the Arcanum, secrets which you will learn when it is appropriate. Reading this section will ruin the pleasure of playing Arcanum characters.

This chapter delves into some of the more hidden aspects of this fellowship of scholars. Many of the details are left deliberately vague to allow you to customize the truth to

fit your own chronicle. The implications of these secrets should fill any Arcanist with paranoiac dread; the creatures outside the Chapter House walls are bad enough, but when strange things happen within this trusted fellowship....

Storytellers should be subtle if they choose to include the ideas in this chapter; conspiracies should not drop from the ceiling onto the characters' heads. Foster, instead, a growing atmosphere of distrust and concern, a feeling that

something significant is going on just behind the oaken door... The truth, if it ever appears, should remain shrouded in mystery. The Arcanum, after all, is a fraternity of searchers. Anyone who expects to keep a secret here had better be damned clever and damned careful....

Inner Questions

He who hungers for the past will be fed on lies.

— Samuel Barber, Vanessa

Bah. Wood-cutters and charcoal-burners.

That is all the Arcanum consists of nowadays: fools who chop away at the Tree of Life, marveling at the splinters they produce and oblivious to the source. They do not understand meaning or truth; scientia sacra is lost upon them. They bustle about like worker ants, following the dictates of the unseen White Monks.

They have lost their way on the Road, and should either be destroyed or gently corrected. Let the fires of the enlightenment burn away the detritus that has gathered. If the Arcanum has failed, than so have I, and I must take actions to redress this failure.

— Benjamin Holmscroft, 24 November 1994

Observations on the History of the Arcanum

A talk offered by Andrew Taylor, at the 1992 Cordova Convocation of the Order of Hermes:

The Arcanum still represents an enigma to the mages of all the Traditions, but we of the Order of Hermes are the most perplexed —possibly because of our own similarities with this band of Sleepers and the semi-Awakened. But perhaps, before discussing these similarities, I should examine its history from the beginning.

As is well known, many of the Arcanum's members came from the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day, which members typically included artists, poets, scholars and bored aristocrats caught up in the nouveau-occult movement of the day. It was prone to wild imaginings, finding lost civilizations behind everything, and detailing "hidden" correspondences between any number of occult activities and interests — the Tarot, the Qabala, Numerology, *et al. ad infinitum*. Only occasionally would the order stumble upon some esoteric truth. A number of the members of the Order were actual magi, shapers of reality; but they had little to do with the HORD's turn toward speculative whimsy. Few true Awakened were members of the Order for long. Most joined merely out of curiosity, and quit soon after, usually quite amused. The majority of those members of the HORD (and other similar societies) who had a talent for magic were nothing more than hedge magi, who, amusingly enough,



quite often believed their art to be the pinnacle of all magical craft.

And so on with other occult societies to the present day: always seeking, sometimes finding, and typically losing.

But what of the Arcanum itself? From the beginning, it was shrouded in secrecy. George Kenealy, himself a magus of the Order of Hermes, was one of the original invitants to Holmscroft's gathering at Vannever Hall — of which I have much to say as well, later — and he felt that the proposal of the Arcanum, while noble and noteworthy, was of little significance.

Kenealy's own blindness to Holmscroft's true nature is an indication of just how singularly powerful Holmscroft can be. Regardless, I digress.

The Order periodically kept track of the early activities of the Arcanum, watching its members muddle through their scholarly-mystical journeys. Certainly, we learned that a number of the semi-Awakened had joined the Arcanum: hedge magicians, psychics, novice alchemists, and so on — but it seems as though one day we looked to discover that they had formed a veritable army of investigators, and were probing into a wide array of matters of which we had not thought them capable, including our own Order.

This is when we began to treat them a little more seriously. We decided then to study the Arcanum as thoroughly as they try to study us....

The Rosicrucians

We know, from conversations with early Arcanists, that the early founders of the Arcanum were quite interested in — one might say obsessed with — the legends of the Rosicrucians: the city of Damcar, the Domus Sanctus, the

The Ancients of Damcar

Fear spoke from the age-worn stones of this hoary survivor of the deluge, this great-grandmother of the eldest pyramid; and a viewless aura repelled me and bade me retreat from antique and sinister secrets that no man should see, and no man else had ever dared to see.

— H.P. Lovecraft, "The Nameless City"

As far as the Ancients of Damcar are concerned, again we can claim no knowledge. But there is much speculation: if the city of Damcar is (or was) located near the Holy Land, then it would have fallen within the sphere of influence of the Ahl-i-Batin. Although the Subtle Ones have been our allies — however reluctantly — they were not forthcoming with all their secrets.

Not only would the location of Damcar have been within the geography of the Ahl-i-Batin, but the history of "Father Christian" and the Ancients follows a similar pattern with the Batini, indoctrinating heterodox mystics and gnostics of mainstream religions.

It is thus the theory of many that the Ancients were Ahl-i-Batin. Damcar may very well have been Mount Qaf, or it may even have been another location entirely — perhaps now a Horizon Realm? Even with the magicks available to us, we have not been able to penetrate the veil of mystery surrounding Damcar. The Subtle Ones, of course, refute all of the above.

Suffice it to say, the Order of Hermes is as interested in establishing the location of Damcar as is the Arcanum.

tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz — all landmarks of a mythic history.

What do we know of the Rosicrucians? I confess that once again I must admit a partial ignorance. It is most likely that "Father Christian" was a true alchemist, if not a full mage, which would account for his longevity, but his historical identity is unknown to us. His name itself would seem to be nothing more than a cobbling together of symbols: "Christian Rosy-Cross," I am confident, is not a true name, but was adopted, most likely as part of an initiation rite.

The Rosicrucians of legend are close in ideology with the Order of Hermes: both believe in a secret wisdom that must be protected from humanity, and aim to guide this knowledge toward perfection. For the Order, this perfection is Ascension; for the Rose-Cross Brothers, it is Reformation: same idea, different clothing. The Rosicrucians-proper (vs. the spurious Rosicrucians — yet another subject I will address) were practicing alchemists and healers. The truth which they safeguarded was, like alchemy, couched in intricate symbolism and mystical language.

There are many who have claimed to be inheritors of the Rosicrucian tradition, including the HORD and the Order of the Golden Dawn, as well as a host of pseudo-mystical societies of dubious merit. Strangely, for all the Arcanum's fascination with the Rosicrucians — and we know for a fact that they actively seek any clues to them that they can find — the Arcanum never claimed itself to be an heir to that grand tradition.

Benjamin Holmscroft

Benjamin Holmscroft remains one of the greatest riddles of the Arcanum: who was — or is — he?

So little is truly known about Benjamin Holmscroft. He first appears among Sleepers in 1879, with his entry into the HORD. There are no records of his existence prior to that year: no birth certificates, school records, tax forms, or any other civic or personal documents make reference to him prior to 1879. It is likely that the name Holmscroft is an alias, a pseudonym created for his debut in the occult community.

There is reason to wonder whether he was, in fact, a mage, as evidenced by the fact that there are no early records of him, that he became very reclusive, and that his alleged death — again, more on that later — is shrouded in mystery. He certainly has more than a minor touch of the Arcane about him. If this, indeed, is true — though we unanimously believe it to be unlikely — then he was anonymous, an Orphan without a Cabal or Chantry.

There are some in the Traditions who suspect that Holmscroft is one of the Awakened, but if so, he is unlike any we have seen before: neither a mage, nor one of the Undead, but simply Undying. Some have suggested that Bryon Hartswicke, the first "inheritor" of Vannever Hall, was in fact Holmscroft; although there is little documentary evidence to prove this, one Leech claimed to have a portrait



Vannever Hall

Dear Elena:

You have written to request further information on Vannever Hall, the Foundation House of the Arcanum, which we both know was once a Chantry House of the Order of Hermes. It has many secrets; some are known; many more have been forgotten.

Its original occupants were publicly recognized as gentlemen and ladies of high breeding and good taste with perhaps a bent toward the intellectual — collectors of maps and manuscripts, books and mementos from across the world. The house was owned, ostensibly, by Sir Thomas Scotte, but his companion, Andrew Saint-George, was most likely the Chantry leader. Saint-George and Scotte, along with their companions (magus and custos alike), disappeared while traveling in Asia; their fate is entirely unknown, as is often the lot of mages.

Although the building was enormous, relatively few mages had residence there. It cannot be said for certain why Scotte had so large a Hall built; perhaps Saint-George anticipated more residents in the future.

The site of Vannever Hall is believed to have been a powerful source of Quintessence, perhaps even before the construction of the building. The Axis Mundi, the Chantry's library, is believed to have been the Node, though this is no longer a source of Quintessence. Of course, according to rumor, there is still much that is strange about Vannever Hall: perhaps a touch of Tass remains, for an unearthly quality assuredly lingers there.

The Axis Mundi

The Arcanum's library is magnificent, even by our standards, although it is lacking in texts of true magick. Saint-George — quite a bibliothecary if his scant biographies are true — began the original collection, and it has been expanded ever since by the subsequent residents — or "resident" — of Vannever Hall.

Yours in the Order,
Andrew Taylor

painted of Hartswicke that bears an uncanny resemblance to Holmscroft. However, this vampire has since disappeared, either drowned in the politics of his kind or fallen under the blade of an Inquisitor.

If Holmscroft — for whatever his True Name is, we know him only by this name — was indeed the inheritor of Vannever Hall from the 17th century onward, then he has lived a long, slow life, aging at a snail's pace. Perhaps his quest for wisdom kept him alive, or perhaps he was aided by some outside factor. Bryon Hartswicke is said to have trav-

eled to the Orient; perhaps in the course of his travels he stumbled upon the secret to his immortal transformation, and learned how to cloud minds, so that he would effectively disappear until he emerged in his Holmscroft persona. He is clearly not a vampire, and I doubt that he is a mummy. However, the Dreamspeakers have tales of some humans, infused by Gaia's energy, who have become almost living avatars of some Gaian aspect: vengeance, love, or in this case, wisdom. Of course, not having the liberty to speak with Holmscroft on the issue, these theories remain purely matters of conjecture.

Finally, we come to Holmscroft's death. One witness to a hermit's death, and a closed-casket funeral? Surely only the most gullible individual would truly believe that Holmscroft died as rumor told. (As far as that witness's credibility, we know for a fact that Winthrop Murray underwent his own transformation, and lives on to this day, although he is rarely seen or heard from.) Holmscroft disappeared in 1914, to be sure, because his longevity was becoming too apparent. However, rather than maintaining behind-the-scenes and control of the Arcanum, he appears to have left behind the society which he founded.

As far as Holmscroft's present whereabouts, and the reasons he left the Arcanum, these questions still remain a mystery.

The White Monks

Forget all this nonsense about Grand Chancellors and Executive Committees: the true leadership of the Arcanum lies with the cabal known as the White Monks. This group is believed to control the Executive Committee — not every member, but enough to sway the Committee's decisions on certain matters — as well as to choose (and direct) each Grand Chancellor.

Rumors of the White Monks first appeared in the early years of the Arcanum; whether Holmscroft was influenced by them, or was himself a member, has yet to be ascertained.

This much we know; anything else is pure conjecture, particularly when addressing the issue of who the actual members of the White Monks are. As of now, there are four theories.

Argument 1: Umbral Lords

Some have proposed that the White Monks are nothing less than the Umbral Lords. While the Arcanum's interest in Hermetic mysteries would lead one to believe that they have some connection to the Western Court — or even the Egyptian Court — this is, of course, absurd; the Umbral Lords do not typically deal with mortals, and when they do, it is with us. What use would they have for a mortal organization that does not actively worship them?

Argument 2: Oracles

Others have proposed that perhaps the White Monks of the Arcanum are actually Oracles, directing mortals from their sanctuary Realms. This is an interesting theory, but it,

too, ultimately fails. The Oracles have duties and roles that are far more pressing than the shepherding of a group of children who dabble in the occult.

Argument 3: Awakened

It has been put forth that the White Monks are an alliance of Awakened, primarily mages and vampires, but perhaps including mummies as well. While it would be in keeping with the Awakened — particularly Leeches — to manipulate mortals for personal gain, most likely the gathering of information, this theory ultimately falls apart as well. Very few mages and vampires have been able to act together in concert, and I cannot see a consortium of mixed Awakened successfully controlling mortals for over a century without making their presence more visible.

Argument 4: Sleepers

This leads us to our last argument: the White Monks must be a group of mortals. Some have theorized that the White Monks are but a new incarnation of a mysterious priesthood begun under Solomon, known only as the White Veils of the Temple. (I will not at this point go into the ridiculous allegations that the *Prieuré de Solomon* are descendants of the White Veils). According to these theorists, the White Monks are alchemists and hedge magi — some of them incredibly ancient, thanks to their magical workings.

This entire theory is ultimately preposterous: that any one group of mortals could occult themselves out of our collective attention for 3,000 years is beyond possibility.

Conclusions

So there we have it: four theories on the identities of the White Monks, all refuted. I admit that I have used only one argument, and not evidence, to discount them; however, I will point out in my defense that no evidence has been offered to support these claims either.

This much we do suspect: whomever the White Monks may be, they are using the Arcanum to further their own goals and research. As the Arcanum traverses the globe, unraveling mysteries and bringing data and relics home to the Foundation House, the White Monks' own work advances: they have the toil and effort of scholars throughout the world to manipulate and draw upon.

Finally, we must question the motives of the White Monks. Do they work to manipulate the Arcanum in hopes of directing it to a greater good? Some speak of a Revelation, when the doors to the Arcanum will be flung open and the knowledge of eons will spill forth.

Or do the White Monks manipulate the Arcanum only for their own purposes?

What should happen if Damcar is discovered? Or if one of the truly powerful relics which the Arcanum seeks is found? What will the White Monks do with it then?

There are layers upon layers of secrets within the Arcanum; it is doubtful that any know the truths behind them all.

The Red Monks

Wrapped in even more ambiguity are the rumors of the Red Monks, a cabal said to oppose the White Monks. Although not directly opposed to the original mission of the Arcanum, they have come to view the Arcanum as a tool of self-serving individuals, and now work to thwart the activities of the White Monks whenever possible. This we have from self-professed agents of the Red Monks, both inside and outside the Arcanum, mortal and supernatural alike; however, we have little confirmation of the identities of the Red Monks as well.

A few suspect that Winthrop Murray reappears on occasion to recruit Arcanists for some hidden cause, possibly in the service of the Red Monks. Whether Murray works for Holmscroft, or whether Holmscroft is part of the Red Monks, is not clear.

Conclusion

In one sense, the Arcanum is the fulfillment of what the Order of Hermes has espoused: it studies the mystery traditions of the ages, seeking the truths hidden in the arcane formulae of numbers and symbols which make up the occult sciences. The Arcanum's collective belief in that which we proclaim helps to enforce the walls of our reality and strengthen the paradigmatic bulwark against the Technocracy.

Many already believe that the Arcanum is a front for the Order of Hermes; while it is true that a number of our own acolytes and apprentices are recruited from the Arcanum,



we have no more control over the order than does any other Tradition.

What does the Technocracy think of the Arcanum? It is likely that it allows the Arcanum to exist as a fringe organization: as long as the collective populace does not believe in ghosts or sorcerers, then the Arcanum will be little more than a body of scholarly eccentrics. If the Technocracy ever comes to view the Arcanum as a tool of the Order, it may decide to crush it. I suspect that when and if this should occur, the stored, collected knowledge of the Arcanum will be revealed, and the Technocracy will face a greater fight than they expect.

If, one day, the Arcanum does release its findings, which prove the existence of the supernatural and refute some of the claims of modern science, then the Technocracy may have cause to worry. It is unlikely that this Revelation will occur any time soon, and one cannot say for certain what will happen when it does. If the timing is wrong, then the Arcanum will bear the brunt of universal mockery. If the timing is propitious, however, the Technocracy's paradigm may find itself quaking just a bit, and we will be ready. In this event, the Arcanum, never a tool, may become an ally. For now, they are just children, playing with fire: but a fire which may one day prove useful.

Until then, we will wait, and we will watch.

Characters

For here, in the New Orleans home of this continent's greatest mystic, mathematician, and orientalist, there was being settled at last the estate of a scarcely less great mystic, scholar, author, and dreamer who had vanished from the face of the earth four years before.

— H.P. Lovecraft, "Through the Gates of the Silver Key"

The following characters are presented for a variety of purposes. Some were important in the history of the Arcanum, and may still play a role in its future; others have yet to leave their mark upon it. Still others are simply personalities that may be found within the Arcanum and may leave their mark on a more personal level. The way your players interact with these personages is left to you and to the dictates of your own chronicle.

Mark Wayne

Secretary

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Avante-Garde

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 3, Dodge 1, Expression 2

Skills: Drive 1, Leadership 1, Research 2, Technology 2

Knowledges: Culture 1, Linguistics 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Resources 1



Willpower: 4

Background: Mark Wayne is young, he's cute, and he's a French major — which pretty much means he's unemployable. But thankfully his uncle pulled a few strings, and now he answers the phones and does some typing for a local scholarly society.

Sure, they've got some really weird books, but the building is nice, you get to use the phone whenever you want, you can read at the desk, and they let you use the basement gym as well. It's not much as far as jobs go, but it's a start.

Image: Mark Wayne is a handsome young fellow whose idea of dressing up is wearing a button-down instead of a T-shirt.

Roleplaying Hints: You're enthusiastic, always ready to help, but a little bit clueless as far as real office work goes. But hey, you can read French!

Sylvia Dorn

Security Consultant

Nature: Jobsworth

Demeanor: Bravo

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 1

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 4, Leadership 1, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Technology 3

Knowledges: Investigation 3, Law 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 1, Resources 2

Willpower: 6

Background: Sylvia was just a security guard who saw something really weird one day (it was just a little UFO, after all), and the next thing she knew she was in all the tabloids. Well, so much for anyone wanting to hire her again.

Then the Arcanum came along. First they investigated her background, then they questioned her about what she saw. Not only did they believe her, they offered her a job at a Chapter House, managing security operations. She's seen even weirder things since then, but after all, it's just a job.

Image: A trim black woman of about 30, short and petite, but all muscle beneath her business suit. Sylvia wears dark glasses whenever possible.

Roleplaying Hints: When it comes right down to it, you're paid to act paranoid, but you're also efficient. The Arcanum was there for you and you'll be there for it.

Mr. Parks

Steward

Nature: Jobsworth

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3



Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Diplomacy 3

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 5, Firearms 2, Leadership 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Technology 2

Knowledges: Arcanum Lore 5, Investigation 3, Law 2, Medicine 1, Occult 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5, Resources 3

Willpower: 5

Background: Edward Parks — simply “Mr. Parks” — is part of a long-standing tradition at Vannever Hall: the stewards of Vannever Hall have come from the Parks family for generations, even when Vannever Hall was “unoccupied.” Now he manages the Foundation Hall’s large domestic staff.

Mr. Parks is a dedicated servant of the Arcanum. While he is universally trusted as the Foundation House’s manager, few people are aware of just how much he really knows. He is well-versed in the secret byways and passageways of the Foundation House, many cellars that are still undiscovered, but he is content “to remain a domestic.” He has his job, like his father before him, and he will do it well.

Image: A dignified, middle-aged white man with a brisk Queen’s English accent. Mr. Parks is neatly shaven, wears a crisp suit and walks a steady pace: never rushed, but never late.



Roleplaying Hints: You are there to facilitate the daily activities of the Arcanum. You expect the same respect that is given the Grand Chancellor, and if any young Journeyman starts to take an attitude with you, you’ll snap him back to reality without a moment’s hesitation — or a single ungentlemanly word.

Madeleine Beaucourt

The Grand Chancellor

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Bully

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Expression 4, Intuition 3, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Leadership 4, Meditation 1, Research 3, Technology 3

Knowledges: Arcanum Lore 4, Computer 1, Enigmas 1, Investigation 1, Linguistics 4, Mythology 5, Occult 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Library 5, Resources 3, Status 5

Willpower: 7

Background: Madeleine Beaucourt was educated in the finest universities in France, and is one of the world’s most noted Indologists. Unbeknownst to her, her career in the Arcanum was groomed by the White Monks almost from the beginning: she was immediately perceived to be a very forceful woman, and the Monks agreed that her strength of character could be put to use in their service. Her rise through the ranks was genuine, given her career and activities, but the Monks facilitated things so that she always had the best opportunities to shine.

By the time she had been voted Grand Chancellor, Beaucourt had already been in touch with the Monks for three years; they made her privy to much of their own private information, and she does their bidding on the rare occasions when they ask: policy decisions, budget considerations, etc.

She has never once seen the White Monks; all communication is conducted through private meetings with nameless liaisons, telephone calls, even private e-mail (which automatically purges after she reads it and cannot be saved or forwarded).

Madeleine is fanatically loyal to the White Monks and the Arcanum: for her, the two are synonymous.

Image: A short French woman in her late forties, smartly dressed in business suits, Madeleine is the consummate professional.

Roleplaying Hints: Be direct, be firm. If you speak to anyone, it is because you think they are worth your time. If anyone has problems with the Arcanum, you’ll listen — and then you’ll refute each and every argument.



Andrew Taylor

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Critic

Tradition: Order of Hermes

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Expression 4, Intuition 3

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Leadership 3, Meditation 3, Research 4, Stealth 2, Technology 1

Knowledges: Arcanum Lore 4, Cosmology 3, Culture 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics 4, Occult 3

Backgrounds: Arcane 1, Avatar 3, Influence 2, Status 3

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Forces 4, Life 2, Matter 2, Mind 4, Prime 3, Spirit 1

Willpower: 8

Arete: 6

Quintessence: 12

Paradox: 3

Background: Andrew Taylor began as a Journeyman with the Washington, D.C. chapter. Over the course of his career as an Arcanist, he met up with a Magus of the Order of Hermes, who selected him to be his apprentice. To this day, Andrew believes that he was chosen less for his personal merit than for his background.

Although Andrew quit the Arcanum a number of years ago, he never quite left it; he has been preoccupied with the origin and true nature of the Arcanum for some time, and does whatever he can to attempt to resolve its many enigmas.

Image: Andrew Taylor is a pleasant young man who enjoys the life of the scholar and the academe, dressing the part to the hilt: brown trench coat, tweed jacket, Oxford shoes, and a worn leather satchel. His face is handsome but not threatening, although at times he looks rather severe. Round spectacles finish off his image.

Roleplaying Hints: You are quiet in public, except for scholarly convocations and gatherings; when you speak at such occasions, you are quite eloquent. In private gatherings you say little, however, preferring instead to watch and listen.

Winthrop Murray

The Undying

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Architect

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 4, Expression 4, Intuition 2

Skills: Etiquette 5, Firearms 3, Leadership 3, Meditation 2, Melee 2, Research 4, Stealth 2



Knowledges: Alchemy 5, Arcanum Lore 5, Astrology 5, Cosmology 3, Culture 3, Egyptology 5, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 5, Medicine 1, Mummy Lore 3, Mage Lore 2, Occult 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 3, Contacts 5, Library 5, Mentor 4, Resources 4

Numina: Alchemy 5, Ephemera 3

Willpower: 8

Background: Winthrop Murray was a prominent Victorian Egyptologist involved with the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day and then the Arcanum. He served as Secretary both to the Executive Committee and to Benjamin Holmscroft.

In the course of his involvement with the Arcanum, he met with an Undying Egyptian sorcerer, who was sufficiently pleased with Murray's knowledge. After many visits to the Arcanum, the Undying accepted Murray as an apprentice.

Murray staged his own death and went to study in Cairo, recreating the method used millennia ago to grant immortality to his mentor. Finally, in a fluke, he was able to create the Formulae which both restored his youth and made him ageless. Although he can be killed by normal means, his body will slowly regenerate while his spirit floats the Umbra.

Now he watches the Arcanum's progress from behind the scenes. He disdains the manipulation of the White Monks, and will counter it whenever possible. He is believed to be a contact for the Red Monks, but he neither confirms nor denies this. He does, however, occasionally contact Arcanists and give them covert aid — often without revealing his presence.

Image: Winthrop Murray is a proper gentleman, even in this day and age, always dressed in the crispest of clothing, with impeccable manners. He never insults — unintentionally — and maintains a pleasant facade no matter what he is thinking.

Roleplaying Hints: Be a polite chap, if somewhat condescending. Always act in a mannerly fashion: in addition to being proper, it helps cover your true motives.

Jebediah Spector Brown

Witch-hunter

Nature: Critic

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Expression 4, Intuition 3, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 4, Leadership 3, Meditation 2, Melee 4, Research 2, Technology 3



Knowledges: Alchemy 5, Astrology 3, Computer 1, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Sacred Scripture 3, Science 3, Theology 3, Vampire Lore 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 3, Library 4, Resources 4

Numina: Alchemy 5

Willpower: 8

Background: The Reverend Jebediah Brown is a God-fearing — but sadly, not God-loving — man who feels his divinely ordained duty is to cleanse the earth of the supernatural evil with which it is infested. He will not join the Society of Leopold, which, being Catholic, follows the Whore of Babylon known as the Pope, and he will not indulge in simple hunt-and-stake missions on his own.

Brown has decided that the best way to rid the earth of this blight is to learn as much as possible about it (a lesson which the Society of Leopold would do well to learn). He began with an extensive study of vampire lore, which to this day remains his field of expertise. It was because of this knowledge that he was first contacted by Benjamin Holmscroft regarding the Arcanum; after a brief membership, in which he learned as much as he could about occult society of his day, he withdrew and moved to America.

Once there, he began the study of alchemy — which, he argues, is evil in itself but which God permitted him to study in light of his mission — with an old gentleman who claimed to have come to the country in the early 1700s. After wresting the secret of longevity (if not immortality) from him, Brown killed his mentor and used his funds to establish a lab in which he could alchemically study captured supernatural creatures.

Recruits and converts aided Brown in his mission, and over the next few years the Reverend founded what was to become Crucible Genetics Amalgamated. He still runs CGA from behind the scenes, using its facilities and supplies for both his own alchemical experiments and for further study of the supernatural.

The Reverend lives in seclusion, surrounded only by his most trusted associates and bodyguards. To facilitate his privacy, he “died” in 1902, according to the certificate hanging on his study wall. When he feels he has learned all that he needs to know, he plans to initiate a massive supernatural pogrom; to this end, he is gathering data and

capturing “specimens” for his experiments and research. CGA has on occasion infiltrated the Arcanum, and vice-versa, in a macabre system of corporate espionage that is understood only by Brown and the Arcanum’s Executive Committee.

Brown was once strong in Faith, but this dwindled as he committed more and more atrocities in the name of “God-driven science.”

Image: A stocky man, Brown has a stern face with a strong aquiline profile. His long hair is peppered gray, pulled back from a high forehead and kept in a short ponytail. Brown looks to be in his 40s, although he is actually much older. Though he is no longer an active clergyman, he continues to dress in the fashion of a minster.

Roleplaying Hints: You rarely laugh, smile, or show any emotion other than stern, pompous contempt and condescension. Quote Scripture when it suits you and serves your purpose, but fly into a cold rage when someone dares to send it back at you.

Appendix One: Alchemy, The Great Art

Gold is immortality

— Satapatha Brahmana, 8th c. B.C.

All that is gold does not glitter...

— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

I walked home late that night, contemplating the various formulae my master made clear to me throughout the day; these ideas, and many others, churned turbulently in my mind, each revelation and discovery building upon the other, to alter subtly my understanding of the way things were.

I looked up at the State building, as I am so often wont to do; there, upon the entablature, was a stunning revelation. What I had previously thought was little more than neoclassical sentiment or mythologized Americanism fixed in stone was actually the allegorical representation of a number of basic alchemical formulae. I stood and stared, my mouth agape — no doubt appearing to passers-by as an idiot or a madman.

A cold wind roused me from my rumination. Drawing my overcoat closer around me, I hurried home, wondering how many more occult truths are boldly emblazoned before the eyes of the ignorant.

The Great Art, Our Sacred Philosophy, the Divine Work, *Ars Chemica* — these are all terms which have surrounded the occult — some would say sacred — science/art of alchemy. But what was, or is, alchemy?

Alchemy is popularly known as a medieval proto-chemistry, a pseudo-science which sought to transmute base metals (e.g., lead) into gold. While such operations often are a part of the alchemical process, alchemy itself goes far beyond this. It is truly the science of transmutation and perfection, but it is a way of perfecting the human spirit. All the many varied physical results, no matter how dramatic, are tangential to the true work of the art. Alchemy as practiced in the west is the epitome of the Hermetic tradition, which draws together into its syncretism the myths of Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as the Biblical traditions.

Alchemy is difficult to discuss empirically or objectively; it straddles the border between art and science, between spiritual discipline and scientific practice. Spanning across Asia Minor and Europe, this discipline has been in practice for over 2,000 years. Description is limitation, and alchemy defies limitation.

A Brief Discussion of the History and Practice of Alchemy

Excerpts from the *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*:

Etymology

The etymology of the word "alchemy" has never been wholly agreed upon. The word itself is commonly acknowledged to have come from the Arabic *al-kimia*; *al* is the Arabic definite article, but the meaning and derivation of *kimia* is often disputed. Arguments tend to fall into two camps:

- Some believe that *kimia* comes from the Egyptian word *khem*, or "black," referring to "the black land"—the ancient Egyptians' own name for their country. Alchemy was once greatly practiced in Egypt, and it may very well have been considered "the Egyptian art."

- Others argue that the word comes from the Greek *kumeia*, which means to fuse or cast metal, often part of the alchemical procedure.

— Elizabeth Sandler (From Vol. V)

History

You ask me to summarize for you in four minutes four thousand years of philosophy and the efforts of a lifetime. Furthermore, you ask me to translate into ordinary language concepts for which such a language is not intended.

— an unnamed alchemist to F. Bergier, as described in *The Morning of the Magicians*

The roots of Alchemy may lie in the innumerable myths which speak of plants, fountains, or other substances that bestow immortality. In such tales, the crucial object may be found after a long quest, only to be lost again, as in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh finds the root of immortality growing deep below the sea, but loses it when it is eaten by a snake, who in turn gains immortality for the act.

The earliest surviving documents date alchemy to as far back as the 3rd century B.C. However, it was between the 4th and 7th centuries A.D. that it truly flourished. Alexandria, home to Persians, Syrians, Egyptians and Greeks, was at that time a cultural and intellectual melting pot; thus, many of the earliest alchemical manuscripts are Alexandrian in origin. Hellenistic Egypt was home to the Hermetic tradition, which infused alchemy and many of the western occult sciences. Prominent Greek alchemists included Bolos and Zosimos, whose works are now part of every alchemist's corpus.

In the 12th century, Europeans began to discover the intellectual heritage of the Muslims, whom they had assailed regularly in their Crusades. Spain, in particular, still under Moorish control, was a haven for the diffusion of Arabic knowledge to the European world. Much of this learning spread throughout Europe, particularly to monasteries, which served as centers for education and the preservation of knowledge. Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus contributed to the spread of alchemical knowledge in the late Middle Ages, and Sir George Ripley (a member of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem), Bernard of Treves, and John Destin all were noted alchemists of the time.

With the Renaissance, alchemy and the other occult sciences reached their zenith, as a new interest in ancient teachings — including those of the occult — spread across Europe. Athanasius Kirchner, Pico della Mirandola, and others trumped the "secret wisdom" of the ancients. With this kind of support, the science of alchemy achieved new heights. Famous alchemists included John Dee, Helvetius, Robert Fludd, Lady Anne Conway and particularly Paracelsus.

However, as the Renaissance trailed into the 17th century, interest in alchemy became more scientific and less metaphysical. Although interest in alchemy has not quite disappeared, it certainly never reached the same heights in Europe as it had during the Renaissance. By the time of the Industrial Revolution, alchemy was popularly sneered at as nothing more than a pseudo-science, its true nature cherished in the hands of those few who practiced it in secret.

— Maximilian Wilhelm (from Vol. X)

Practice

The Philosopher's Stone is called the most ancient, secret or unknown, natural incomprehensible, heavenly, blessed sacred Stone of the Sages. It is described as being true, more certain than certainty itself, the arcanum of all arcana...

— Anonymous, *The Sophic Hydrolith*, 17th century.

The key to — and often the aim of — Western alchemical study is the Philosopher's Stone, sometimes simply called the Stone. Alchemy is full of paradoxes, and the description of the Stone is one of these: some alchemists say it is an actual stone, others claim that it is some other substance; it has been variously described as a tincture, an elixir, a wax, a powder. But the Philosopher's Stone is that substance which aids in the final alchemical processes of transmuting lead into gold, healing all ills, and granting immortality.

The alchemical art brings Nature to perfection. The *prima materia*, the primal material, is the substance which is turned, through a variety of processes, into the Stone. But even the nature of the *prima materia* is a mystery. Some alchemists believe it must be a base material: dog droppings, bones, blood, etc. — while others argue that the *prima materia* itself is a supernatural substance.

After a substance is chosen for experimentation, the next question to be addressed is what to operations to

perform and in which order. The number of processes varies. One may go by the number either of planets, the days of Creation (according to Genesis), or the signs of the zodiac. A knowledge of astrology is requisite in alchemy, as various planets control various metals, and knowing which days to perform which operations is essential.

The first step usually involves putrefaction, which culminates in *nigredo* (the black stage), when the substance is dead, or has been reduced to its first matter. The substance is then reborn in "The Peacock's Tail," a stage of many colors, followed by *albedo* (the whitening), when a white elixir is formed. Finally, the process concludes with *rubedo*, when the substance becomes a red tincture, elixir or powder: the Philosopher's Stone.

— Geoffrey Truesdell (from Vol. LXXIII)

Transmission

A most wonderful Magistery and Archimagistery is the Tincture of sacred Alchemy, the marvellous science of the secret Philosophy... which men have never discovered through the labor of their own hands, but only by revelation and the teaching of others.

— Thomas Norton, *The Ordinall of Alchimy*, 1477

The Great Work is not easily learned. True, there are many works in print which claim to detail the secrets of

alchemy, but these are often analogical reflections which cannot be comprehended without some initial understanding — and this innate knowledge cannot be gained through books.

The Sacred Craft is typically learned through the instruction of other alchemists — and finding a genuine alchemist is no easy task — or through "revelation," which most often takes the form of dreams or visions. One can read the vast alchemical corpus, but will truly grasp very little without proper instruction and initiation.

Alchemy is a sacred art, and a secret one: true alchemy, maintaining its own symbolic language and cosmology, is the province of the rare few who are initiated into its secrets.

— Margaret Fisher (from Vol. LXIX)

The Image of the Alchemist

Their clothes be bawdy and worn thread-bare...

— Sir George Ripley, *The Compound of Alchemy*, 1652

The public perception of alchemy has varied greatly throughout time. In the West, the discipline has at times been trumpeted as a great restorative, capable of curing ills beyond the limitations of science; while at other times it has been called the Devil's Art. Some have viewed alchemy as little more than fraud and the craft of swindlers, and regarded alchemists with scorn and disdain.

Many alchemists considered themselves Christians, and many Christian mystics dabbled with alchemical language: Christ Himself was held by some to be the perfect Philosopher's Stone. The established Church, however, frowned upon alchemy, as alchemists looked to their own art, and not to the church, for salvation.

Some argue that the word "gibberish" comes from the name Geber (the medieval rendering of *Jabir ibn Hayyan*), a Muslim alchemist whose works reached some prominence in Europe — evidence of the mockery to which alchemy has been subjected.

— Miriam Detwiler (from Vol. LXX)

Alchemy Across the World

My teacher used to say that if one wished for perpetual life one should diligently take the great medicines, and if one desired to communicate with the gods and spirits one should use solutions of metals.... One will also be able to enter the presence of the powers and principalities of the heavens, and the deities of the earth, as well as having the spirits of all the mountains and rivers in one's service.

— Ko Hung, circa A.D. 300

Alchemy is typically discussed in Western terms, using Greek or Latin vocabulary to refer to European or Classical western authors or alchemists, and incorporating Western philosophies in its teachings. The discipline is generally perceived in its Hermetic vehicle, born of Hellenistic Egypt. While it is natural for a western audience to accept this, it

The Secret Language

VITRIOL: *Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem.*

(Visit the interior of the earth: in rectifying thou wilt find the hidden stone.)

— Alchemical adage

Alchemical works are laden with symbolism, metaphor and allegory, in addition to outright deception, and initiation into the alchemical tradition is a must if one is truly to understand any alchemical text.

Take, for example, the following instruction from the 17th century treatise *Twelve Keys*:

Take a fierce grey Wolf. Cast to him the body of the King and when he has devoured it, burn him entirely to ashes in a great fire. By this process the King will be liberated; and when it has been performed thrice the Lion has overcome the Wolf, who will find nothing more to devour in him. Thus one body has been found fit for the first stage of our work.

The Wolf is probably antimony, which easily alloys with — or "devours" other metals, and the process may be the purification of gold by repeated fusion with antimony sulfide.

One book, the *Mutus Liber*, printed in 1677, almost entirely eschews text and is instead composed of fifteen plates, each one detailing in symbolic imagery the steps for the creation of the Philosopher's Stone.

In short, any text which is said to reveal all the secrets of alchemy in "plain English" is probably a fraud. The Great Work does not reveal itself to the masses in paperback form.

should also be understood and appreciated that the practice of alchemy is not limited to the descendents of Greece and Alexandria. Alchemy's history goes back just as far — if not farther — in the Orient as it does the Occident.

Dar al-Islam: Alchemy has ancient roots in the Islamic world. Its origins can be traced from Adam to the ancient masters and prophets through Aristotle, Socrates, Galen, et al.; the art itself was endorsed by the Prophet, Muhammad, as a vehicle of grace. Muslim scholars helped preserve many Greek texts which would have otherwise been lost during the European Dark Ages. Muslim alchemists were responsible for many of their own interpretations and innovations, a number of which were transmitted to Europe in the 12th century. Alchemy is even now practiced as a traditional science in a number of the smaller villages of the Islamic world. (For more discussion of Islamic alchemy, q.v. Smythe, Vol. LX, and Davies, this Vol.)

India: In India, alchemy is called *rasayana* — the way of essences. Nagarjuna, the semilegendary father of Indian alchemy, is thought to have lived for 800 years. According to Vedantic philosophy, the gross elements of the manifest

world are ultimately reintegrated into the Absolute, and the Indian alchemists strive to analogically mimic this within their laboratories. In addition to the typical mineral/vegetable substances used in most western practices, Indian alchemists also use semen and blood. Buddhist alchemy relies more upon internal processes than mercurial ones. (For more discussion of Indian alchemy, q.v. D'Souza, Vols. LXXIII, LXXV, and LXXVI, and references contained therein.)

China: Records of alchemical practices trace back to the second century B.C. Chinese alchemy is rooted in Taoist philosophy, *ch'i* (or *qi*), the breath of the universe, which permeates all things, as well as the reconciliation of opposites in *yin* and *yang*. Instead of the Philosopher's Stone, Chinese alchemy's goal was the Pill of Immortality, which not only conferred physical immortality but also ensured a place in the celestial hierarchy. Those who do attain the Pill become immortals (*hsien*), and still wander the earth, only recognized by fellow alchemists. Tai ch'i chuan, the Chinese martial art typically associated with the elderly — a gross misappreciation — is a Taoist yoga which cultivates the



Alchemical Study

As indicated, Alchemy cannot just be learned through books; it must either be taught by another or discovered through revelation. There must, however, be some intellectual foundation in order for the Alchemical Path to function.

In order to advance to a new level, alchemist characters must have, in addition to the Alchemy Path, both the Occult Science: Alchemy and the Occult Science: Astrology. These are both requisite knowledges; the former is the intellectual working of the Path, while the latter is necessary to determine the proper time for alchemical workings.

Alchemist characters must have Knowledge ratings in both Occult Sciences equal to the Alchemical Path level to which they aspire. A character wishing to rise to a Path rating of three must have Occult Science: Alchemy and Occult Science: Astrology three as well.

Rising in the Path of Alchemy is not easy, but then its goal is immortality.

The Alchemical Laboratory

Alchemy is a Path with extensive use of foci; any alchemist who aspires to mastery of the craft must have at least the following equipment:

- **Furnace:** The alchemist makes constant use of heat in her operations, whether distilling or smelting; the furnace may be self-regulating, or it may even be a simple open fire (which must be constantly monitored).
- **Distilling vessels:** Alchemists are often purifying substances using the process of distillation. An alembic is a common tool, in which a heated liquid causes vapor to rise to the cooling dome atop the vessel, to be directed down a long spout.
- **Mortar & pestle:** Alchemists must grind many ingredients, and the mortar & pestle are common tools for this purpose.
- **Measuring device:** Of course, an alchemist must measure the materials with which he is working, which requires the use of scales or a laboratory balance.
- **Altar:** Many alchemists insist that an altar must be present in the laboratory, for the Great Work is a Sacred art.

Even in the 20th century, most alchemists will use the same equipment that their medieval ancestors employed; the production quality may be better, but the technology remains the same. Some alchemists have begun to experiment with updating the laboratory to employ more modern tools and equipment.

The alchemist's lab may be located anywhere, but private places are preferred, in order to avoid both suspicious neighbors and general distractions. Attics or basements are common locations for an alchemist's laboratory.

ch'i; Tai ch'i is then a physical form of alchemy. (For more information on Chinese alchemy, see Chan, Vol. LXXVI.)

The relationship of the various non-western forms of alchemy to each other and to the west is debatable. Certainly, Islamic alchemical practice had an effect upon the development of European alchemy. Likewise, China and India are believed to have influenced each other, and the Islamic world as well. Although the various traditions grew up individually, dependent upon their own cultures and cosmologies, it would be naive to assume that there were no connections between the variations.

— Sandeep D'Souza (from Vol. LXXVII)

Game Uses and Costs

Alchemy is one of the Paths of Hedge Magic. Although the Hedge Magic system is discussed fully in *Ascension's Right Hand*, basic information is repeated below.

The Path of Alchemy, like other Hedge Magic Paths, has a dot rating from one to five. Each rating is a general indication of how much the alchemist comprehends and is capable of performing; it does not represent quantifiable abilities at the alchemist's command. These specific abilities are represented in Hedge Magic by Rituals; the Rituals of Alchemy are more properly called Formulae, with each Formula capable of producing certain reactions or effects. Formulae vary from tradition to tradition, and indeed from alchemist to alchemist; Alchemy is a personal art, and its manipulations are often altered to correspond with the personality or desires of the alchemist.

Most Effects require extended rolls, or one to three days of work per level of the Formulae attempted. The difficulty of such rolls is the Path level + 4, and the amount of successes determines the purity (and effectiveness) of the result.

Alchemy costs only seven points to begin, and each new dot includes one Formula of that Path level. These Formulae cost three "Freebie Points" to purchase, and three times the level of the Path to buy with experience. A level three Formula would then cost nine points, while a first level Formula would only require three experience points. Each Formula requires one Willpower point to produce.

Effects

Although Alchemy is primarily the art of purifying the soul, many other effects have developed from its practice — some helpful, some harmful. Such products may have been developed intentionally or accidentally discovered. Remember that these elixirs and substances are byproducts; no matter how dramatic they may be, they are always ancillary to the true goal of the alchemist. See the Paths of Herbalism and Enchantment for other possible Effects.

Roll: Intelligence + Alchemy Costs 1 Willpower

- Minor substances can be created, such as simple poisons, tranquilizers, anesthetics or even stimulants —

nothing that is obviously “magical” or “supernatural” in effect. Lesser healing potions can be created. At each level of Alchemy, a more powerful healing Formula can be created, using the levels of the Healing Path, discussed in **Ascension’s Right Hand**, as guidelines.

— A liquid which, when imbibed, removes minor Health Level penalties (through Injured) until the individual is wounded again or heals.

— A powder which, combined with an alcoholic beverage, allows one to instantaneously dispel the effects of drunkenness.

•• More powerful versions of level one Formulae may be attempted. Formulae which affect the consumer’s insight may also be created, granting visions or dreams.

— A powder which grants the consumer a vision; the vision is always clothed in symbolic language, and may either portend future events or show previously unknown aspects of a current situation.

— A liquid which will allow the consumer to go an entire week with only one hour’s sleep per night.

••• At this level, true “supernatural” effects can be attempted. For example, Alchemists can create substances which temporarily grant the consumer psychic abilities. Metals and other substances with obvious effects — typically either healing or damaging — may be created as well, although these will have limited lifespans.

— A metal may be altered so that a small weapon (either a dagger or a handful of bullets) will do aggravated damage against a supernatural creature.

— A liquid may be created so that the consumer has a Psychic Numina (different Phenomena require different Formulae) for the remainder of a scene.

•••• More powerful version of lower Formulae may be created, along with substances which temporarily increase an Ability or Attribute by one or two dots.

— A powder which, during the turn following its consumption, grants the consumer an additional dot to both Manipulation and Expression for the remainder of a scene.

— A liquid which, when applied to the eyes, grants the user the ability to see through the Shroud for one turn (see **Wraith: The Oblivion**).

••••• At this level, an alchemist can create substances which allow temporary replication of other supernatural abilities, e.g., vampiric Disciplines or werewolf Gifts. (The Spheres of True Magick cannot be duplicated, however.) More dramatic versions of lower Formulae may be created as well. These typically last for one turn per success and cannot exceed the second level of the Discipline or Gift.

— A regenerative powder which, when consumed, allows the user to regenerate levels of damage slowly (one level every other turn) for the duration of a story.

Alchemical Considerations

Formulae vary in form and in what they create. When creating Alchemical Formulae, keep the following considerations in mind:

• **Form:** Alchemical products may exist in a variety of forms: liquid, wax, powder, etc. In many respects, form is irrelevant, but since Formulae must often be ingested, a form suitable for consumption is best.

• **Lifespan:** Alchemical creations have varying lifespans. Theoretically, a product may last indefinitely, until it is used. Some, however, may last only moments — until the liquid cools or the wax hardens, for example. Remember that alchemists typically work for their own benefit; they are not mass-production facilities of arcane liquids or powders. The Arcanum does not have a storage cabinet filled with “magic potions” for its members use.

• **Duration:** The effects of Alchemical products vary in duration: some last only for a few moments, while others are permanent. Some Formulae may create elixirs or powders that have more intermediate effects, such as hours, days, or months, but these Formulae must be researched and experimented upon individually.

• **Components:** Some formulae call for very specific components, which may be rare, expensive, or quite difficult to get. Exact components are usually irrelevant for game purposes, but may prove difficult for alchemist characters to procure.

• **Creation Time:** The more complex the Formula, the longer it takes to create. Creation times vary, but most will be between one day and one month per Formula.

Do not get wrapped up in the systems of Alchemical Formulae; consider instead their place in stories. Instead of trying to determine the above considerations for each and every Formula, assume a default: liquid form, indefinite lifespan, instant effect, negligible components and one week to create. Variety should be provided to spice things up, not to make the mechanics difficult or time-consuming.

— An elixir (requiring at least five blood-points of vampire’s vitae) which allows the user to use one of the Kindred’s Disciplines for one turn per success.

Formulae “above” level five exist; they are the pinnacle of the alchemical tradition. These are the most mysterious and sought after Formulae, including the Philosopher’s Stone, which is required for any attempts to attain immortality or transmutation. Whether the Formulae still exist in written form, or if there a teacher who knows them, is a mystery left up to the Storyteller.

Some argue that there are other high level Formulae which result in the Awakening of the Alchemist’s Avatar; this is a true irony, because as one climbs in mastery of any Path, it becomes harder to Awaken the Sleeper. Only the highest Formulae, which both unify and transcend the workings of Alchemy, are capable of resolving this paradox.

Appendix Two: Artifacts

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

— The Gospel according to Luke 11:9

These bygone relics are highly sought by the Arcanum: not only are they often tangible evidence of the reality of myth, but they frequently possess great power. Such artifacts found on Arcanum missions are typically sent to the Foundation House, where they are catalogued and stored. Sometimes exceptions will be made; Arcanists do not always report lesser findings immediately.

Sample Relics

The following artifacts are graded according to their relative power — one through five, to correspond with the Artifacts Background. These can either be used as created,

or can serve as guidelines for the creation of other such relics.

• Mentat Stones

A variety of these stones are known to exist, each with different properties or strengths; they are all said to aid psychics in their mental workings. The most common stones are either Inhibitors or Matrices:

Matrix: This stone allows the psychic to better focus his abilities; carrying a Matrix lowers the difficulty of Psychic Phenomena rolls by 1.

Inhibitor: This stone interferes with psychic activity. Those carrying an Inhibitor are somewhat protected from

psychic interference: the use of any psychic affinity which would directly affect the bearer has the difficulty increased by 1.

Stones with different or more powerful effects may exist, but these would require higher ranks (•• through •••••).

••Shadow Cloak

This black cloak makes the wearer almost invisible in darkness or shadow; she automatically has three dots (or three additional dice) of Stealth when traveling in dim light. Of course, wearing a cloak in public will draw attention to you, and Shadow Trenchcoats have not yet been created.

•••Faerie Ring

This intricately wrought silver ring indicates the blessing of the fae; whoever wears it is considered a friend of the fae folk and will be welcomed by them; likewise, the ring's bearer may be sought by the fae in times of need. The Faerie Ring increases the difficulty of fae magic (called Glamour) used against the wearer by 2.

••••Silver Chalice

A small number of these Chalices have been found; each time, the finder usually believes he has discovered the Holy Grail. Although the Chalice's finders have eventually been disappointed, these are still powerful and important items.

Drinking pure spring water from a Chalice while standing on holy ground — of any religious tradition — will immediately heal all damage the drinker has sustained, aggravated or not. This may be done only once each full moon, however, and it is said that a man once healed by the Chalice can never benefit from it again.

•••••Crusader's Sword

A number of relics exist which fit this description, all created in the days of the Crusades. A bone-splinter from a saint is generally imbedded in the hilt of the sword. The reversed hilt and quillons of the sword count as a holy symbol when used by one of True Faith against the supernatural, channeling the power of Heaven and igniting the blade with holy power, adding one die of damage per Faith roll success. Wounds caused by these weapons, when wielded by one with True Faith, are aggravated. While bearing these blades, the Faithful also receive the Iron Will Merit, unless the wielder already has it. Such swords also provide a Faith bonus of + 1.

Crusaders' swords are medieval broadswords: a three-foot long blade with a nine-inch hilt. These heavy weapons require a Strength 2 to carry, 3 or better to wield (Difficulty 7). The weapon causes Strength + 5 damage, and this is aggravated damage in the right hands. The weapon radiates an aura of Faith that is immediately discernible to Kindred



who possess Auspex (appearing as a nimbus of golden flame). In close range of this sword, Kindred sweat blood.

The Arcanum owns five variants of the Crusader's sword; The Society of Leopold is believed to have three such swords in its possession. Others are known to exist, but cannot be accounted for.

Greater Relics

*But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward: up I climbed a thousand steps
With pain: as in a dream I seemed to climb
For ever: at the last I reached a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
"Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail."*

— Tennyson, "The Holy Grail"

Greater Relics are those items so powerful that they defy systems convention; Arcanists may devote their entire lives and careers to the quest for these.

The Quest for any Greater Relic should not be an easy task. The seeker must first prove herself by passing through a number of tests. She will ultimately be transformed by even the slightest glimpse of the Greater Relic, although in many cases the quest is more important than the goal itself.

The following represent some of the Greater Relics which are commonly sought:

The Holy Grail

This is the chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper, later used by Joseph of Arimathea to collect the Lord's blood as it dripped off the Cross. The Quest for the Grail is the focus of much medieval literature. A glimpse of the Grail is a glimpse of Heaven.

Durandal

Durandal was the sword of Roland, one of Charlemagne's Paladins. Hector of Troy once wielded the weapon, and it is so powerful that no metal has yet been created that can resist it. The sword disappeared sometime after Roland's death, and is said to be somewhere in Arabia.

The Cauldron of Annwn

There are many tales of the Cauldron, located in the Otherworld, which detail its powers of healing; a corpse placed in it was said to be brought back to life, although lacking the power of speech. Some tales link the Cauldron with the Grail; whether they are different manifestations of the same principle or two distinct items has yet to be resolved.

Suggested Readings

Those who know do not say;

Those who say do not know.

— Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

Halls of the Arcanum is about knowledge, so we would be remiss in not providing some suggested readings:

Miscellaneous Books:

— **Knowledge and the Sacred**, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. This work, by a prominent Islamicist and proponent of the Perennial Philosophy, discusses the eclipse of the sapiential dimension and sacred knowledge.

— **Hamlet's Mill**, by Giorgio de Santillana, discusses the interrelation of myth and science in the transmission of cosmology and culture.

— **Alchemy**, by E.J. Holmyard, is a reliable (if somewhat dry) text on the history of the alchemical tradition.

— **Oriental Magic**, by Idries Shah and **Chinese Alchemy**, by J.C. Cooper, are useful books for anyone interested in the Eastern world of mysticism and magic.

— **The Magician's Companion**, by Bill Whitcomb, is a compendium of magical and occult symbols, ideas, and languages; with its illustrations and diagrams, it is a must for anyone who wants to bring more a visually authentic feel to their game.

— **Lost Continents**, by L. Sprague de Camp, discusses myths of Atlantis and other lost lands.

— **A History of Secret Societies**, by Arkon Daraul. A collection of historic secret societies which can be incorporated into the World of Darkness.

— Both **The Atlas of Legendary Places** and **The Time-Life Encyclopedia of Mysterious Places** are useful for anyone interested in the mythic or legendary landscape as well as places of archeological significance.

— **The History of Magic and the Occult**, by Kurt Seligmann, and **A History of Magic**, by Richard Cavendish, are both useful overviews of the field.

— For those interested in "secret histories," conspiracies, and assorted paranoiac readings, look at **Holy Blood**, **Holy Grail** and **The Sign and the Seal**.

— **The Encyclopedia of Mysticism and Mystery Religions**, edited by John Ferguson, and the **Encyclopedia of the Unexplained**, edited by Richard Cavendish, are essential reference works.

— **The Dictionary of the Khazars** is a fun and enlightening romp through history, myth and legend, presented in a unique format: three dictionaries, each with slightly different entries on the same subjects, each dictionary showing a Christian, Muslim, or Jewish bias.

Series or Collections:

— **Myths and Legends**. The importance of myth should not be forgotten, particularly in Arcanum games. Read

about mythology in general, through the works of Joseph Campbell, or read it directly: the Mabinogion, the Shahnamah, Parzival, Gilgamesh, the Mahabharata, etc.

— **The Encyclopedia of Religion**, edited by Mircea Eliade. A monumental reference work on all aspects of religion, from tribal shamanism to mainstream beliefs to the occult, this is the source to look for. Salient parts of this multi-volume work are excerpted in **Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy and the Occult**, edited by Lawrence Sullivan.

— **Man, Myth & Magic: The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown**. Edited by Richard Cavendish, the title of this multi-volume reference work says it all.

— **The "Elements of" Series**. This is a library of small but comprehensive books detailing a number of aspects of the mystery traditions. **The Elements of Alchemy**, by Cherry Gilchrist, is particularly useful, but other books discuss the Celtic tradition, Dreamwork, the Druid tradition, the Grail legend, and more. As in any series, some books are more reliable than others.

— **The Writings of H.P. Lovecraft**. Many of Lovecraft's works deal with the slow dawning revelation of a hideous knowledge. Almost anything of his is recommended. Beyond the obvious works ("The Call of Cthulhu" and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*), the following are useful: "The Tomb," "Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family," "The Nameless City," "Under the Pyramids," and a personal favorite, "The Statement of Randolph Carter." In fact, anything concerning Randolph Carter is useful reading.

— **Time-Life Mysteries of the Unknown**. This series of many volumes are not works of great scholarship. However, they are fun to flip through for ideas (as well as lots of visual clues from the photos and paintings), particularly:

- **Secrets of the Alchemists**
- **Ancient Wisdom and Secret Sects**
- **Eastern Mysteries**

- **Magical Arts**

- **Mystic Places**

— Encyclopedia sets (preferably **Brittanica**, **Americana**, or **Collier**). You'd be amazed at what you can find in so common a source.

Tone, Atmosphere and Inspiration:

— **Hayward Sanitarium**. This extended audioplay is a bit corny, but lots of fun. A well-executed labor of love by Last Minute Productions, *Hayward Sanitarium* sums up some of the more exciting possibilities of an Arcanum Chronicle. Available on a series of tapes, this audioplay can be ordered through Last Minute Productions, P.O. Box 217, Bloomington, IN 47402-0217, or by calling (812) 824-2400.

Roleplaying Games

— **Call of Cthulhu**, from Chaosium. The word on playing hapless investigators of the supernatural; the entire run is excellent, and main book offers valuable advice on setting the mood for supernatural-themed games.

— **Nephilim**, also from Chaosium; this is an excellent interpretation of the Western mystery tradition, and is useful for anyone interested in grand conspiracies, the occult, and secret societies.

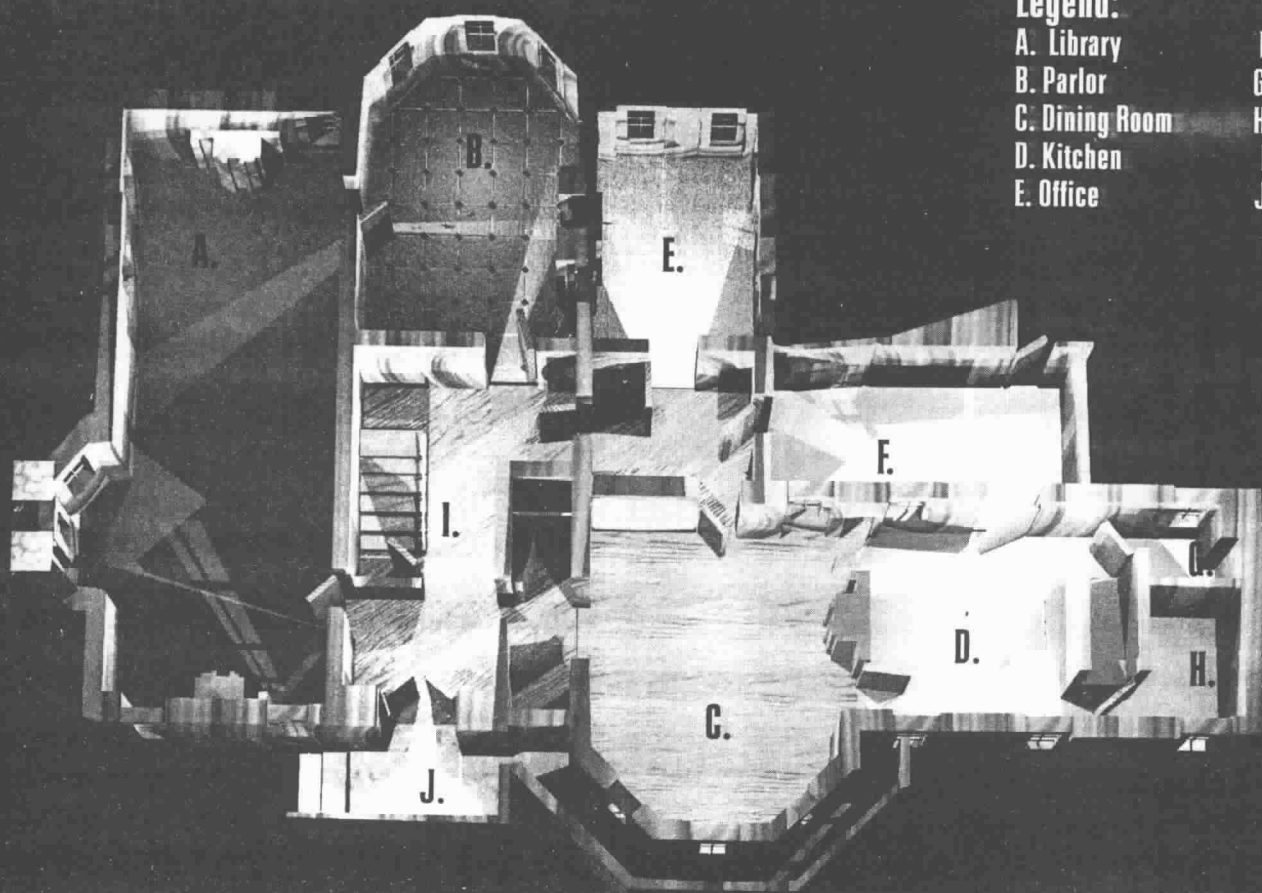
— **The World of Indiana Jones**, from West End Games, contains useful and interesting resource material on archaeology and world cultures, particularly during the 1930s and '40s.

— **Fables**: These include books that are neither entirely fact nor entirely fiction; they draw upon a variety of concepts, and use them to tell tales of personal significance and universal value.

- **The Alchemist's Journal**, by Evan S. Connell
- **The Alchemist**, by Paolo Coelo
- **That Hideous Strength**, by C.S. Lewis (an interesting blend of theology and science fiction).

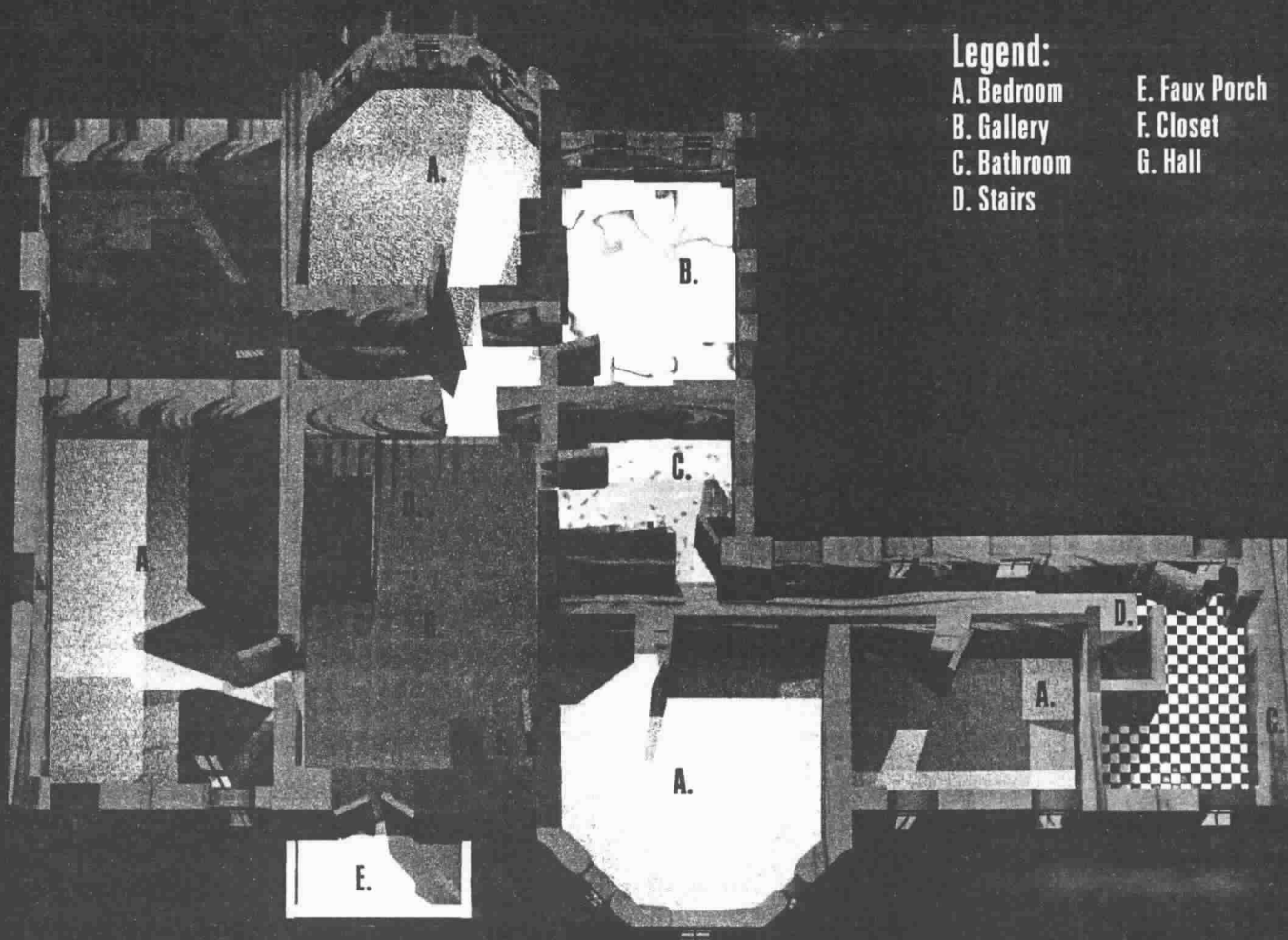


Small Arcanum Chapter House



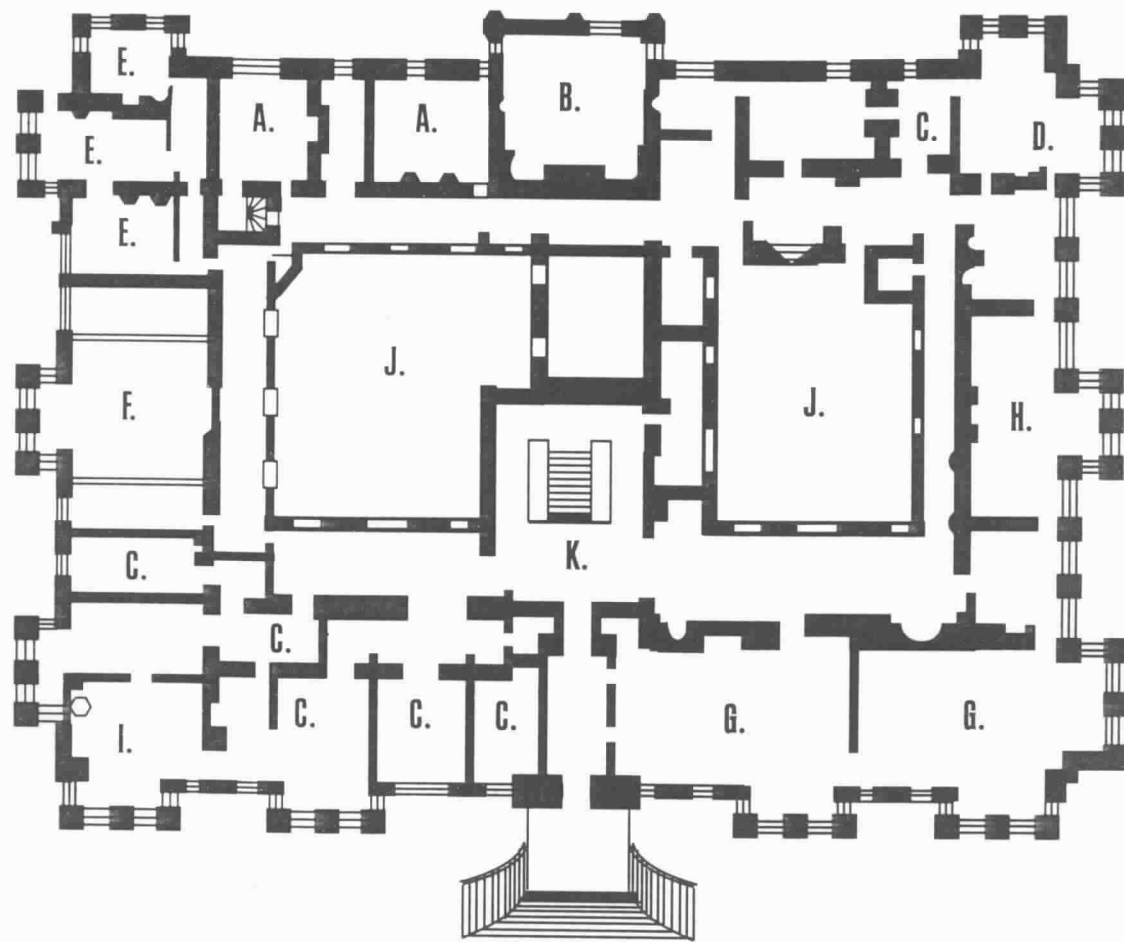
Legend:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| A. Library | F. Solarium |
| B. Parlor | G. Pantry |
| C. Dining Room | H. Storage |
| D. Kitchen | I. Stairs |
| E. Office | J. Porch |

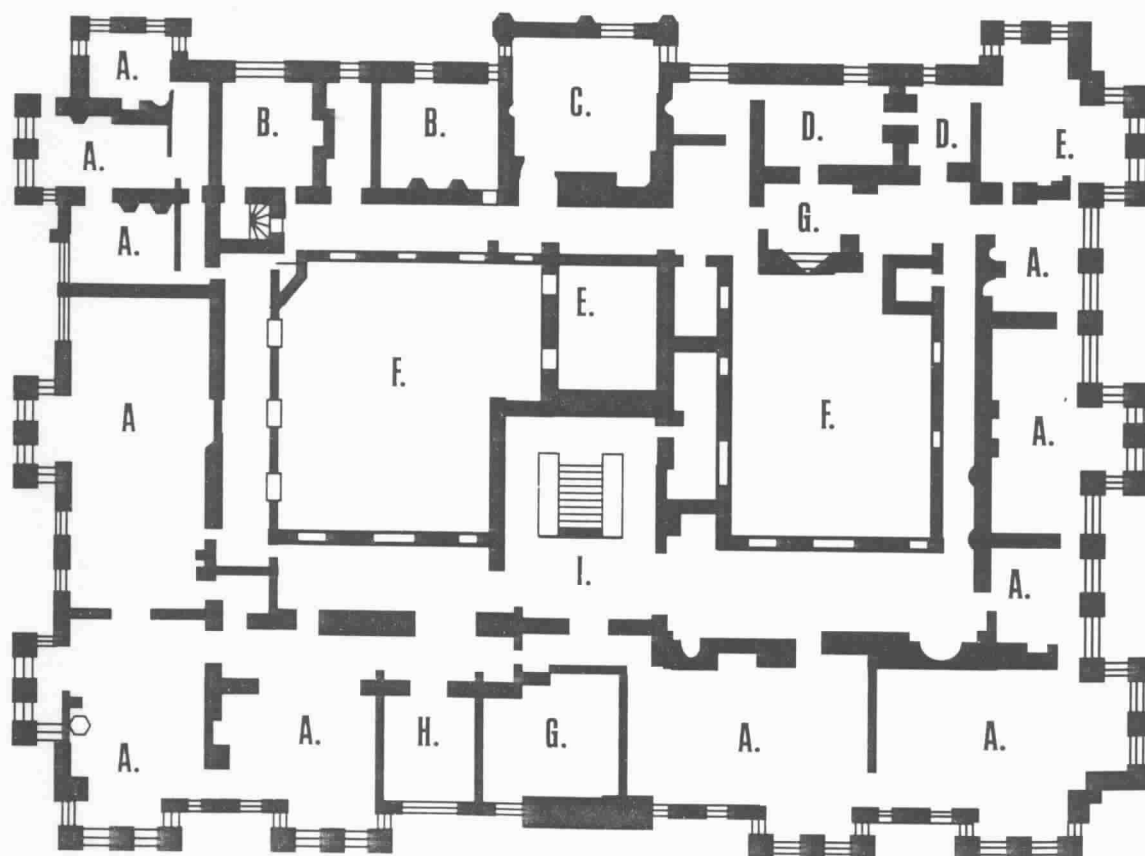


First Floor

- A. Dining Chamber
- B. Chapel
- C. Office
- D. Conference
- E. Kitchen
- F. Great Hall
- G. Sitting Room
- H. Drawing Room
- I. Parlor
- J. Court
- K. Stairs

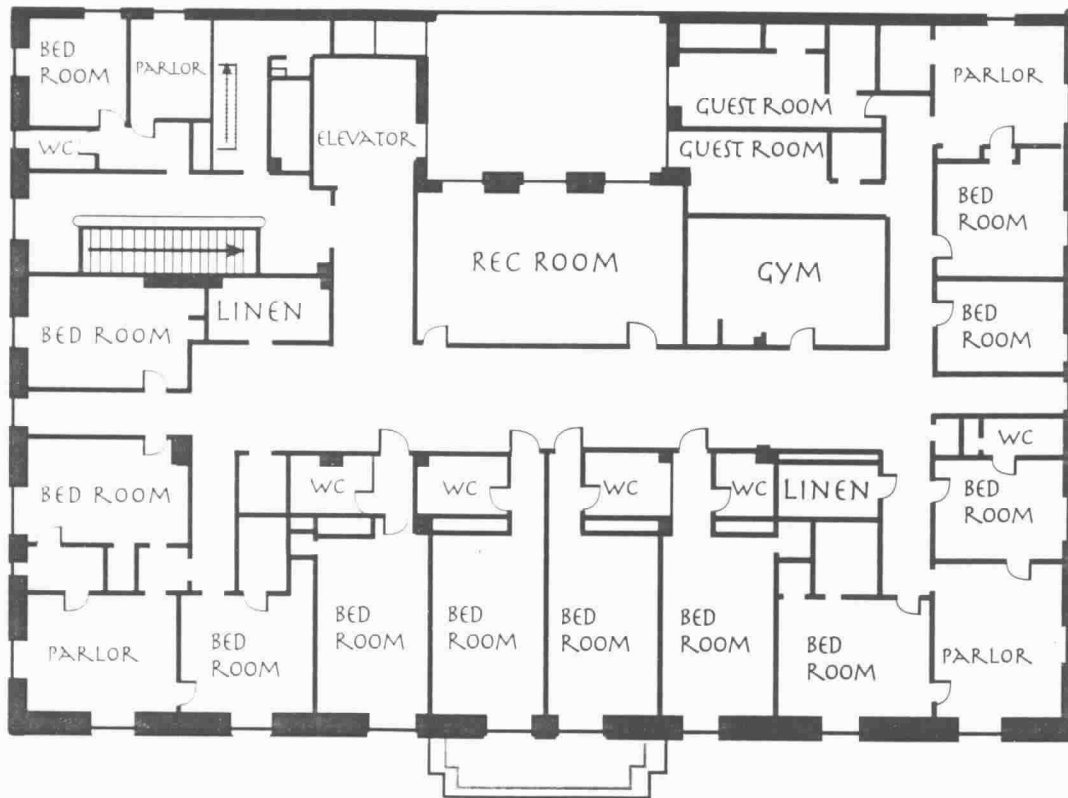


Second Floor

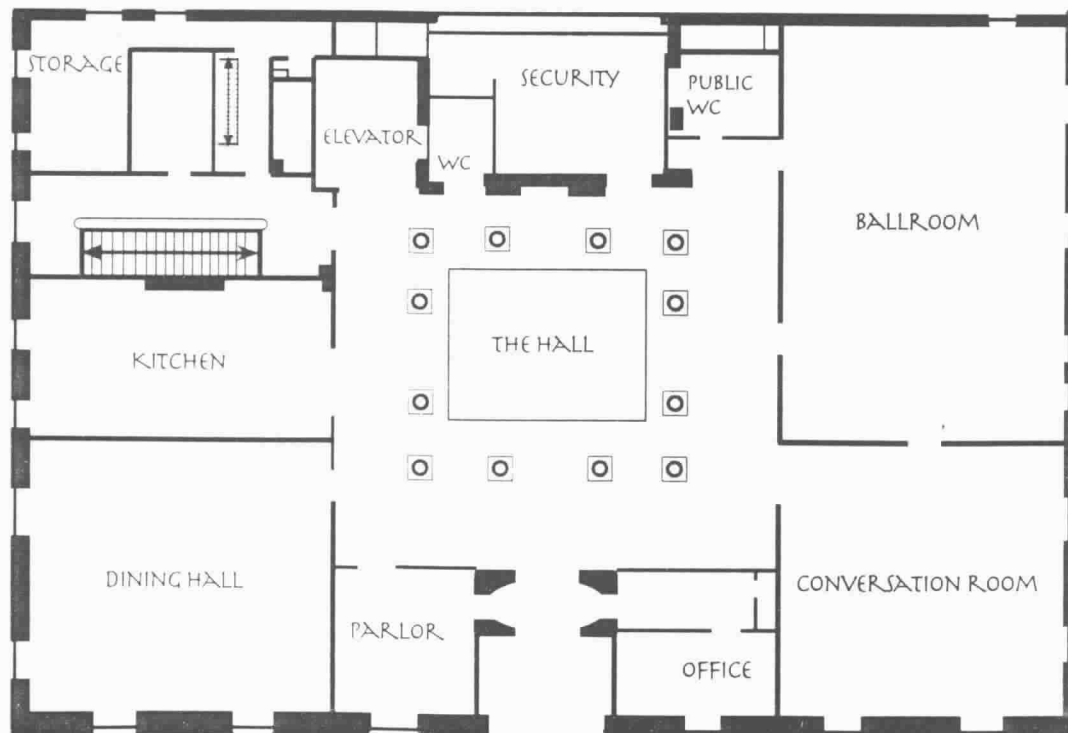


- A. Axis Mundi Library
- B. Computer Center
- C. Conference Room
- D. Study
- E. Seminar Room
- F. Overlooking Court
- G. Preservation Office
- H. Librarian's Office
- I. Stairs

Large Arcanum Chapter House - New York City

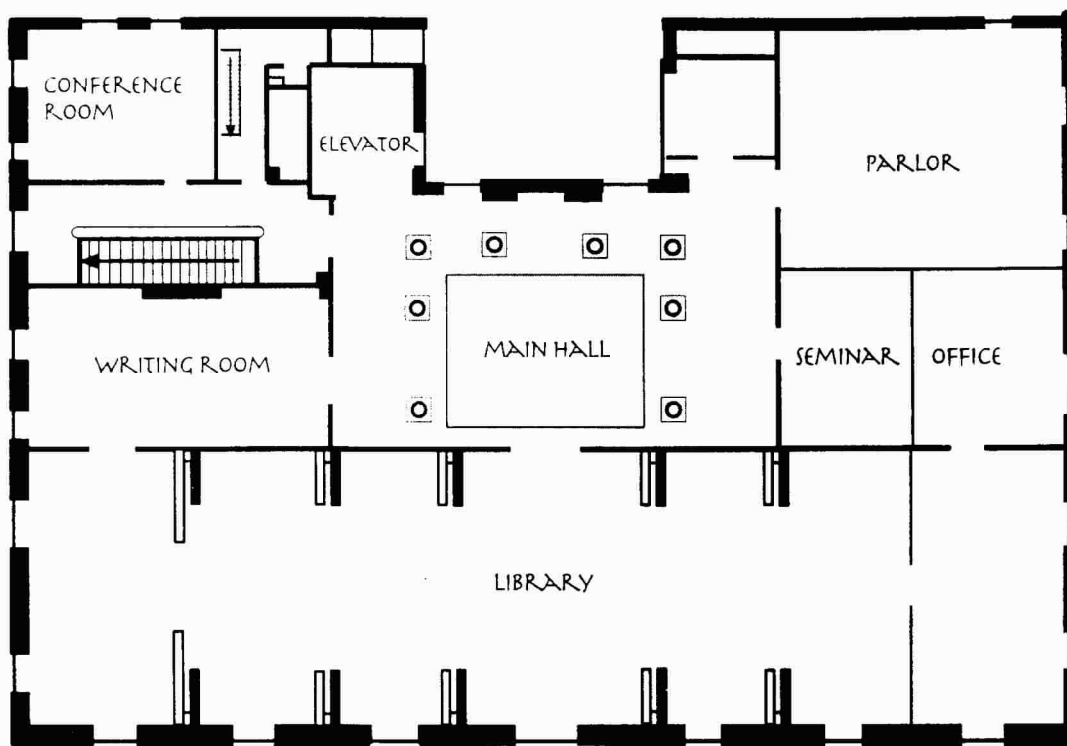


Mezzanine Level



First Floor

Large Arcanum Chapter House - New York City



Second Floor

Hidden Lore Uncovered: The Missing Text from Ascension's Right Hand

Faerie Companion: (3pt Merit)

You have a faerie companion, a friend and associate who's one of the wee folk — the changelings. Perhaps he is a Muse of yours, or your creativity feeds his craving for dreams. In any case, this fae companion tends to stay out of sight to avoid the humans, but he has a number of minor magical abilities which he will occasionally use to your benefit when you're in a jam. Of course, your companion may well expect favors from you in return for his generous, if quixotic, aid.

The primary benefit of your faerie companion, however, is the advice he gives you and the access he can sometimes grant to the ancient faerie realms. In an extreme emergency, your companion might even hide you away in the faerie realms for a time! Beware this offer, however. One never knows the truth behind such an offer, and the price for the trip could be steep indeed!

Shapechanger Kin: (4pt Merit)

By some quirk of fate, you are closely related to one of Gaia's Chosen, a werewolf, -cat, -raven, -bear or perhaps even one of the more mysterious breeds. The Changing Blood has not stirred in you, but it has left its mark. You are immune to the Delirium, the madness that claims those who see a werebeast's Crinos form in full Rage, and favored by those among the Changing Breed you're Kin to. This doesn't mean that you know their secrets, or that you can lead your mage to their sacred caern without retribution, but you have

a certain edge when dealing with the Chosen that no normal mortal can match.

Aside from the immunity to the Delirium, this Merit has no special system significance. You have a good chance to know some Garou Lore, though, and may share some common contacts and allies. You will probably claim some degree of affection from your relative's tribe and some animosity from their enemies. Kinfolk from the other changing breeds have an especially hard time with this Merit. Highly prized as breeding stock, mortal relatives of the Corax, Bastet and Gurahl are so rare that their benevolent cousins often go overboard when protecting them — to the extent of forbidding them at claw's length from doing something dangerous!

Ghoul: (5pt Merit)

At some point in time, a vampire fed you some of her potent vitae, possibly Bonding you into service. Somehow, you broke free (possibly with the help of your new master), but the blood's force has granted you some of your mistress' power. In addition to a vague knowledge of vampiric society (one dot of Vampire Lore), you age slowly, have an extra automatic success on any Strength roll you make, and inflict an additional die of damage with all hand-to-hand attacks. (If your game integrates the **Vampire** rules, you have a Blood Pool, a dot in Potence and the potential to buy and use other Disciplines).

This does not come without cost, however. You must continue to feed on vampire blood occasionally, otherwise you will regain your mundane mortality and crave forever the sweet rush of your former mistress' essence. Should you revert (after going a month or more without the sacred vitae), you will lose your supernatural might forever.

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We watch the shadows cast upon the walls...

Eccentric scholars or visionary mystics? Harmless seekers of ancient lore, or delvers into forbidden mysteries? Who are the detectives of the Arcanum, and what do they seek? Wherever the werewolf howls, the demon corrupts, or the vampire feeds, there the Arcanum can be found: its members are poets, dreamers, philosophers — anyone who has seen beyond the veil. Their motivations hidden, they are an enigma, with much to teach the World of Darkness... and much to learn.

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