

THE SECRET WORLD



THE SECRET WORLD

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*"This book wouldn't exist without my amazing wife, Melissa Verhalen. Her love of the Secret World and my love of **Savage Worlds** meet here. Thanks for supporting me and this crazy dream to make role playing games." — Brandon Verhalen*



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FOREWORD

It will surprise no one, if you know me from my work on *Deadlands™*, that my first character in *The Secret World MMO*, was a gunslinger. And of course I worked for the Templars...I'm a history guy.

What you probably *don't* know is that when I worked at Cryptic Studios, makers of the *City of Heroes Massively Multiplayer Online* game, we were pitching a new project called *The Lost World*. This was 2007, a few years before I ever heard about FunCom's *The Secret World*. Clearly, this was an idea many of us in the game development community were excited about.

The doc at right is from one of the pitch packets we made—complete with incredibly expensive solid steel cases the execs from Electronic Arts, Ubisoft, and Microsoft declined to take back with them after their presentations.

The art was by Ocala Scott-Bellows, a fantastic concept artist with a real flare for costumes, mood, and action.

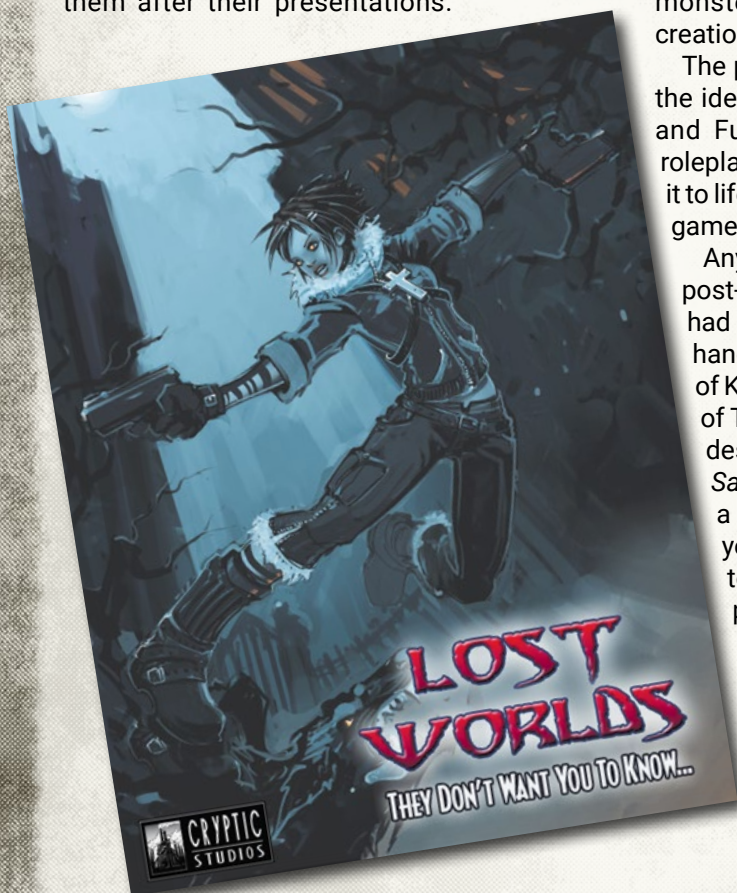
I believe the original idea for *Lost Worlds* was Jack Emmert's, then-CEO of Cryptic Studios, with a fair amount of input from myself and others. You can definitely bet the Moth Man scenario I used in examples was from me...more on that in a bit.

Lost Worlds was never greenlit, so I was thrilled a few years later to see FunCom capitalize on their *Age of Conan* success with *The Secret World*. I bought a Lifetime Subscription and played my happy heart out when it first launched. My shotgun-toting, sword-wielding gunslinger carried out hundreds of missions for the Templars, and aspects of the creepy boss monsters have probably infiltrated my own creations ever since.

The point of all this is that in the early 2000s, the idea of a "secret world" was on our minds, and FunCom's massively multiplayer online roleplaying game did a fantastic job of bringing it to life, adding factions and quasi-action based gameplay to the genre.

Anyone who's worked on MMOs knows that, post-launch, content is king. *The Secret World* had it in spades, and the book you have in your hands replicates the creepy gothic missions of Kingsmouth, ambushes in the neon streets of Tokyo, and the desolate tasks of the deep desert perfectly. I'm happy to say our own *Savage Worlds* roleplaying game system is a perfect fit for this genre, easily allowing you to play everything from street samurai to shotgun toting gunslingers to mages powered by Gaia's lifeblood, anima.

Ultimately, creating the kind of rich content in *The Secret World MMO* is incredibly expensive, and is likely one of the reasons the original MMO is no longer with us (but *Secret Worlds Legends* is still available and has a lot of the original, excellent content).

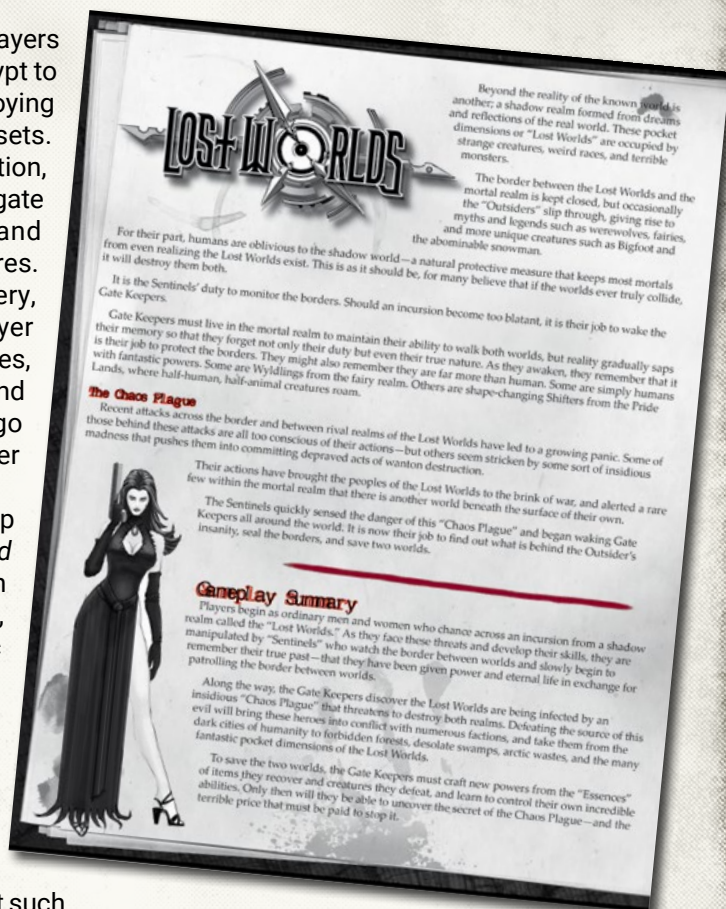


Fortunately for you, dear reader, your players can travel from the harsh deserts of Egypt to the cold forest of Siberia without employing dozens of artists to create new terrain sets. With nothing but an immersive description, the party can wander the globe to investigate mysteries, sabotage rival factions, and battle the Filth and other strange creatures. You have a limitless budget for scenery, enemies, special effects, and nonplayer characters. You can craft deep adventures, quick encounters, and daring chases and escapes on the fly, letting the story go where your imagination and the player characters' wild actions take you.

This is the beauty of tabletop roleplaying games. *The Secret World* was an excellent MMO, and now you can play in that world with all the excitement, intrigue, and depth of the electronic version—plus the freeform ability of tabletop RPGs to go wherever and do whatever you want.

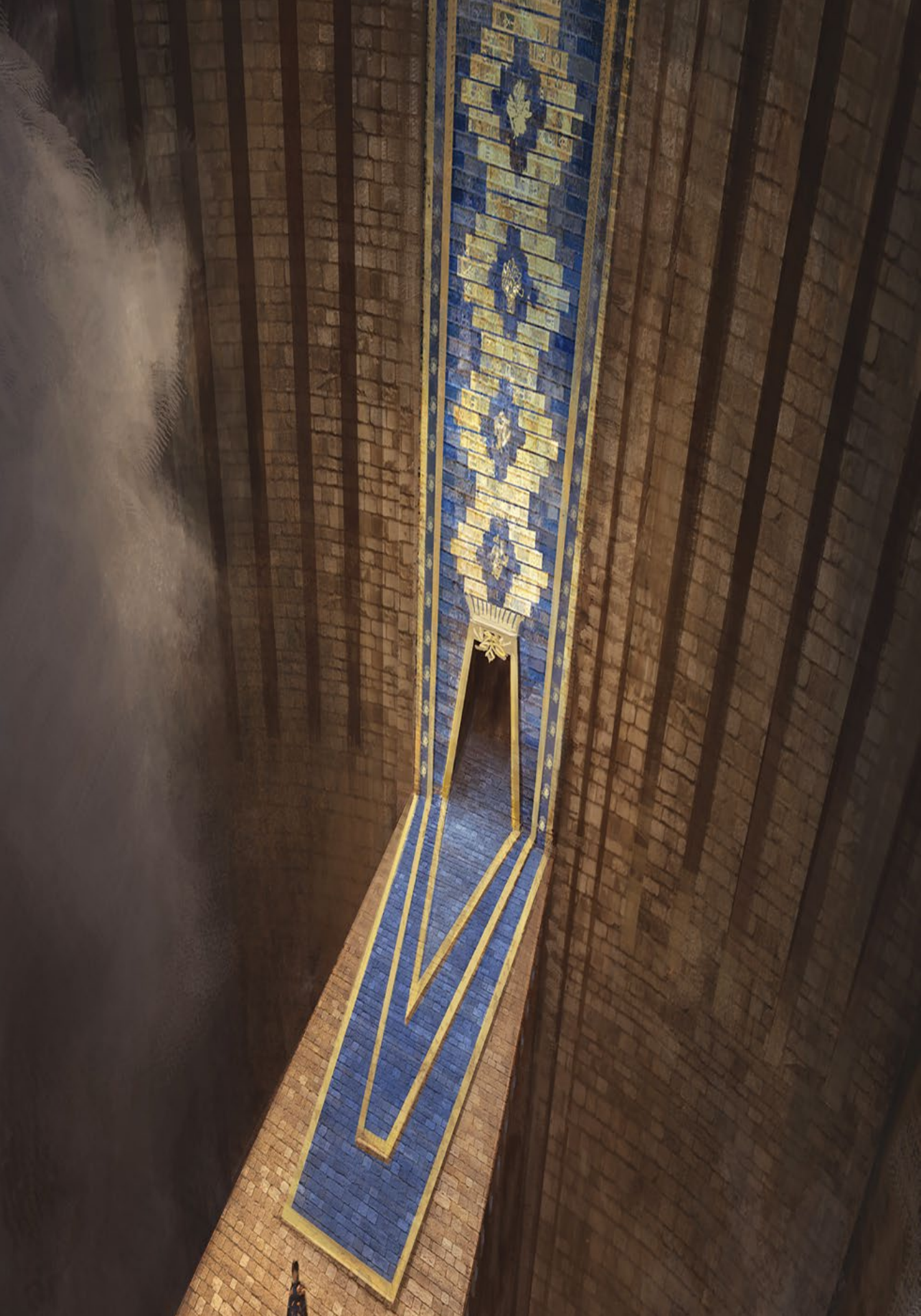
Now about the Moth Man. *The Secret World* contains numerous creatures I'd call cryptids, and any child of the '70s was immersed in television shows about such creatures...Bigfoot, the Loch Ness monster, yetis, and a bizarre creature in West Virginia the locals dubbed the "Moth Man."

I grew up near where the Moth Man was spotted, and its appearance was often connected to the 1967 collapse of the "Silver Bridge" over the Ohio River—a bridge my own father had crossed just a day before the tragic event that took 46 innocent lives. Ten years later, when I was about 10, television news programs and daily newspapers revisited the legends, unearthed new sightings, and published illustrations taken from witness descriptions. Images of the Moth Man are a little cheesy by today's standards, but to a ten year old in rural Ohio, they were terrifying—and exciting. The Moth Man, Erich von Däniken's mysterious aliens, the Jersey Devil, and whatever Leonard Nimoy investigated that week on the tv show *In Search Of*, proved to me that the "secret world" was *real*. So when the game came along, I was in.



So I'm incredibly happy to have Star Anvil's *The Secret World*. I've already got an adventure in mind. Locals in a small West Virginia town claim a corrupt construction company has built a new bridge over the mighty Ohio River with sub-par materials. Your heroes know that company has long and terrible ties to certain occult entities. Could the CEO be preparing a terrible sacrifice? And what are the rumors of a strange, winged being with glowing round eyes lurking in the ruins of an abandoned factory nearby?

—Shane Hensley



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This is bad. This is so bad.

I mean, yeah, okay, I told you to come see me if you ran into anything ... you know, out of the ordinary. Something suitable for me to publish in the next issue of *Weird Non-Fiction*. But this? I was expecting some UFO stuff, maybe some men in black or sewer gators or something, not ... not whatever this is.

Do the thing with your hands again. With the sparks.

Geez, that's freaky! And you say you just woke up like this? All charged up and hearing voices?

Heh. Guess you believe me now, don't you?

Nah, don't give me that. I heard you laughing with Amy when you were going through my back issues. I'm risking my life here, telling the truth about the conspiracies all around us, and you're laughing! I've been warning people for years: puppet governments, their shadow masters, Big Brother corporations, cults, squid worshippers, and freaky freaks with freaky powers. It's all true.

Don't forget the things that go bump in the night. I've got boxes of documentation on werewolves, vampires, demons, angels, you name it. You want zombies? I got three minutes of video of six different types of walking dead from an infestation in New England. Ghosts? Fairies? Cryptids? I met a man who knew a guy who actually shook hands with the Jersey Devil. He's still got one hand left.

Not so funny now, is it? Now that you're living it?

All right, calm down. I don't want you blowing the place up. You came to me for help, and I'll help you. I'll probably have to abandon this place afterwards, once they know what I've done, but I've spent too long here anyway. The sound of laundry machines helps mask conversations, but the constant whirring and clunking ... It makes me a little crazy, you know?

Come in the back, where I've got my files and all the back issues.

I've heard about people like you. Wrote up an article on them a few years back. They just woke up weird and—

Oh. Wait a second. Have *they* talked to you?

You know, *they*. *Them*. The ones pulling the strings, turning the gears, keeping us blind and laughing all the way to the bank.

No? No recruiters?

Okay. That's good. But they're coming. Because you got power now, and they're drawn to the stuff like moths to flame, and you're a freaking bonfire.

I used to think it was just the Illuminati running things. And why not? They're the classic conspiracy bogeyman. But the deeper I dug, the more I found.

Oh, it's all one big conspiracy. We've always known that. But inside *that* conspiracy is a bunch of *other* conspiracies. And the people running *those* conspiracies are split into factions, and they're fighting over who gets to control the world. How messed up is that, right? But if you think about it, it makes sense. Because people say, "If a vast conspiracy is running everything, then how come you know about it? Wouldn't it be completely hidden?" And maybe it would be, but the folks calling the shots are fighting each other, you see? So long as they've got to split their attention between us and the other conspiracy outfits, there's always going to be cracks for us to look through and see the truth.

So yeah, it's not just the Illuminati. But if you're here in New York, chances are, it's the Illuminati who are going to be banging on your door in the next hour.

The Illuminati own New York. And Boston, and Seattle, and LA. The whole country's in their pocket, and always has been. Hollywood, Wall Street, the White House—these are just toys for them to play with, tools to help them get what they really want.

What do you *think* they want? Power.

Conspiracies are global. Home turf, yes, but can be anywhere! —Z

And where does power come from? It comes from people. No, really. Think about it. The politicians who make the laws and decide what programs get funded? They're just people. Corrupt, greedy people desperate to stay in office long enough to retire as billionaires. And the corporations who fund those pigs and shape everyone's lives with their products and marketing? They're run by people too.

All those people, all those so-called power brokers, they're just pawns, man. Just more tools for the Illuminati.

Just like you.

They're going to want you to join them. To be a tool, to use *your* power to help them wield *their* power.

I can see the appeal. They let you slip behind the curtain, maybe pull some puppet strings yourself. Network with the movers and shakers. Maybe meet some celebrities and blackmail them. I hear the Illuminati likes ambitious types, the more ruthless the better. If you're willing to use your gifts in their service, I'm sure they'll take real good care of you. All it'll cost is your soul.

Of course, if you don't want to be a tool of the Illuminati, you could always be a weapon of the Templars.

No, not the Knights *Templar*. That's a different thing. Well, it's *related*, but not really ... Just forget about those guys, okay? The real Templars were around before knights, before the Crusades, before the Church or any of that stuff. At least, that's what the guy told me.

Oh yeah. Turns out the Templars aren't the most *secretive* of the secret societies. I ran into one of them in the sewers in Jersey. He was hunting vampires. I kind of saved his life, so he agreed to an interview for the magazine. Here's the issue he was in. I'm going to need that back when you're done with it, though. All my other copies seem to have disappeared.

You can read it yourself, but the short version is that the Templars see themselves as soldiers in some sort of righteous war against the things that go bump in the night. Yeah, like vampires, but other things too. Ancient things. Things we ain't even got names for. Sounds good, right? And maybe it is, but they're still sneaking around behind the scenes, manipulating things in their favor. They're kind of like the European version of the Illuminati, but instead of seeking power for its own sake, they're using it to fuel their crusade.

The Templars *love* folks like you. You'll be a one-person army once you get that power under control, and they would kill to have that army on their side. If they track you down before the Illuminati, I'm sure you'll hear all about how you can join up and fight the good fight.

At least they talk to you. Give you a choice. If the Dragon come for you ... Well, if the Dragon come for you, they'll just *take* you.

Oh, you hadn't heard of 'em either? No surprise.

I've been trying to wrap my head around these Dragon people ever since the Templar sewer guy brought 'em up.

I mean, yeah, they're kind of like the other two groups. They're huge. They're powerful. They got eyes and ears and guns all over the world. But beyond that, they've definitely got their own thing going on.

These guys wield power almost as an afterthought. It's a side effect of their true agenda, which is *controlling chaos*. I'm not talking riots-and-anarchy chaos, but like *chaos theory* chaos. Butterfly wings and stuff. A nudge here, a whisper there—and a few weeks later, revolution wipes out a country's government.

Yeah, I don't get it either.

How do you control chaos? Isn't that like a paradox or something? I don't know. If you wake up in the Dragon's HQ, you can ask 'em yourself. Me, I get a headache if I think about that stuff too much. I think it's from the high-frequency emitters they installed in the neighborhood.

What? Yeah, of course there's others. Conspiracies, secret societies, cults, what have you—dozens of 'em, hundreds, maybe thousands. Some are ancient, like the Big Three, with drama going back thousands of years. Some are small and local, like psychos worshipping a pyramid or an inbred monster-hunting family. I've got back issues *full* of these guys.

Wait a second. *Who* offered you a job?

Before you woke up like this?

Oh, man. This is worse than I thought.

Yeah, the Váli company is one of those groups. They're part of Big Pharma, but that's not the half of it. They're doing genetic stuff. Gene splicing. Half-man, half-moth stuff.

Bigfoot. Cancer babies. Making mutants with x-ray eyes. Cyborgs, even.

Oh, I'll bet they wanted you to work for them. Got a nice cushy lab rat position ten stories underground, with all the sugar water and magic mushrooms you can eat. You can't go back home, man. You're on their radar now.

Of course, Váli is just one head of hydra. Just one part of the multinational corporation known as the Orochi Group.

No? Not surprised. They prefer to stick to shadows, spend all their marketing on their subsidiaries. Them, you've heard of.

Váli, I just mentioned. And you know Anansi Technologies, with its computers and phones and video games, tracking everything we do and everywhere we go. And how about QBL Media? They got movies, books, music, streaming shows ... filthy little fingers in every pie, controlling what we see, what we hear, what we think. This is all the tip of the Orochi iceberg.

They're in our food. Our medicine. They're making bombs and planes for the military—all the militaries. They're worldwide, man, they don't care. No national allegiances. Their only loyalty is to next quarter's profits.

Whistleblowers? Oh yeah. They're blowing, and then they're dying. Or they end up brainwashed and recanting everything. Remember the guy talking about how they were kidnapping kids, trying to give 'em mental powers or whatever? Yeah, he changed his tune. I mean literally changed it. His voice patterns didn't match at all. I think they replaced him with a clone or an android or something. They've got the technology. They could totally do it.

What now? Good question.

You can't really hide. If Orochi knows you're ... like this ... then the Big Three definitely do, and they'll find you. And there are worse things than getting recruited. Like getting locked up in an Orochi mad science lab, for example.

Here's the thing: the world is ending. The apocalypse that kicked off in 2012 is still lurching forward, one miserable step at a time. It wasn't the end, but the beginning of the end. The Mayans were crazy, but they weren't wrong.

Remember 2012? Remember the explosion in Tokyo? The one they called a terrorist attack, that killed thousands and infected thousands more? Maybe you haven't seen the video—they did a good job covering it up—but I have. The survivors were ... mutated, *changed*, turned into these monstrous freaks roaming the streets and attacking anything that moved. And from what I hear, those things are still there. It wasn't radiation or a toxic leak. It's something worse.

But it wasn't just Tokyo. Starting in 2012, there's been incidents like this all over the world. Egypt. Romania. Boston. It's not bombs. It's not terrorists. It's something older.

Some of this I got from the Templar from the sewer. Like I said, they're kind of chatty—especially once I break out the painkillers. But some of it I've pieced together myself, talking to people in the know, reading between the lines of the right blogs and newspapers, and digging through the dark web. And here's what I've found.

There are terrible, ancient things in the earth. Living things. Powerful—more powerful than we can imagine—and they are hungry. Hungry for us, for our world. Hungry for ... everything. They've been asleep since time began, but they're starting to wake up. Starting to toss in their sleep, starting



to thrash like they're dreaming, but we're the ones getting nightmares. Every time they twitch, they ooze a bit more corruption into the world.

I don't know what they are. Gods? Maybe. Some folks think they are. Some cults even worship them, with the robes and the human sacrifice and the whole bit. Crazies, you ask me. Whatever they are, they're more than just physical. They exist on a spiritual plane, where they can infect the mind and soul as well as the body.

This corruption is spreading. It's been spreading since 2012, and it's only getting worse. There's a darkening in the world. You feel it too, don't you? I think we all do. We can see the symptoms: the hate, the violence, the fear ... not to mention the poverty, the desperation, the collapse of our whole ecosystem. We're watching the world whimper its way into oblivion.

You're right. I barely mention this stuff in the magazine, and never talk about it in my videos. I'm not a doomsday prepper. I'm not some survivalist nut. I'm not selling vitamins and radiation hats. I'm a realist. And up until now, I didn't think there was anything we could do about what's coming.

But now ... Seeing you here ... Well.

Here's the thing.

I also learned that there's a cycle to these things. A balance. A kind of yin and yang, if you will.

When the dark forces start stretching and thinking about waking up, the Earth starts waking up too. And just like the old corruption makes monsters, the Earth makes her own ... well, not monsters ... But. You know, *people*. Enhanced people. People like you.

So you ask me what you should do now. Now that you're waking up with crazy powers and hearing voices that aren't voices. You're asking me, David O. Screed, like I'm some sort of guru and not just the guy who used to run Dungeons & Dragons for you and your friends until you went off to grad school.

You know what I think? I think you woke up like this for a reason. I think you were *chosen*.

There are no coincidences in the world. I've seen too much to think otherwise. Maybe the Earth or whatever picked you because of your background. Maybe it's in your blood. Maybe it's something so deep in your DNA or your soul or whatever that you'll never know why, but something chose *you* to defend this misbegotten planet from the forces of corruption.

And yeah, maybe this ... Earth entity or whatever did the choosing is no better than the Illuminati or the rest of them. Maybe it's just another shadowy puppet master looking to pull your strings.

But you? You got something the rest of us puppets don't have: power.

I think you should use that power. Use it to make a difference. Fight back against these ancient evils, against things in the dark, against the cults and cabals that are leeching our lives away.

If you have to join up with one of these conspiracies that come sniffing around, then so be it. Use them like they want to use you. Pull some strings of your own. Use your power to take control of theirs if you can. But let's be honest: you're gonna need some allies.

Like I've been telling you for years, the world's a weird and dangerous place. Up until now, you've been able to skate by on the surface, ignoring crazy messed-up stuff going on down below. But now? Like it or not, you're part of that secret world. And things are going to come for you. New enemies. Enemies that look like friends. Enemies that look like nothing you've ever seen before. And without friends, you're gonna get rolled.

I'm just saying.

Yeah, of *course* I'm your friend. I'm helping right now, aren't I? But my mission is to tell the truth. I use my magazine and my videos to expose the horrors of this world. It's *your* mission to fight them.

Okay, we've been in one place talking about this stuff for way too long. That black truck has driven past the window three times since you got here, and the lights are starting the buzz like they do when the hidden surveillance mic kicks in.

No, I haven't seen it. It's *hidden*.

But before I kick you out of here, I've got one more piece of advice for you. Take this card. When you're at least ten miles away from here, borrow a phone and call the number on that card. Leave a voice mail. Tell him ... eh, it doesn't matter. Don't say my name. Don't need to say yours, either. He'll find you.

His name is Zuberi. He's a ... a person like you. Gifted, you know? He's always on the lookout for more of your kind. I figure he can help you figure out the voices and the powers and stuff.

Yeah, you're welcome. And good luck.

Now get out here while I clean out my office and get ready to burn this place to the ground.

WELCOME TO THE SECRET WORLD

In The Secret World roleplaying game, players take on the roles of supernaturally powered agents of global conspiracies who band together to uncover mysteries and fight the forces of corruption that are bent on destroying the world.

Player characters in the Secret World are known as “Bees.” They have been chosen and transformed by Gaia, the Earth’s guardian, and given supernatural gifts to help Gaia defend the Earth against her enemies. As Bees, they receive flashes of mystic insight, travel the world through hidden pathways, and are effectively immortal.

The Bees are each members of one of the three conspiracies that secretly fight for control of the world: the Illuminati, the Templars, and the Dragon. Each of these factions has its own agenda and philosophy of world domination. Their agents nevertheless work together, when necessary, to fight common threats. While the player characters may represent different factions, they are all Bees, united in their mission to serve Gaia and protect the Earth.

The biggest threats to the Earth, and Gaia’s primary enemies, are the horrific beings known as the “Dreaming Ones.” These cosmic horrors are trapped on Earth and bound in eternal slumber. Even in this sleeping state, however, they scheme and strive for release. Their dreams touch the minds of those who might help free them, offering them power and prestige in exchange for their service. Other dreams become physical manifestations of the Dreamers’ will. This “Filth” corrupts all it touches; those infected by Filth lose their minds to the stuff and are often twisted into mutant monsters. The Dreamers’ minions will stop at nothing to release their masters. If the Dreaming Ones ever do escape their transdimensional prisons, they will devour not only our Earth, but all of reality.

As Bees in the Secret World, the heroes face more than the Dreamers and their followers. For when it comes to legends, myths, and conspiracy theories, everything is true. Monsters, cryptids, demons, and other savage predators from a thousand stories hunt the unwary. Cults, shadow governments, and power-mad corporations likewise prey on innocent minds and souls.

Between foiling the plots of the Dreaming Ones and facing the myriad evils of the Secret World, the player characters have their work cut out for them.

But they don’t have to do it alone.



WELCOME TO THE HIVE

I have no quarrel with the Illuminati, no problems with Templars or issues with Dragon. I have worked with all of them at one time or another. The other ones, too: the Phoenixians, the Council of Venice ... groups you've never even heard of.

No, I have no quarrel with any of them, but I pity them. They're so shortsighted. They see only power, and what it can gain them. They're so obsessed with the game, they have stopped seeing the board on which they play. They move their pawns with clever subtlety and skill, but somehow miss how the game table is rotting and falling apart.

I am not like them.

They snatched you up the moment you showed any spark of power, but me? I took my time. Bees are not shiny baubles to simply be added to some conspiracy's collection of assets. They are dangerous, unpredictable manifestations of Gaia's will.

I watched you. Studied you. Saw what you stood for, and meditated upon what you could become. When Gaia told me you were ready, I came to you, and made you an offer.

I explained that as Bees, we are intended to be more than just agents for those who would shape the world in their own image. Ours is a higher calling. We were chosen by Gaia to defend her from the Dreaming Ones, to carry out her wishes and defeat her enemies. We are all that stands between her children and the forces that would corrupt them, devour them, or destroy this game board we call reality.

I explained these things, and I offered you another path: Join me, and others like me, and together we will set aside the petty rivalries of the secret societies in order to carry out our true missions for Gaia and protect the Earth from the horrors that lie beyond the Secret World. In return, I will teach you the ways of Gaia and what it truly means to be a Bee.

I offered. You accepted. And now we are here, surrounded by like-minded Bees, separated by faction but united by our common purpose.

Welcome to the hive. Now let's get to work.

Colloquial "hive," since the capital-H Hive is a thing you never want to visit. Perhaps the author is trying to "reclaim" the word? — Z

WHAT DO BEES DO?

While player characters are all members of one of the three major factions in the Secret World, most of their adventures in the game are missions assigned by the Bee known as Zuberi. (Note: There are other influential NPCs—aside from Zuberi—that the players may encounter to gain direction in their activities in the Secret World. See page 141 for more.)

Zuberi is a Haitian shaman of immense power and no allegiance to any faction beyond Gaia and her Bees. Though he has worked with high-ranking members of the Illuminati, the Templars, and the Dragon—often at the same time—he has never joined any of those groups, and refuses to do so.

Zuberi is a Bee, empowered by Gaia, but with access to powers and abilities beyond those of most Bees. He can channel raw magical energy. He can appear anywhere in the world. He can transmit his power to those around him, and seems capable of hearing the voice of Gaia directly.

In 2012, an explosion of Filth rocked the Kaidan district of Tokyo, killing and corrupting thousands of people. Warned of the attack by Gaia, Zuberi played a key role in containing the disaster. As a powerful neutral party, he helped agents of the three factions to put aside their differences and save the people of Kaidan. Though he was known to the faction leadership before Kaidan, it was at this time that he earned their wary respect.

In the aftermath of that incident, Zuberi dedicated himself to serving Gaia only and encouraging others to do the same. He still occasionally assists various secret societies, but only so far as it advances Gaia's agenda. He works with other Bee-only groups, but he is skeptical of their true motivations.

To that end, Zuberi has taken it upon himself to recruit specific Bees to his cause. He does not demand ultimate loyalty, or that they reject the factions that may have recruited them. Rather, he encourages them to use their factions' resources and influence to help preserve Gaia. He also urges them to work together, for he sees that another apocalypse is looming. If the three factions can't get along, the Dreaming Ones may be able to win this time.

Zuberi assembles teams of Bees, which he calls “cabals,” from across the range of conspiracies. These cabals don’t always look like they should work together at first, but Gaia is wise, and the shaman listens to her whispers about such matters.

Zuberi believes he hears the voice of Gaia, believes that he knows best—but some say he is merely interpreting messages that are highly metaphorical and open to interpretation. When he feels that Gaia has a need, Zuberi calls for the cabal that he wants to carry out her wishes. He informs them of what he knows, and what needs to be done, then turns them loose to carry out the task as they see fit. Zuberi cares nothing for methods, only for results. This attitude, however, has caused other bees to claim that Zuberi seems to know too much, perhaps, and that he may instead be manipulating these “messages” for his own ends.

The major factions aren’t always keen on their Bee agents being sidetracked by Zuberi’s missions. Nevertheless, they recognize Zuberi as a powerful (if occasional) ally, and their Bees as vital assets. If allowing for these “hive activities” keeps the shaman and the Bees happy, then it’s a price they’re willing to pay. Besides, the factions have a vested interest in Zuberi’s world-saving: There’s no point in ruling the world if there’s no world left to rule.

If asked, a faction may offer Zuberi support for one of his missions, so long as he agrees to repay the favor—and another faction doesn’t benefit from it. A Bee’s faction may sometimes add its own “side quest” to carry out while working for Zuberi. (“Since you’re going to be in Boston anyway, could you swing by the Amherst HQ and blackmail their head of research? Thanks.”) Zuberi approves of this sort of conspiracy synergy, for he feels it moves the Secret World one step closer to a unified front.

WHEN GAIA CALLS

In the Secret World roleplaying game, the player characters are all members of the same cabal. When Zuberi “hears the voice of Gaia,” he assigns their cabal a mission on her behalf. The process typically goes like this:

A LESS COOPERATIVE SECRET WORLD

If you wish, you can set the factions against one another more competitively than they are presented here. In this case, player character groups may still work together if they are from different factions, but they would then need to hide details of their activities—which presents a somewhat more challenging approach! Similarly, there are individuals within the factions that don’t look kindly on Zuberi’s efforts ... or who may simply think he’s absolutely wrongheaded. This would give player characters the choice of divergent paths to follow whenever they are given an assignment. Lastly, the “cabal” method presented here is merely one mode of play—if your group prefers to work directly for just one faction, or if you have a completely different idea you’d like to pursue, have at it. The Secret World is much bigger than just one quest-giver, after all.

CONTACT

Before the mission begins, Zuberi contacts the player characters to brief them on where they need to go and what they need to do. Zuberi prefers to meet in person, and has been known to appear to his Bees wherever they happen to be when he needs to speak with them. He also delivers any special equipment or the names of any contacts they may need for the mission at this time.

MISSION

While Zuberi presents the player characters with the general goal of the mission, the specifics of achieving that goal are up to them. While every mission is different, most of them include some combination of the following elements.

Investigation: The heroes look for clues, talk to witnesses, and generally try to find answers to their questions.

Exploration: When exploring the environment, the players aren’t looking for a specific answer but just discovering the overall lay of the land, both literally and metaphorically.

Confrontation: This is where things get ugly. Confrontation often means combat (Gaia's enemies rarely go down without a fight), but not always. Threatening a local politician with exposure and his family with lawsuits can be even more effective than killing him outright.

DEBRIEF

After the player characters complete the mission, Zuberi rejoins them to collect any information, artifacts, or intel they have gathered, and he may tell them how their actions have helped Gaia in the large picture. He may also reward them with access to rare artifacts, special equipment, or new Bee abilities. Zuberi rarely sticks around for long. He's managing many cabals around the world, each doing its part for Gaia, and any one of them may need his help or guidance.

TASTE FOR ADVENTURE

The Secret World roleplaying setting is all about heroes going on exciting adventures, overcoming terrifying obstacles, and facing mysterious adversaries. As warriors chosen by Gaia, the player characters explore the unknown, investigate mysteries, defend the innocent, and fight against the forces of evil and corruption.

For example, Zuberi could send the players' cabal on any of the following missions:

- Retrieve the Eye of Zeus, an ancient artifact made of an unidentifiable metal that was recently stolen by a Dreamer cult calling itself "The Daughters of Hera." The Eye was last seen on a train headed for Cairo.
- Deliver a high-tech weapon to a team of monster hunters who are trapped in Transylvania by a new breed of winged, day-walking vampires. The locals know more about the vampires than they're saying.
- Dodge the minions of a towering Filth monster in rural Kansas long enough to discover its hidden weakness and report it to the local blood mage. She can use this knowledge to craft a special enchantment to trap the beast.
- Infiltrate a cable news network to learn where the literal bodies are hidden, and to expose its demonic masters. Though it doesn't look like it, the corporate office is crawling with armed guards, most of whom only appear human.

- Explore the mysterious Thailand cave system that produces strange, alligator-like creatures with vipers for tongues. The creatures have no hunger for human flesh, but they need warm bodies in which to lay their eggs.
- Defend the small Welsh town that's under siege by hungry corpses returned to life by Filth. Hold off the undead until you can find out where the zombies are coming from.
- Rescue a Bee ally who is being held captive and experimented on in a corporate laboratory. The lab is on the ninth floor of a high-security hospital where violent criminals are treated.
- Discover why the members of an ancient bloodline turn feral and cruel on their twenty-third birthday—before the latest member changes in three days. The old library is a good source of research, but only family members are allowed inside.
- Find the person who has been spreading the worship of the Dreaming Ones through online discussion boards, and put a stop to it before the next full moon. Are they a true believer? A troll? A Filth-infused AI more infectious than any computer virus?
- Research, create, and administer a vaccine for the designer virus that's infecting the guests of an international conference—before they unwittingly spread the infection across the globe.

THE TIPPING POINT

The apocalypse is at hand.

Once more the Earth stands at the brink of destruction, and once more it's the Bees that are holding it back.

The Dreaming Ones are stirring. Their prisons are weakening, starting to bulge and buckle at the seams. Corruption oozes into reality. If left unchecked, it will grow from a trickle into a stream, and then into a world-devouring torrent. Many in the Secret World know this, yet they choose to ignore the crisis and either hope for the best or seek a way to profit from the horrors to come.

The player characters don't have the luxury of ignorance or self-delusion. They have been called by Gaia and chosen by Zuberi to fight the corruption and keep the Dreamers from awakening. This is their duty.

This is the heart of what it means to be a Bee.

TO BE A BEE

You hear it, don't you? You feel it deep within you. That buzz fills you up and tempts you with everything you want to know. Listen, but listen carefully. The signal can overwhelm all but the strongest of minds. There is knowledge in the buzz, oh yes. But there is danger as well.

—Zuberi, on the Buzzing

It starts with a dream. A lone bee infiltrates your home, then flies into your mouth. You hear overlapping voices, signals, and static, seemingly random at first, but messages can be picked out here and there. Next are visions of strange creatures and catastrophic events. Some look like human beings, but twisted and corrupted by a viscous black substance. Others are purely monstrous, dripping ichor as they wreak havoc in the world around them. Lastly, you find yourself in the middle of some terrible battle where you may or may not prevail. When you wake up, it's easy to convince yourself it was just a dream. At first. At least until the first wave of power surges through your limbs. This is anima: the power of Gaia in concentrated form and a primary (although certainly not the *only*) source of magic in the world. With the blossoming of this power, you have been inducted into the Secret World as one of Gaia's Chosen, or Bees.

The world is not what it seems. Everything is true. This is the recurring refrain in the life of a Bee. The Tokyo Subway explosion of 2012 made it clear to those in the know that the Filth was ramping up its incursions in our world. Gaia, the Machine Goddess, the life force of the world, needed more defenders to push back the Filth, and thus a mass awakening of Bees occurred. No one knows exactly how or why Gaia picks those who will be her agents. One morning, you simply wake up different.

The Buzzing has altered you, allowing you to channel tremendous amounts of anima. You can feel this mystical energy pulsing through the world around you and coursing through your body. Anima grants incredible powers that might manifest in the form of casting magical spells, calling forth elemental damage, transporting yourself from one place to another, or cloaking yourself in divine-like protection. For some, it

grants proficiency with weapons; swords and guns become an extension of your limbs, striking down foes with little more than a thought. You may even exhibit psychic abilities: influence over the minds of others or preternatural intuition. How you choose to focus those powers is up to you.

The most incredible power is, you cannot die. Wounds or trauma that would normally prove fatal are temporary setbacks for you. The Buzzing will heal and restore you. But be warned, it's not a pleasant process. You will feel every ounce of the pain and agony that would have done you in. For that reason, even though they'll be brought back, most Bees try to avoid life-threatening injuries.

But power comes at a price. To be Gaia's Chosen means you are a foot soldier on the front line in the war against the Filth. When a new threat manifests, you (along with any other Bees in the vicinity) are drawn to the site to deal with it. If you try to ignore the call, you are inundated with visions and voices in your head. While you always retain your free will, Gaia does not take kindly to those who refuse her; many Bees quickly become overwhelmed if they repeatedly refuse the call. You are forever walking a tightrope between serving Gaia and trying to live your own life.

Your abilities also put you on the radar of the secret societies that vie for control of the world. Chief among them are the Templars, the Illuminati, and the Dragon. Each society has its own traditions and goals, but they all ultimately want the same thing—to prevent the destruction of the world—and they will recruit Bees to help them do so. While groups generally do not force you to join them, you will quickly find life outside of the protection and resources of a larger power fraught with danger.

To be a Bee means both being lonely and never truly being alone. Your family and friends, your coworkers and acquaintances will never understand what you are going through, and you've probably already distanced yourself to keep them safe. Most of the world still lives in ignorance about the truth. The secret societies and other factions of the Secret World keep it that way to prevent panic and unrest. Your old life was over as soon as you woke up to the truth.

Other powers will also become aware of your existence. The Filth, a mysterious and corrupting transdimensional force, seems to have a knack for flowing into a Bee's path. Cults and corporations

David O. Screed here, editor-in-chief of *Weird Non-Fiction* magazine, trying a new way to reach the masses with the truth: this vlog. Episode one? And every episode to come? The Illuminati. Yes, they're real. They're right here in New York and have been since the beginning. Any of our so-called American institutions? They control them ... at least, I think they do. The government, the military, the media. They're in bed with all the big corporations, at least half of your Hollywood stars, and let's not even get started on Wall Street. The Deep State has their dirty little fingers in everybody's pies, and they won't stop until we choke down every last bite.

The Illuminati have been working overtime to hide the truth, but even they can't cover up EVERYthing. Too much shit has been happening for them to keep up. Oh, they have spin doctors working overtime, but if you know where to look, like I do, you can see the cracks in the pudding. Remember the creepy clowns from a few years back? The Illuminati played it off like a viral prank, but it was really psychic projections of some kind of extraterrestrial horror. They couldn't bury it, so they had to twist it. If you pay enough attention, you can see this kind of stuff everywhere.

The apocalypse is already here. It's just not as loud as we were made to believe. The Illuminati claim they're saving the world, but if that was true, they wouldn't need to be so damn secretive about it. I know they've got their eye on me, but I'm one step ahead of them. As long as I have my soapbox, I'll keep telling it like it is.

—Dave Screed's inaugural YouTube video, "The Truth They Don't Want You to Hear!"

want to harness anima for their own ends and can be ruthless in doing so. You must always keep one eye looking over your shoulder, as you never know when the next attack may happen. It's easy to see how people become paranoid once they learn the truth.

The other constant in your new life is the Buzzing. Though you may not always be actively aware of it, the Buzzing is always transmitting—often, it's less that the Buzzing is speaking to you specifically at a given time, and more that you happen to see or experience just the right combination of stimuli to bring the Buzzing's never-ending broadcast into sharp (and sometimes painful) focus. It is a living collection of knowledge, otherworldly in origin, that communicates through the signals, patterns, and voices present everywhere. While it is often more of a transdimensional presence, the Buzzing also has a physical form of biomechanical bees ... but you will rarely interact with them directly. It was the Buzzing that awakened you, and now it speaks to you as one of Gaia's messengers. Its messages are often cryptic, however, as it is far more advanced than human intelligence (or at least alien to it). Though most in the Secret World will counsel you to listen to the Buzzing, some may warn you not to trust it entirely, as the precise nature and origin of the Buzzing is unknowable to our mortal meat minds.

The Buzzing will introduce you to secret places in the world: lost temples and forgotten gods, buried labs of mad scientists and vast libraries of occult knowledge.

The most hidden of these is Agartha: the great tree that inhabits the center of the earth and connects to gates all around the world (see page 100), and some say these Agartha doors (or sometimes roads) may even travel through time or alternate dimensions ... though this is unconfirmed. The imbuelement of anima allows Bees to enter and traverse Agartha safely, a dangerous and even deadly feat for normal humans to attempt (though there are rumored exceptions). Though it is primarily a means of travel, a few of the Chosen have made Agartha their permanent home, and the realm is guarded by giant mechanical guardians called Custodians.

THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE

Throughout most of history, Gaia has been sparing in selecting her Chosen. Great heroes of ages past, names that resound in myth and legend, were almost certainly among them. There were also quiet heroes whose names are lost to time. Something changed in the last few decades. Following the explosion in Tokyo, there was the largest awakening in history, and there were more Bees than ever before. The three primary secret societies (Templars, Illuminati, and Dragon) scrambled to recruit as many as possible, swelling their ranks to numbers not seen for centuries, if ever. Joining one of these factions means a relatively safe haven at their headquarters, access to training to hone your control of anima, and comrades to watch your back. Like in any group, however, there are power struggles, internal politics, and personality clashes to deal with.

Some Bees choose to forgo all that and try to make it on their own. Few last long. Many are rumored to be kidnapped by the Orochi Group to be experimented on. Orochi is a massive multinational corporation, with all the potential for malfeasance and amorality that implies. Though nearly everyone has heard of some of the subsidiaries, most are not aware of the true scale of Orochi's operations. While Orochi mostly avoids interfering directly with the societies, they are certainly not above sabotage and engaging in their own covert operations.

Cults like the Morninglight also try to recruit Bees. Although, on the surface, Morninglight seems like an eccentric but harmless self-help society, there are whispers about a much more sinister truth. It does seem like any Bee joining Morninglight quickly disappears, never to be seen again.

Despite the relative safety, life as a Bee in a secret society takes its toll on you. While the three societies are generally aligned (in their own unique ways) with Gaia's goals, they each have their own agenda, such as power, order, or control. While carrying out a mission for your faction, you may find the Buzzing pulling you in a different direction from your marching orders, and you'll have to choose which to follow. Some factions might be fine with putting the world at

One night, I started having the strangest dreams. They seemed so real, I couldn't shake the feeling they meant something. And when I woke up, a freaking lightning bolt shot out of my hand into my TV! Before I could even, like, process what was happening, this dude busted into my apartment. His mouth was sewn shut, and he did ... something. I don't know what the hell he did, but next thing I know, I'm being pushed out of a van onto a strange street. I eventually found out it was in South Korea, halfway around the world! I had no idea what was going on. I kept seeing these clouds of butterflies, and they were so beautiful I just couldn't help but follow them.

The butterflies led me to a hotel. There was a guy in the lobby talking about chaos and order. Trippy stuff. But the real weirdness was upstairs. This chick took me to a room and started to get all hot and heavy. But she was talking about chaos too. Just when it started to get really good, bam! I had this crazy vision of monsters in a subway station and people fighting them. Then, I saw the universe stretched out in front of me, endless and cosmic.

Suddenly, it all clicked. There's so much more going on in this world than most of us had any idea. The monsters are coming, and it's going to take everything we can give to stop them. Even the tiniest change can eventually move mountains. Like ripples on a pond, man. That's why the Dragon's work is so important.

—Transcript in the Venetian Council files of an interview with Janice, a new Dragon recruit

risk if they think they can then mold it into the world that they desire.

Careening from one potential apocalypse to another is exhausting physically and mentally. Most Bees have trouble sleeping, either due to the Buzzing or simply their memories of the horrors they've witnessed. Though they have grown in their control over anima and the skills associated with it, their sense of paranoia over the next disaster to strike has grown in equal measure.

RECONNAISSANCE REPORT— SOLOMON ISLAND

My research in the Templar archives has uncovered extensive notes on Solomon Island, located off the coast of Maine in the United States. A now-deceased Templar agent was sent to investigate the island in mid-2012 after the community lost contact with the outside world. That report lists multiple Filth-related phenomena, such as a dense fog surrounding the island and masses of draug and other undead wandering the area. The Illuminati-affiliated Innsmouth Academy appears to have been conducting ill-advised research and lost control of its subjects. On top of all of that, a portal to the Hell Dimensions had allegedly opened in a local motel.

With all these issues in a single area, it seemed best to conduct reconnaissance to assess the current situation. When I arrived at the island, however, there seemed no trace of the prior concerns. While the late agent's reports indicated the immediate threat had been dealt with, the pages made clear much more work would have to be done. In fact, the area had been declared a disaster zone to limit access until the continued issues were dealt with. I found no record of additional missions that would have resolved the lingering problems. Today, Solomon Island is slowly regaining economic power. Its residents have no memory of the catastrophic happenings of barely a decade ago.

I am utterly baffled as to how the situation changed so drastically, with no documentation available. Perhaps I can convince a member of the local Wabanaki to speak with me. Historical records indicate the tribe guarded the island for centuries, so perhaps there are oral traditions that can explain what has happened.

The longer one lives as a Bee, the more one changes, both physically and mentally. A few of the Bees from the 2012 awakening have already become massively powerful. There are rumors of even older Bees who barely look human anymore. Being one of Gaia's Chosen is a constant process of evolution.

THE NEW WAVE

*TRANSMIT—initiate signal—RECEIVE—
Filth spreading, always spreading—TIME IS
RUNNING OUT—hurry, sweetling—YOU'RE
MY ONLY HOPE—commence end times
sequence—AND HELL'S COMING WITH ME—
the Dreamers must not awake—WITNESS!—
the cosmic truth—*

—Transmission from the Buzzing

The situation has only grown more dire since 2012. Gaia has been compelled to start another mass awakening of Bees. You are a part of this latest wave of the Chosen. There has never in living memory been so many of Gaia's Chosen active at the same time. However, the swell of Bees is causing issues with the use of anima; the power is being spread thin by so many users, and some fear it may someday wear out.

No matter which faction you choose to join, you now start a life of duty to the cause. That cause: stop the Filth from intruding on our world, by any means necessary. You have been trained to fight and taught how to refine your control of anima. Now, you are set loose on the world to await your next mission. That mission may take you anywhere on Earth, but one thing is for certain: it will be dangerous.

There's also the little matter of the Long Night. Most people's memories of the last decade are ... murky. They know time passed and life continued on, but if you try to think too hard about the specifics, it all gets a little fuzzy. Something is missing, but no one is quite sure what. Those in the highest ranks of the Secret World may have a clue as to what happened, but so far, they don't seem inclined to share with the rank and file.

So, there you have it. You have been granted incredible powers by Gaia, the Immaculate Machine, and in exchange, you must defend her and the world from the forces of evil that would take it over. Sounds simple? You really have no idea. Welcome to the Secret World.

CHAPTER TWO: MAKING HEROES

Once you're ready to explore the mysteries of the Secret World, it's time to create a character of your own with which to do so.

Before defining your character in terms of game stats, take a moment to consider their history, motivation, and personality. Are they a power-hungry intellectual seeking revenge against the cultists who killed their sister? A bored computer hacker looking for the next big heist? A righteous crusader with a soul full of compassion, a storage locker full of weapons, and active warrants in six countries? The choice is yours.

While your Secret Worlder should be fun and exciting for you to play, they should also work well with the group. Discuss your character concept with your GM to make sure it fits with both the other player characters and the campaign you're about to play. If everyone's playing a grizzled loner who refuses to work with others, for example, it's going to be a lot of work for the GM and not much fun for the players.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

While the heroes of The Secret World are all secret agents holding back the forces of chaos, their different backgrounds and specialties give them each their own particular twist on the role. Below are some examples of character types you can use as inspiration when creating your own character. This list is by no means exhaustive, but is intended to give you a place to start.

Bounty Hunter: The Secret World is a great place to hide. Those who are on the run from the law, their creditors, or their past can disappear into countless shadows where those outside the Secret World can never find them. It's up to bounty hunters from within those shadows to track these fugitives and drag them into the light.

Brawler: The brawler sees the Secret World as a gladiatorial arena, and each battle as a chance to test their mettle. They seek out conflict, and fight for both glory and the sheer thrill of combat.

Con Artist: Most people in the Secret World are liars, but con artists are professionals. Their silver tongues and brilliant schemes advance their employers' goals while often lining their own pockets.

Data Broker: While no one knows all the worlds' secrets, data brokers make it a point to know as many as they can. Their minds (and encrypted database) are full of facts, theories, and knowledge thought by many to be lost, hidden, or forgotten. And yet they are not satisfied. The data broker is always hungry for more data.

Dealer: There's money to be made in The Secret World, and dealers know the best ways to do so. Buying and selling (whether real estate, weapons, or earth-shattering secrets) are always lucrative, as are the various conspiracy-backed investment schemes. Dealers often have a wide network of customers and suppliers.

Explorer: The most important mysteries in the Secret World cannot be solved in a library or from behind a computer desk. They require explorers in the field (or jungle, or desert, or ten stories below ground) with notebooks, flashlights, and weapons within easy reach. Explorers brave any dangers to make their amazing discoveries.

Fixer: It's hard to maintain a conspiracy. It requires countless lies, cover-up campaigns, blackmail, and bribes. It's a constant act of spinning plates with razor-sharp edges. It's one the fixer is very good at. Fixers usually work directly for one faction or another, working the streets to pave over horrific truths with smooth, palatable lies.

Guardian: Bodyguards, security forces, and other such defenders are dedicated to protecting their charges from the dangers of the Secret World. Guardians go to extraordinary lengths in pursuit of their duties. For many of them, it's more than a job. It's a matter of honor.

Hacker: Computers and their networks are their own worlds with the Secret World, and hackers are the ones who know how to access and manipulate them. While some prefer to downplay their importance, hackers are key to any successful modern-day conspiracy.

Hitman: Some people know too much. Some people have too much power. Some people have simply angered the wrong person at the wrong time. Some people need to die, and it's the hitman's job to see that they do.

Inquisitor: Inquisitors see the corruption around them and refuse to stand by while people, institutions, and entire cultures succumb to chaos. While the common inquisitor (commonly found in the ranks of the Templars) prefers to root out corruption by destroying the corrupted, others work to remove the corruption itself, working to heal the wounded and soothe the hurting.

Investigator: Mysteries are everywhere in The Secret World, and investigators are driven to solve them. Whether hard-bitten private eyes, police detectives, or amateur sleuths unraveling the secrets of a vast conspiracy, investigators won't stop until they have the answers they need.

Magician: Magic in the Secret World is real, and magicians are obsessed with mastering it. They understand that by controlling magic, they can control reality itself. They hunger for power and will stop at nothing to expand their own magical abilities.

Monster Slayer: The world is full of malevolent creatures far beyond what most people can comprehend, much less defend themselves against. That's where monster hunters come in. They have the knowledge and experience to know what they're hunting, and how best to kill it—if it doesn't kill them first.

Mystic: Monks, sages, and other seekers of wisdom dedicate themselves to understanding the supernatural mysteries of the Secret World—not to control them, but to better find their own places within the greater cosmic web. While they may accumulate power in this quest, it's not power they desire, but sacred insights.

Occultist: A scholar of the arcane, the occultist knows the history, theory, and legends behind the supernatural truths of the Secret World. Not all occultists wield magic themselves, but those who do tend to be highly skilled in the mystical arts.

Puppet Master: The unseen manipulators are at the heart of every conspiracy. While they may not be the ones calling all the shots (their own strings are pulled by masters higher up), they are the ones tweaking politics, culture, economics, and more to serve their purposes. Puppet masters prefer to work from behind the scenes, but aren't above doing field work if the project is important enough.

Scientist: Whether researching the Filth, performing experiments on psychics, or discovering ancient secrets, scientists are responsible for many of the modern breakthroughs in understanding The Secret World. (They're also responsible for many of the horrors unleashed through their experiments, but prefer not to mention that.)

Soldier: The backbone of any good conspiracy is the soldier. They are highly skilled at what they do, do it without question or regret, and seek nothing more than a regular paycheck and the respect of their peers.

Spy: Espionage is an important part of maintaining a conspiracy. Whether they are working undercover, conducting surveillance, or turning key assets, spies are key to gathering the intelligence their masters need to make informed decisions.



MAKING CHARACTERS

Once you have a basic concept for your Secret Worlder, it's time to figure out their statistics. Character creation in *The Secret World* follows the rules found in *Savage Worlds*, with a few exceptions, as noted below. (One of those exceptions is that heroes in *The Secret World* start play with the equivalent of four Advances at Novice Rank.)

1. ANCESTRY

Heroes in *The Secret World* are human. As such, they begin play with a free Edge of their choice. This Edge can be of any Rank, but cannot be an Arcane Background.

2. ARCHETYPE

Each hero begins with a package of attributes, skills, and Edges that help define their role as an agent in The Secret World. Your character is not bound to this starting package once they begin play, but it's useful to speed up the character creation process.

Archetypes are described starting on page 23, and include the following:

- Assassin
- Demolisher
- Gunslinger
- Magus
- Mercenary
- Punisher
- Ravager
- Trickster
- Warlock

3. FACTION

Choose your character's faction: either the Dragon, Illuminati, or Templars.

These secret societies offer their members access to a vast array of resources, but make demands on them as well. The Templars, for example, are glad to hand out weapons to their members who need them, but expect constant reports of new types of monsters encountered in the field.

HEROIC HUMANS

Bees are not your average humans, and therefore have abilities above the norm. The following character creation procedure deviates from standard *Savage Worlds* rules.

MERELY HUMAN

Some players may wish to start their characters' stories *before* they are transformed by Gaia into Bees. If you'd like to do so (and your GM approves), you may create your character with two free Edges, neither of which can be an Arcane Background.

If your character becomes a Bee, you must spend your next Advance on the Arcane Background (Bee) Edge.

FREESTYLE HEROES

As noted previously, archetypes are merely bundles of traits and Edges, conveniently grouped so players can quickly select what types of heroes they want to play, and get a headstart on creating those heroes. If you'd like to create your character without the benefit of an archetype, you may do so by following the basic rules in *Savage Worlds*, with the following tweaks:

Attributes: You have 6 points to spend.

Skills: You have 15 points.

Edges: You get Arcane Background (Bee), plus one additional free Edge of any Rank.

Gear: You have \$1300 to spend on gear.

Agents' standing within their factions are determined by their Favor dice. Your hero's Favor die starts at d6. Rules for using Favor dice and dealing with factions are found starting on page 80.

4. HINDRANCES

Secret Worlders are often damaged, scarred individuals with skeletons in their closets and monsters at their heels. All this baggage is represented by Hindrances. You may take up to 4 points of Hindrances. A Major Hindrance is worth 2 points and a Minor Hindrance is worth 1.

You may choose any of the Hindrances listed in *Savage Worlds*, or any of the new ones listed below, starting on page 42.

Use points gained from Hindrances to purchase benefits for your character, as detailed in the sections below.

5. ATTRIBUTES

Your Secret Worlder begins with a free d4 in each of the five attributes: Agility, Smarts, Spirit, Strength, and Vigor. Depending on the archetype you chose, one or more of your hero's attributes might start at d6 or higher instead.

Distribute 3 points among your hero's attributes. Raising an attribute by a die type costs 1 point. You may not raise an attribute above d12.

You may spend 2 Hindrance points to raise an attribute by one die type.

6. SKILLS

Archetype Skills: Your hero's archetype gives them a number of skills at d4 or higher for free.

Core Skills: Your hero also begins with a free d4 in Athletics, Common Knowledge, Notice, Persuasion, and Stealth. If one or more of these is an archetype skill, it starts out at the higher die type instead.

Buying Skills: You have 9 points to buy skills.

- Purchasing a new skill (starting at d4) costs one point.
- Raising a skill by a die type costs 1 point as long as the new skill die is no higher than the attribute to which it is linked.
- It costs 2 skill points per die type to raise a skill above its linked attribute.
- Skills cannot be raised above d12.
- You may spend 1 Hindrance point to gain an additional skill point.

7. DERIVED STATISTICS

Unless modified by Hindrances or Edges, a hero's derived statistics are calculated thusly:

- **Pace** is equal to 6.
- **Parry** is equal to 2 plus half the character's Fighting die. A character without Fighting has a Parry of 2.
- **Toughness** is equal to 2 plus half the character's Vigor die.

8. EDGES

Heroes in *The Secret World* start with the Arcane Background (Bee) Edge, plus one or more additional free Edges, from their archetype.

You may spend Hindrance points to purchase additional Edges for which your hero meets the requirements (ignoring Rank requirements), at the cost of 2 points per Edge.

You may purchase any of the Edges listed in *Savage Worlds* except Arcane Backgrounds. New Edges are detailed starting on page 42.

9. GEAR

Characters start with a standard array of weapons and equipment based on their archetype.

You have \$500 to purchase additional gear, and may spend 1 Hindrance point to gain another \$1,000 in starting funds.

10. BACKGROUND DETAILS

All that remains is to describe your Secret Worlder's personality, history, and appearance.

Everyone comes from somewhere. Before your hero was a Bee, they were a person with hopes, desires, and dreams, occupying a world they thought they knew. Gaia may have changed everything, but She didn't erase it; that person still informs everything your character does, bridging the gap between then and now. Humans are little more than a collection of memories and a spark of potential, haunted meat stumbling through existence. What ghosts does your hero carry with them?

ARCHETYPES

New characters in The Secret World have their pick of archetypes to choose from.

Archetypes include starting attributes, skills, Edges, and gear. These elements help define the character's role, both in combat and in the cabal.

Remember: these archetypes are merely starting points; characters can grow and adapt as they see fit over the course of their careers.



ASSASSIN





ASSASSIN

Killers who stalk the mundane world believe humans are the most dangerous game. The assassins who tread through the Secret World know there are whole dimensions of more dangerous targets out there. Assassins achieve victory through subtlety and precision.

Assassins include ruthless murderers, slick hitmen, dedicated monster hunters, and agents of espionage who focus more on infiltration than the killing blow. Some assassins have spent their whole lives honing their skills as government and criminal contract killers, only to be further boosted with an infusion of anima. Others may have spent a fairly innocent life, only to discover a hidden penchant for murder once empowered by Gaia.

Assassins excel at melee weapons and elemental magic. Their modus operandi involves stealth, skill, and landing a killing (or at least disabling) blow. They might channel their anima to cloak themselves in shadow, heighten their reflexes and accuracy, or charge their weapons with elemental energy. They further sharpen these supernatural skills with patience and knowledge of their targets, acquired through stalking or research.

Assassins might come from any number of origins. For example:

- A professional killer for the Mob is touched by Gaia and takes on a higher purpose.
- A scholar of the occult and of supernatural beings receives the power to put that knowledge to use hunting monsters.
- An international espionage agent has strange dreams and is approached by headhunters from organizations even he didn't know existed.

- A mild-mannered barista, charged with anima, finds her reflexes and agility boosted to something beyond human, and gains a preternatural instinct for murder that terrifies her.

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

Assassins have crept silently down the Ages, from the ninjas of Japan to the handpicked warriors of Alexander the Great who climbed like spiders up a sheer cliff to lay siege to Sogdian Rock. The Jewish Sicarii, or “dagger men,” covertly attacked the Romans who oppressed their home. The “poison damsels” of the Vishkanya plied their trade under the direction of the first Maurya emperor of India, Chandragupta. The Hashshashin became a deadly specter of a legend in the ancient Muslim world.

In the Secret World, assassins use stealth, speed, and cunning to disable foes. They channel their anima to enhance their skills to supernal levels.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

Secret societies' network operatives must possess precise skill, discipline, and a certain moral elasticity. It is no wonder the factions scramble to recruit assassins. Often these agents served in a similar (if mundane) capacity before their awakening by Gaia. Beyond their aptitude for killing, assassins possess marketable skills in stealth and infiltration. Sometimes information and observation of a target offer just as much payoff as a kill. The secret societies do not know what plans, if any, Gaia has for Her imbued assassins. They just want to direct those skills toward their goals while the assassins are around.

Starting Attributes: Agility d8, Spirit d6

Starting Skills: Fighting d6, Focus d6, Stealth d8

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Blade Conduit, Elementalism Magic Conduit, Elementalism Magic Specialist

Starting Gear: Elementalism charm, tactical blade (Str+d6)

DEMOLISHER





DEMOLISHER

Demolishers burn with an inner fire. This wellspring of power is the blessing of Gaia at its simplest and most primal, like a primitive hominid cracking skulls with a jawbone. They smash things and they smash them good.

More than any other, the demolisher archetype includes Bees from all walks of life: athletes, doctors, homemakers, mechanics, musicians, soldiers, students, and more. It is not physical strength that marks a demolisher, nor is there any special training one needs to take a stick and hit things with it. There is only the accursed gift of Gaia.

Demolishers may be blunt instruments, but that does not make them incapable of finesse. They can channel anima into not only explosive melee attacks, but protective effects as well. They can make their skin hard as steel, and surround themselves (and their allies) with mystical barriers. Demolishers can learn to be as adept and subtle as any assassin or punisher.

Demolishers fight in the front lines, leading charges and taking on whole armies by themselves. They're loud and destructive, and they're often sent into the field to act as diversions for more discreet operatives. Sometimes, however, the best defense is a good offense ... and nothing says "offense" like a one-person wrecking crew.

Demolishers might come from any number of origins, including the following:

- A minor league baseball player knocks one out of the park. There's a flash of lightning when his bat connects with the ball, blinding the catcher and umpire behind him.

- A Renaissance fair player, dreams haunted by seeming memories of life as a questing knight, discovers the Templars are real when they offer her a job.
- An English major with anger issues joins her university's coed hockey team. She discovers she's capable of a slapshot she never would have guessed at, even as strange things begin stalking her from the shadows.

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

Kali and her sword, Cú Chulainn and his spear, Bradamante and her lance, Benkei and his seven weapons ... Scholars of all factions theorize that many of the men and women whose tales gave birth to great mythological and legendary figures worldwide were, in fact, demolishers. There is a purity to their righteous power, a simplicity that echoes through the eons.

In the Secret World, demolishers could be anyone from anywhere. They manifest their power as walking siege engines, channeling anima to wreak destruction in the most direct way possible.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

Every faction wants to find its own modern Hercules, someone who can trade blow for blow with oni and giants. Demolishers often serve an almost symbolic role within societies, representing the epitome of Gaia's might—and that of the faction for which they work.

In the field, demolishers provide excellent support for ... squishier ... team members. A demolisher in full tactical gear with a breaching maul is a better bullet stopper than a reinforced concrete wall, and much better prepared to smash a draug in the face.

Starting Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6

Starting Skills: Fighting d8, Focus d4, Taunt d6

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Blade Conduit, Hammer Conduit, Provoke

Starting Gear: Battle hammer (Str+d8, requires two hands), Kevlar vest (+2), tactical blade (Str+d6)

GUNSLINGER





GUNSLINGER

Like all Bees, the gunslingers channel their anima through their weapons. Unlike many other Bees, gunslingers can use those weapons—at a distance, and without anima—to reduce their enemies to fleshy goo in a matter of seconds. To them, a gun is more than a magic wand with a firing pin; it's the answer to most questions that the Secret World throws at them. Gunslingers follow but one rule: be fast or be dead.

Anima-wielding can be dangerous. It can demand a price you might not want to pay. It can run out just when you need it most. But firearms are machines. They demand nothing more than bullets, oil, and the occasional cleaning. If gunslingers come off as cocky, it's because they bring a gun to every knife fight.

Gunslingers often come from backgrounds that involve ranged weapons, but sometimes the anima turns a person into the weapon they need to be.

The origins of a gunslinger might include the following:

- An international marksmanship champion starts seeing strange creatures that others fail to notice.
- A young woman's friends and family chided her for spending her life savings on a pair of antique six-shooters at auction, but there was a buzzing in her ear that only abated when she acquired the guns. Then the dreams came, and her life changed forever.
- A huge anime fan could never get enough of heroes performing ridiculous stunts with guns. When the anima flowed through him, there was only one way for it to manifest.

- A former bounty hunter was diagnosed with something terminal, so he spent the last several months of his life getting into duels with bad people, wanting to go out in a blaze of glory... but just kept winning. Then ZAP! Now it looks like he's going to live a lot longer, and needs to decide what to do with those lightning skills.

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

Legendary slingers and duelists are a relatively modern addition to the human mythos, from Doc Holliday to the ultra-kinetic antics of the gun-wielding heroes of pop culture. Do our stories come from fuzzy memories of the exploits of the anima-imbued, or does the zeitgeist of culture inform the shape of anima manifestations and tell a Bee what they can be? That is a topic for occult scholars.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

Secret Societies love their mercenaries and assassins as go-to operatives. However, when subtly isn't the main parameter of a mission, there is something to be said for those who can go up against gods and monsters and get by purely on bullets and attitude.

Starting Attributes: Agility d10

Starting Skills: Fighting d4, Shooting d10, Focus d4,

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Pistol Conduit, Shotgun Conduit, Two-Gun Kid

Starting Gear: Combat shotgun (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1, AP 1), pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1)

MAGUS





MAGUS

Magi are always alone.

They say it is their power that sets them apart from the rest of humanity—and even other Bees. For while other servants of Gaia augment her anima-based gifts with sharp chunks of metal, slug-throwers, and crude weights attached to sticks, magi wield nothing but anima. Yes, they carry the requisite charms, but those trinkets are mere conduits. The true power is the magi's unstoppable, super-human force of will. It's this willpower that allows them to shape anima—to shape *reality itself*—to their liking.

Magi know they are finest of Gaia's chosen vessels, and they take the position very seriously. They must set an example of how to wield anima shrewdly, and to seek esoteric excellence in all that they do. Though, like all Bees, they channel anima intuitively, still they seek out occult knowledge and training in hopes of expanding on and improving their inherent abilities. Some magi even claim it works.

It's lonely at the top. That's partly by choice. Magi tend to be jealous and competitive among themselves. A magus may be close allies or even friends with other Bees who don't claim the "magus" title (since they see them as lesser beings), but is rarely friendly with other magi.

Most magi had at least a little understanding of the occult before becoming Bees. Many of them see their awakening by Gaia as a reward for their years of dedication to the mystic arts. But there remain some magi who weren't interested in such things, and (to the chagrin of the other) simply woke up one morning with the ability to wield anima. Possible magi origins include (but are not limited to) any of the following:

- A scholar studying a series of esoteric ancient texts dreams of prophetic runes. He awakens

with a full understanding of the text in his head, and a throbbing ball of anima in his soul.

- The grad student trying to combine her philosophy and physics degrees suddenly understands the two of them are fundamentally the same—and how she can change them both with a thought.
- Even though he's from the wrong side side of the tracks, the genius with a library card knew he was destined for greatness. When Gaia awakens him, it confirms everything.
- She always liked starting fires. Now that she can do it with her mind, no one can stop her.
- They said the old man was delusional and locked him up for years. But now the voices really are talking to him, and it's time for him to move out..

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

Secret Worlders believe John Dee, the court astronomer and advisor to Elizabeth I, to have been a powerful magus. Some believe that Enochian was a language given to Dee by angels or interdimensional entities. Others speculate that Dee conjured the language from his own sheer force of will: his ferocious mind given substance through anima.

In the Secret World, magi channel anima through self-mastery and willpower. Their egos are enormous, as they need to be, in order to control such power using nothing but a few charms and their own brilliant minds.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

Magi are renowned for their massive sense of self-importance. This can make recruiting them a challenge, and fitting them into a team an even bigger challenge. Nevertheless, their ability to wield anima is among the best. Their discipline makes them capable agents who will stay on task and not flinch when they see a cosmic horror.

Starting Attributes: Smarts d6, Spirit d8,

Starting Skills: Persuasion d6, Focus d8, Occult d6

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Chaos Magic Conduit, Elementalism Magic Conduit, Wizard

Starting Gear: Chaos magic charm, elementalism charm

MERCENARY





MERCENARY

Mercenaries are the soldiers, rangers, and hunters deployed to solve problems in which violence is always an option. Some fight for country, others for fortune, and still others to get at inner demons they can't otherwise scratch.

While skilled with both ranged and melee weapons, mercenaries are more than armed goons. They are tacticians and strategists, capable of seeing the big picture of the battlefield as well as the immediate dangers. Mercenaries are cool-headed and resistant to the fear and panic that can come when facing supernatural threats. They know how to synchronize with and buff the unique talents of their team.

Despite the name, not all mercenaries do what they do for the paycheck. They all have their own reasons. Their origins can include (but are not limited to) the following:

- A veteran finds a new call to action as old wounds begin to heal.
- A Navy SEAL is the lone survivor of an undersea horror that devoured his unit. He rises from the sea, half-drowned, with a buzzing in his ear and the knowledge that he has to stop what's coming.
- A soldier of fortune is haunted by her past deeds and strange dreams, but a shadowy organization says they can fix all that.
- A beast stalks the woods, and a lone survivalist suddenly finds a use for the skills he's acquired over the last several years.
- A guerrilla fighter turns her zeal toward a new global enemy, the Orochi Group.

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

Disciplined soldiers have existed since war first began on this planet. Those who can commit to complex logistics while in the primal fray of violence have always had a use. The industrial womb of the modern age has birthed a new kind of soldier, one who retains those ancient skills while wielding modern technology and increasing the shock and awe.

In the Secret World, mercenaries possess extensive weapon proficiency, tactical aptitude, and practical discipline—all of which can be enhanced through the use of anima. They are an all-purpose tool in the supernatural battlefield.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

Practical operatives with combat skills and the ability to follow a plan are worth their weight in cutting-edge military weaponry. The secret societies prize skilled agents, particularly when they have an anima edge. Such even-keeled operatives help keep the more chaotic Bees in line, and keep the higher-ups apprised of conditions on the ground.

Starting Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6,

Starting Skills: Shooting d6, Fighting d6, Battle d4, Focus d4

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Assault Rifle Conduit, Fist Conduit, Rock and Roll!

Starting Gear: Assault Rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8+1, RoF 3, AP 2), bladed cestus (Str+d4, Parry +1)

PUNISHER





PUNISHER

There are those who pour much context into their weapons—a code, a cause, an identity. Then there are those who pump a ton of anima into said weapon, igniting it like a beacon in the dark of unknowable, paranormal menace. They hone their skill and stoke their inner fire. By concentrating their anima into the razor-sharp focus of their favored weapon, punishers achieve a balance of carnage and control. More even-keeled than the ravager, inflicting less collateral damage than the demolisher, the punisher serves as the well-rounded warrior of the Secret World.

The punisher can take as much punishment as he dishes out. Reinforced with anima, and a fierce determination in his veins, he stands firm between the horrors of the world and those he has chosen to protect. And when those horrors are close enough—when they have spent their fury upon his own grisled flesh—it's time for him to draw his own weapons and get to work.

Some punishers were devotees of weapons, martial art katas, and the like before entering the Secret World. Others lived more mild-mannered lives until they were imbued with anima. A weapon in the hand now directs those energies and helps a now-insane world make a little more sense.

Possible origins for a punisher might include (but are not limited to) the following:

- A dead relative bequeathed her an antique weapon years ago. Last night, a buzzing filled her head and she felt an irresistible urge to dig said weapon out of the attic.
- Through a game of chance or a bit of larceny, he has acquired a sentient weapon. Only he can hear it whispering. Listening to its instructions allows him to perform superhuman feats. Is it Gaia speaking to him? Or madness?

- He took money to hurt people, until his soul became sick and he threw away the gun. Now, he's picked up a more archaic weapon and feels a more noble cause burning in his chest.
- Nothing in her background indicated the direction her life would take. Yesterday, she was an accountant. Today, her clip-on tie is stained with monster blood.

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

Ninigi wielded Kusanagi, a magical sword given to him by his grandmother, the sun goddess Amaterasu. King Arthur inspired a kingdom with his sword, Excalibur. The god Ninurta swung Sharur, an enchanted talking mace known as “smasher of thousands,” and slew the monstrous demon Asag. From Age to Age, heroes of myth held extraordinary weapons.

In the Secret World, punishers may act as modern-day questing knights, driven vigilantes, or cold enforcers from syndicates and organizations both mundane and supernatural. They bring order to chaos through the power of violence.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

When a secret society needs an operative who can get in close to a threat, but they can't afford the collateral damage of a demolisher or the unpredictability of a ravager, they send in a punisher. These all-purpose warriors prove useful in most situations.

Starting Attributes: Agility d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Starting Skills: Shooting d6, Fighting d6, Focus d4, Athletics d6

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Brawny, Hammer Conduit, Shotgun Conduit

Starting Gear: Battle hammer (Str+d8, requires two hands), combat shotgun (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1, AP 1)

RAVAGER





RAVAGER

For the ravager, channeling anima is a very visceral experience. While they can wield Gaia's power at a distance, they prefer to do so in ways that are up-close, physical, and filled with primal intensity.

To walk the path of the ravager is to balance on the edge of a two-handed paradox.

One hand is curled into a fist. Anima flows through that fist, setting right the wrongs of the world in the most brutal fashion. Ravagers earn their name by tearing into their enemies with a savage, near-bestial ferocity.

The other hand is open in compassion. The blessings of Gaia gently flow from it, offering healing and comfort to those who need it. While the ravagers' enemies fear their dreadful claws, their allies welcome their soothing touch.

Ravagers are deeply passionate Bees. They are filled with strong, volatile emotions which, when infused with anima, can boil over in spectacular displays of power. As they release this emotion, they can enter into a frenzy, unleashing anima-fueled wonders and horrors on the world around them.

The ravager's driving emotion is often rage or terror, but could just as easily be compassion or even love. Ravagers want to embrace the world and make it better with their touch: this might mean relieving life's pains, but might just as easily mean ripping out the pain-causing cancer in a jaw-dropping explosion of pure violence. Such is the paradox of the ravager.

Some ravagers were mystics or warriors before being touched by Gaia; others were simply trying to live as passionate people in a cold-hearted world. Their origins could include (but are not limited to) the following:

- A martial artist or practitioner of some form of physical discipline, on the verge of a heightened state of mind and body, is pushed over the edge by a massive infusion of anima.
- An injured survivor of a monster attack retains some trace elements of the creature's nature in her blood—elements that come alive and change the survivor when Gaia imbues her with power.
- A seemingly ordinary person, buttoned down by modern society, harbors a vast core of rage. One day those roiling emotions explode.
- There is no explanation. The ravager has nothing in his background to indicate this new nature, but perhaps some potential was buried so deep only Gaia could see it.

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

History and legend contain clues to the possible ravagers of the past. Certainly some of the demigod warriors of world mythology have their roots here. Most Secret Worlders agree that the ancient Norse berserkers, who fought in a trance-like state, were early ravagers. And at least a few of the whirling dervishes of the Sufi were known to enter a dance of ecstatic joy that protected them from the claws and fangs of demons.

In the Secret World, ravagers are filled with anima-fueled emotion that spills out into violence and magical effects.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

While ravagers can be unpredictable, the secret societies see how effective they can be—not only as savage warriors, but as bearers of Gaia's power, as the anima radiates out from them.

Starting Attributes: Agility d8, Strength d6

Starting Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Focus d4

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Blood Magic Conduit, Fist Conduit, Frenzy

Starting Gear: Bladed Cestus (Str+d4, Parry +1), blood magic charm

TRICKSTER





TRICKSTER

Since the dawn of sentience, there's been a sucker born every minute, and the tricksters were soon to follow. Some stalk the shadows, clouding the minds of their unsuspecting enemies. Others strut in the open, convincing naked emperors that they are wearing invisible clothes.

Tricksters come in many forms and guises (often, a single trickster comes in many forms and guises!). They are illusionists, con artists, interlopers, and delvers into places and situations where angels know not to tread. Some are ruthless manipulators, pulling the strings of their victims and dupes. Others seem to be hapless fools who somehow tickle the strings of chance and fate, coming out of impossible situations no worse for wear.

Tricksters are comfortable with chaos. They know how to ride the wave, and subtly guides its flow to help their friends or hinder their enemies. They know that things aren't always what they seem, and that true power comes from knowing what's real and what's illusion. Tricksters know when to make themselves an obvious threat (that is, an obvious distraction), and they know when to vanish from sight altogether.

Tricksters bend and break rules—the laws of society, physics, and the supernatural. They break boundaries, whether in a code of conduct or the walls of dimensions and worlds. However, this impulse is more than simply crass or contrary behavior. A trickster practices the sacred obscenities. They turn the system upside down to reveal its flaws, or to cause necessary (if traumatic) change.

Even before they become Bees, tricksters often have a knack for trickery and manipulation. Possible trickster origins may include (but are certainly not limited to) any of the following:

- A devotee to a trickster deity.
- A charlatan or con artist who finds his gift of gab suddenly and supernaturally boosted.
- A stage illusionist with a hobby and interest in the occult.
- An anarchist or corporate saboteur who expands her mission to one of more cosmic significance.
- A celebrity poker player who has mastered the mathematics of chance and finds he can now nudge chance in unlikely ways.
- An introvert, who has always felt unseen, who gains the ability to literally become invisible.

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

Trickster beings show up in all of world mythology—Loki, Anansi, Hermes, Crow, and the rest. Some are friendly. Some are dangerous. All sing the sacred obscenities. These are beings who sometimes imperil the world, but also save it with their antics. They illuminate the flaws in the proud and the tyrannical.

In the Secret World, tricksters excel at illusion, mind-bending enchantment, and probability manipulation. They are daring will-workers who win by keeping their enemies off balance and confused. If one's opponent is stronger, then turn that strength on them and let them destroy themselves.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

Tricksters, by their very nature, don't play by the rules. However, canny recruiters for the secret societies know that one does not need to completely control a trickster, but rather to simply unleash them on the enemy. It can be a subtle dance of who is manipulating whom. Despite those risks, tricksters have a package of abilities that any clandestine organization would desire.

Starting Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6

Starting Skills: Shooting d6, Focus d6, Taunt d6

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Chaos Magic Conduit, Chaos Magic Specialist, Pistol Conduit

Starting Gear: Chaos magic charm, pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1)

WARLOCK





WARLOCK

Warlocks know they are not alone.

They can feel how the anima that courses through them also connects them to the rest of the world. The anima in them is the same as the anima in others. It's all one.

Warlocks know that connection leads to understanding, and understanding leads to power. To truly understanding something is to control it.

Through the supernatural connection afforded by anima, warlocks understand the other creatures to which they are connected, regardless of whether they are friends or foes. This gives them power over those creatures: to heal, harm, or otherwise manipulate.

Warlocks are connected to everything and everyone around them. These connections are the passageways through which they channel their anima to work their will upon the world.

While some warlocks had no knowledge of or interest in the supernatural before being chosen by Gaia, many of them were already seeking a mystical connection to the greater universe. Possible warlock origins include (but are not limited to) any of the following:

- A lonely young woman who joined a cult to bask in its deep sense of connection finds herself suddenly connected to everyone—even those outside the cult—and wielding powers the cult leaders could only dream of.
- An academic occultist with a head of esoteric book learning finds new links between the ancient texts and his modern neighborhood as Gaia opens his eyes to the bonds that had always been there.

- The matriarch of the apartment building has no children of her own, but is loved and respected as the building's mother-figure. When "her kids" are in trouble, anima surges rises up and connects her to both her children and those who would harm them.
- A would-be demonologist calls out to the void, and a million voices call back as anima floods his mind.

WHERE THEY FIT IN THE SECRET WORLD

Warlocks have often played the roles of leaders or advisors to leaders: roles in which their deep understanding of the connections between people and the surrounding world gives them insight and power. Some say King Solomon (a great wizard king) and Merlin (legendary advisor to a legendary king) may have been warlocks.

In the Secret World, warlocks are known as healers and destroyers. Because of their connection to those around them, warlocks understand their targets intimately. When they wield anima, it's always personal.

WHY THE SECRET SOCIETIES WANT TO RECRUIT THEM

Warlocks make great team players. They comprehend the ebb and flow of authority, energy, and morale throughout a cabal. They know when to step in to help, and when to step back and let others take charge. They are versatile agents in the war against darkness, capable of both keeping the front line standing and fighting on that front line themselves.

Starting Attributes: Agility d6, Spirit d8

Starting Skills: Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Focus d8

Starting Edges: Arcane Background (Bee), Assault Rifle Conduit, Blood Magic Conduit, Blood Magic Specialist

Starting Gear: Assault Rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8+1, RoF 3, AP 2), blood magic charm

NEW HINDRANCES

HAUNTED (MINOR OR MAJOR)

The hero is haunted by a ghost, demon, or other ethereal entity dedicated to making his life difficult. As a Minor Hindrance, the haunter inconveniences the hauntee by doing things like hiding possessions, breaking valuables, or waking them up in the middle of the night. As a Major Hindrance, these inconveniences become dangerous. Once per session, when the hero's player draws a Clubs in combat (or when the GM feels it's appropriate), the hero becomes Distracted or Vulnerable, or must make an attribute roll at -2 to avoid being hurt by the haunter's antics.

MONSTER MAGNET (MAJOR)

This agent attracts trouble—specifically, the type of trouble with sharp teeth, nasty claws, and a violently aggressive personality. While in combat or in some other situation where a monster can choose to attack this character or another, the monster always chooses this hero. ("Monster" in this case excludes humans and Bees.)

SMART MOUTH (MINOR OR MAJOR)

The character has a problem with authority figures. Whether it's a faction superior, an arrogant CEO, or the local cop, the hero can't help giving them lip—even when trying to cooperate with them. Some find this attitude refreshing, but most are quick to slap them down.

As a Minor Hindrance, the character suffers a -1 penalty on Performance and Persuasion rolls when interacting with authority figures. As a Major Hindrance, the penalty increases to -2.

UNSTABLE MAGIC (MAJOR)

The magic-wielder isn't in complete control of his powers. When things go wrong, they go *really* wrong. If the caster rolls a Critical Failure while activating a power, not only does he suffer the standard Backlash, but he and everyone within 5" are Shaken and Distracted.

Only characters with Arcane Backgrounds can take this Hindrance.

NEW EDGES

BACKGROUND EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND (BEE)

While Bees may be human, Gaia has imbued them with abilities far beyond those of normal humans. These abilities are fueled by anima, which is represented by Power Points.

Requirements: Spirit d4+

Arcane Skill: Focus (Spirit)

Starting Powers: A Bee starts with two Conduit Edges (see below), each of which gives them its own sets of powers.

Power Points: 13



Available Powers: A Bee's powers are determined by their Conduit Edges (see below) and what conduit (weapon or magic charm) they are wielding.

Magic: Bees may take Power Edges that require Arcane Background (Magic), Arcane Background (Any) or Arcane Background (Bee). Bees may not take the New Powers Edge.

Agartha Access: Because they vibrate at the proper celestial frequency, Bees can easily enter Agartha through its many portals.

Destiny of Luminance and Shadow: Bees are destined to do great and terrible things, but their destinies are not fixed. Two possible destinies are Shadow and Luminance, which are represented by stats that start at zero. Rules for these stats begin on page 79.

Immortal: While Bees can die, they don't stay dead. When killed, their bodies quickly regenerate and return to life, as detailed on page 80.

The Buzzing: All Bees may hear the Buzzing, the cryptic voice of the Immaculate Machine. Tuning in to the incessant chatter allows Bees to access strange and hidden knowledge, an ability that grows stronger with practice. See page 79 for details.

Anima Conduits: Like old-school wizards casting spells through wands, Bees channel their anima through the weapons and magical charms that they wield. These items are called "conduits." As a Bee masters a new conduit, they unlock its corresponding Edge, which lists the abilities they can use through that conduit.

For example, a Bee with the Assault Rifle Conduit Edge can use its Anima Boost, Eagle Eye, and Lock and Load abilities at Novice Rank, Fire in the Hole and Lucky Bullet at Seasoned, and Razor Wire and Sharp Shooter at Veteran.

Bees start with two Conduit Edges (determined by their archetype), and can take up to two more per Rank after Novice.

Some conduit abilities are powers. Bees use these powers according to the core rules, spending Power Points per the power description.

Other conduit abilities are not powers, and don't require a roll to activate, but still require Power Points. To use these abilities, the Bee must spend a **limited free action** and the listed number of Power Points. These abilities are marked with an asterisk. (*)



ASSAULT RIFLE CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding an "assault rifle" type conduit weapon, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

- **Anima Boost:** *Energy arcs from the automatic rifle to those it deems worthy of its blessing.* The Bee has the *healing* power and can use it at Smarts range, but can't heal themselves.
- * **Eagle Eye:** *Looking down the rifle's sights, the Bee can see everything.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to ignore penalties for Dim or Dark illumination for an hour.
- **Lock and Load:** *The Bee's rifle puts down an extraordinary spray of fire.* The Bee has the *burst* power.

Seasoned

- **Fire in the Hole:** *The Bee launches a grenade from a hidden launcher on the rifle.* The Bee has the *blast* power.
- * **Lucky Bullet:** *The Bee is supernaturally steady as they line up the shot.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to gain the Steady Hands Edge for the next five rounds.

Veteran

- **Razor Wire:** *The rifle launches a special grenade that explodes into a zone of pain.* The Bee has the *damage field* power.
- * **Sharp Shooter:** *Guided by anima, the Bee shoots like a marksman with twice their experience.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to ignore all penalties on their next shot.



BLADE CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding a “blade” type conduit weapon, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

- *** Martial Discipline:** *The Bee has an answer for every attack.* Up to three times per encounter, the Bee can spend a Power Point to increase their Parry by +1 until the end of the encounter.
- *** Steel Echo:** *The blade glows with arcane energy.* The Bee has the smite power (self only).
- *** Wind Through Glass:** *A sudden burst of wind speeds the warrior to where they need to be.* The Bee has the sloth/speed power (self only, speed only).

Seasoned

- *** Dancing Blade:** *The Bee’s blade becomes a whirlwind of destruction.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to gain the Sweep Edge (or Improved Sweep if they already have Sweep) until the end of their turn.
- *** Shadow Play:** *Sporting a set of climbing claws, the Bee can scamper up any vertical surface.* The Bee has the wall walker power (self only).

Veteran

- *** Spiral of Death:** *The Bee vanishes in a puff of smoke, then reappears in a spiral of flashing blades.* The Bee has the teleport power (self only).
- *** Surging Blades:** *The Bee is a blur as they dash forward, blade at the ready.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to increase their Pace by 4 until the end of their turn.



BLOOD MAGIC CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding a “blood magic” type conduit charm, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

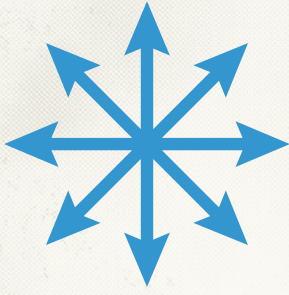
- *** Angelic Aegis:** *A soothing green mist descends on the wounded.* The Bee has the healing power.
- *** Boiling Blood:** *Wisps of green energy rise up around the target, who begins to scream.* The Bee has the bolt power.
- *** Infusion:** *The Bee’s blood repels all invaders.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to become immune to poison and disease for the next hour.

Seasoned

- *** Anesthesia:** *A sickly green fog wraps itself around the victim’s head, replacing the oxygen there.* The Bee has the slumber power.
- *** Corrupted Blood:** *The Bee’s fingers drip with greasy green corruption.* After a successful unarmed attack, the Bee can spend a Power Point to force the target to make a Vigor roll or suffer the effects of Mild Poison.

Veteran

- *** Coagulation:** *The Bee’s glowing blood rushes to the site of the wound to work its magic.* The Bee can spend one Power Point each day to make a natural healing roll.
- *** Possession:** *Wisps of green energy wrap around the victim’s limbs, and begin to move them as their own.* The Bee has the puppet power.



CHAOS MAGIC CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding a “chaos magic” type conduit charm, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

- **Hand of Change:** *What appear to be rocks and other debris hurl themselves at the target.* The Bee has the *bolt* power.
- *** Prisoner of Fate:** *With chaos magic, what should be a sure thing no longer is.* Once per encounter, the Bee can spend a Power Point to choose a foe within Smarts range. That foe must reroll their next successful Trait roll and take the worst result.
- **Shell Game:** *By sheer coincidence, attacks upon the Bee land on the chaos charm shield on their back instead.* The Bee has the *deflection* power (self only).

Seasoned

- **Illusion:** *Chaos plays tricks on the target's mind, causing them to sense what might be there, but isn't.* The Bee has the *Illusion* power.
- *** Pattern Recognition:** *With chaos magic, nothing is certain.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to choose an ally within Smarts range. That ally can reroll one failed roll on their next turn.

Veteran

- **Smoke and Mirrors:** *The Bee's image is reduced to a slight shimmer.* The Bee has the *invisibility* power.
- *** Wheel of Misfortune:** *In the chaos of conflict, it's hard to keep track of the sequence of events.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to swap the action cards of any other two characters.



ELEMENTALISM MAGIC CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding an “elementalism magic” type conduit charm, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

- **Electrical Storm:** *Sudden winds create a localized tornado that crackles with lightning.* The Bee has the *havoc* power.
- **Flame Strike:** *A gout of flame slams into the target.* The Bee has the *bolt* power. Those hit with the bolt may catch fire.
- *** Mind Over Matter:** *The Bee knows flame and heat, and can sense it through doors, walls or other obstacles.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to gain *infravision*: until the end of the encounter, halve the *Illumination* penalties when attacking warm targets.

Seasoned

- *** Altered States:** *Water becomes air in the elementalists' lungs.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to become *Aquatic* for the next hour: they can't drown, and move their full Pace when swimming.
- **Molten Earth:** *The ground bubbles with intense, flesh-melting heat.* The Bee has the *damage field* power.

Veteran

- *** Grounded:** *Earth becomes air beneath the elementalists' hands.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to gain the *Burrowing* racial ability until the end of the encounter.
- **Storm:** *A mighty wind answers the Bee's summons.* The Bee has the *fly* power.



FIST CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding a “fist” type conduit weapon, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

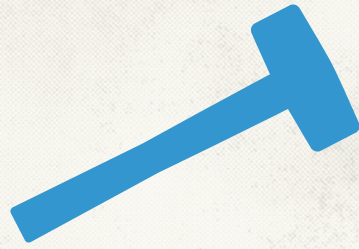
- *** Bushwhack:** *The Bee’s knees sparkle with power.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to leap, per the Leaper racial ability.
- **Healing Sparks:** *Sparks of power flicker up and down the body, bring succor to the tormented.* The Bee has the *relief* power.
- **Killer Instinct:** *Electrical-looking sparks dance across the Bee’s fists.* The Bee has the *smite* power (self only).

Seasoned

- **Pack Leader:** *Electricity arcs across the body.* The Bee has the *boost/lower Trait* power (boost only).
- *** Reckless:** *The Bee lashes out further than wisdom or physics should allow.* By spending a Power Point, the Bee increases their Reach by +1 until the end of the encounter.

Veteran

- **Ferocity:** *The Bee’s eye glow an electric red.* The Bee has the *warrior’s gift* power.
- *** Gore:** *The Bee attacks with supernatural savagery.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to add +1 to all melee damage rolls until the end of the encounter.



HAMMER CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding a “hammer” type conduit weapon, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

- **Epicenter:** *When the hammer drops, the ground rises, clawing at the Bee’s enemies.* The Bee has the *entangle* power.
- **Excessive Damage:** *The Bee’s hammer vibrates with potential power.* The Bee has the *smite* power (self only).
- *** Stonewalled:** *A layer of stone covers the Bee’s flesh.* Once per encounter, the Bee can spend up to 3 Power Points to gain that much Armor until the end of the encounter.

Seasoned

- **Immovable Weight:** *The hammer glows. The Bee’s enemies stagger beneath phantom weight.* The Bee has the *sloth/speed* power (sloth only).
- *** Stone Cold:** *The Bee’s skin resembles thick stone.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to gain the Hardy racial ability until the end of the encounter.

Veteran

- **Piledriver:** *The Bee slams their hammer to the ground here, and the ground there explodes.* The Bee has the *blast* power.
- *** Brick Wall:** *The hammer grows, and the Bee grows to match it.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to increase their Strength and Vigor die types by one until the end of the round.



PISTOL CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding a “pistol” type conduit weapon, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

- **Gun Crazy:** *The Bee’s pistol fills the air with more bullets than possible.* The Bee has the *burst* power.
- *** Gun Fu:** *The Bee is a master blaster.* The Bee can spend up to 2 Power Points to ignore up that number of points of penalties on their next Shooting roll.
- **Shake and Bake:** *The pistol shoots a stream of what must be rubber bullets.* The Bee has the *stun* power.

Seasoned

- **Fear and Wonder:** *The Bee twirls their guns in an impressive display.* The Bee has the *confusion* power.
- *** Mad Skills:** *The Bee knows every enemy around every corner.* The Bee can spend up to three Power Points to “mark” that number of enemies. Until the end of the turn, they get +1 on Shooting rolls targeting marked enemies.

Veteran

- **Bullet Ballet:** *The Bee launches a fusillade of bullets into the air; they come down as deadly rain.* The Bee has the *blast* power.
- *** Straight Shooter:** *The Bee’s bullets fly as if steered by minds of their own.* The Bee can spend a Power Point to ignore up to 2 points of called-shot penalties on all Shooting rolls until the end of the turn.



SHOTGUN CONDUIT

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

While wielding a “shotgun” type conduit weapon, the Bee can use the following abilities at the following ranks:

Novice

- **Breach Party:** *The shotgun’s explosive rounds create craters where enemies once stood.* The Bee has the *blast* power.
- *** Scattershot:** *The shotgun’s magic bullets scoff at cover.* Before firing, the Bee can spend a Power Point to reduce their target’s cover bonus by 2.
- **Shield Formation:** *A shimmering shield appears around the Bee.* The Bee has the *protection* power (self only).

Seasoned

- **Stopping Power:** *A shimmering wall appears between the Bee’s allies and enemies.* The Bee has the *barrier* power.
- *** Sure Shot:** *The shotgun knows how to hit its enemies’ weak spots.* After rolling for damage from the shotgun, the Bee can spend a Power Point to make the target Vulnerable or Distracted.

Veteran

- **Bean Bag Rounds:** *The shotgun unleashes what appear to be bean bag rounds.* The Bee has the *stun* power.
- *** Raging Bullet:** *The shotgun glows and roars with every shot fired.* Before firing the shotgun, the Bee can spend a Power Point to set its damage at Medium range equal to its damage at Close Range.

FACTION FAVORITE

Requirements: Novice, member of a secret society

Maybe they're a suck-up. Maybe they just know where too many bodies are buried. In any case, the agent adds +2 when making a Favor roll.

KNOW THE SIGNS

Requirements: Seasoned, Smarts d8+

The Secret Worlder has been around long enough to recognize the symbols of the hidden powers when they see them. These may include such items as arcane symbols scratched into the dirt, occult rules engraved on ancient stones, or faction graffiti spray-painted on an underpass. They add +2 to all Academics, Common Knowledge, or Occult rolls made to identify mysterious symbols. (At the GM's discretion, more common symbols may not even require a roll.) Once the symbol is identified, they also discern its hidden meaning, such as whether it marks a territory border, serves as a guidepost for those who seek it, stands as a warning to outsiders, or is part of a larger set of ritual markings.

SECRET IDENTITY

Requirements: Novice

As a member of a global conspiracy, the agent has an alternate identity that appears completely legitimate to all but the most obsessive scrutiny. The identity is listed in all the right databases, and comes with at least one piece of documentation (such as a passport). This Edge can be taken multiple times to provide multiple identities.

URBAN EXPLORER

Requirements: Novice, Survival d6+

The Urban Explorer knows their way around abandoned buildings, sealed-off rooftops, and the tunnels that run beneath city streets. They may use the Survival skill in the city as well as in the wilderness. Furthermore, they never get lost while in a city: they always know which way is north, where the landmarks are, and the fastest route to reach their destination.

COMBAT EDGES

DRIVE BACK

Requirements: Novice, Strength d8+

This character may push an enemy (as described under "push" in *Savage Worlds*) with a successful Fighting roll, rather than an opposed Strength roll. The Fighting roll deals damage as normal.

TRICKY FIGHTER

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility or Smarts d8+, Fighting d8+

The character ignores the multi-action penalty from performing a single Test on the same turn as a single Fighting attack.

POWER EDGES

BLOOD MAGIC SPECIALIST

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Any)

The spellcaster has unlocked the mysteries of blood magic, which can heal as well as injure. When they successfully activate a power, they produce a surge of restorative blood magic energy, which may unshake any number of Shaken characters within 5".

CHAOS MAGIC SPECIALIST

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Any)

By its very nature, chaos magic can never truly be mastered, but the caster has begun to understand its secrets. When they successfully activate a power, a wave of pure chaos washes over them, giving them one point of Armor until the beginning of their next turn.

ELEMENTAL MAGIC SPECIALIST

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Any)

Wielders of elemental magic have discovered how to add the sting of fire, ice, or even electricity to their magical attacks. When a caster with this Edge successfully uses a power on an enemy, that power deals 1d4 damage to that enemy, in addition to any other damage the power may deal. The caster chooses elemental trappings for the damage dealt.

GAIA'S BLESSING

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Bee)

Those chosen by Gaia to be transformed into Bees are blessed with anima, which they can use for various supernatural effects. Most such effects are represented by the Bees' powers, but Bees with this Edge can also spend one Power Point to do any of the following: cancel the effects of hunger, thirst, or lack of sleep; cancel any amount of falling damage; or magically refill the magazine of a firearm they are holding.

SOCIAL EDGES

COLD READ

REQUIREMENTS: Novice, Notice and Persuasion d6+

The hero can read a person like a book. They can discern a target's strengths and weaknesses by making either a Notice roll (during surveillance) or Persuasion roll (when in person). On a success, they learn one of the target's Hindrances or Edges (of the GM's choice); on a raise, they learn two.

GASLIGHTER

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+

The Gaslighter is such a great liar, people believe their lies over their own memories. For example, they can convince someone that the demon they saw was a madman in a costume, or that the zombie bite on their arm came from a wild dog. ("It was dark in there, wasn't it? And the thing that bit you was low to the ground and growling, right?")

Gaslighters add +2 to Persuasion rolls when telling a reasonable-sounding lie.

WEIRD EDGES

BOUND WEAPONS

Requirements: Novice

A hero with this Edge has up to two weapons of their choice permanently bound to their person. The specifics of the binding are up to the player and GM. Perhaps the weapons are physically implanted, or can be magically summoned from a pocket dimension, or manifest at will from a cloud of nanites. In any case, the weapons must be acquired per normal before binding, can

only be wielded by their owners, and can't be damaged, lost, or stolen. Producing the weapons is a limited free action.

LIBRARY CARD

Requirements: Novice, Occult d6+

The Innsmouth Academy boasts one of the most extensive occult libraries in North America. The wielder of the Library Card (likely an alumnus of the Academy) has access to this library. Regardless of where they are in the world, they can use the library card to request books pertaining to a specific magical subject and, if available, those texts will be provided to them through metaphysical means. Only one book may be borrowed at a time. It gives a free reroll on all related Occult and Research rolls, and magically returns to the stacks after three days.





CHAPTER THREE: GEAR

In *The Secret World*, all the non-futuristic gear listed in *Savage Worlds* is available. Even items like military hardware can be acquired either for purchase (on the black market) or through the heroes' secret societies (and Favor rolls); the heroes are assumed to be very well-connected.

Only military vehicles and vehicular weapons present a true challenge for the agent who simply must have the most outrageous toys. Sneaking a tank off an army base isn't quick or easy, even for the Illuminati. (Oh, it *can* be done, but it costs twice the listed price, and can take weeks for delivery.)

Weapons: Note that the weapons listed below are commonly issued to agents of the big three conspiracies. They are slightly better than their normal counterparts, as they have been upgraded to be lighter and more effective in battle. See *Savage Worlds* for firearm magazine costs and weight.

Conduits: The weapons and charms listed below each have an entry for "conduit type," which indicates which Edge the Bee needs to activate their powers through that item. The weapons can still be used normally by anyone, even those without the Edges. The charms, on the other hand, are useless to those without Arcane Background (Bee).

GEAR

Item	Weight	Cost
Bug Detector	1	200
Notes: This handheld tool can detect any surveillance devices within 10 feet.		
C4 Plastic Explosive	1	50
Notes: C4 resembles gray clay, comes in bricks about 1 foot long and 4 inches wide, and is accompanied by a blasting cap that can be triggered remotely. C4 can only be detonated by its blasting cap. Once detonated, a 1-pound brick of C4 deals 3d6 damage within a Medium Blast Template.		
Enhanced Smart Phone	.5	n/a
Notes: Every Secret World faction has its own proprietary version of this device, which looks, at first, like a high-end smart phone. While it has all the features of a cutting-edge device (camera, voice-activated apps, GPS, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, enormous hard drive, etc.), it also boasts enhanced security, connectivity, and faction-specific features. The phone can only be unlocked by a combination of biometric and password, its communications are all highly encrypted, and its use and location are only trackable by the faction that issued it. The phone can connect to satellites (so it's never out of service) as well as encrypted local networks (so it can serve as a personal comm link between you and the rest of your cabal). Finally, each faction installs its own software on its phones to securely communicate with its agents and aid them in their missions.		
Gas Mask	1	75
Notes: This rubber mask filters out smoke, particles, and toxic gasses such as tear gas. It protects the eyes, nose, and mouth. The wearer is immune to such gasses and particles if they are non-magical, and adds +4 to the Vigor roll to resist them if they are magical.		

Grappling Gun	8	1000
Notes: This device, about the size of a sawed-off shotgun, can shoot a small steel grappling hook on a 50-foot long, carbon fiber filament rope. After firing, the wielder can retract the hook, thus lifting or pulling the user (up to a weight capacity of 250 lb.) if they hold on, at a rate of 25 feet per round.		
Healing Drone	5	1000
Notes: An advanced drone with its own limited AI, the healing drone measures about 16 inches in diameter and is controlled by its own unique controller. By default, the drone hovers two feet above and behind its user (though this can be adjusted). Through its controller, the drone monitors its user's blood pressure, heart rate, and skin temperature. When the user is hurt, or at the user's command, the drone shoots a dart full of drugs to revive and invigorate the user. In game terms, the drone can use the Healing skill at d6, at a range of 3", three times before having its darts replaced.		
Holy Water	.5	20
Notes: Use Athletics to throw (or Fighting if engaged). Range 1/2/4. If the target is a demon or undead, it takes 2d6 damage.		
Tactical Survey Drone	2	500
Notes: This hand-sized drone can be controlled through either a smartphone or a dedicated transceiver with a video screen. The drone is equipped with a video camera and microphone, and transmits whatever it sees or hears to its controller. It can travel up to a quarter mile away from the controller and can reach an altitude of 500 feet. Its charge lasts up to 1 hour. It has a Hardness of 4, but due to its small size, those attacking the drone must subtract 2 from their attacks.		
Thermographic Camera	5	500
Notes: Also known as an infrared or thermal imaging camera, this digital camera records still and video images of heat patterns. It can be used to "see" through walls and other barriers, and detect warm-blooded creatures within 200 yards.		

ARMOR

Item	Armor	Min Str	Weight	Cost
Biohazard Suit	0	d6	30	500
Notes: This plastic overall includes a gas mask and rubber boots and gloves. It makes the wearer immune to contamination from diseases, gasses, particles, or chemicals—including Filth. It has a built-in rebreather with its own two-hour oxygen supply. If the wearer takes damage, the integrity of the suit is breached. At the GM's discretion, the wearer may be able to hurriedly patch the tear with duct tape or something similar. Otherwise, the suit loses all effectiveness. The suit offers no armor, and armor cannot be worn with it.				
Integrated Anima Conduits	0	d4	10	1500
Notes: Each faction has its own version of this specialized suit, which channels anima for increased combat effectiveness. It is only useful when worn by a Bee. The suit is form fitting and can be worn under civilian clothes. While wearing the suit, Bees recharge Power Points at a rate of 10 per hour, rather than the normal 5 per hour.				



MELEE WEAPONS

Type	Conduit Type	Damage	Min Str	Weight	Cost	Notes
Battle Hammer	Hammer	Str+d8	d6	2	400	Two hands
Bladed Cestus	Fist	Str+d4	d4	1	200	Parry +1
Tactical Blade	Blade	Str+d6	d4	1	300	High-tech short sword

RANGED WEAPONS

Type	Conduit Type	Range	Damage	AP	ROF	Shots	Min Str.	Weight	Cost
Assault Rifle (5.56mm)	Assault Rifle	24/48/96	2d8+1	2	3	30	d6	8	450
Combat Shotgun	Shotgun	12/24/48	1-3d6	1	1	6	d4	8	200
Notes: See Shotguns in the core rules.									
Pistol (9mm)	Pistol	12/24/48	2d6+1	1	1	17	d4	4	300

CHARMS

Charms are hand-held items used as conduits for channeling a Bee's anima. Each charm is unique, and is often created by its wielder. Charms are not weapons, and do no damage by themselves.

Type	Conduit Type	Min Str	Weight	Cost
Blood Magic Charm	Blood Magic	d4	.25	300
Chaos Magic Charm	Chaos Magic	d4	.25	300
Notes: Chaos magic charms resemble shields that are worn on the back, technically leaving the users' hands free. However, wielding the charm still occupies one hand, since activating its conduit abilities requires specific one-handed gestures.				
Elementalism Charm	Elementalism	d4	1.25	300

TALISMANS

Agents of the Secret World conspiracies have access to not only the tools of traditional spycraft and advanced gear that seems like science fiction, but magical equipment as well. Magic items come in thousands of different forms, each with its own arcane quirks and requirements, but the most common are referred to as "talismans."

Talismans are small, enchanted objects that characters can carry on their person. Talismans are divided into seven categories: head, finger, neck, wrist, waist, luck, and occult. The first five correspond to where they must be worn to be effective; the last two categories of talisman aren't worn, but rather carried (usually in a pocket) or brandished as needed. An agent can wield up to seven different talismans, one of each category. (They can carry more, but extra talismans have no effect.)

Some talismans have an ongoing, passive effect. Others need to be activated by their users, who spend an action and momentarily focus on the intended effect. Still others can only be activated in response to a trigger (such as when the user gets hit), and are activated as a reaction or free action. Some talismans can only be used a limited number of times before they have to recharge. The details of how each talisman is activated and recharged are listed in its description.

Heroes can find talismans in secret stashes, receive them from their superiors, buy them on the magical black market, or even take them off fallen enemies. The GM is encouraged to create their own unique talismans, using the ones listed here as a guideline.

There are countless different types of talismans in the Secret World. Below is a small sample of the most common ones.

Accelerating Chronometer

Wrist Talisman

At first glance, this talisman looks like a mundane, if expensive, wristwatch. A closer look reveals that the numbers on the clock face have been replaced by runes, and there are six different clock hands spinning at various speeds. The Pace of the wearer of this talisman is increased by 1.

Ankh

Occult Talisman

This talisman is a pocket-sized ankh made of iron and crudely hammered into shape. When an enemy within line of sight is Incapacitated, the wielder may brandish this talisman to cast *healing* using their choice of either Smarts or their arcane skill.

Ashes of Crushed Cities

Head Talisman

Appearing more as ancient armor than modern jewelry, this talisman is a leather headband lined with metal studs. If the wearer of this talisman hits a target that is Shaken or Wounded, they add +2 to their damage roll.

Barbelith Wire

Waist Talisman

The "wire" is a seamless loop of silver links. It has no opening or fasteners, but grows and shrinks to fit whoever slips it onto their waist. If the wearer deals damage to an enemy who doesn't see them, that enemy's Pace is reduced by half (to a minimum of 1) for the remainder of the encounter.

Biker's Charm

Occult Talisman

The most common version of this talisman consists of a motorcycle key welded to a palm-sized sprocket. When the bearer Incapacitates an enemy, they may activate this talisman as a free action to restore 1d6 Power Points to themselves and all allies within 5".

Blood Halo

Head Talisman

The halo is a thin, red metal circlet with a small ruby inset in its center. Once every 24 hours, the wearer may cast *healing* and *protection* on one target with a single roll, using their choice of either Smarts or their arcane skill.

Bracer of Horus

Wrist Talisman

The talisman is a 5-inch-long bronze metal bracelet decorated with Egyptian hieroglyphics. When an enemy gets a raise while attacking the wearer, the wearer may cancel the hit entirely, before damage is dealt. The talisman cannot be activated again until after the next dawn.

Fishbone Medallion

Neck Talisman

This medallion is a circle of amber on a fine silver chain. Inside the amber are seven fish bones, arranged in such a way as to make an ancient rune. The wearer of this talisman has the Hard to Kill Edge.

Golden Coin

Luck Talisman

This coin is clearly very old, but the markings are worn and seem to change over time, so it's impossible to tell how old it truly is or where it originally came from. But one thing is clear: it's definitely lucky. When an enemy rolls a Critical Failure while attacking the coin's holder, they not only miss, but take the damage they would have inflicted had they hit.

Rune Dice

Luck Talisman

This talisman consists of a pair of hardened clay dice. Each of the six sides displays a different rune; between the pair there are 12 runes in all. The talisman can only be activated if the wielder has both dice. If the wielder gets a raise on an attack, they roll a d8, rather than a d6, for bonus damage.

Rurikid Knot

Finger Talisman

The knot is a golden ring covered in ornate filigree. The wearer's flesh is somewhat hardened, giving them Armor +1, which stacks with all non-magical Armor.

Seed of Aggression

Luck Talisman

Not a comfortable talisman to wear, the seed is a jagged piece of bone on a coarse length of twine. The wearer has the No Mercy Edge.

Serpent Venom Ring

Finger Talisman

This ring looks like a pale green viper with tiny ruby eyes. When the wearer successfully damages an enemy with a melee attack, if that enemy is susceptible to poison, the enemy is Distracted.

Waistguard

Waist Talisman

This talisman is a metal belt buckle (typically steel or brass) etched with runes that occasionally give off a soft glow. The wearer of the talisman has the Combat Reflexes Edge.





CHAPTER FOUR: THE SECRET WORLD

While the surface of the Secret World may look like our own, its depths hide untold mystery and danger. This chapter presents an in-depth look at the world and global secret societies competing for control of it.

LIFE IN THE SECRET WORLD

In most ways, the Secret World setting is much like our own world. People work, love, waste time online, seek what pleasures they can, and hope for a better future. Governments and corporations rise and fall, forever chasing power and wealth. Technology lurches ever forward, always two steps ahead of our ability to use it wisely. The natural world struggles to endure its man-made prison, and occasionally explodes into raging storms and other catastrophes.

But those who live in the Secret World can't shake the feeling that something's *not quite right*.

THE MUNDANE WORLD

Even those who have known nothing but the mundane world can sense that something is wrong. Shadows flicker at the corners of their eyes. Foreboding looms behind conscious thought. A darkness seems to permeate the world: hungry, patient, and somehow alive.

The world is dangerous. Crime is up. Tempers are short, and violence is common. Protests in the streets turn to riots. Riots simmer on the edge of revolution ... only to be crushed beneath still more violence. Natural disasters are increasingly common and deadly. People vanish. Sometimes, a lot of people vanish.

The world is strange. People tell of weird creatures in the woods, in the sewers, or in the

back alleys. There are places where people vanish, or come back changed. New sects and faiths bubble to the surface, attracting followers with promises of power that just might be true.

And yet ...

And yet, no matter how dangerous, weird, or ominous the world may be, it's never acknowledged.

The news media focuses on meaningless political scandals, the fluctuations of the economy, celebrity gossip, cute animals, and sports. Mysterious deaths go unreported. Strange sightings are unmentioned. Those events that are too big to ignore are explained away as gas leaks or hoaxes. Even when a glimpse of the darkness slips into the public eye, it's gone by the next news cycle: erased or buried beneath a tidal wave of drivel, noise, and advertisements.

Those in authority are just as bad. Politicians may gesture vaguely toward "social unrest" and pay lip service to "getting back to normal" during election season. But once comfortably in office, they settle into their cocoons of corruption and complacency. Law enforcement likewise scurries around on the surface of the hidden world, scraping up and smoothing over anything that might disrupt the corporate machinery while ignoring the festering at the world's core.

Then there are those individuals who try to point out the darkness, the danger, and the unanswered questions. The internet and social media have given them platforms. The loudest have turned their rants into lucrative enterprises, and they spout theories so ludicrous that no one can take them seriously. Others are dismissed as crackpots. They're laughed at and shunned. Still others simply disappear. These lone voices in the wilderness are examples of what happens to those who refuse to keep their heads down and their minds distracted from the feeling that something's *not quite right*.

BEYOND THE MUNDANE

There is no single path to enlightenment.

Some witness the unexplainable, and follow their curiosity through the veil of the mundane into the Secret World. Some hear bits of truth from the conspiracy theorists who make the most sense, and discover still more truth beyond. Some experience a spontaneous supernatural awakening, with insights that expand their minds so that what was hidden is now exposed.

Others are recruited. They have skills, knowledge, or some rare essence that makes them valuable to a conspiracy, secret society, or mad scientist. Not all recruits come willingly. Not all recruits survive.

Still others are born to it. Theirs is a legacy of secrets and power. Though they may not know it at first, the Secret World is part of their heritage, and its mysteries are in their blood.

Regardless of how they step through the looking glass, new Secret Worlders are often overwhelmed by a series of revelations.

First is a sense of relief. They *aren't* crazy. They aren't the only ones sensing the chaos growing in the world, and the efforts of the authorities to cover it up. Everything they'd suspected about the world is true ... or true enough. They are more than relieved. They are *vindicated*.

Second is the realization that their old lives are over. They know too much. They've seen too much. Once they've stepped behind the curtain, they can't pretend to ignore the sets being moved or the operators pulling the strings. Furthermore, their knowledge marks them. They're a liability in the eyes of those who demand secrecy—or a possible asset to those who need new recruits to carry out their secret agendas.

Finally, they realize that *everything is true*. Every conspiracy theory, every urban legend, every fairy tale and monster myth is true in some way. It's all here. It's always been here, just out of sight. The magnitude of this revelation is as terrifying as it is awe inspiring. For the darkness they sensed is darker than they could have known. The chaos and danger are worse than they could have imagined.

And yet ...

And yet there is hope.

THE HIDDEN TRUTHS

The Secret World contains a vast array of hidden truths. Many of them are powerful. All of them are dangerous. Those living in the Secret World may encounter any of these things as an enemy to be destroyed, an asset to be used, or an ally to be betrayed when the time is right.

MONSTERS

Traditional monsters such as vampires, ghosts, werewolves, and zombie-like undead stalk the night. While their specifics might not match the legends (and even the legends themselves aren't in agreement), such supernatural creatures are not uncommon in the Secret World.

Other unnamed and eldritch beings likewise lurk in the darkened corners of the world. Spawn of cosmic horrors, these hideous beasts are alien in mind and body. They can neither be reasoned with nor easily destroyed.

CONSPIRACIES

Every conspiracy theory contains a seed of truth, and those seeds bear much fruit in the Secret World. Conspiracies bind the world in secret threads, connecting people and places of power to the pawns who carry out their will.

Cults thrive both in the shadows (such as the ancient Egyptian Cult of Aten) and in the daylight of commercialized self-help (such as the Morninglight). Many cults are dedicated to the worship and service of otherworldly beings, who often bless them with inhuman abilities.

More insidious than any cult is the Orochi Group, one of the largest and most powerful multinational corporations in the world. Through its countless subsidiaries, Orochi has its tentacles in virtually every industry. From health care to consumer goods, there is no aspect of modern life that Orochi does not touch. The company uses this influence not only to increase its own power and wealth, but also to harness forbidden sources of arcane energy. Orochi will sacrifice any number of employees, customers, and innocent bystanders to secure its hold over the planet.

SECRET SOCIETIES

The Secret World is riddled with clandestine organizations of various sizes, agendas, and areas of influence. The three most powerful are

the Illuminati, the Templars, and the Dragon. While they oppose each other, they all stand opposed to the various cults, conspiracies, and supernatural entities that threaten the globe. Self-preservation is an even greater motivator than greed or powerlust.

The Illuminati are manipulators and puppet masters who seek power and wealth above all else. They are ruthless, ambitious, and exceptionally well connected. The Illuminati see all, know all, and will use any means necessary to reach their goals.

The Templars are dedicated to saving the world from evil through the use of brutal, overwhelming force. A military-minded society, they are more concerned with defeating the enemy than maintaining their secrecy. They are zealots willing to make any sacrifice to achieve victory.

The Dragon are quiet conspirators whose primary weapons are subtlety and patience. Their plans are long term and nuanced. They offer whispers of advice and gentle nudges to turn the paths of empires and the tides of history. While other secret societies seek to control the world, the Dragon controls fate itself.

The factions are not always a Bee's friend, however—they can be paranoid, and there are often sinister, hidden depths to their structures. They do—and have done—ruthless things in pursuit of their aims. The leaders of these societies do not necessarily have the best interests of humanity at heart.

LIVING IN THE SECRET WORLD

Knowledge is power. Secret Worlders know the truth of the world, and that makes them powerful. This is especially true if that knowledge unlocks supernatural abilities. It also makes them a target to those who would silence them or prevent them from using that power.

They must decide: What will they do with their power?

PICK A SIDE

Some new Secret Worlders choose to go it alone. So long as they keep their heads down, pretend they don't know what's going on, and never draw the attention of the various cults, conspiracies, and supernatural entities around them, they may live long enough to die of old age.



But the moment they interfere with someone's plans or start to wield their own influence, the clock starts ticking. They're living on borrowed time.

This is why most of those in this situation choose to join up with a secret society. These powerful groups protect their members, guide them through the labyrinth of conspiracy around them, and train them in how to use their power to its greatest effect. Of course, each society has its own ideas about how power should be used. And all of them require service in return.

SECRET MISSIONS

Whether earning their keep for their secret societies or (less commonly) pursuing their own personal agendas, Secret Worlders can find much to keep themselves busy. Here are just a few of the more common missions:

Conquer the Objective. Before a secret society can control something, it must first conquer it. This could mean literally conquering territory, whether a city, a region, or an entire nation. Or maybe it's an industry: Orochi dominated the aerospace industry, for example, through its Manticore Research Group subsidiary. The objective could also be a more abstract area of influence, such as a police department, a professional organization, or a trending hashtag. Whatever it is, it's worth controlling, and it's up to the secret society's operative to take it over.

Deliver the Goods. Delivery missions aren't always glamorous. "Get the package to the Paris office by end of day" seems like a job for a brown-clothed courier, not a supercharged Secret Worlder. But if the package is a ticking bomb, a snarling vampire, a sports car, or a briefcase chained to the wrist of the world's most wanted criminal, it changes things. Things get even more complicated if the person who was supposed to receive the delivery is dead, missing, or mutated into a bloodthirsty beast. Or ... if the address is wrong.

Destroy the Danger. The world is constantly in danger. Cults summon up earth-shattering things they cannot put down. Tech companies unleash untested chemicals, evil machines, and deadly memetic campaigns for the sake of next quarter's earnings. Other conspiracies tamper with things beyond their control and endanger all life as we know it. Governments, law enforcement, and even the military are useless. They're incapable of even comprehending the

threat, much less facing it. No, it's up to the other inhabitants of the Secret World to confront and neutralize these dangers. After all, as the secret societies say, there's no point in ruling the world if there's no world left to rule.

Infiltrate the Enemy. Sometimes the best place to wreak havoc is from the inside. If the Secret Worlders can't get someone on the inside to betray their allies, they themselves may slip inside the group to destroy it from within. Of course, they don't have to destroy it right away. While undercover, they can feed their enemies useful lies, steal data, and subtly push their own agendas. And when the time is right, they may use their enemies as a tool against some other opponent, then let them twist—and burn—in the wind.

Investigate the Unknown. The world is strange and mysterious, with new secrets and dangers emerging all the time. What's that green mist over the fields of Scotland? What are those lights above Lisbon? Where did the 218 cultists in Detroit vanish to, and where are their dogs? To find out, Secret Worlders need to look for clues, talk to witnesses, and check local records—without drawing attention to themselves. Luckily, members of the Secret World are uniquely qualified to investigate these incidents—and capitalize on them for their own benefit.

Oppose the Rival. The Dragon, the Illuminati, and the Templars are all committed to controlling the world and reshaping it to their designs, which makes conflict between them inevitable. As a member of one of these secret societies, a Secret Worlder may find themselves caught up in that conflict. They might be on the front lines, literally fighting and killing to advance their side's agenda. Or maybe their "front line" is in front of a computer screen a thousand miles away. Or maybe the battle is over the soul of a single person: Will he remain true to his sect, or can the operative turn him? It's easy to forget, with all of their common enemies, that the societies are fundamentally opposed to each other. In the end, there can be only one.

Preserve the Silence. Keeping the Secret World a secret is vitally important, and it's something that most conspiracies can agree on. Covering up the truth might be as simple as flashing a badge at a witness and convincing them to keep their mouth shut. Blackmail may be an option. Murder often is. Or the cover-up might require an elaborate ruse involving dozens

of reporters, drones with cloaking devices, and a pair of clueless politicians willing to believe the worst about each other. The more moving parts involved, the more that can go wrong. On the other hand, it's the elaborate plans that often evade scrutiny, since common sense suggests that no one would go to such lengths to hide the truth.

Protect the Powerless. While some Secret Worlders use their power to build up their wealth and influence, others use it to watch over those they love in the mundane world. Maybe they take care of their family through an anonymous trust fund. Or they protect a small town from monsters, or expose the crimes of the corporation where they used to work. Such efforts are usually small and personal. Grandiose schemes tend to get complicated, and complications draw the attention of other Secret Worlders. The last thing these protectors want is for their pet projects to get caught up in some dangerous conspiracy.

Recruit the Ally. In the same way the Secret Worlders stepped from a world of bills, school, and work into one of conspiracy, magic, and

danger, they may wish to help someone else take that step. Perhaps they have an eye on someone who is supernaturally gifted and would make a great asset. Maybe it's an old friend. Or maybe they have no idea why the leaders in their secret society are so eager to have them kidnap this old man and bring him to the safe house, but they know the only way to learn is to follow orders and find out.

Research the Mysteries. Many conspiracies have been around since the beginning of recorded history. The supernatural has been around even longer. And some mysteries go deeper still, passing from history, through myth, into something that mundane historians can't even dream of. These are the secrets worth researching through archaeology, weird science, and sometimes even stranger methods.

Secure the Target. In this context, "securing" the target might involve meeting a black-market dealer, raiding a cult's stronghold to eliminate its current owner, or even orchestrating a heist requiring a safe-cracker, a test pilot, and a ventriloquist. Likewise, the "target" could



be anything: a gun, an ancient artifact, a USB drive full of state secrets, or the mistress of a corporation's CEO. Some operatives make a career out of "securing targets." It's a lucrative profession.

Seize the Power. Being part of the Secret World means having access to the hidden levers of power. While the secret societies, cults, and conspiracies vie for control of various parts of the world, there is enough potential power that any ambitious Secret Worlder can claim it. If they can hold it, they can increase their own wealth and influence. For some, this means rising through the ranks of their secret society. For others, it's personal. They are masters of their own domains. Those domains may be small, but they can grow over time. Perhaps eventually, the Secret Worlder will be the head of their own secret society.

Watch the Watchers. Conducting surveillance isn't always exciting. But the best place to do it is from within the Secret World. Watchers aren't just watching for its own sake; they have questions they're hoping to answer. How is the subject getting his stolen artifacts? Who is the traitor in the cult? Where does the CEO go every Tuesday at 3:33 a.m.? Surveillance isn't always a physical stakeout. Sometimes it's digital or electronic, as when Secret Worlders scan the target's online data transfers. It could even be magical, through the use of scrying spells or artifacts (magic mirrors, anyone?).

THE BIG PICTURE AND THE BIG CHOICE

Slipping from the mundane world into the Secret World can take but a moment. It may even seem a small thing. But for those who discover the Secret World, it is the most important event of their lives.

Those who live in the mundane world sense the darkness around them, and the chaos howling at the edges of what they know to be true. Some see with their own eyes the horrors and strangeness that everyone so studiously ignores.

The worst part is the constant undercurrent of fear. They know something is wrong but don't know what. They don't know how to find out. And any serious investigation is quickly stymied and mocked. The unknown is terrifying, and they are floating on a vast sea of the unknown.

But once they cross over into the Secret World, the unknown is revealed. While countless mysteries remain, simply being able to put a *name* to the things that lurk in the shadows relieves much of the fear that has been their constant companion.

Oh, there is still much to fear. Monsters, cults, and world-ending conspiracies abound, each more horrible and threatening than the last. And yes, there is still much that remains unknown. But Secret Worlders are armed with the very best tool for fighting fear and uncovering hidden secrets: knowledge.

Armed with this knowledge, they have something that they never had in the mundane world: power to truly change their lives. Before, living lives of unspoken fear, manipulated by forces beyond their comprehension, they were essentially powerless. They were cogs in the conspiracies' machines. Unwitting tools of the very system that kept them oppressed. Impotent. Frightened. Imprisoned.

But now they have freedom. They have hope. And they have a choice.

Secret Worlders must each answer the question for themselves: "Whom shall you serve?"

The question goes deeper than simply choosing a secret society. For even while carrying out the schemes and agendas of the various powers behind the scenes, the question remains.

For in the end, there are but two choices.

The first, easiest choice is to serve oneself. Free from the fear of the unknown, filled with the power that comes from knowledge, it's almost instinctive to use this new life purely for self-gratification. It's understandable. After being trapped for so long, it feels great to have money, influence, and true control over one's life.

The second choice is to serve the world. Now that the Secret Worlder sees the big picture, and realizes the truth of the danger that reality faces every day, it may seem foolish (as well as selfish) to put one's own pleasures ahead of the common good. They need not be saints or martyrs. They may not need to do anything more than carry out their society's orders. But if the moment comes, they need to decide whom they will serve, and at what price.

SECRET SOCIETIES

There is no such thing as coincidence, chance, or luck. Everything happens for a reason or because someone, somewhere, had a plan. Civilizations have always had a group that pulled the puppet strings from the shadows. Rulers and the religious have been trained to cooperate and share just the right amount of control and wisdom that can keep the masses loyal and useful. These societies ultimately control the direction of human civilization and carry secrets of how human life began.

Some of these societies are content to protect humanity, as long as humanity conforms and follows certain rules. Other groups want only money and power, with an agenda to control everything that exists on Earth. Still, other organizations are patient, and use the madness that is creation and the advancement of humanity to their advantage. Order, power, and chaos are all at the center of the societies' manifestos.

Whether hidden in plain sight, veiled in shadow, or arrogantly operating in the open for all the world to see, the societies function to this day. As the Ages came and went, knowledge from each became a faint echo even to the most knowledgeable Secret Worlder. Most people are content with the history they read in school and see on documentaries. The history collected by the secret organizations sheds light on the very origins of Earth and its first inhabitants. The average person would consider this knowledge sacrilege or fantasy.

There are three main societies that fight to safeguard Earth with the goal of claiming superiority over the planet. A single group called the "Four and Sixty" originally protected Gaia's domain from humans and other creatures, but it later split into the "Big Three" ... or so many have been led to believe. Any real information about the Four and Sixty is mired in allegory or simply lost, but men of renown, such as King Solomon, builder of the temple, were members.

Most members of the secret societies are "non-Bees," whether they are human ... or otherwise. The Bees are just the ones they scramble to get for themselves.

Each faction has a goal that they consider mutually beneficial to themselves and humanity. The Templars regard order and following rules as the key to any successful civilization. The Illuminati seek money and power, and find that those they control are the best sources for fulfilling these needs. The Dragon waits in the shadows for the day all other societies and factions effectively eliminate one another as they fight for domination. Out of the chaos the Dragon will rise, to rule when all other organizations fall to ruin.

Within the Secret World, each group has its own creed and set of rules, but each has a part to play for Gaia ... and even more so for themselves. Recruitment into a secret society is done so quietly, most do not even realize at first that they were being watched, evaluated, and then chosen. Numerous internet forums claim to be affiliated with a secret society, or that they are the society itself. The imposters may be well meaning, or else seeking to make a profit by using the mystique of a secret name. Joining any organization comes with a risk, but joining a secret society is a choice with significant lifetime consequences ... if you're even given a choice in the matter to begin with. After all, there are those within any secret society who prefer the "hard sell."

The life of the society recruits is not an easy one. Each society demands all-consuming loyalty. While other factions exist, their power and standing are nowhere near that of the Illuminati, Templars, or Dragon. The Templars and Illuminati are spoken of even in mundane conversations and conspiracy circles. Time has built the mystique and the stories, and the factions have become intriguing legends to the outside world.

To survive in the world of intrigue, mingling with the secret societies is a risky venture. Recruits are pushed to the limit of their endurance and sanity. Loyalty is constantly tested, and stealing a member from another society is encouraged. Knowledge is power, and the more power one society can gain over another, the better. The ultimate goal is domination and control over the choices made to protect and rule the planet. The humans of the current Age whisper and search for information about secret societies, not knowing how dangerous their inquiry can become—or how they may regret learning more than they can safely comprehend.



ILLUMINATI

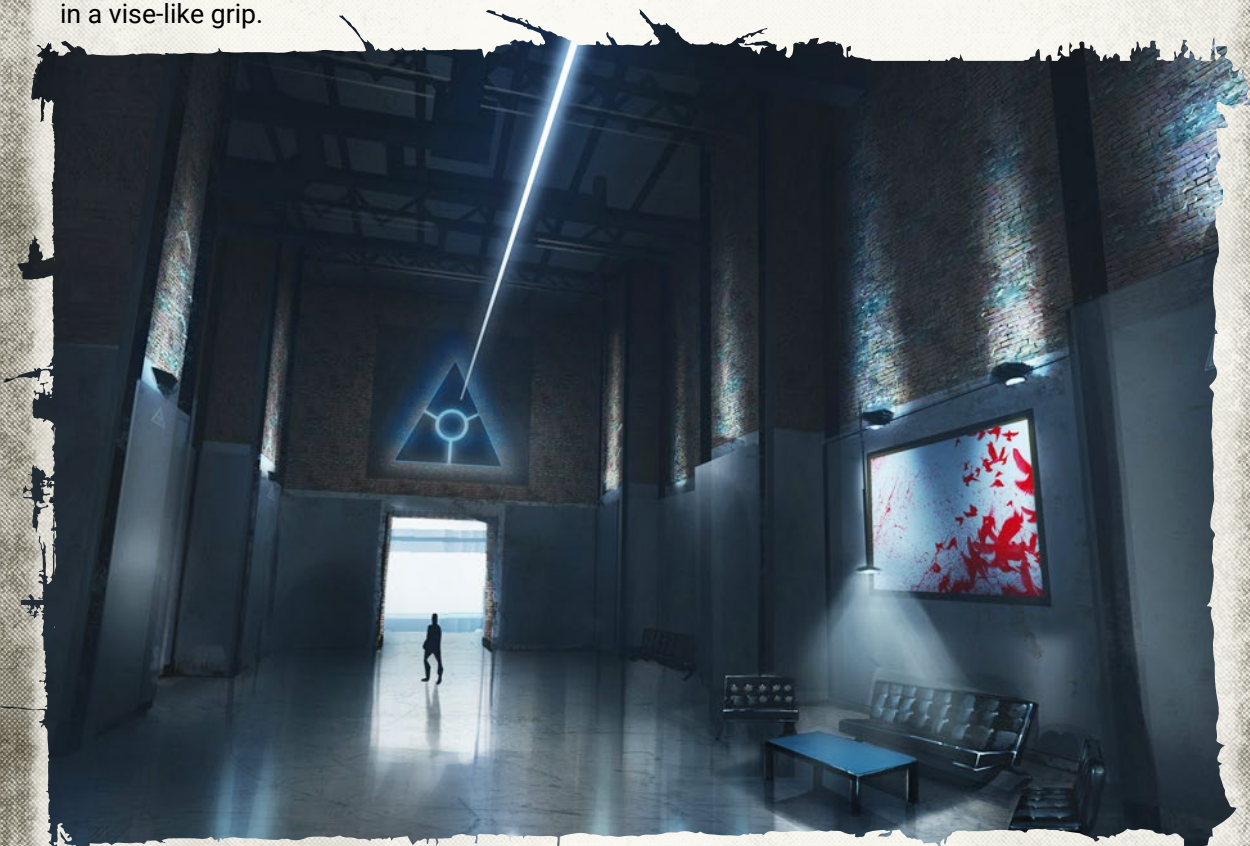
"Sex, drugs, & Rockefeller!"

This faction is somewhat more popular in conspiracy circles than most. The very word "Illuminati" conjures up visions of wealth, control, and manipulation. The conspiracy theories are not completely without merit, but they lack depth. The Illuminati are deeply entrenched in every major government and security agency across the world. They are not an illusion or just a name—they are an entity that holds the world in a vise-like grip.

HISTORY

Somewhere during the time of the ancient Egyptian empire, and after their split from the Four and Sixty, the Illuminati came to be and created ripples in the fabric of the world's Fourth Age. At least that is the accepted truth outside the walls of their headquarters. Apocryphal rumors claim the elite leaders of the Illuminati know the true birth of the secret society occurred in a prior Age, and that a vault of powerful artifacts from the Third Age gave them an edge all through the Fourth. Whether this is true or false (or an Illuminati PSYOP bluff) is unknown.

Around 6000 BCE, the Illuminati appeared in history books known only to those of the Secret World. Egypt and its growing empire intrigued the power-hungry faction. Eventually, the Illuminati installed their own people in temples, armies, and merchants' guilds. They chose Pharaohs for their own purposes that would steer the empire in the direction of greatest wealth and prosperity for the Illuminati. When a Pharaoh would fail, or the people turned from them, the Illuminati simply found another leader loyal to their ideals and ambitions. In this way, the Illuminati pulled



the hidden strings and celebrated gains, while never having to take responsibility for the losses.

During this time another faction, the Templars, formed an uneasy partnership with the Illuminati. The rival factions supported one another in their quest to secure control of Egypt and eventually the growing empires in the Mediterranean. The Templars were the protectors of the Egyptian rulers and their priests. The Illuminati controlled the political agendas and expansion of the empire. Though the two factions often maneuvered against and fought each other, this on-again, off-again partnership proved beneficial for millennia.

When Egypt became too limiting in terms of power-seeking for the Illuminati, they expanded throughout the continent of Europe. They flooded the Roman Empire with their agents, infiltrating forums and even the inner circle of emperors. The Templars aided this endeavor, and both factions had success up into the Dark Ages. The rivalry continued, with one faction's tactics pulling it ahead of the other (and back again). Their influence and power grew with each new century and each lesson learned from failed or prosperous societies.

However, the Illuminati have always valued power and forward progress. The Templars became entangled in inner turmoil as the Crusades of the 11th and 12th centuries raged through the Arab empires. The Illuminati chafed under these theocratic ties, leading to a series of conflicts and irreconcilable differences between the already competitive rivals/allies. After years of hidden and even open conflict, the Templars hunted the Illuminati until they all but seemed to vanish.

When the first settlers of the New World began to establish their roots on the shores of what is now the United States, the Templars were sure they would be the fathers of a new nation. They were shocked to discover the Illuminati alive, well, and entrenched. The Illuminati had no intention of letting the Templars control a new land. The Illuminati had insinuated themselves into expeditions to the New World. Having gotten the jump on the Templar, they lit the flames of revolution between the colonies and England. When the fog of war cleared, the United States was formed; the Founding Fathers put down roots in their new country; and the Templars were forced to watch the Illuminati control the

new, fertile land that overflowed with promise and innocence.

Without the direct influence of the Templars or the Dragon, the Illuminati set up their headquarters in New York City, intent on controlling the growth of their new country. Recruits were easy to find and maintain, as the growing population simply had to be taught to fight for their freedoms. The specter of autocracy could always be used to control the masses and remind them that freedom was a tenuous thing. A little nudge in one direction or another from the Illuminati, and mobs would fulfill the visions of their strategically placed leaders.

As before, with Egypt, the Illuminati always had a hand in elections, laws, monetary projects, and government involvement in the everyday lives of citizens. If a president could not complete a mission or refused the will of the Illuminati, they were considered expendable. One example was the four-term president Franklin D. Roosevelt, who followed the Illuminati manifesto by leading the country into World War II and supporting the creation of apocalyptic weapons. When he refused to use these weapons, his presence was no longer necessary. Another president, John F. Kennedy, failed to escalate tensions with Eurasian powers, leading to his demise, though the team tasked with his elimination was uncharacteristically sloppy.

As the 21st century began, a new generation of technology was becoming a fixture, even in poverty-stricken homes. The home computer opened the dimension of infinite knowledge via a web of connected networks. Anyone that could connect to the internet was now a fresh canvas to manipulate and use. Information could be uploaded or removed within seconds, and a few forums of like-minded individuals who were given a few breadcrumbs to follow created the perfect scenario for controlling the masses.

Currently, the Illuminati are concerned with the Filth and the unsettling discovery that someone out in the world is trying to awaken the Dreaming Ones who sleep in the Gaia Engines. Why anyone

Any claims of "accuracy" in these "histories" is merely what is written, or said, or claimed, or believed by the easily led. The truth, as with so many things, may be very different from what it appears.

would see waking the Sun Eaters as a viable next step in advancing an agenda is not known by the Illuminati. They only see the situation as messy and lacking any future merit. The Filth must be eliminated, the Dreaming Ones must sleep, and the Illuminati must continue their dominant rule of North America.

VISION

Power, control, money, success, and excess are all means to an end for the Illuminati. If something cannot increase their power, or at the least maintain it, then it's of no interest. All interactions are based on the amount of power or money that can be acquired. The Dragon and Templars have their ancient gods and goddesses, but the Illuminati acknowledge only the higher power of capital and the records of their numerous investments.

Recruits are chosen for their strengths and their ability to find the weaknesses of others. Conspiracy theories are encouraged and even expounded upon by the tech-savvy members of the faction. "Complete the mission and climb the ladder" is the mantra of the agents. The only concern should be for the faction and ensuring it survives when the others fall short.

Every employee is compensated well, and payment is swift following the completion of an assignment. Charity begins at home, so the Illuminati are rarely seen as altruistic members of society. Their agents never lack money or options for increasing their bank accounts. Giving to the less fortunate is a waste of perfectly good money that could be used for the finer things in life, like sex, drugs, and the pursuit of eternal happiness.

There are no inherited roles in the Illuminati. While families do tend to choose the same line of work as previous members, this doesn't mean a child inherits a parent's position. All movement within the company is based on merit or lack thereof. Since the restructuring of the organization by incoming executive recruiter and handler Kirsten Geary, every assignment has been even more closely monitored. Those who produce results are an asset, and those who find only failure are a liability.

All missions are approved or created by the "Talking Heads." This group is equivalent to a

board of directors for a corporation. Impressing the Talking Heads is a rare occurrence. These are mysterious people that even the most prestigious executive may never meet face to face. All decisions are final, and no one questions the wisdom of the Talking Heads.

The Illuminati will be the last faction standing. They will play the long game and outlast the others. The world needs protection and guidance and the illusion that choice is real. When people feel safe and in control of their own lives, they're willing to give up anything for what they've been taught is the greater good. Simply put, sacrifice the few for the good of the many.

SYMBOLS

The all-seeing eye and the pyramid are the symbols used to identify the Illuminati. Since their days in ancient Egypt, the Illuminati have prided themselves on the imagery that they can display in plain sight. The one-dollar bill in the United States is printed with a pyramid and the all-seeing eye. While all currency boasts the creed "In God We Trust," the dollar bill is the stamp of ownership placed on the United States by the Illuminati. These images are so ingrained into society that they appear in fashion magazines, in movies and television, and as graffiti on walls.

PROMINENT MEMBERS

KIRSTEN GEARY

A former self-proclaimed Valley Girl, Kirsten Geary didn't seek out the Illuminati—they found her. Amateur necromancers on the hunt for human sacrifices encountered Geary without realizing she would fight back. Instead of becoming their sacrifice, Geary became the aggressor, extracting precious information through torture and eventually death. When she arrived at the New York headquarters with information concerning the two dead agents, her survival and detective skills impressed a recruiter enough that they offered her a chance to prove herself within the organization. Using her human resource degree to keep shoving her foot in doors, Geary eventually became the main handler and recruiter for the Illuminati. All new Bees report to her, and she prides herself on the fact that she rewards or punishes her recruits personally.

I am never sure if the Talking Heads are just crazy enough to know what's really going on. —Z

Impressing her is nearly impossible, but if the chance comes an agent's way to make their mark, Geary encourages this, as competition keeps the organization fresh and constantly seeking improvement. Geary made sure to secure her own position and value early on by being ruthless and taking chances on alliances that hadn't been previously considered because of taboos. Her alliance with the "House-in-Exile," a group of demonic Japanese oni, in exchange for monetary support, was considered risky but became profitable. The oni were already structured like a military branch and their assassinations were flawless. They worked for money and protection, while the Illuminati benefited from the oni's connection to the demonic leaders of different factions and dimensions.

ERIN MAHLER

Every organization has an internal affairs department. Erin Mahler runs this department, Q&A (Questions and Answers), for the Illuminati. Her history is known only to the Talking Heads, but no one wants to be sent to her office. A summons from Mahler means death. There are rarely second chances with the Illuminati, and those extraordinary occurrences usually involve severe punishment. If Kirsten Geary is considered ruthless and cold, Mahler is her mirror image.

DR. CHARLES ZURN

Not every mad scientist is a liability. Primarily experimenting with and implementing biological and chemical research, Zurn is invaluable to the Illuminati. Whereas the Orochi and Dragon tend to become sloppy and the Templars are too focused on guidelines, the Illuminati allow Zurn freedom. Geary trusts him to keep the medical breakthroughs coming, and Zurn doesn't disappoint.

ALEX MCCALL

A high-ranking agent in the Illuminati, Alex McCall stumbled upon the existence of the faction while investigating murders in Manchester, England. An expert in chaos magic, McCall has dabbled in the occult and in power-seeking activities since childhood. Sarcastic, hard, and quick to avoid emotional entanglements, he is nevertheless loyal to his team and the goals of the faction. McCall was present during the Tokyo incident and witnessed the emergence of the Filth following the explosion in the subway of Kaidan.

SENATOR CICERO

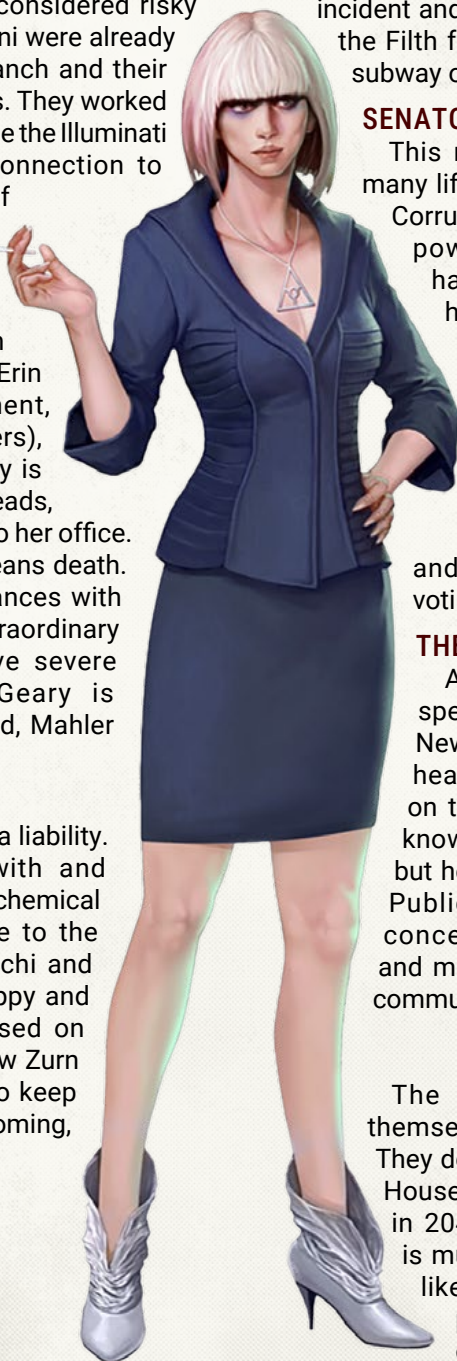
This man is bought and paid for many lifetimes over by the Illuminati. Corrupt and answering only to his power-hungry faction, Cicero has long ago forgotten what his personal political platform was or if he even had one. A sleazy, sex- and alcohol-addicted politician, Cicero was elected to the state of Michigan many years ago. He has made a career out of following Illuminati orders and corrupting the public into voting for him repeatedly.

THE PYRAMIDION

A voice that is heard over the speakers in the headquarters in New York, the Pyramidion is the head of the Illuminati. No one on the floor of the headquarters knows who or what this man is, but he is obeyed without question. Public service announcements concerning Illuminati business and mission briefings are the main communication from the Pyramidion.

ALLIES

The Illuminati don't consider themselves to have any real allies. They do have an agreement with the House-in-Exile that is set to expire in 2040. It only exists because it is mutually beneficial, and it's not likely to be renewed. All other partnerships are on a case-by-case basis. The Illuminati do



not see the need to seek help or offer it, unless the very safety of the world is on the line.

The House-in-Exile. This current alliance is more of an experiment. The group of demon assassins has proved useful and efficient, but everything eventually becomes obsolete.

The Council of Venice. This peacekeeping group is composed of members from all three major factions. An alliance (or at least civil communication) is expected. The goal of the Council is to make sure no single faction becomes strong enough to overshadow the others and dominate the world.

ENEMIES

The Illuminati considers anyone who is not aligned with their organization an enemy. Some they will challenge, others they do not find significant enough to notice.

The Templars. These former allies are far too structured and oppressive with rules and inherited positions of status for the Illuminati to find anything of value in a relationship.

The Orochi. This corporation's CEO is a famous celebrity who has been making headlines since 2012. However, the company is trespassing on Illuminati territory in Egypt and the United States, trying to become a contender in the competition to rule humanity. This is not acceptable.

The Phoenicians. Money-hungry agents that are not to be trusted, they are the black sheep of the secret societies. The Illuminati use this group only when it's necessary, and they rarely are forced into such scenarios. There is always another way. Besides, the Phoenicians are supposed to be protecting humanity from the horrors they cannot see. They are not allowed to participate in the battles between the major factions, but all else is fair game.

The Dragon. Ancient and hailing from the First Age, the Dragon are simply the products of chaos. They see no other means than to seek absolute anarchy and turmoil, and this makes them unpredictable and almost cult-like. There is no good to be had from aligning with such a volatile organization.



THE TEMPLARS

"Deliverance From Evil"

They are the staunch defenders of justice, law, and all that is righteous. That is what they tell themselves and the world. Other factions hide and keep themselves as secret as possible, but the Templars are prominent in society and see no reason to conceal their existence, only their methods. The Templars have their secrets but are not so mysterious in how they function. Unlike the other major factions, the Templars conduct their operations out in the open. Rigid and militaristic, they see no reason to conceal their intention, and that is to save the world. The problems come when the world doesn't want or need saving—and the Templars never take no for an answer.

HISTORY

The Templars claim the role of first faction in existence. Whether that is correct isn't a concern to them. They hail from Ancient Babylon, long before the tower was even built. Their sibling faction, the Phoenicians, are nothing but a brute-muscle and mercenary-minded ally of the past. Both factions were created through a partnership between two brothers, possibly the biblical Cain and Abel. At some point there was a critical disagreement between the brothers. The tower fell, the brothers went their separate ways, and the Phoenicians and the Templars were no longer affiliated. What the dispute was about was never known. Rumors suggested a human woman was part of the conflict.

Formidable but arrogant, the Templars looked with a critical eye for their next alliance. In ancient Egypt they encountered a group known as the Illuminati. Power-hungry but intelligent, the Illuminati installed Pharaohs, priests, and the right merchants to ensure the optimal progression of the civilization. The Templars lent their skills of military protection. If one of the chosen government officials failed to follow the rules or strayed from Templar law, the Illuminati eliminated the offender.

As the Illuminati focused on the political and economic corners of society, Templars began to recognize that their strengths of persuasion and obtaining order were useful for controlling religions. In the name of faith, with the promise of salvation or the threat of damnation, humans would bend and bow to the specter of a greater power. To test this theory, the Templars incited unrest within the people as the Pharaoh Akhenaten declared the priests unnecessary and erected a temple to the one true god of the sun. Faced with the loss of their gods and their way of life and protection, people raged against the godless Pharaoh and his house. Akhenaten fell, the priests returned, and the temples reopened to worship the Egyptian pantheon. Whether or not the Illuminati were aware, the Templars had made it clear that the true power lay with their faction. Men wanted leadership, a vision, and religion to remind them of their mortality. Yet, they wanted the promise of something greater. Once they believed, they would remain loyal and follow any and all of the proclaimed laws of their deity.

Eventually, the Templars felt limited in Egypt and agreed to branch out north and west into the Mediterranean and Europe with the Illuminati at their side. The partnership was still intact at this point, with each faction playing their proverbial role and the masses controlled and thriving. The Templars congratulated themselves for a job well done in the advancing society. While they excelled at following laws and rules to the very letter, the Templars were also unyielding in their stance concerning law, order, and punishment. This led to the fall of Rome, in accordance with the Illuminati's plan, and the birth of a new movement, Christianity. Testing the influence of religion once more, the Templars aligned with the Church left after the Roman Empire was deconstructed.

The Dark Ages were rampant with raids by warring clans from the Germanic regions and in the Celtic lands. The word of the Christ and his Father God began to flood through the territories conquered by former Roman generals, and as the centuries passed, more pagan peoples were converted as the Templar influence grew. Greater authority meant that a larger group of people were needed to maintain the scope of power and control. This created violent infighting, and the Templars orchestrated betrayals to prove their strength and glory.

Disgusted by the vulgar display of egotism and rampant treachery, the Illuminati broke all ties with the Templars and dedicated themselves to becoming the largest and most dangerous faction. On the world stage, the Templars launched a mission to hunt and kill any Illuminati in an effort to end the society. On the inside, the religious zealots were purged, treasonous influencers were killed, and new leaders were chosen. If a group as lacking in morals as the Illuminati were repulsed by their absence of self-control, things needed to change.

Returning to their roots within religious circles, Templars worked with the Pope to begin Crusades into the Holy Land. With the trust of the Papacy, Templars installed their own people in every court in Europe to maintain a semblance of peace and diplomacy as the nations of France and England warred with one another. Templars were now kingmakers. It was one such king that ordered the execution of a religious order masquerading as the Templars. The Knights Templar were amusing at first, but their extreme dedication to Christianity and their desire to cleanse the Earth of any other faith was not productive. The deity did not matter, the devotion did, and the Templars couldn't control multiple cultures if their name was tied to one religion.

As the centuries progressed, more monsters posed a threat. Demons and other foul beings from fiery dimensions were common, as well as humans practicing dark magic. Without fail, Templars vanquished these practitioners of evil, always reminding those they saved that evil was animalistic and that their humanity was what gave them the ability to choose to do good or succumb to evil.

Vampires, werewolves, witches, and creatures from within the fiery dimension of Hell and beyond were their targets. Human witches were tortured to discourage further training in magical

arts that happened outside the halls of faction headquarters. Many of the accused were burned or skinned alive to appease the Christian God. The Spanish Inquisition was at one point halted for fanatical hunting practices.

When they began hearing about lands to the west of the ocean, the Templars made plans to set foot on the shores of the New World. Believing they had pursued the Illuminati to near extinction, they began preparing to send ships, expeditions, and missionaries in the name of the Church. They did not worry that they might have to share real estate with the other faction. It was their arrogance, again, and the belief that they were above reproach that were their undoing.

Illuminati spies were thriving within the Templars, and they landed in the New World. Over the course of decades, they installed themselves as mayors and governors of the British lands. At the opportune moment, the Illuminati staged the American Revolution, and the Templars effectively lost exclusive rights to the future United States of America.

Another failure of this magnitude was a bitter pill for the Templars to swallow. As both factions worked from the shadows, responding to the dread blossoming of a second world war, the Templars once again let pride nearly destroy them. Despite nightly bombings and failing naval support, they waited until the near fall of Great Britain before asking for assistance from the Illuminati. However, as several leaders over the course of the 20th century began creating an atmosphere of autonomy and taught people to question their loyalties to God, country, and government, a reluctant association with the Illuminati was necessary. It wasn't until nearly the 21st century that both factions had once again wrapped their fist around the population and eradicated the free thinkers. As before, they went their separate ways.

At present, the Templars are still enemies of the Illuminati and have nothing but disdain for the chaos-stricken Dragon. Unable to find a foothold in the United States, their headquarters is at Temple Hall in London, England. They are focused on the current Filth situation and containing the growing monster population. There is a rip in the dimensions between Earth and Hell, and a growing number of infected Filth Humans march through cities and towns. Since the state of affairs is so dire, partnerships in the field are necessary, but when the threat

is neutralized, the Templars will restore their order and continue to be the same transparent organization as always. Why operate in the shadows when you can stand in the light and still pull the puppet strings?

Once the most powerful faction of all, now the Templars are at a crossroads. At least the string of failures set into motion a true reform of the order that continues into the 21st century. Lineage and rank matter, but they are not the focus. Recruits are not necessarily "old" blood, and ancestry isn't a necessity to climb the ladder within the organization.

Still, their methods and libraries of codices and spells are woefully archaic. Dusty tomes on shelves that reach vaulted ceilings fill their archives. Meanwhile, the average citizen on the street can download a copy of a similar text to their e-book device. Tradition is a blessing and a curse. The Templars are growing and making genuine efforts to catch up to the pop culture and technology of the Fourth Age. Only the commitment to good separates humans from animals that can be corrupted by evil.

VISION

Tradition is all that matters. Authority is followed and respected. Templars only want the bravest and the brightest in their ranks. Obeying the hierarchy fosters order. Humans crave order and to be controlled. Making sure the masses believe they have a choice and offering only options that support Templar power is the key.

Monster eradication must be a priority at all times. Constant training is required, and all targets will be live demons or equivalent creatures. Realism is important to instill true vigilance in the face of the worst that evil can create. Fear, indecision, and questions are not needed. Missions for monster extermination are clear, and there are no exceptions. Humans corrupted by magic, such as those openly calling themselves witches, warlocks, or practitioners of the Dark Arts, will be eliminated if they cannot be recruited safely.

Magic is only practiced in the field and for mission purposes. Though it is a debated topic between cliques in the faction, the current leading thought is that once the evil of the world is eradicated, all tomes and instructions concerning the practice of magic will be destroyed. The Templars will not allow the profane arts to continue when they are no longer needed. Such

spells, especially those of blood and chaos, only serve to corrupt the good and just.

Everyone is welcome to excel in their field, but bloodlines matter. It is not a matter of purity of the blood but a matter of hierarchy. Loyalty through the centuries is more valuable than simply recruiting someone from the streets. Ancestry is also important when dealing with traitors or those who have not proven diligent in their duties. Centuries may pass before the sins of an ancestor can be forgiven, but the slate is never truly wiped clean. The shadow of those that came before always looms over the current recruits.

There are few allegiances outside of the Templar ranks. The Templars are the strongest, even if that is only in their own minds, and will be the last faction standing. As far as every member is concerned, when working with a different group, it is the other who benefits from the Templar influence and glory.

SYMBOLS

The Templars are known for their bright red uniforms when formality is key. They also have a white cross on their red flags and coat of arms. Templars have always identified with the lion throughout their history, as they “roared” through the ages.

PROMINENT MEMBERS

RICHARD SONNAC

As the main contact for recruits and a liaison between members and the leaders higher in the ranks, Sonnac is polite and pristine, and his etiquette is beyond compare. He values tradition but has also opened the ranks to the possibility of recruiting those without defined bloodlines within the Templars. It is a more liberal view, but one that he feels is necessary for the Templars to grow and sustain their hold in the world.

Sonnac has been lauded as a wonderful mentor and voice of the Templars as they navigate the 21st century. There are whispers that the “old guard” of the Templars do not like him because of his radical “new ideas.” Other murmurs state that he is the true force behind the rebirth that is seeing Templar power grow once more. Whatever the case, Sonnac still adheres to formalities and mission parameters.

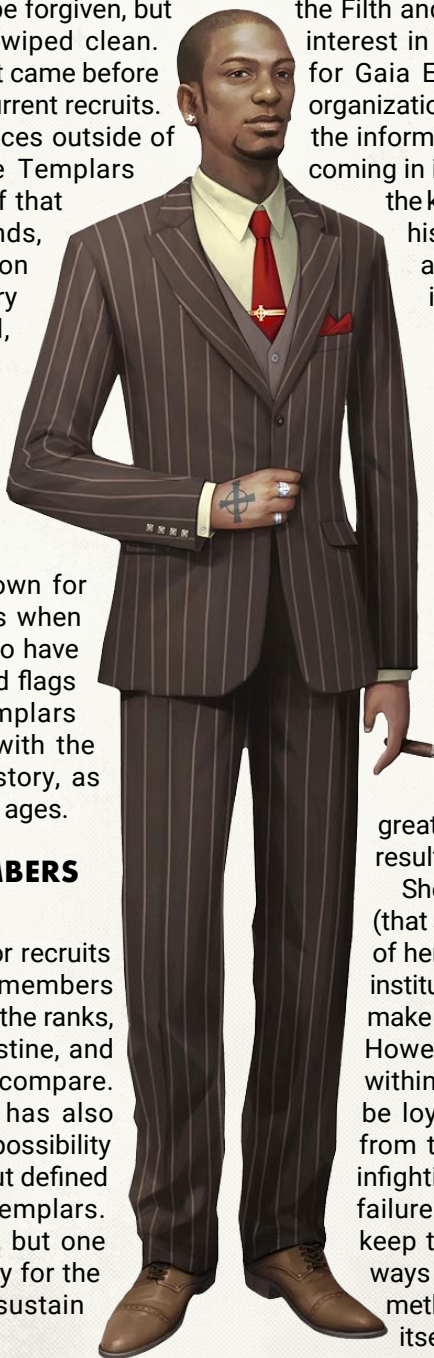
Currently, Sonnac is exploring the issues with the Filth and learning that Orochi’s CEO has an interest in building technology that searches for Gaia Engines. If someone higher in the organization needs to be briefed, Sonnac relays the information, and the information currently coming in is not good. He has mingled with all the known societies in some capacity, but his opinions of many of them are not always favorable. He has a particular interest in Kirsten Geary and her current pursuits. This is probably due to the competitive nature of the Illuminati and Templar rivalry.

DAME JULIA BEATRIX TYBURN

Dame Tyburn has been a member for most of her life. She adheres to the old ways and the old guard. She is not opposed to adding new blood to the cause, but she is not ready to see all of the structure rebuilt. Change takes time, and she sees no point in rushing things.

That doesn’t mean that as changes come, she doesn’t foster some goodwill. She assigns missions of great importance and expects exemplary results.

She has no allies within the organization (that she claims) and is reluctant to speak of herself in any way. Her loyalty is to the institution, not one person. Friendships can make a person sloppy or forget their focus. However, when someone is challenged within the ranks and she knows them to be loyal and true, she will defend them from the divisive anger. She knows that infighting has been the cause of Templar failures in the past and is determined to keep the peace, even if it means the old ways must slowly disappear. Better to see methods fade into ashes than the order itself.



ROSE WHITE

Though very young when she joined the Templars, Rose does not hold the same views as other new recruits. Bloodlines matter to her, and she values loyalty and justice as much as the first founders of the order. Her thirst for the blood of monsters stems from a personal vendetta, as she lost her family at a very young age. Revenants are her main target, but she openly destroys any monster that crosses her path. Fuzzy sweaters and shotguns are a must in the field.

She believes true Templars should stand by the order despite the failures that occurred during the Renaissance and into the Victorian Age. However, she is not as rigid when it comes to making friends in other factions. Though the Templars and Illuminati are more enemies than anything else, she has a decent rapport with Illuminati magic user Alex McCall. This is probably due to their shared determination to smite the forces of evil. They have been called to work together more frequently as the Filth continues to grow out of control.

ZAMIRA VATA

She is everything that the new Templars strive to be and more. Enthusiasm and optimism are her very nature. Her desire to see change and reform prompts many of her colleagues to shake their heads, but it's hard not to like her. Even the taciturn Konrad Engel has been known to drink with her at the Horned God in London from time to time since his expulsion from the order. Determined to live up to expectations and change the world one demon death at a time, Zamira is always ready to help further the agenda of the order and assist new recruits.

KONRAD ENGEL

Once a respected member who served as a liaison to the Council of Venice, Engel is now on a permanent leave of absence at the request of the high leadership within the Templars. Konrad upheld the rigid rules and hierarchy to the point of alienating possible new recruits and ideas. His days spent going between the order and the Council have left him jaded, and he believes he is part of the problem and less of the solution when it comes to the failures that have plagued the order in recent centuries.

PIT AND PENDULUM

The order has a pair of custodians to see that no one veers too far from its true rules and goals. New ideas are sweeping through the ranks, but that doesn't mean that the way the Templars have functioned for millennia is forgotten. Assumed to be two men with varying strengths (and forms of punishment), the Pit and Pendulum are known as sin eaters. Within the order, holiness and devotion are paramount, and if a member is thought to have deviated from this stance, their sins are feasted upon by the Pit and the Pendulum as retribution.

ALLIES

The Templars choose to believe they are the only true faction and will be the only one standing at the end of it all. They have to play along with the Council of Venice, but they see no reason to hold long-standing alliances with any other group. Occasionally, they have been known to collaborate with the Jingu clan in Kaidan, Tokyo.

ENEMIES

The Templars have many enemies. Monsters, heads of state that do not follow the right breadcrumbs, and any faction that challenges their authority. That makes the list a bit long.

The Illuminati. The Crusades put a strain on the two factions' already complicated relationship, the scars of which still show to this day. Occasionally working together is necessary if the threat goes beyond the scope of a single faction. For the most part, the Templars see the Illuminati stronghold in the United States as a rival victory that came from a great betrayal. In the end, the Illuminati will fall once their usefulness expires.

The Phoenicians. The connection was severed with the fall of the Babylonian tower constructed by the creators of the Templars and Phoenicians. Both orders went their own way, and while the Templars seek justice and to eradicate evil, the Phoenicians are mercenaries more interested in wealth and what power that wealth can buy.

The Dragon. Chaotic, and without any direction as far as the Templar can understand, the Dragon are avoided and interactions are kept at a minimum. Like with the Illuminati, the Dragon can prove helpful when the threat is on a global scale, but as is their way, they seek chaos, and sometimes missions that should be easily completed become meandering journeys into rabbit holes.

The Orochi. The major factions know the company to be a front for research and a growing faction of its own. The Orochi do not seek to ally with anyone, especially the Templars. Their interest in the occult has caused more headaches for the Templars than millennia of the Dragon and Illuminati combined, and they are a source of irritation for the major factions due to their lack of adherence to the status quo. Every faction wants to be the one that controls the world, but the Orochi are single minded in their pursuits, and the Earth suffers for their blind dedication to studying the Filth.



THE DRAGON

"The Art of Chaos"

No faction is as secretive, or as hidden, as the Dragon. They have no allies and only part-time enemies. Everything and everyone are opportunities because the winds of change always blow. A gentle breeze is the assassination of a foreign leader. A hurricane is the toppling of an entire regime and a country's system of government. Every opportunity is worthwhile, and everyone plays a part in the chaos that is life. People are equal parts useful and disposable in the eyes of the Dragon.

HISTORY

There is no hard data regarding the formation of the Dragon. There is, however, a story. Some say it takes place in the First Age if such a thing can be believed.

The story goes: There was a child prophet sitting by a pond. In a vision, she glimpsed a dragon's tail disturbing the water. Within the

nanosecond ripples of the water, she glimpsed whole galaxies of secret equations. She reached out to grab the water, tail, and equations... She was later found half-drowned. Dying, she whispered of the Dragon's open mouth and of a nine-headed naga slithering out, each of its nine heads singing nine discordant truths. With her final breaths, the child whispered these truths, and those who listened became the first converts of the Dragon.

Since their beginning, the Dragon meandered and planted the seeds of unrest. Some among the Dragon boast that they meddled in the battle between the Grigori and Nephilim, in the First Age – not caring about the outcome, only the chaos that could be squeezed from conflict. Whether or not this is true, it gives an accurate depiction of the Dragon's approach to any conflict. Regardless of the victor, the people would follow them and need guidance. However, the Dragon do not look to rule over people... but to rule reality itself. They follow their occulted models and equations, trying to hone the perfect model, one that will unlock the controls to all that was and is and will be.

The structure of this secret society comes from the seeds of that ancient story. The Dragon goes through constant cycles of seeking a young prophet, the Chosen, the Child. The Dragon's leader is always a child, who is always killed before adulthood to speed the process of reincarnation. No one outside this faction knows quite why the Dragon sacrifices the Child. Perhaps this replicates the loss of the young girl from the original story, sending an echo of the pattern through time. This cycle perpetuates through the history of the Dragon: a Child was found, the order congregated in that area, the Child was lost, the order disappeared. There is always a Child. They always appear, and the dragon always finds them.

The Silent Monks protect the child. Their other functions have never been clear. The person who translates the body language and whispers of the Child is known as the Mouth of the Dragon. Members of the Dragon take this structure very seriously, and only the Mouth may interpret the Child's wants and edicts.

The myths of the Ages sought to demonize the Dragon and its initiates with such depictions as Zeus fighting the serpent Typhon, the Christians battling Satan, Thor wrestling Jormungandr, and so on throughout time. These tales were designed



to remind people that dragons, serpents, and that which crawled were the enemy and would destroy humankind. The Dragon didn't work to dispel this theory because there were always enough people willing to look past the religious zealots and happily choose to serve the Dragon.

It wasn't until the fall of the Roman Empire that the Dragon found it worthwhile to venture further into the world. Europe abounded with fertile minds that the Dragon wanted to corrupt and confuse. Though the Illuminati had destroyed the Romans, and the Templars were fighting amongst themselves and carving out a bloody path through Christendom with the Crusades, the Dragon decided to dabble and experiment. A rumor here or a false witness there fanned the flames of madness as they grew bolder.

When merchants began to trade and visit numerous ports by sea, the Dragon devised a scheme. As random ships entered harbors, they placed rats injected with an illness and waited to see the results. How far would these ships carry the infected rodents? Who would succumb? Was the disease strong enough to truly kill, or would it be a minor annoyance? The Dragon were not disappointed with their efforts. The Black Plague swept through Europe, parts of Asia, and then North Africa, killing almost 200 million people.

In the wake of the infections and the rotting corpses, turmoil followed.

Pestilence, war, assassinations, and the rise and fall of empires were all indirectly the result of a simple intrusion by the Dragon. Their initiates were placed in the highest of courts and stood at the side of every Templar and Illuminati who falsely considered themselves the superior faction and the de facto authority. Kings were murdered with only a tiny push. Citizens rebelled and slaughtered their rulers with a slight redirection of thought and reason. Gaia's children were always seeking something to anchor them, something to give them purpose. When people were peaceful and content, the world did not shake and the fires did not burn. Where there was no chaos, the Dragon could not breathe. It was their oxygen. The solution was to always maintain an atmosphere of confusion and distress and sow discontent wherever growth and prosperity were starting to take hold.

The Dragon are believed to be responsible for the fall of the Russian Empire with the death of Tsar Nicholas and his heirs. Emperor Puyi, the last emperor of China, who abdicated in 1912, was reinstated after World War II. Then, after years of abusing his power and people, he was relieved of duty and imprisoned until his death. This saw the rise of communism, and the will

of the people dissolved. The Dragon felt more secure in the suffering of the impoverished and the glorification of the elite. The poor would always want more with no real way to obtain it, and the rich would always take more while always looking over their shoulders, knowing they had to keep a tight leash or the dogs would devour them.

While chaos is appreciated and encouraged, the Dragon do not want the Filth to engulf all reality (though there are rumors that the Dragon has recklessly experimented with Filth in their pursuit of causing chaos). Just because they enjoy seeing populations scurry like roaches exposed to light (at least, for a greater purpose—not simply for the sake of mayhem) doesn't mean they wish to see all of them ultimately destroyed. While some among the Dragon take a manic joy in the turmoil, many take this work seriously, as it is meant for a greater end. These are the times the Dragon emerge and work with the other factions, albeit grudgingly. The Filth situation in Tokyo is hitting too close to home. The Dragon's current headquarters is in Seoul, South Korea, and they must protect their Golden Child and current place of operations. Of course, the more Templar and Illuminati agents that fall before the Dragon do are a bonus side effect of the apocalypse's current manifestation.

For now, the Dragon are open to working with their enemies. The Filth would end all that is Gaia, and even the Dragon are not willing to part with their favorite plaything: humanity. Considering it a necessary evil, the Dragon sent their agents to oversee the incident at Kaidan station. In perhaps the first instance since their beginning, the Dragon now seek to end the chaos of the Filth. The Sun Eaters are not part of their plans, and even distasteful and uncomfortable alliances are worth the destruction of the Dreamers.

VISION

Chaos is the key, and every means to every end. What humans construct, the Dragon must see leveled. After all, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." One would think the Templars were part of coining that phrase, but it was the Dragon. A contented society relaxes, trusts, gets comfortable—and that reduces chaos and confusion. The Dragon need chaos to survive and continue their legacy.

Recruits are specially selected, but the Dragon are not as picky as the Templars or the Illuminati.

Sometimes, the less intelligent, or more volatile, the better. Such individuals live the chaos as well as spread it, and the Dragon are successful either way. Though the order has been dismantled and rebuilt many times, this has only served to define the true nature of the initiates and their leaders. Nothing is permanent, and everything is subject to change.

The hierarchy is rigid, but not in the same vein as other factions. Since the first vision of the young girl in China, the Golden Child of the Dragon has always been found, and there the roots are put down for the faction during that time. The Mouth of the Dragon, a translator of sorts, interprets the orders and wishes of the Child and conveys these edicts to the faction. The word of the Child is law within the ranks of the Dragon. Once they reach adulthood, the Child is eliminated, and a new child is sought. This is why there are huge gaps in history where the Dragon are not active and their place in the world is not certain.

The Mouth of the Dragon is only as vital as the Child, or their own aspirations. Like anyone, the Mouth of the Dragon can be corrupted by thoughts of domination or change. The Dragon seek to change the world, but their chain of command is clear. If the Mouth of the Dragon becomes suspect, or begins to interpret the Child in a way that is self-serving, the Mouth is relieved of duty. Their mind is wiped, and they are placed back where they came from with no knowledge of their time among the Dragon.

A group of Silent Monks watches over the headquarters of the Dragon, and the Child specifically. Their purpose isn't stated or known, and they simply oversee the organization at every level. Joining their ranks, or leaving them, isn't a choice. Silent Monks appear and disappear regularly, but the cause is not known. However, the Monks, the Mouth, and the Child are the triad that forms the Head of the Dragon. Their word is final.

Headquarters for the faction are not easy to find. However, agents of the Dragon limit the population of the town or city where the Child was found, making it resemble a ghost town. The fewer people to watch the comings and goings of the Dragon's elite, the better. There is a reason they are the most hidden and secretive faction and have remained so for millennia.

SYMBOLS

The Dragon use the symbol of the mythical creature of legend that shares their name. A black dragon upon a green background is what identifies a member of the faction if they wish to make their presence known. The symbol scares those who have no business near a Dragon member and intrigues those who might be useful to the organization.

PROMINENT MEMBERS

THE CHILD

The prophet, intelligence, or ruler of the Dragon is the Golden Child. In the ancient story, a young girl saw a dragon in a vision and reached for it, and her story set the stage for the Dragon to take form. Every generation's Child is different. They are the reincarnation of the first child who had the vision. Taken from their homes, the Child then directs the Dragon in their pursuit of world domination.

Like the Buddhists seek their Dalai Lama, the Dragon always seek their Child. It must be a child, as an adult is past the point of innocence and can create discord in the system. The Dragon welcome chaos they create, not chaos they must fight within their own ranks. Once the Child approaches their teenage years, they are eliminated, and the search begins again. The Child can be found at the headquarters of the Dragon, guarded by many agents, cared for by the Mouth of the Dragon, and watched by the Silent Monks.

THE MOUTH OF THE DRAGON (DAIMON KIYOTA)

Chosen for their intellect and removed when they are no longer useful, the Mouth of the Dragon interprets the will of the Child. The Mouth is the Child's voice and gives orders upon the Child's whispered commands. Whatever the Child needs, or the Dragon

wants, the Mouth provides—or finds someone who can. But the usefulness of the Mouth is not guaranteed, and like the Child, the Mouth has an expiration date.

When the Mouth begins to exhibit autonomy, or a tendency to ascribe personal ideas to the will of the Child, they are replaced. Luckily, the Mouth survives the demotion, unlike the Child.

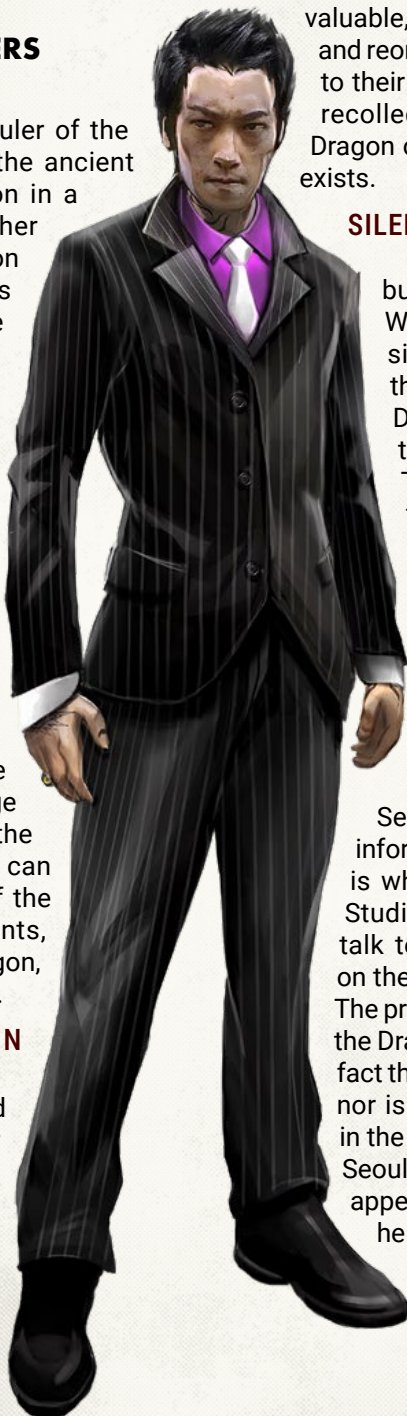
When the Mouth is deemed no longer valuable, their memories are removed and reorganized, and they are returned to their former life. They will have no recollection of their time with the Dragon or recall that any such faction exists.

SILENT MONKS

Their true function isn't known, but they are many in number. With stitched mouths that silence them to forever keep the secrets of the Head of the Dragon, the monks are found throughout the headquarters. They surround the Child and the Mouth of the Dragon at all times, and the whispers they hear are never repeated. Their silence is eternal.

JIN JAE HOON

The dragon recruited Jin Jae Hoon, a professor, for his inexhaustible desire to research all aspects of the Secret World. His ability to find information about literally anything is what caught the Dragon's eye. Studious and fair, he is willing to talk to new recruits and expound on the virtues of joining the Dragon. The professor is not so much loyal to the Dragon, as he is accepting of the fact that he can neither escape them nor is he meant to. He usually sits in the lounge at the Kumiho Hotel in Seoul, South Korea. This makes him appear aloof or overly relaxed, but he is shrewd and careful to guard the Dragon.



AKMA

Half-demon, half-human, Akma has no allegiance to one or the other, as he was shown no acceptance from either. When he was a child, his parents were murdered for their commitment to one another and for his existence. Despite true feelings of love and respect between the human woman and the demon man, both were shunned by their respective species and executed. This caused Akma to float through the centuries without any strings attached. Every job was just done to ensure his survival. When an employer set him free, or perished, he simply sought another opportunity.

This continued until he met his current mistress. For whatever reason, he is absolutely loyal to her and never questions her orders. He is silent and steadfast as he brings her new Dragon recruits to initiate. Despite centuries without attachment, Akma has chosen this woman, and he is never far from her or her residence at the Kumiho Hotel.

AKMA'S MISTRESS (HANA)

After a recruit is deemed worthy by the Dragon, their first assignment is to visit this woman at the Kumiho Hotel. Akma leads them into her suite. She has a set of skills that can lure the recruit into a state of transcendental bliss, both mental and physical. Hours or days later, the recruit emerges imbued with new purpose. It is noteworthy that out of centuries of wandering, Akma found no true desire to chain himself to anything human or demon. However, this woman has his undying loyalty.

ALLIES

As with many secret societies, the Dragon's alliances are often made in times of short-lived convenience, when goals happen to align. They work with those that are necessary, just like it is necessary for the predator to cull the prey. Cataclysmic events are the only reasons that can be deemed to necessitate even brief partnerships.

The Council of Venice. This association is out of necessity and only for appearances. The Dragon count no one as an ally. The Council keeps the peace between the major three factions, so the Dragon suffer their interference from time to time. Polite indifference is usually effective when dealing with the Council.

ENEMIES

The topic of enemies is more familiar and comfortable. Enemies are chaotic by nature. This is where the Dragon thrive. Indifference is just another word for lazy. Cultivating chaos starts at the very basics of human behaviors and relationships. The good and the bad are all needed in the scheme of things.

The Templars. Masquerading as religious believers that hide behind tradition and militaristic hierarchy, the Templars are an annoyance. This annoyance can become a festering wound from time to time. The Dragon have very little contact with them and enjoy upsetting their carefully laid plans on every possible occasion.

The Illuminati. Materialistic, opportunistic, and generally too detail oriented, this faction is also at odds with the Dragon. The Illuminati and Templars controlled everything for far too long, and the Dragon see no reason to allow their expansion to continue. Concerning the Illuminati, the Dragon have little respect for their Western ways and choose to have as few transactions with them as possible. From time to time, a brawl—monitored by the Council of Venice, of course—stokes the more competitive side of the Dragon and Illuminati. Whether battling over resources, a stake of land, or control of a recruit, these factions have little to no hope of aligning other than during apocalyptic events.

The Phoenicians. The mercenary side of the Templars, and their disowned sibling, this group is a curious bit of chaos but also a thorn in every side. They want money, and they're a little too quick to ignore promising opportunities when obtaining wealth. If the pay is good, the Phoenicians are fast to worship the source of income. This makes them less entertaining than a group this tumultuous should be.

The Orochi. Ambitious and prone to impulsivity, this group is at least amusing. They are naturally an enemy, as they seek to sit atop the mountain alone, but the Dragon enjoy picking through their leftovers. It is somewhat surprising that the Orochi haven't succeeded in more of their endeavors, given that they are helmed by an actual fallen angel. This is a piece of the puzzle the Dragon find interesting—and exploit whenever they must interact with the corporation. *Aximinto volluptat. Am faceatiur? Qui dit quia dersperapel magnat labo. Et mo voluptae ditiatis ex esererisi nobitem aut ut officiur assinct urendicita sus providit*



CHAPTER FIVE: SETTING RULES

While *Savage Worlds* contains all the core rules you need to play The Secret World, this chapter includes a few new rules to help represent what it means to be a Bee, working as part of a secret society, to keep the forces of darkness at bay.

The Secret World uses the following Setting Rules from *Savage Worlds*:

Born a Hero: Starting heroes can ignore Rank requirements when choosing Edges.

Conviction: Heroes gain Conviction Tokens through moments of personal triumph or tragedy.

More Skill Points: Heroes without a starting archetype start with 15 skill points.

THE BUZZING

For a Bee, the Buzzing is always present. Sometimes it's a quiet background hum, a bit of psychic white noise that's easy to tune out, ignore, or even forget. Sometimes it's a shriek of warning, a flash of insight, or demanding howl that proclaims Gaia's will in its cloying, mocking tone.

Bees can tap into the Buzzing when seeking answers to the questions that drive them. By channeling their anima, they can open themselves up to the Buzzing, which may reward them with supernatural understanding—or just as easily overwhelm them with secrets that mortals were never intended to comprehend.

In game terms, the Bee can use the Buzzing to Support a skill roll when trying to uncover lore, secrets, or the details of whatever they are studying.

To use the Buzzing, the Bee must first declare what skill the Buzzing will support. This is usually Academics, Notice, Occult, or some other “investigative” skill, but could be any skill the GM agrees is relevant.

The Bee then spends a Power Point and makes a Focus roll. For each success and raise on this roll, the Bee adds +1 to their Supported skill roll,

to a maximum of +4. On a Critical Failure, they subtract 2 instead.

Accessing the Buzzing in this way can be exhausting. After making the investigative skill roll, the Bee suffers a level of Fatigue for each raise on their Focus roll, to a maximum of two levels. This Fatigue dissipates at a rate of one level per hour, per the core rules.

DESTINY

As pawns and players on the cosmic stage, Bees are destined for greatness, but are free to choose the shape of that destiny. Two of those destinies are Shadow and Luminance. At key points in their lives, Bees may embrace either one of these destinies in order to unlock greater powers within themselves, but doing so means giving up some of their free will.

- **Embracing Shadow:** Shadow represents the power of chaos, deception, and destruction, and is associated with the Dreaming Ones. When a Bee embraces Shadow, their Shadow score increases by 1.
- **Embracing Luminance:** Luminance represents the power of brutal honesty, rigid constructs, and zealous devotion to rules and law. Luminance is associated with the Host. When a Bee embraces Luminance, their Luminance score increases by 1.

POWER OF DESTINY

There are benefits to embracing a destiny of either Luminance or Shadow.

- **Hidden Potential:** Once per Rank, when a Bee is granted an Advance, they may embrace a destiny to take a second Advance.
- **Invigoration:** Once per turn, a Bee may embrace a destiny to immediately gain three

Bennies, refresh all their Power Points, and Unshake (if Shaken).

- **Speedy Resurrection:** When a Bee dies, they may embrace a destiny to resurrect the next turn (as described under **Resurrection** (see below.)

PERILS OF DESTINY

Sacrificing a bit of free will in exchange for power has its downsides too.

- **Bound to Destiny:** It's possible for a Bee to give up too much free will, and become a mindless drone in service to either the Dreamers or the Host. When a Bee embraces a destiny, before receiving the benefits of doing so, they must make a Spirit roll. They subtract the greater of their Luminance or Shadow scores from this roll. If the roll fails, the Bee becomes a loyal and unthinking servant of either the Dreamers or the Host. If their Shadow score is greater than their Luminance score, they serve the Dreamers. If not, they serve the Host. In either case, their players lose control of their Bee, which becomes an NPC under the GM's control.
- **Destined for Destruction:** The cosmic forces that have marked the Bee look forward to claiming their prize. When a Bee makes a Vigor roll to Soak a Wound or stop Bleeding Out, they must subtract the greater of their Luminance or Shadow scores from the roll.
- **Slippery Slope:** Once a Bee has 3 or more points of either Shadow or Luminance, they can no longer embrace the opposite destiny. They have already chosen their fate. The only question remaining is how quickly they will meet it.

RESURRECTION

Bees don't stay dead. When they die, their bodies go into an anima-fueled regenerative coma to repair the damage done to the flesh. During this time, the Bees' minds drift through spirit realms, where they may commune with the Dreaming Ones, the Host, or other eternal beings. The Bees' physical bodies eventually reassemble

themselves, and the Bees' spirits return to their mortal shells.

In game terms, when Bees die, they eventually return to life Unshaken and without Wounds. How long it takes for this to happen depends on the Bee's choices. For while their mind drifts, they can hear and respond to the voices of both the Dreamers and the Host, who call out to them with enticing offers. Either one will gladly aid the Bee in their hour of need; all it will cost is a bit of free will.

When your character dies, you have two choices.

- **Embrace Luminance or Shadow:** If you embrace a destiny of Luminance or Shadow, your character may resurrect at the start of any of your next turns.
- **Embrace Freedom:** If you reject both Shadow and Luminance, and choose your own destiny of free will, your character resurrects in 1d6 rounds.

FACTIONS AND FAVORS

The heroes of the Secret World are all members of one of the three main factions. While they are willing to put their factions' differences aside and work together, those factions still have their own goals, plans, and projects. Agents who advance their factions' agendas (as detailed below) gain those factions' favor, as represented by their Favor dice.

USING FAVOR

Agents typically don't pay their own way. If they need something, they simply requisition it from their faction. If it's a reasonable request, their handlers do their best to fulfill it as quickly as possible. If it's less reasonable, the faction may take a bit longer, or deny it altogether.

In game terms, when heroes make requisition requests, they roll their Favor dice. This is not a trait roll, but it acts like one: they may spend Bennies, roll their Wild Dice, and use Support from their allies in the same faction.

FAVOR		
Modifier	Asset	Time Frame
0	Mundane weapons or other gear worth up to \$1000, a specialist (mechanic, plumber, programmer, etc.) who doesn't know about the Secret World.	Within three days
-2	Mundane items worth up to \$10K, highly illegal items, a criminal specialist (hacker, smuggler, car thief, etc.), a Secret Worlder ally	Within 24 hours
-4	Rare or magical items, multiple mundane allies (a gang of goons, a squad of soldiers, a team of lawyers, etc.), an elite specialist from the faction (sniper, occultist, etc.)	Within the hour

This Favor roll is modified by both the asset being requested, and how quickly the hero wants to have it, as illustrated on the Using Favor table.

For example, if an agent needs a Kevlar vest (\$200) and a shotgun (\$150) by the next morning, she would subtract 2 from the roll for the 24-hour time frame. Hiring an expert in Enochian blood rituals in the same time period, however, would rack up a modifier of -6 (-4 for the specialist, plus -2 for the time frame).

Favor rolls may be further modified as the GM sees fit. Agents may get a bonus if they've just completed a major task for their faction, or suffer a penalty if this is the third request from their cabal this week.

On a success, the hero receives the requested asset, but must reduce their Favor die one step. The agency coordinates with the hero to arrange the pick-up or drop-off, but is now less inclined to fulfill subsequent supply requests.

On a raise, the faction is pleased with the agent, and the Favor die is not reduced. For each additional raise, the asset can be delivered one step earlier (within one day instead of three, or within the hour instead of the day).

If the roll fails, the faction is unable or unwilling to provide the requested asset. The agent can try again the next day.

On a Critical Failure, not only is the request denied, but the Favor die is reduced as well. The faction leaders are unhappy with the hero's demands.

OUT OF FAVOR

If a character's Favor die is reduced below d4, he is "out of Favor" with his faction. He can no longer make Favor rolls until he gains Favor.

FAVOR

Playing your factions agenda, when it is not in your personal best interest, is in direct opposition to another party member, or is extremely dangerous to complete, this should be rewarded with a benny. This meant to facilitate the normal intra faction frictions that exist in the secret world but should consider the groups sensibilities and fun for all.

GAINING FAVOR

Heroes can gain Favor with their factions (and increase their Favor dice) by advancing their factions' agendas. This can include everything from assassinating a world leader to stealing blueprints to helping an old lady cross the street. But the factions have several broad agendas:

THE ILLUMINATI AGENDA

- **Seek Artifacts:** The Illuminati are very interested in artifacts of the Third Age. They look kindly upon any members who discover new artifacts, learn the secrets of existing ones, or actively secure one for Illuminati scientists to examine.
- **Expand the Network:** Much of the Illuminati's power comes from its influence over people and organizations. If an agent can convince (or bribe, or blackmail) someone to work for the Illuminati or use their position on the secret society's behalf, that agent is sure to be rewarded.

- **Remove a Threat:** Whether it's eliminating a leak, discrediting an enemy, or sabotaging a rival's operation, the Illuminati likes it when agents take the initiative.

THE TEMPLAR AGENDA

- **Seek the Enemy:** The supernatural enemies of the Templars—the enemies of humanity—are everywhere. Those agents who help locate them, learn their secrets, and ultimately destroy them will prove themselves loyal, and worthy of additional Templar support.
- **Defend Order:** The Templars are pleased by those agents who defend not only themselves but the civilians (and Templar assets) around them against otherworldly threats.
- **Secure Weapons:** As a militaristic faction, the Templars are always looking to add new tools to their arsenal. Agents who give them additional warriors, organizations, or literal weapons to wield in the good fight are sure to be rewarded.

THE DRAGON AGENDA

- **Sow Chaos:** The Dragon thrives on chaos, and smiles on those who slip it between the gears of any orderly system. This doesn't necessarily mean blowing up buildings (though it can)—it can also include deleting random files, spreading misinformation, or offering very specific advice.
- **Execute Odd Jobs:** Hail a taxi at 10:34. Bury this book behind that tree. Push the man in the green sweater. Sometimes the Dragon issues commands so cryptic, even its own agents don't know exactly what they're doing or why. They are merely butterfly wings, flapping up hurricanes they can't even perceive. So long as they do it, the dice of the universe keep rolling.
- **Seek Rebirth:** In the eyes of the Dragon, all change is good. The Dragon blesses those who embrace change in themselves and encourage change in others.

When the GM feels that a hero has advanced their faction's interests (based on the broad criteria above), that hero gains Favor: their Favor die increases one step (or increases from nothing to d4 if the hero was out of Favor). A hero can only gain Favor once per game session.

OFF THE BOOKS

Heroes may prefer to acquire goods and services without going through their respective factions. (It's hard to claim you weren't responsible for blowing up the Orochi lab when your boss has a receipt for the explosives.)

If they wish to buy such things, they can use the Wealth system detailed in the core rules.

Like Favor, Wealth doesn't require players to track income and expenses, but it has a much lower price cap; few agents can buy new cars for every mission without going broke.



CHAPTER SIX: GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

While everything is true in the Secret World, not everything is known. Mysteries abound, and even the most experienced Bee doesn't know everything. This chapter reveals many of those mysteries. If you're not the GM, and want to preserve your ignorance, read no further.

LORE OF THE SECRET WORLD

Inhabitants of the Secret World hold mystical knowledge from throughout the Ages. The legends and conspiracy theories only scratch the surface enough to pick at the world's wounds and draw a drop of blood. That which is hidden is in plain sight, but most people never take the time to pay attention. When a new member of the "hive" awakens, their senses are raw. They can access the very essence of what makes the world's heart beat. New initiates see the best and worst of what dreams can bring. Voices speak often, whether someone is ready or not. Choices must be made. Those of the Secret World do not ignore their hair raising or an inexplicable shiver down their spine. Such warnings are heeded. The hive will still make its sweet honey, even if it loses a few worker bees. If someone disappears or fades away, no one will remember they even existed.

Things only hinted at in pop culture and ancient mythologies are real. There is a Hollow Earth. There are groups vying for control of the human race, and not all have altruistic intentions. News, art, media, and even local school newspapers are regulated to ensure compliance and obedience. The conspiracy theory crackpots who flood social media with their disclosure videos are not all wrong. There is good in the Secret World, but there is also evil and darkness.

Angels, demons, nature spirits, vampires, and other supernatural beings do exist. They walk among the unassuming of the world. Sometimes

a picture of Sasquatch slips past the gates built by the censors that cleanse the normal world of paranormal or mystical information. Not every picture is real, but not every picture is of a man trekking through the forest in an ape costume. Ghosts float through long-forgotten halls, with ever-improving technology now able to discern their moans and haunting cries on advanced recording devices. Governments experiment on their own citizens, creating telepaths, remote viewers, and superhumans that become enhanced soldiers. Fringe science is practiced more than many would want to believe.

Seekers are warned of what they will find. Sometimes illumination leads to madness, sometimes to truth, and sometimes ... to regret. Once Pandora's box is open, the only thing left is hope, and the rest of the pestilence is free to wreak havoc on the body and mind of the explorer. Not all that is hidden was hidden out of malice, but rather to protect those who cannot and should not know or see. "Be careful what you wish for" is a proverb parents tell children begging to learn about life before they are ready. Even Alice had regrets over following the rabbit into Wonderland.

GAIA

"Come see the Immaculate Machine!"

Humans throughout history have sketched, painted, sculpted, and revered the Mother. Gaia is the goddess incarnate, the womb from which the world was born. The Renaissance period of art constructed a particularly interesting vision of what Gaia would look like to her loving children. People always try to put a face to what they cannot or will not understand. Gaia is every beautiful painting, every sculpture of the scorned woman, and she is the brightest sun and the darkest night upon Earth.

The mother of all on Earth, Gaia is exactly what the masses believe her to be. There is truth to every form that can be envisioned. To the spiritual she is the goddess, a celestial being

She is a recurring pattern, built and rebuilt upon countless worlds, an alien thing made by even more alien things for an even more alien plan ...

that has created and endured. Her names have been many, such as Geb, Ki, or Bhumi. To those who walk a path of absolutes, she is a computer, a master server that secures millennia of data. Like strings of DNA, her memory is long and winding, and all that has happened, and all that ever will, reside in her core. She is the Immaculate Machine.

Cults, religions, cities, wars, and empires have all been created or destroyed in her name. The ancients have all written of the mother of creation, but those of the Secret World know that the ancients never captured the true depth of her role. She is equally loved and derided, but always at the center of every creation story. Her role in touching the mountains and causing them to rise, or prompting the streams to flow and the oceans to move in rhythmic waves, are all certainties to her faithful. In turn, those who have suffered from pestilence and disease throw the blame for these evils at her feet.

"Sure, it sounds warm and fuzzy, Mother wants to let us nap, love Mother, adore Mother. The truth is, Gaia is a game just like anything else. Yes, we owe her for creating us as we are, and possibly letting us advance. But look at all that strolls around us unchecked. The Grigori and the Nephilim fight. They're really just clichéd bratty siblings. Vampires and werewolves roam through our world like something out of a bad B horror movie. Nutjobs murder, rape, and thief unfettered. You know whose job it is to clean it all up at the end of the day? OURS! Gaia is the mother that has no maternal instincts. Those machines haven't seen maintenance in Ages, that's literal Ages, honey, and so it's no surprise they're letting all kinds of madness hop, skip, and jump the globe. Love Mother dearest if that's what lets you rest your head on your pillow at night. Just keep in mind that Mother hasn't really checked on us since creation and her minions aren't exactly behaving themselves. But all families have their squabbles, I guess. Now, go forth and find something to fight for and prove to me you can actually protect our Mother."

—Kirsten Geary. Transcript from a training video for entry-level Bees in the Illuminati.

Although many seek to know more about her existence, little information can be found concerning her own creation. The "Host," a group of angelic and demonic beings that came before all that is, are whispered to be Gaia's makers. Since not much is known about her origins, her birth remains a mystery. Gaia's true form, if there is such a thing, has never been seen. Her presence is vibrant, but perhaps her image has been lost to the annals of time. This can only mean that for eons, this maternal entity has seen the rise and fall of many human constructs, and still, she loves and shelters her progeny within her embrace.

Some see Gaia as a "mother bear," but her totality cannot truly be quantified. Her maternal nature is balanced by the fearsome unknowability she represents—Gaia may wish to nurture us, but for purposes humankind simply does not—or cannot—understand.

She creates, protects, and supports all that is life on the planet. Her protection is greatly needed, as there are horrors that only those who dare court nightmares can know. These horrors would see the world burn and be slowly devoured.

Her existence is fluid throughout dimensions that humans cannot conceive of or find. She networks herself through all facets of reality. She channels the energy called anima. Though all living things have the capacity to interact with anima, she empowers others to interact with it on a far greater scale. There is a sweet buzzing heard by those who are gifted with the ability to use anima. When the whispers reach their ears, they know the Mother needs them to help protect the rest of her children.

A good portion of Gaia's children continue to remain unaware, but she will not let them be vulnerable in their obliviousness. This is where teachers and protectors come into play, those trained specifically through time with magic that can only come from within and from a strong connection with Gaia. One such man, Zuberi, is a formidable shaman that has connections to many factions but claims no affiliations himself. He claims to speak to Gaia often and attributes his magic and life to her existence. Other known groups, such as ancient Druids, were direct worshippers of Gaia and sought magic to protect her creations.

Not all relationships with Gaia are so tranquil. The elemental jinn revere Gaia above all things,

but over the Ages, that love turned toxic, and they direct their hatred towards humans, whom they think stole Gaia's attention and desecrated her gifts. Others see her as less than attentive. The beings who feel Gaia's children have been abandoned are easy targets for those seeking to further their own agendas. Gaia Engines are failing to keep the "Eaters" asleep and imprisoned, leading to easily manipulated minds. The blame for this falls upon Gaia. Time marches on, the world descends further into darkness, and Gaia is still unable to be found by many. This sows the seeds of unrest and gives cult leaders and despots room to create public division, strengthening their power over others.

Whether someone chooses to see Gaia as the Mother, a supercomputer that is self-aware, or the mystical goddess imbuing them with power and purpose, the choice is their own. No one is ever alone, but every Bee must fight without end. Hungry horrors, Bees lost to corruption, and the visceral instinct for humans to seek blood will keep Gaia's children forever defending her. Her love is absolute, as is the commitment made to her.

Since the beginning, and until the end, Gaia's followers will kill, sacrifice, and die in her name. Her secrets and her words will pass down through all Ages for as long as the world survives. The Druids have existed for millennia, at the very least, and have been seeding wisdom through the Celtic tribes for hundreds of years. Ancient Greeks explained Gaia as the Mother that created every facet of the world with her consort, Uranus. The Sumerian mother, Ki, was the consort of Anu and the cocreator of the world as we know it. For the Egyptians, Geb was the god of the Earth and the great protector of its people; they went so far as to refer to Earth as "The House of Geb." In India, Bhumi is the Hindu goddess known as "The Divine Mother Earth." No matter the culture, Gaia survives, and the people know her in some way, for good or bad.

THE BUZZING

"Our wisdom flows so sweet. Taste and see."

Whispers, radio static, and cryptic words flowing together on graffiti-covered walls: that is the buzzing. While anyone has the potential to hear the Buzzing, particularly those with skewed perceptions or minds, it is the Bees who can most reliably tune in. Hearing the buzz mingled

WORSHIPPERS OF GAIA

Throughout the Ages, when faced with the wonder and power of Gaia, some humans have always reacted with worship. In this Age, she has been worshipped by countless people under many different names, including those listed here.

- Druids
- Ancient Greeks
- Sumerians (as Ki)
- Egyptians (as Geb)
- Indians (as Bhumi)

with the drone of everyday noise is an honor and a curse. The hum is always just on the edge of the consciousness.

The entity introduces itself as the education protocol. The program is coded to deliver messages through all possible channels. One problem that arises for most is understanding the communication as it is presented. The syntax in the message lacks any rhyme or reason. What is delivered is sometimes an interpretation that is far too literal, that simplifies the true meaning and obscures it into a puzzle.

The Buzzing is not constantly heard, but the collective is always broadcasting. Once a Bee is connected to the hive, there are triggers that can activate a link. Jumbled messages are intuitive warnings, while a word might be repeated within the static of an old television to impart wisdom about an impending event. "Everywhere and anywhere" is literally true of the Buzzing's choice of communication, and there is no point at which the transmission will cease pervading the fertile senses.

The low hum of a radio that is barely audible has been tuned to a specific station and set at a specific volume for a reason. Just beyond what can be heard clearly, there is a voice, a pattern, and the listener can grasp at the faint words to form the meaning. The lessons are many but not easily understood. Many times, the entire point is missed, as is the image, thought, or musical refrain carrying an important clue.

Examples of obscured messages can be found everywhere, such as a flight pattern of a flock of geese or blood spatter at a crime scene. For

those who will listen, a change in a bird's song or television channel that just can't quite be tuned in are all possible avenues to hear the Buzzing. Interpretation is everything, as the collective will not care if the message is not received correctly. Failures and triumphs are all accepted. A new Bee is easily acquired—one that can hear, see, smell, touch, and taste the honey of the hive.

Like bees in nature pollinate flowering plants, so will the Bees fertilize the minds of others who are willing to listen to knowledge. The mundane rarely appreciate such enlightenment. The wisdom of the Buzzing is sweet, but it is an acquired taste. The knowledge is the honey, and the workers are the recipients of the lessons learned. Gaia's children have only grown wiser and stronger as the Bees fly from one budding mind to another, sharing and imparting wisdom.

Perception of time is unimportant. The Buzzing occupies a space outside of time and has no concept of linear etiquette. Alien in origin and in thought, the Buzzing will not always relate with the hive on a friendly level. Clues, puzzles, and riddles are just as likely to be had from the collective as are reminders that the human mind is a canvas stripped bare for higher life-forms to mold and use. Human foibles are exploited for the purpose of communicating with and controlling the hive.

Not all the messages are of doom and gloom; some are pieces to a puzzle. What history has been lost or misinterpreted? The Buzzing carries it all within the strains of a melody or the lashing of rain on a windowpane. Much is

lost to the hunger of time, but the Buzzing loses *nothing*. It only acquires. It is the triumph of information over entropy. Every creature's mind leaves behind a whisper. The whisper travels and grows. A butterfly flaps its wings in a garden, and thousands of miles away, the energy has increased and grown into a massive storm that lashes against the shore.

Sometimes the whispering voices in the darkness will disagree. They may vie for attention, leading the Bee to act in a manner that conflicts with their personal interests or moral compass. The will of the Bee will be pushed into the recesses of truth and consequence while the Buzzing lingers in the neurons and dances through the gray matter. Dreams can be areas of contact, and this leads to the inability to decipher reality from the fog of sleep. These states become interchangeable, and the Bee acts without fearing human outcomes. All actions must be accounted for; there will always be ramifications. If the Buzzing comprehends any unfairness in the fact that it is the Bees who suffer those consequences, they do not speak of it.

Deep within the cells of a Bee, swimming in blood and acid, the Buzzing creeps into the veins, the nerves, and the thoughts. In Ages past, those considered mad, fey-touched, or oracular were often Bees. Throughout history, the study of a new art or science has been attributed to a moment of epiphany. A sudden burst of inspiration or thought leading to a society-shattering discovery was considered an intervention from a higher power. Humans are not the dumbest of creatures, but neither are they particularly wise. The Buzzing slowly guides those on Gaia's Earth with hints and lessons, all to help Gaia's chosen to grow.



"Always whisper in here, huh? Keep something moving in the background, sound, something. They're always listening ... hear everything. You know what I mean? Don't you feel it? That itch you can't scratch in the back of your brain? That hum that you hear over everything or when it's all quiet and the silence makes your ears bleed? It's always there, you know? I ain't crazy, I've heard it forever. Their cameras are bad but that hum, that buzz that you can always hear but you can't make out what it's saying? That's them always making sure they're in control."

—Dave Screed, conspiracy theorist, social media influencer, podcast creator. New York City, USA.

Important safety note: If the Buzzing tries to communicate too directly with someone, it can damage their mind. Sometimes the Buzzing may grow frustrated with the limitations of "meat brains."

Magic exists in the world without anima. However, anima can boost the power of magic just like it can enhance one's body or weapons.

ANIMA

"The world is bleeding, bleeding anima!"

This is the blood of Gaia, the esoteric energy of creation. Anima is the honey of the hive that flows through the Bees. Pure energy, anima is what powers Gaia and all her creations. Anima can create or destroy life, as it is the first and last energy that powers the world and reality. Every supernatural ability that a Bee has can be credited to anima. It awakens the Bees and fuels their powers.

Everything and anything that walks or slithers on the Earth is permeated with anima. This is the mana spoken of in ancient texts or the ambrosia of the gods. Whatever the origin, it is obviously what sustains Gaia and her children. Magic requires anima to be manipulated or changed in some way. Found in the powdered particles of mined metals, or in intricate designs in objects forming a circuit, anima is needed for all magic

users. Depending on the amount needed by the magic user, with the help of an anchor or starting point of a spell, the caster can work with anima to focus power and intention.

Intent is everything, and a focused mind is imperative. Anima can be used for good or bad. Anything that can create can also destroy. Gaia's blood has not always been used by those with good intentions. Enough anima can perform what humans see as miracles. By the same token, anima can create a massive cataclysmic event.

Some magic practitioners seek to study the depths of anima's power and to use the research to better humanity. Many hope for peace and to cure diseases of mind and body. Then there are those that summon demons from the dimensions of Hell, cast spells of manipulation, and study mind control. It is the will and the focus of the magic caster that decides where and how anima energy is used and directed.

FUNCTIONS OF ANIMA

Imbuing Items (Magical). Weapons, armor, talismans, and jewelry can all be imbued with anima to enhance the user. Glyphs and signets infused with anima can offer a boost to weapons and abilities or provide a strong protective quality.

Magic (Blood, Chaos, Elemental). Magic vibrates throughout the Secret World. Blood magic draws from the caster's blood. It can make the user stronger or more deadly with their attacks but more vulnerable to damage. Chaos magic strips the target of their defenses, their abilities, or sometimes their very thoughts. Elemental magic powered with anima can create a small wind like a butterfly's whisper or a mighty hurricane while the Earth burns.

Healing. In its purest form, anima heals nearly all wounds and disease, even the Filth. However, the more dire the illness or injury, the more anima that will be needed. This is why the Filth has not yet been cleansed and has grown beyond the confines of the Gaia Engines.

Protection. The Secret World is full of dangerous puzzles, monsters, and celestial beings that do not always play by the rules.

Anima protection can be fused with items and used to survive the most volatile of encounters. Heightened defenses against the elements, blood magic, and thought control from chaotic magical forces are all possible with anima.

Anima is the most powerful substance known to the followers of Gaia. Alchemists have imbued items such as swords, crowns, or even something as simple as a piece of jewelry. This infused magic can protect, heal, or serve as a weapon. Magic is fueled by anima energy when the user can bind with a focus item. A focus item is imbued with anima, allowing the caster to use blood, chaos, or elemental magic in their attempts to defend Gaia and her children. Healing is more elusive, as the human body is frail in comparison to the celestial beings that make war upon Gaia's Earth. To heal, the target must be imbued physically with anima and accept the consequences of being touched with the divine blood of the Mother. Pure anima when not focused is as unstable as a nuclear reactor left to leak radiation into the world. Thus, pure anima is a double-edged sword that can kill or offer renewed life.

Anima can dissolve the Filth in large quantities, but it can also be corrupted. While anima is the blood of the source, it is not easily acquired. Every source that can be mined is protected, and the secret is kept safe. Avatars of Gaia have walked in human form upon the Earth, and they are thought to be manifestations of pure anima. In every Age, there has been an avatar that is revered or reviled, and such a being could not have manifested without a source of energy imbued by a creator.

One avatar of Gaia that was studied by the Orochi Group was perhaps a creation of pure anima. The child was either born this way, or

Gaia imbued her with anima when claiming her body. The child Anima lost her family very young, and the Orochi Group “adopted” her. Through a misunderstanding of the pronunciation of her name, Anima is now called Emma Smith, and her connection to Gaia and use of anima are sought after by Lilith, the Mother of Monsters. Then there is Samael, a fallen Host that holds no allegiance to any group but, through Orochi, seeks to unlock any answers Emma might have or to use her to find a well of unlimited anima.

“The child is unstable. She has no control over her thoughts, powers, or actions. We have tried to give her toys, let her watch American television, and have even resorted to punishment. When Emma is denied anything, she becomes volatile. I am not so cruel as to think she wants to harm anyone, but good intentions do not erase numerous accidents and injuries that have occurred in those who have been her handlers. Even the fireman who rescued her later committed suicide, and several diaries were found with ramblings about black monsters that crawled inside his brain. She is not a child. She is a creature that needs to feed. The first handlers hypothesized that she was a child of Gaia, an avatar of the Mother. They are wrong and they have suffered for their miscalculations. She is a conduit of power and a creation of that which is chaos. She must be contained, and showing her mercy, indifference, or malice makes no difference. Emma Smith cannot be allowed to leave the compound, and any attempts to integrate her into society as she ages will prove futile. If it is true that Lilith is seeking her, then that speaks of the havoc that Emma’s existence has created. She is a test subject that may become more of a liability than an asset.”

—Field report from the communications of Orochi Agent Julia Smith

“What’s it feel like? Uh, it’s ... thick, like honey. Kinda bubbly, like champagne. It’s like shooting up sunshine, and it burns when I bleed. I dunno, man. It’s sparkly.”

—Chloe Dawson, Templar enforcer (probationary)

“Emma is a child that is struggling with a sense of self and her origins. She knows that she is unable to control herself and has expressed the desire to learn more about her abilities. She exhibits all the outward appearances, and some of the emotional and mental attributes, of a child. She sleeps with a teddy bear at night, cradled close. This is in sharp contrast to the neural scans that show her amplified brain activity even in sleep. She is a puzzle.

Punishment and reward are not working despite following all the tenets of Skinner and the lab protocols. Without containment when Emma becomes emotional, accidents have occurred. I am aware that my partner, Julia, believes that Emma is responsible for the death of the first responder that rescued her from her home as a toddler. While I understand her suspicions, I have come to believe that it might be the work of those seeking Emma rather than Emma herself. Anyone that she had contact with before is gone, dead from unusual circumstances, and all repeated the same ramblings of monsters and brain-eating blackness that haunted them. Emma cannot swat at a fly, so I cannot theorize that she could have any part in the deaths of previous custodians.

I still try to maintain a parent-child relationship with the subject, but she senses my partner’s fear and lack of empathy for her situation. Emma has become distrustful of us all and I do not blame her. I doubt it will be long before she runs away, and finding her again might prove impossible.”

—Field report from the communications of Orochi Agent Winston Smith

THE DREAMING ONES

"You are all made of stars!"

Neither the darkest of horrors nor the merged imaginations of King and Lovecraft could conceive of the Dreaming Ones. No human has seen a Dreamer in its totality. Because they exist in multiple dimensions, it is impossible for a human mind to comprehend their full reality. It could cause the person to fall into insanity. The Dreaming Ones literally eat stars, galaxies, and worlds, their very existence oozing terror and madness. The Dreamers are also known in some cultures as Sun Eaters.

Gaia and her engines were designed to trap the Dreaming Ones long ago (before the First Age, some believe). They slept fitfully through the Ages, nearly awakening a few times. Something

changed during the Third Age. As the Fourth Age dawned, the efficiency of the Gaia Engines decayed, and Filth leaked into our reality in unprecedented amounts, carrying the hopes and aspirations of the Dreamers. Their first wish was to escape, and the Filth helped to spread the cancer.

These monsters must slumber. They wish to devour everything within their grasp. As they drift through space and time, they are drawn to any body of stars to slake their hunger. Once a world is consumed, they must seek more sustenance. Their appetite is never truly sated. Numerous celestial beings have been made into a feast of stars.

Mortals are vulnerable to the temptations of the Dreaming Ones. Offering the thing a person most desires, the Dreamers lure them into their arms.

WORSHIPPERS OF THE DREAMING ONES

The Dreaming Ones want to be free. They cannot free themselves, but they stir as they slumber in their tombs, reaching out through the cracks in their prisons to contact those humans who may be able to help free them. They offer the poor fools anything: power, love, eternal life. In exchange, all they ask is faithful service.

Dreamer cultists have worshipped their imprisoned gods from time out of mind. Their cults have taken numerous forms over the millennia. Though the Dreamers represent themselves in different ways to different people, they often use the sun, or the eating of the sun, as a symbol or metaphor. For example, the Mayans worshipped a Dreamer as the "Fifth Sun," while ancient Mesopotamians revered the sun and the god that created it.

Below are some of the most prominent cults of the Dreaming Ones.

Cult of Aten. In ancient Egypt, the Pharaoh Akhenaton outlawed the worship of all other gods, and he eventually dedicated his entire nation to honoring (and releasing) the Dreamer he knew as Aten. Though the Black Pharaoh was eventually overthrown and bound inside his own pyramid tomb, the Cult of Aten still persists in the shadowy corners of Egypt today.

Sol Invictus. The ancient Romans worshipped their own Dreamer sun deity, Sol Invictus. As the Roman Empire spread throughout the world, so did the Sol Invictus cult, which established colonies in Egypt and Transylvania, among other sites. While the cult itself has vanished, the haunted ruins of its old colonies remain.

The Morninglight. Today, one of the most successful Dreamer cults presents itself as a New Age religion dedicated to helping its members reach the next levels of their spiritual evolution. The cult has offices around the world, where it offers free testing and self-help programs to anyone who asks, in order to recruit new members. While it puts on an earnest, cheerful front, the Morninglight is tight lipped about its actual doctrines, and mercilessly pursues any who would reveal its secrets.

The Fear Nothing Foundation. This Tokyo-based branch of the Morninglight caters to younger citizens looking for a purpose. Soda, candy, pizza, games, and self-improvement classes all appeal to young adults hoping to become someone that can make a difference in the world. Unfortunately for them, the party ends as the indoctrination begins—and the indoctrination doesn't end until they're either brainwashed or dead.

The Dreaming Ones have enticed mortals into helping them escape their sleep. They promise the moon and stars, which is where many of the cults of the world come into play. Sometimes when someone can hear a Dreamer, it's through a nursery rhyme that is jumbled. Other times it's a hiss that slinks through the cracks of a human's conscious thoughts. They want to awaken, they want to walk and consume the Earth—and they need humans to find the key and turn the lock, releasing them from their prison.

For thousands of years, the sleeping monsters have communicated through dreams. Epiphanies and the greatest scientific breakthroughs could very well have been the influence of a Dreamer and not the Buzzing. Even the well-intentioned and great leaders of men may not have had original ideas. Philosophers always spoke of prophetic dreams. Some of these great men were probably gifted by the gods of their time, or they were Bees that walked among their fellow humans. However, never discount the Dreamers, and never assume they do not know how well patience can be rewarded.

Akhenaten, an Egyptian Pharaoh known for his monotheistic rule, is one of the most well-known figures of Secret World history. He was quick to fall prey to the Dreamers. Through the Cult of Aten, the Dreamers spread their messages and put out calls to help free them. The more people worshiped the Dreamers, the stronger the Dreamers became. Through malfunctioning Gaia Engines, the Dreamers spread their plea, begging for release. The Morninglight, a global cult founded on the promise of self-improvement, is now openly recruiting humans to worship the Dreamers and help secure their freedom.

Through an accident or fate, a man named John Copley became a victim and voice of the Dreamers. A recruit of a Morninglight branch known as the Fear Nothing Foundation, John was mutated into a pure form of the Filth. John offered the Dreamers something new: a voice through which to empower their nightmares, a self-aware bit of the Filth ... with a little bit of unexpected autonomy. Exposed to Filth to such an extensive degree, John was no more and became the "Black Signal." Existing as a tone that hides in computers, television waves, and radio frequencies and can peer through the eyes of infected Filth monsters, John knows the desires of the Filth in a way nothing else ever could. This new noncorporeal form of the Filth is slithering

behind the scenes of every technology known to man and can turn man's inventions against him.

Some believe that if they awaken these horrors, they can control them. The Dreamers are only under control because they sleep. It is the only thing preventing the end. The Engines keep them dreaming and are supposed to prevent any Dreamer from interacting with the surface. But the Engines aren't functioning at optimal capacity any longer, and the Dreamers spew Filth everywhere. Despite this, some individuals still harbor an insane desire to make the Dreamers into puppets for the right puppet master. Such a plan is doomed to fail.

All apocalyptic outcomes, from religions to cultural teachings, are the warnings of what will come upon the waking of the Dreamers. Once they stir, all is lost. If the Gaia Engines fail on a mass scale, many believe there is no hope. If the world does fall and Gaia's army is not victorious, a fail-safe reboot of the Earthly program will activate. The Dreaming Ones will be contained in the Gaia Engines, and the reality of our solar system will be restarted. That would be the end of all that currently is, so it is not an ideal option. However, if it keeps the Dreaming Ones in check, then it is the only alternative. There could be no greater nightmare than should the Dreaming Ones wake and consume the Earth.

THE FILTH

"It is the harbinger of change—the sizzling, celestial syphilis."

The Filth is the brainchild of the Dreaming Ones and the manifestation of their desires. It is the ultimate horror concocted in the imprisoned consciousness of those that must sleep. Black, slimy tendrils that seep from the Earth and entwine about mortal creatures harbor the darkest of desires from the Sleepers. Whether the Filth has a sentience is not really known. It is, however, a force that seems to control those it touches, and creates a desire for violence and chaos. While its goal (or even whether a goal exists) is unknown, the Filth seeks to break down reality, mutating minds and bodies like a runaway force of nature.

Many cultures have had different names for the Filth, such as Nergal's Rot in Babylonia, the Eater in Sumeria, and the Devouring Plague from a language lost long ago. It is the manifestation of the visions of the Dreaming Ones. Seeping

and crawling over the world, the liquid nightmare infects all it touches, so it has been feared throughout recorded time.

The Filth has been slinking into the world since the end of the Third Age, and now it's grown stronger. Even parts of Agartha are covered in webs of black ooze. Those that know of the Engines and their failing protocols are aware of the growing infections and loss of life. Though it was once contained by the Gaia Engines, the Filth is now winding its way up to snatch at everything throughout the world and in Agartha itself.

Black ooze worms its way into places as varied as the heart of a mountain, a crystal blue lake, a magical forest, or simply a town inundated with fog and storms, such as the unfortunate Kingsmouth on Solomon Island. Victims, once touched, go through various phases of mutation. Eventually, tendrils, or wisps of sludge, flow from every part of the infected. A few prominent creatures, such as the Filth Guardians; large, mutated wolves; and a winged monster resembling a bird, are formed completely from Filth.

The infected are contagious. The Filth is transmitted through the briefest of touches. It spreads easily and quickly. From anger and violence, the infected will eventually descend into madness. After this phase passes, the creature is connected to the minds of other infected. They are linked like a hive-mind protocol. The person and their identity are gone, replaced with a shared consciousness fulfilling the Dreamers' will.

While some believe that the Filth most often takes on forms resembling a cephalopod (especially the tentacles), its mutations are absolute chaos—far more like the creature from John Carpenter's film *The Thing*. Whatever the reason, the turned creatures kill without thought and infect whatever they touch. As the infected devolve into insanity, the Filth churns within, trading peace for chaos and logic for madness. People have suddenly turned into mass murderers and entire towns have been suffocated within a blanket of darkness. Even magical creatures have suffered and fallen prey to the creeping slime, as evidenced in the forests of Transylvania.

Despite the absolute corruption the Filth is capable of, there are some deterrents. It is known that ghosts can keep the blackened tendrils at bay. The energy of a wandering soul cannot be infected, and therefore the Filth cannot feed

"I really believed the cult was a harmless bit of human tripe about finding a singular purpose, and as always, worshiping it like mindless creatures. I never thought they'd actually dump Filth into the water supply and try to wake up the old bastard. Akhenaten rightly wore out his welcome with the elite, and his sleep was supposed to be as eternal as those Sun Eaters. Then again, just look at me, and eternal sleep isn't always the endgame, now is it, love? Curious creatures, humans. Oh, of course I was once one, but it's probably a small mercy that I remember nothing but sex, riches, and a few parades. Watching how the lot of them scrape and bow for any attention is rather tedious, to say the least."

—Saïd, trade prince of Egypt. Transcript from a video interview found in the Illuminati archives.



and poison those in between worlds. It's been proven that some Illuminati wards are effective in keeping the infection from progressing in some individuals, and the Wabanaki Tribe of Solomon Island protected their land for centuries with certain rites. Other options for protection are pure anima, which is not easily sourced, and the fabled sword of Arthurian legend, Excalibur. It is believed this relic is not sword at all, but a device of the Third Age, reputedly with the power to blast and cleanse the Filth.

The most recent mass disasters involving the Filth were the Tokyo incident and the corruption of Solomon Island. A subway bomb released concentrated Filth in Tokyo, while a thick fog followed a ship home to Kingsmouth Harbor. Millions died in Tokyo, and any resident that

encountered the fog of Solomon Island walked into the ocean, returning to the shores as some kind of zombie with a combination of human and sea-life characteristics. The contaminated water supply in al-Merayah, Egypt and the Cult of Aten plot are not as well known; the area is still being monitored and cleaning efforts are ongoing.

The tentacles that reach out from the Dreamers into the world of the living are wrapping the unwary in their embrace. Everywhere a drop of Filth falls, an infection will eventually follow. It is an inevitable consequence of imprisoning the Dreaming Ones. Their shadowy dreams of anger, hunger, and desperation for freedom live in the essence of the Filth, and the infected are equally desperate to release the Dreamers and destroy anything that stands in their way.

FILTH MANIFESTATIONS

The Filth manifests itself in countless ways as its oozes and infects its way throughout the world. Living creatures, water, soil, and even thoughts and radio waves can be corrupted by Filth. Nevertheless, there are a few types of manifestations that are more common than others.

Filth-Infected Humans. The most common Filth entities, so-called "Filthy humans" were once regular people. They were corrupted—first in mind, then in body—by coming into contact with the Filth. Now they're covered with the stuff. Tendrils of it flail from their limbs as they mindlessly attack, babbling incoherently and trying to spread their infection to others.

Filth-Infected Undead. Though spirits who are no longer part of the Earthly plane can avoid Filth infection, the bodies that litter the streets of infected cities or have long since been buried are not as lucky. The Filth reanimates the dearly departed, creating armies of undead. Some Filth zombies are transformed into enormous, muscular hulks capable of breathtaking violence.

Shades. Once merely infected humans, Shades are now creatures of pure Filth. They are feral, animalistic beasts that hunt on all fours, but they can also melt into blackened puddles and take on new shapes. They can

combine their Filth to create new, composite creatures of greater size and horror.

Shade Stalkers. Enormous versions of the Filth Shades, Shade Stalkers no longer have even a passing resemblance to humanity. They lurk in Filth-filled pits and swamps, infecting their victims not only by touch but through psychic projection.

Filth-Infected Agarth. Not even Agarth is safe from the Filth's corruption. The Filth has infested some of the lower levels of the trees, permeating deep within their limbs. Other branches, specifically those that lead to the portal of Kaidan, Japan, have become black with the sludge of infection. New, squirming black branches are beginning to grow out of the contamination.

The Black Signal. When the Filth bomb exploded in Tokyo, it revealed a new type of manifestation—one that, while not common, is quite dangerous—that spreads and corrupts through electronics. Once a human mind, the Black Signal is now a digital virus with no patch, seeding networks and machines with its infection. An occult hacker that slips through the cracks of every firewall, the Black Signal allows the Filth to broadcast its message of madness to anyone its network touches.

GAIA ENGINES

"The engines run, but where are the builders?"

Mysterious constructs that have likely existed through multiple Ages, the Gaia Engines seem to function to contain the Dreaming Ones that would devour the world and solar system. There are many facets to the Engines. They contain the Dreamers, and the energy needed to power the Engines comes from the Dreamers as they sleep. The Gaia Engines should be considered the most extraordinary machines ever created. Without them, the world would have been lost long ago and Gaia herself with it, consumed by the gluttonous Dreamers.

Not only do the Engines keep the Dreamers under control, but they act as a filtering system for the manifestation of the Filth. The slumbering ones are desperate for freedom; hence the Filth churns and grows, hoping to ensnare the willing minds of humans. Like a filtration system clears water and air of pollution and poison, so do the Gaia Engines purify the Filth and remove the venom of the Dreamers.

Some of the Engines are deteriorating, and some are no longer working at full capacity.

"My family was taken by the fog. Sounds crazy, but it swallowed the island whole. Me and my 12 gauge kept the zombies or whatever those walking corpses were away. At least we did for a while. Then the bigger ones came. Long arms and thick black ooze dripping off their faces. The town got real quiet and I stopped hearing from Sheriff Bannerman. This is why I'm writing it all down now. If anyone sees this or finds what's left of our little town, they'll know we just didn't roll over. I don't hear the screams anymore. No more guns or shotguns in the distance. Even the sea is slowing down, moaning real quiet-like. I'm Norma Creed, and the fog took my family and I know it's going to take me too."

—Scrawled note found nailed to a porch at a house on Solomon Island after it was cleared by Orochi agents



THOSE SEEKING THE GAIA ENGINES

Samuel Chandra (Samael)

Samuel Chandra is known to the world as the CEO of the illustrious Orochi Corporation. The truth is more sinister, as Samuel is really Samael, an original Host, more commonly known as a fallen angel. Since the First Age, he has been on a quest to prove humans are mundane, unintelligent creatures that must be controlled and contained to their proper station—serving him and those of his power class. Of course, these views do not apply to his wife—one of the first humans, Lilith.

Lily Engel (Lilith)

Lily Engel was not always known as Lilith, Mother of Monsters. Ages ago, she was one of the first humans, with a family and a desire to see the world become a paradise. In the First Age, Lilith caught the eye of the arrogant and ambitious Host, Samael. Although she lacked his cosmic powers and intelligence, they were a perfect fit and have schemed to dominate the world ever since. Their relationship has not been without its ups and downs, however. Lilith is obsessed with the ultimate monsters: the Dreaming Ones. She longs to tame them and adopt them into her collection of monstrous offspring. She has tried before and failed. Her husband no longer supports her efforts. And yet, defying all reason, Lilith pursues her mad vision.

Philip Marquard (Morninglight Founder)

Philip Marquard was one of Lilith's key pawns in her Dreamer schemes. As a young man, Marquard had a vision of a Dreamer trapped in a Gaia Engine, and the experience left him determined to free the Sun Eater. As the leader of the cult known as the Morninglight, Marquard originally followed Lilith's directives without question, and he used her to control those beneath him in the organization whenever they questioned the Morninglight creed. He has since outgrown his need for her, and now seeks his own path to power through the Dreamers.

The Filth has overrun several of the Engines, causing system failures. The Dreaming Ones rejoice in the many malfunctions, but the Bees are desperate to contain the Filth or find a way to fix the Engines. With the number of Engines unknown, as well as their many locations, the possibility of a Filth infection cropping up literally anywhere is high.

Many seek the Engines. Some believe that if they control the Dreaming Ones, they can control reality. Others want to simply see the end of all creation. A few want to fix the machines, keep the chaos in check, and return to business as usual. The hope to repair that which could save the world is still flickering like a candle fighting the wind. One such hope for cleansing the Engines exists in the pure anima avatar of Gaia, Emma Smith.

Raw anima can cleanse Filth in large quantities. Emma is anima, but harnessing her power and her true self are not always easy tasks. Still, she practices, and she has had successes in eradicating whole swaths of Filth from our reality. One such success was the retreat of the Black Signal, John. John had grown drunk on the power of controlling all technology and the minds of the Filth-infected. Emma survived all of John's attempts to destroy her. As a result, the prominent factions sense there might be a chance to reverse the failing of the Gaia Engines.

Where the Gaia Engines can be found remains a mystery. For the most part, only rumors exist concerning their locations. One is under Solomon Island in the United States and was only found after the Filth and Fog Incident. Another is thought to be in Egypt, beneath a pyramid.

The Gaia Engines have been discovered at times, however, and not always by those who would use them wisely. The last Engine known to be possessed by a mortal was the Engine that the Orochi removed from Antarctica. A former member of the Host is the CEO and founder of the Orochi Group. Samael, or as he is known in the present times, Samuel Chandra, is rogue and holds no allegiance except to himself. Whatever his true intentions, Samael has not revealed his endgame. Some think that if the world falls, then so would he and his wife, the monster mother Lilith. Others fear he would try to control the basic roots of creation by enslaving the Dreamers upon their awakening and reversing the function of the Engines to serve only him and his goals. Meanwhile, Lilith's puppet, cult leader Philip

Marquard, is the wild card in play while Samael and Lilith quarrel about how to control Earth.

If the Engines fail and the Dreamers awaken, there are rumors that the Engines have a fail-safe program. Should they sense the Dreamers opening their eyes, the machines will reverse the system commands to contain Dreamers and instead seek to siphon all their power and control their minds. This reset would be unlike any other, and much of what the world knows as reality would be lost.

These machines must last, must survive, and there is little time in which to make all of this happen. During the Third Age, the Age that saw the emergence of the Filth, the infection was so swift and fierce that when Gaia rebooted the Earthly program, the Engines were damaged and lost much of their data. The Engines wouldn't survive another catastrophic event. Emma Smith must succeed in her research to control her powers. The Engines must be cleansed, or the Fourth Age will be the last.

THE HOST

"Human children hear our cries in their sleeping minds, and then make angels in the snow."

The builders, the creators, the engineers, the aliens—or are they the angels? No one is ever quite sure. The Host existed before the Gaia Engines, and they are credited with creating that which is Gaia. The Host were once considered the original designers of the Hell Dimensions and the Garden of Eden. During the First Age, the Host were thought to live in the Garden of Eden. They created all that is known, but disagreed on how to maintain or rule these creations.

Winged creatures that have existed on Earth through all the Ages, the Host are divided on how the children of Gaia should be handled and what should be done with the Dreaming Ones. This has resulted in two factions with vastly different goals: the Grigori that want to maintain Gaia as she is and protect her children, and the Nephilim that want to control her creations and subjugate them.

The Nephilim saw no real intelligence in the first humans, finding them to be without brainpower or worth. In their opinion, the talking animals should be kept on a leash and controlled. The Grigori and the Nephilim fought viciously to reach their goals, with the Grigori securing victory during a great battle that ended the First

"I'm practicing every day. I am getting better at learning what works and what doesn't. I won't talk for very long. The last time I tried to contact you, your agents swarmed and tried to take me into custody again. I cannot be kept in a prison. The Engines must be cleansed, and I'm so close to figuring out how they work and what I must do. Your lives depend on letting me work!"

—Transcript of a phone call from rogue Orochi test subject Emma Smith to Templar Headquarters

Age. The stories of apocalypse and what can and will come to pass are remnants of the histories of that first great war.

When the Second Age began, the fragments of the war remained. The Garden of Eden was destroyed, and the Hell Dimensions were open to humans. No peace had been made on what to do with the Gaia Engines that imprisoned the Dreaming Ones. Essentially, the great creations began to fall into disarray. The once-mighty Host were no longer as prominent, and by the Third Age they had received the title of "The Fallen Ones" in some circles.

In the current Age, the Nephilim and Grigori are not as obvious in the world and are more surreptitious in their dealings with mortals. Playing the long game, the Nephilim are quiet and work behind the scenes to reclaim power. It is the journey, not how quickly they reach the destination that is important, and the Nephilim intend to rule with an iron fist and absolute power. As for the Grigori, they take the role of observers, hesitant to intervene directly. However, it is suspected that they do influence events, at a distance, with a subtle hand. Some say they have ties to the Four and Sixty.

Humans pray to some of these beings for help and strength, thinking they are calling to a messenger of their god. The Nephilim use this cry for help to their advantage, while the Grigori mostly seem to see to it that humans are not exterminated outright, but otherwise leave them to their own (often destructive) devices. Sometimes humans conjure images of angels with cherubic faces, beautiful wings, and halos around their heads. Other times the angels look like avenging warriors framed in fiery light. The lore of angels has survived all of the Ages and

MEMBERS OF THE HOST

Many religions call heavenly beings “angels”— winged creatures that are said to protect and defend the Earth from the hellish demons that wish to see it burn. In the First Age, there was a group of beings responsible for Gaia’s creation and her protection, the Host. Inevitably, the Host disagreed on their goals and became two factions, the Grigori and the Nephilim. These brothers and sisters fight to see their vision realized, creating conflict that has lasted through all four Ages.

Grigori: The original Host were divided on how to handle humans. The Grigori found purpose in protecting humans and allowing them to grow. They are no longer as prominent, preferring to quietly offer wisdom from the shadows. The Grigori want humans to survive and achieve greatness, perhaps in their own image.

Nephilim: This faction is the exact opposite of the Grigori. This name is used in the Christian bible and speaks of the giants and men of renown. These creatures are feared, and it is known in no uncertain terms that they feel nothing but contempt for humankind. At best, the Nephilim see humans as a means to an end, and, at worst, as a hindrance to true progress.

Who is Fallen? Every faith around the world has a story of its gods falling from the sky and corrupting or enriching the Earth in some way. Christians consider them fallen demons, with Lucifer as their king. Vishnu is the fallen god of Hinduism, and the Anunnaki of Sumer are also in the category of the Fallen.

While the Nephilim are most often styled as “fallen angels,” some religious mortals see any celestial being who left the heavens for earthly conflicts as fallen.

continues to grow and morph with each new era. Neither faction within the Host has attempted to dissuade human worship or adoration.

In more recent times, the Host are often mistaken for aliens or demons. If someone comes into direct contact with a Host, it can be misconstrued as an alien abduction or encounter. This also fuels some ancient alien theories about how texts teach of beings from the sky and the great builders and teachers of the past. When they are connected to this theory, the Host are likened to the gods of some cultures.

Of course, there are some of the Host who see no reason to follow the crowd. One such being is Samael. He and his fellow Nephilim desired to control Gaia and all creation as they wished. However, even from the beginning, he forged his own path, taking a human wife, seeking his own whims and pleasures. It’s not confirmed whether he still interacts with other Hosts, but the Nephilim consider him a disgrace for marrying one of the first humans, and they have long since had a falling out. Early humans were nothing more than grunting animals to the Nephilim. Presently, he masquerades as the Orochi CEO Samuel Chandra.

Another of the Host, Eblis, once ruled the Hell Dimensions, having no treaty with any factions or others of his kind. His apathy did not help the deteriorating situation in the Hell Dimensions. Eblis was ruled only by wrath and a desire for destruction. Creation had now been a desire for his for many millennia, and having found a way to tear holes in the dimension of Hell that lead to Gaia’s Earth, his main goal was to bring fire and war. The residents of Gaia disgusted Eblis, and he never sought to control them like the Nephilim. He desired only destruction and, in the end, destruction came to him, as it is reported that he met his end in the recent revolt in the Hell Dimensions.

With such powerful immortal beings pulling the puppet strings of humankind, it can only be a matter of time before another civil war is waged. Such a war could result from the Nephilim’s capture of Lilith, whom they banished outside reality for her role in the Tokyo incident. Although the pair had been quarreling over how best to dominate the world, Samael wants his wife returned. For Ages, the Nephilim had hoped to trap Lilith and remove her influence from Samael. She was a lowly animal of the first cycle of humans, and therefore they considered

her poison to their brother Samael. As such, the Nephilim are not inclined to grant Samael's request and return his wife.

First, the Filth must be contained and Gaia's Engines repaired. The Illuminati, the Dragon, the Templars, and even the Council of Venice are all influenced in one way or another by the Host in this regard. Does the Host influence even the great secret societies at the highest levels? There are those paranoid souls who believe it to be so. Unlike the Grigori or Nephilim, Samael and his Orochi Group do not play by any of the loose rules applied to the other members of the Host, and they are therefore considered the most dangerous.

"It was inevitable really, the power struggle. Nephilim and Grigori locked in battle for dominance. The Grigori claim to only have humans' best interests at the heart of their campaign, but their determination to win is no different from the Nephilim's determination to dominate. The Nephilim are transparent in their quest for ultimate power. They make no excuses and offer no misleading information concerning their goals. The Grigori hide behind a few good deeds and a paltry number of alliances with humans that have made the creatures believe they can roam about without the leashes they require. Neither faction is worthy of my interest, but I must now deal with the Nephilim for taking my wife. The annoyance of diverting resources to contact my former comrades is great, but I will not be indebted to the Grigori, so asking for their help in this matter would not be practical. Their price is too high ... loyalty. No Nephilim or Grigori will have my loyalty, but both warring factions will kneel before me sooner than they think."

—Recording of Samuel Chandra speaking to an unknown listener (the spy who recorded the conversation has since gone missing)

THE AGES

"There were three beginnings before the beginning you know, sweetling."

The first three Ages are memories that are vague and few. In the current Age, the Fourth Age, the Gaia Engines are truly failing, and the chaos of the Dreaming Ones has taken hold through the spread of Filth. Previous Ages birthed heroes and villains, and humans matured and fell while climbing to heights of greatness and then plunging to depths of despair. When an Age ends, a new beginning dawns. Remnants of the past remain, but the players of the game of life start at ground zero. Reality and time are reset, reshaped. The vast gulfs of eons unknown and the warping effects of the resets make even the concepts of these "Ages" nebulous, barely understood by even the most knowledgeable. Relics and rare holdovers remain from Ages past, a byproduct of compounding corruption from each imperfect reboot – like a grand, cosmic Mandela Effect.

The First Age was that of the creators and first humans. What few details are known from this Age have led to the belief that it was a pure paradise. At first, it appears that the Host, and even rudimentary humans, were living in peace for a short time. The Host also created the Hell Dimensions in this age. Somewhere during this Age, the Host descended into a deadly disagreement. Because of this, when the first Age ended, it was not a natural occurrence.

The Grigori and Nephilim were locked in a final battle that destroyed all that was and forced Gaia to renew and reboot. It was during this time that Eblis, a member of the Host, broke from the Nephilim and created another dimension, the Hell Dimension. The turmoil could not be contained, and the Gaia Engines were reset for the first time. When the dust settled, everything began anew. The Second Age was born – an entirely new reality and reset planet, with just the faint half-memories of something that came before.

The Second Age is lost to obscurity, much like the First Age and a good portion of the Third. Cults, churches, gods, and blood worship were prevalent in this Age, as were the gods these practices were seeking to appease. During this time, at the height of the Hell Dimensions, humankind and demonkind freely intermingled.

Why the Host agreed to this change in the order of things is a mystery, but it was a definite shift.

Near the end of the Second Age, something caused the Host to no longer have use for the Hell Dimensions. As this Age came to a close, the Host abandoned the Hell Dimensions without a thought to those who were left behind. This left former fallen demons, succubi, and their creations to fend for themselves. Through the betrayal of their abandonment, the ones left behind became the stuff of nightmares, satanic rituals, and the literal Hell of the religions of the world.

When the Third Age dawned, man became enhanced, and technology flourished. Guardians of Agartha were created in this Age. Atlantis and seafaring cultures were born, as were individuals who learned again how to harness pure anima. Some relics recovered from that Age even hint at basic time travel. This suggests that science and magic were learned as one facet of knowledge and not as separate entities. It is possible that a truly advanced society existed in this Age that was lost. Artifacts that have survived from the Third Age are considered by those of the Fourth Age to be magical. Their technology is still difficult to understand or duplicate.

Many of the named gods, such as Odin, Thor, and Loki, were active in this Age as well. These beings were no doubt Bees of their era. They protected, taught, and led humankind through new inventions and toward a higher degree of critical thinking. Their tools survived, as did some of their lessons, into the Fourth Age. This has been invaluable, as one such relic, Excalibur, has been used to remove and repel the Filth.

While exact data from any previous Age is, at best, highly theoretical to even the most erudite Secret Worlder, there exists a persistent story regarding the end of the Third Age. Lilith, the Mother of Monsters, is said to have attempted to rouse a Dreaming One from its slumber. The titan horror stirred, ever so slightly, a cosmic yawn, and it was enough to bring the planet to ruin in screams, tentacles, and warped reality running like hot wax.

It's not known what ended the Third Age and started the Fourth, but the Age concluded almost as chaotically as the First. Some theories from texts or tribal legends speak of a total reset that changed and remade everything on Earth. The beginning of any Age comes with memory loss

or a reinvention of humanity. However, the end of the Third Age was so abrupt and absolute that little was transferred in the reset, causing the stories of flourishing societies to be told incorrectly, or else forgotten.

The Fourth Age is the current Age and, in some ways, the most tumultuous. Many cults that worship the Dreaming Ones through images of the sun have been born again, liked repeating patterns superimposed on the skin of reality from all the resets. Wars are waged, and human weaponry is becoming more chemical and more destructive. Histories that were passed through the generations have been lost or manipulated to benefit those seeking power.

As the Gaia Engines fail, the Filth continues to corrupt and gain ground. The Host are hidden in shadow, with their rebellious former colleague Samael settling in to pick pieces of the world for himself through illicit business deals. Another former member of the Host, Eblis, burns holes into the fabric of Gaia's reality with the plan to march his Hell Army into the world and destroy humans. Then, there is Samael's wife, Lilith, and her monster children who fight to control the Dreaming Ones. Another apocalyptic event might be on the horizon.

The Fourth Age could well be the last, as the Gaia Engines cannot power another reset of the system. With the end in sight, Secret Worlders sift through the scant grains left behind by the previous Ages for any clues to further the survival of Gaia's creations. The dawning of a Fifth Age would look very different from any other reset and might usher in a reality that no one can fathom.

"There have been many millennia that have passed, many men and women have sat beneath my tree and died beneath it as well. I no longer remember THE beginning, and every ending and beginning just run together in my memories now. It's best to just let memories go. Unreliable things, really. Too much sentiment, be it love or anger. The Ages have come and gone, but this time, the Filth is a strong foe. My sister has finally set events in motion that even she will regret. So many years and ages, but if I've forgotten the ties that bind, then I know she has no memory or care either."

—Diary entry found scattered at a burnt-out tree in the Transylvania Forest

THE AGES

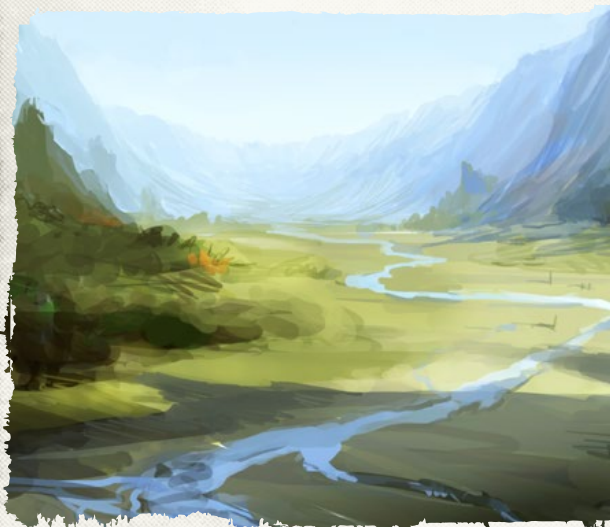
Though time is a human construct, and its passing is yet another illusion, it's commonly held that three Ages have come and gone, and the Fourth Age is now upon us. The details of each Age have been lost (or hidden), but here is an overview of what Secret Worlders know of such things.

The First Age. It was a paradise, until it wasn't. The Host were split by civil war, and humanity was caught in the middle.

The Second Age. It was an era of awe, worship, and sacrifice, when humans consorted with demons ... until the Hell Dimensions were cut off.

The Third Age. It was a world of wonders, of technologies fused with anima. It was also the first Age in which the Dreaming Ones stirred in their slumber. Atlantis fell, and the world ended again.

The Fourth Age. It is now. Every Age thus far has ended in destruction. Every Age has birthed the one after it. But as the Fourth Age totters toward its climax, it's unclear if the world will be able to reset itself once more, or whether it will be devoured by the increasingly restless Dreamers.





AGARTHA

"Agartha's heart is the tree."

Beneath the pounding feet of civilization, there is a place known only to those that buzz on the right frequency. The Earth's core is dense, full of liquid metals churning deep within. Science is very sure of that fact. There is a space that survives between dimensions that is vast and home to the World Tree. The tree branches throughout the belly of the Earth and connects many different places on the surface. This is Agartha, the heart of the hive. Both of these realities—the molten core and Agartha—are simultaneously true.

Numerous books exist on the reality of Inner Earth. People claim to have dreams about the center of the Earth's core and people traversing unknown worlds. Ancient Mesopotamia had legends of people walking through nearly endless caves and ending up in an underground paradise. The Celts spoke of a cave, Cruachan, that was later called Ireland's Hell. Tibetans taught there was a subterranean world through the mountains of Kunlun called Shambala. Even America claims to have possible known entrances, such as Mount Shasta in California and Mammoth Cave in Kentucky.

In some cultures, Agartha is spoken of as a paradise, while many religions liken it to the entrance of Hell. The Greeks thought that Agartha, or the Underworld, consisted of both the fires of Hell, complete with trials, and the paradise of the Elysian fields. Tibet's Shambala is thought to be a heaven of sorts where there is no disease or violence. The true Agartha isn't as good or as bad as the myths told aboveground suggest.

More recently, astronomer Edmond Halley hypothesized that the Earth could have a hollow point in its center. It was his answer to the aurora borealis, the light seemingly emanating from the poles that he thought came from openings inside Earth. This idea was ignored and it faded, becoming known more as pseudoscience or fantasy for literature. Even Shakespeare dabbled in hints of an inner world in his plays. Late 19th-century fantasy writers included a plot device that relied on Inner Earth theories.

In the early 20th century, Admiral Richard Bryd claimed to have made five trips to Antarctica in search of an opening to the center of the Earth. Even former colleagues worked to discredit his

notes and claims. In the latter part of the 20th century, nearly forty years after the death of the admiral, his diaries were released. At this point many came forward to claim the diary was simply Byrd trying to falsify documentation of his location. To this day, anyone with a working theory concerning Agartha is labeled as naive or without any academic merit.

Third Age machines—some of the most tangible evidence that anyone can find of a previous Age—thrive in Agartha, guarding the various portals connecting the major cities and homes to the warring factions. To enter, someone must be vibrating at the right frequency. A mundane human might go insane or suffer an imploding brain – such results are unpredictable. Bees have the easiest time getting around, but other humans and entities have managed travel through Agartha through technological and supernatural means. This is the way Agartha is protected—by allowing only those who know there is another realm hidden within the normal world to enter. Already those individuals possess a different sense of time, space, and reality.

A kindly man known only as the Stationmaster, who is reminiscent of the Victorian Age, welcomes new travelers and directs them to their destinations. He has some tales to relate, but even he knows he's a bygone relic of a time that is fading. The Buzzing calls him "Kindly Sisyphus." He talks about the old days, the formation of tunnels, and travelers that have come before. His kind nature and devotion to the travelers that see their way through the Agartha tunnels is genuine. Any threat to Gaia or Agartha is one he takes seriously, and he encourages all Bees to do the same, as Agartha is his home.

Merchants have popped up over the centuries in Agartha and can help new and seasoned travelers with any purchases they require. Offering rare (but expensive) curiosities, these sellers are a mixture of the past and the present. Clothing, healing agents, weapons, items for magical focus, and even pets are found for sale among a congregation of vendors.

Metal golem-like creatures known as Custodians direct and protect travelers to and from the World Tree. Each major faction's tunnel is protected by the Mechanical Guardians, as are tunnels to Solomon's Island, Kaidan, and the Council of Venice, to name merely a few. Some of the tunnels of Agartha that are much older and deeper within the branches lead to

"I have allowed man and country to believe me a liar and a fraud. This I do to protect the light of the Inner Earth. The remedial minds that have read my claims are searching for fantastical drama, not illumination. The wonders that were seen should not be shared with the infertile minds that permeate our existence. This will be the last I will write about my recantation of my journey to the North Pole. May it be that in future generations, the spark for truth is once again ignited."

—Admiral Byrd's classified personal notes. Taken from the Council of Venice Library.

other places and other times. Rarely are those "older" tunnels used. This could be to prevent a being from entering a future or past reality and encountering their own self or another version, leading to unnecessary turmoil. The newer branches are creating different points of entry on the surface all the time. This could explain how the Filth found a way to creep into the haven of the World Tree.

Unfortunately, the infected branches are germinating and creating more branches. These new growths are diseased mutations with a vile self-awareness, and they are seeping into the heart of Agartha. Like trees growing new branches and leaves, the Filth takes advantage of this process and is evolving and growing as well. Branches are increasing inch by inch, sprouting leaves that drip with the black blood of nightmares. The World Tree itself is not succumbing to infection just yet, but the blackened branches are climbing higher and becoming more numerous.

It's theorized that the tunnels were created long ago to connect areas where Gaia Engines were contained. Agartha's history has been lost to the Ages, like most stories and beginnings. For now, the Mechanical Guardians roam the branches and watch the tunnels. They have been especially on guard since the Filth slithered through the cracks into the Inner Earth. The Kaidan portal is the most affected by the Filth and is closed to all but a few. Many refuse to admit the fact that with the Filth infiltrating Agartha, the Fourth Age might be waning and nearing its end.

THE HELL DIMENSIONS

"See the denizens. The incubi and succubi strut through the wasteland."

The Hell Dimensions are the twisted remains of a former paradise that was probably created in the First Age. Around the Second Age, the paradise was lost, either at the hands of the warring Host or the result of humans summoning creatures from the dimension for their own purposes. The corruption caused the Hell Dimensions to devolve into what many know it to be today. Pain, torture, blood, and fire are all present at the gates. Brimstone rains from the sky. No paradise can be found, only fire and lasting shame.

While the Hell Dimensions had been open since the First Age, the Second Age saw a heightened mingling of humans and demons. At first there appeared to be no issues. Then the Host abandoned the dimension to ruin.

The former paradise was stripped of anima, and reckless humans began to conjure and summon the demons and creatures of the Hell Dimensions for their own amusement. What had been a careful design of meticulous architects was now cast into oblivion.

The inhabitants have long life spans, and despite the warring and the fire that rained from the sky, they survived, devolving somewhat. Paradise became ruin and misery. It became the true wasteland that is Hell from ancient texts and the literature of the centuries. Religions, cultures, and philosophers spoke of the realm of fire, torture, and hopelessness. There are those that fear this fiery place, and others that seek to enter or to bring a piece of the fire to their own plane.

Because the Hell Dimensions were once a wonderland, the current inhabitants felt their dimension had been unfairly corrupted. The succubi, the demons, and the soldiers of Hell all wondered what could have been if their home hadn't been razed and abandoned. They

HELL DIMENSIONS RESIDENTS

The demons that call the Hell Dimensions home come in a vast array of shapes and sizes. Some forms they chose. Some were chosen for them. Any of these demons might be found on Earth, but the types most commonly found here are listed below.

Rakshasa. Formerly mischievous imps, the rakshasa were transformed by the lords of Hell into mindless, brutal slave warriors. They are literally addicted to causing pain, which in some small way eases their own constant suffering. As battle slaves, they can be found in the service of other Hell denizens, either on Earth or in the Hell Dimensions. They would be pitiable, were they not so terrifying.

Oni. The demons called oni are strong, clever, and resourceful. They claim to be the fiercest warriors in the Hell Dimensions and boast of vast armies beyond counting. They often fight as soldiers of fortune in the occult conflicts on Earth (especially in Japan) and other worlds. With their numbers and cunning, the oni could possibly be a world-conquering force if they were not divided into nine rival houses. Each house proclaims itself the best,

and the most qualified to lead. The endless infighting keeps them from achieving their fullest potential.

Succubi and Incubi. Demons of temptation, succubi and incubi are dedicated to finding ways to let humans humiliate and debase themselves. They have long envied humanity. Over the Ages, this envy turned to hatred, and the hatred to obsession. They are obsessed with humans choosing and embracing their own degradation. There is no difference between succubi and incubi; each form is merely an illusion worn to tempt, guide, and nudge their victims into self-destruction. They wear many illusions. So many, in fact, that their true forms may never be known.

Hell Soldiers. This catchall term refers to the wide variety of demonic troops that fight for Eblis and the various lords of Hell. They protect their territories within the Hell Dimensions, and they can be found roaming the Earth near any portals connected to Hell. Hell soldiers are precise, deadly, and bent on the destruction of humans.

derided the humans that called upon them and bound them with their broken incantations and ignorant attempts at magic. Even well-meaning, inexperienced magic users only caused more trouble in the end by attaching a demon to themselves or a location outside of the Hell Dimensions. Occupants of the dimension find no pleasure, and their existence is devoid of any joy.

Once ruled by a former Host, the Hell Dimensions' creator, Eblis, the Hell Dimensions were at war within. Eblis had no love for any humans. Eventually, this disgust grew to include the citizens of his realm. His disinterest, or revulsion, led to disarray in the Hells. This caused some to fight to restore the realm to its former glory, while others followed Eblis and continued to walk among the ashes of the lost and sail on the rivers of flame with apathy.

Only one human has been known to enter Hell in the current Age and survive. Theodore Wicker was an Oxford graduate who was at the top of his field in demonology in the late 20th century. His research was considered an obsession by most. The unhealthy number of hours the driven Wicker put into his investigation of the dimension and its history attracted much notice.

Wicker was so dedicated to learning the languages of demons that he even had the inside of his mouth surgically altered. The precise cuts into the upper parts of his cheek and tongue were done to help him form the right sounds and dialects. Once he was able to speak the ancient demonic languages properly, Wicker wanted to put his knowledge to use.

It is said Wicker fell in love with a succubus and traded his heart for a demonic body that could properly traverse Hell. Whatever the truth, Wicker performed a ritual that allowed him entrance into the Hell Dimensions. Upon seeing the destruction but knowing there was more beyond the melted mountains and anguished moans, Wicker set out to restore the glory the Hells lost long ago. His presence was noticed by Eblis, who sensed the anima in Wicker and used him to open portals to Gaia.

Eblis and his army fought Wicker and those who shared his dreams of rebuilding the Hell Dimensions. A human had breached the infernal realms, and Eblis raged at the fact that an insignificant creature had found its way inside his domain. Not wanting to stop at subjugating Hell, Eblis also began to rip holes into Gaia's

dimension. This led some Bees to discover the cause of Eblis's sudden renewed interest in Gaia.

A faction agent eventually uncovered Eblis's intent to invade Gaia and discovered the portal he was attempting to use to bridge his world with the other. Wicker's supporters, along with



"Wicker refused to return to the Earth realm and walked away into the shadows of fire and ash. We offered him asylum and assistance in returning, but he saw no purpose in reuniting with humans. He claims to have transformed into something that is in between man and demon. He shows and feels no emotions and has no social or emotional intelligence beyond casual etiquette. All other attempts at contact since returning from the Hell Dimensions have failed. Professor Theodore Wicker wants no communication with those of this dimension and has assumed the role of leader among what's left of the Hell Dimensions denizens."

—Declassified portion of a Templar report concerning missions on Solomon Island during the fog incident

Wicker himself, were able to aid the agent in combat by establishing a home base at Sheol, Wicker's home in Hell. Eblis eventually appeared before the agent and Wicker but was ultimately defeated.

After the downfall of Eblis, Wicker turned from his original goal of righting the wrongs of Hell and instead sought to find a better place for its demons and denizens. It is not known how long Eblis had let the Hell Dimensions fall into ruin, but those left behind had been fighting to survive among the wastelands. Eblis's war did not interest them, and they gladly followed Wicker to search for something more meaningful in the beyond.



THE SECRET WORLD GAZETTEER

The world of the Secret World. Important locations. Important groups. Movers and shakers.

SOLOMON ISLAND

Solomon Island is located just off the coast of Maine, and is officially known for its fishing, mining, and tourism. Unofficially, the island is known for its danger and mystery. Ever since English colonists arrived in the 1600s, it's been plagued with bloodshed, madness, and horror. Even now, though the locals try to ignore it, strange things are rumbling throughout the island, sowing peril and fear.

And yet the people stay. For an ancient secret writhes and whispers at the heart of Solomon Island, offering answers and power to those who heed its call.

SECRET HISTORY

For thousands of years, the people of the native Wabanaki tribe were dedicated to keeping the Dreaming One beneath the island in its Gaia-induced slumber. They repelled various Dreamer cults and, with the help of their Viking allies, established rune stones to protect the island from supernatural invaders.

Unfortunately for the Wabanaki, their runes were powerless against European colonists.

In the 1600s, Solomon Island was one of the Illuminati's first strongholds in North America. Illuminati tunnels burrowed beneath the soil. Their sigils and wards marked each new construction. Their agents and money built monuments and buildings—then rebuilt them as they fell to fire and disaster again and again. The Solomon Island colony grew as the Wabanaki dwindled away. With each crisis and tragedy, the land was further tainted with dark magic, powerful curses, and deadly abominations.

In 2011, a great fog rolled across Solomon Island. It brought with it a terrible song. Those who heard it were drawn to the sea, where they drowned, then returned to land as voracious undead. These monsters were soon joined by

draug, zombies, and other creatures. Even the Filth oozed its way onto the surface, where it corrupted animals, people, and other creatures.

The fog isolated Solomon Island from the rest of the world. The Illuminati, Dragon, and Templars all descended on the island to investigate the strange happenings and prevent the horror from spreading. What they found was nothing short of apocalyptic. But then ...

Then ten years had gone by.

And now the Long Night is over. The fog is gone. So too are the draug, the zombies, and the hordes of monsters swarming the island. Most of the locals who had gone to sea and returned as undead are living their lives, safe and sound. Others remain missing, but no one quite remembers when they vanished ... or why.

It's as if none of it happened. No one quite remembers the time of fog or the decade that followed. If they try to think back to more than a year or so ago, the details become indistinct ... foggy, even. Some still dream of eating human flesh, and many more have a faint knowledge that there is something, ever so slightly, *wrong*.

Solomon Island today is much like it was before the fog. But while it's no longer a hub of supernatural terrors, neither is it the sleepy isle it once was. Dark things have awakened, and old threats are stirring once more. The Dreaming One tosses in its sleep, calling for new servants to free it. Such things don't go unnoticed, which means the secret societies are taking an interest in the island once again.

HIDDEN POWERS

The Illuminati arrived on Solomon Island with some of the earliest English settlers and have been here ever since. If any secret society knows what's going on here, it's them. But while the Illuminati are aware of supernatural strangeness on the island, they're more concerned with covering it up than investigating what they see as minor disturbances.

The Orochi Group is a major investor in the island's latest ventures. Through its subsidiaries, the company has helped finance real estate development (via the Solomon Island Outreach Committee) and recent mining operations. Neither the corporation nor its subsidiaries have an official presence on the island, but their employees, black vans, and unmarked helicopters are often seen in the area.

POINTS OF INTEREST

While the island is relatively small, it hosts more than its share of strange locations full of mysterious dangers. Below are some of the most prominent ones.

KINGSMOUTH

Founded in 1667, Kingsmouth is a picturesque New England town. Its economy is suffering, but it stays afloat through commercial fishing, tourism, and sheer islander stubbornness. Its people are tight knit and tight lipped; they're friendly enough (they're always smiling), but they don't trust outsiders and prefer to keep the town's secrets to themselves.

One of Kingsmouth's biggest unspoken secrets is that the Illuminati are woven into the very fabric of the community. Not everyone knows the society by that name, and very few speak it, but any lifelong resident is aware that there are larger forces at work behind the scenes here. Those forces aren't necessarily malevolent, but folks who mind their own business tend to do better than those who don't. When faced with the strange, it's best to just smile and look away.

Kingsmouth is governed by the Town Council, which provides guidance to the town manager. The current town manager is Helen Bannerman, who previously served as the local sheriff. No one can recall exactly when she took office, but they all agree that she's much better for the community than her predecessor ... whose name they also can't quite remember.

Sheriff Andy Gardener is Bannerman's right-hand man. He and his deputies provide law and order throughout Solomon Island, but they are most commonly found in Kingsmouth, where their office is. Gardener is an expert in solving problems. Whenever he investigates an unusual situation, the problem tends to clear itself right up. After he talks to them, folks realize they were mistaken. No one's missing. Nothing's wrong. "It was all a misunderstanding," they say, and they smile.

While in Kingsmouth, people may want to visit some of the more interesting spots:

Kingsmouth Congregational Church. The church's roots go back to 1713. A community hub, it's lovingly shepherded by Reverend Henry Hawthorne, who likes to talk a bit more than he should about the town's history and conspiracies.

Priest House. Named for Kingsmouth's founder, this large, ominous house is famous

for its drawn curtains and mysterious nature. Among its many secrets is an entrance to the Illuminati tunnels that run beneath the town.

Susie's Diner. This harborside diner offers up a classic slice of Americana, served hot and fresh with a scoop of homemade ice cream. Locals congregate here to chat, swap fishing stories, and feed the rumor mill. The sheriff and his deputies frequent the place as well, sipping coffee and feeling the pulse of the town.

Raven's Knock. While the shop sells crystals, charms, and other New Age trinkets, its main attraction is its proprietor, Madame Rogêt. The self-styled "clairvoyant" tells fortunes and mystifies the tourists. The locals don't take her seriously, but some say that if you ask her the right questions at just the right time, her demeanor changes, and she speaks with a voice not her own.

Paradise Found. This cluttered antique store sells a jumbled collection of goods dating back hundreds of years. There's no telling what cursed, legendary, or enchanted items might be found on its dusty and disorganized shelves.

King of Books. This proudly independent bookstore carries not only the current bestsellers but an impressive collection of rare, esoteric tomes as well. The store also displays a complete collection of Sam Krieg books, which are not for sale.

Kingsmouth Public Library. Housed in a small, converted brick building, the public library is cramped, cozy, and the home of the library chess club. In addition to hosting weekly chess nights and quarterly tournaments, the club has started quietly investigating the strange occurrences plaguing Solomon Island. Its members are patient and subtle. They wish to avoid a visit from Sheriff Andy.

THE SAVAGE COAST

The seaward-facing edge of Solomon Island is home to the island's on-again, off-again tourism industry. It features beaches, beautiful scenery, and even an amusement park. (The park's been closed for years, but potential new owners are often sniffing around looking to reopen it.)

While tourism is lagging at the moment, members of the Solomon Island Outreach Committee are dedicated to bringing it back with a vengeance. With financial assistance from outside investors, the Committee has helped develop new hotel, amusement park,

and beachfront opportunities. They are also in the process of purchasing tracts of shoreline property for “future development.”

During the warmer months, the Committee sets up regular festivals along the shoreline with food, games, and music. Every summer they put on the “Island Heritage” celebration. They claim it was a long-standing tradition that was removed from the local histories for some reason, and that they have recently rediscovered it. The celebration is marked with aquatic imagery and fun smiling fish masks. Though it’s never mentioned publicly, every festival is marked with a tourist or two going missing.

INNSMOUTH ACADEMY

The Savage Coast isn’t entirely dedicated to recreation. It also features a number of old homes and other buildings, including Innsmouth Academy.

Founded in 1798, Innsmouth Academy is an exclusive private boarding school and day high school that provides the most exceptional (i.e., richest) students with the best education that money can buy.

The Academy’s more important role is educating Secret Worlders’ children in the ways of magic and supernatural power. Most of these children are related to members of the Illuminati, though the school accepts students affiliated with other secret societies if they’re deemed “exceptional” enough.

The Academy buildings themselves are secured behind a high brick wall and defended by both a world-class security system and numerous mystical wards. With all the supernatural

experiments and magic-wielding teenagers inside, the wards are as much to protect the rest of the world as they are to protect the school itself.

Perhaps it’s because of these wards that those inside the school have better insight than most into the strangeness surrounding Solomon Island. The Academy’s headmaster, Hayden Montag, and Annabel Usher, one of its top instructors, are quietly working with a number of other staff and local Secret Worlders to investigate what’s going on. Montag and Usher have retained their memories of the past decade, including the headmaster’s extraordinary efforts to cleanse the remaining townsfolk of their Filth infection. (He himself has been deeply changed by the Filth, and while the infection is kept magically concealed and in check for the moment, he rarely leaves the Academy grounds lest the binding spells collapse.)

Montag and his associates occasionally reach out to visiting Secret Worlders for assistance. Sometimes this has to do with their ongoing investigation, but it just as often involves help with experiments, deliveries, or discreet cover-ups.

KINGSMOUTH LIGHTHOUSE

The most prominent landmark on the eastern shore of Solomon Island is the Kingsmouth Lighthouse. The second-tallest structure on the East Coast, the lighthouse serves not only to guide ships but also to signify the Illuminati’s power in North America. Those who know where to look can still find Illuminati symbols and wards all over in and around the lighthouse.



The lighthouse was virtually abandoned once it was automated years ago. Its location on a hard-to-reach rock just off the coast meant that no one visited it if they didn't have to. It was starting to fall apart when Sam Krieg, the famous fiction author, rented it out as a place to finish his latest novel.

Krieg's novel is done. It's just come out, and the critics are baffled by its radical tonal shift from anything else he's written. While it still touches on his usual theme of human depravity, there is an unsettling lightness to the material that makes it more approachable. His loyal readers are confused and irritated; Krieg is finding a more mainstream appeal, and fans are less than enthused about sharing his dark visions with that audience.

Krieg himself has emerged from the tower a changed man. He's happy. He smiles. He's purged the place of his old files and notes, and talks of buying it outright.

True Krieg fans are suspicious. Some say the author is being blackmailed or somehow coerced into this new persona. They see his latest book as a cry for help, and scour it for hidden clues.

The fans are right. The man posing as Sam Krieg is an impostor. The real Sam Krieg is locked in the basement of the lighthouse, muttering and dictating his prose to the insects that keep him company. He talks to ghosts, which may or may not be real, and scrapes his skin until it bleeds in order to "let the bad words out." The fake Krieg keeps him fed and relatively healthy, and listens to the madman's story ideas in order to sell them as his own.

OVERLOOK MOTEL

The original Overlook Motel was intended to serve the waves of tourists descending upon Solomon Island each year to enjoy the amusement park and take in the sights. When those tourists abandoned the island, the motel closed. It went through a number of owners, none of whom were able to open it successfully.

For decades, the motel was abandoned and boarded up. It still attracted more than its share of strange folks investigating disappearances and alleged supernatural occurrences. Many of them ended up disappearing themselves.

At some point over the past ten years, the motel burned down. No one remembers the incident clearly, but no one misses the old eyesore. The Solomon Island Outreach Committee sold

the property to a holding company, Ascent Investment Group, which promptly flattened the whole area in preparation for new construction.

Construction on the new Overlook Hotel has just been completed. Those close to the construction say that the hotel's design is most unusual. Many of the walls are at very specific non-right angles. Some hallways start out too narrow for two people to walk abreast, then grow wide enough to accommodate a truck. A secondary courtyard in the center can only be accessed via a handful of rooms, and its six swimming pools are each twelve feet deep but only twelve feet across.

The hotel is at least twice as large as its predecessor. Since there weren't enough visitors to keep the original afloat, the locals are skeptical of its success, but Ascent management encourages them to have faith. "They're coming," says the bland-faced man in the impeccable suit. "They're all coming."

They may be right. Rumor has it that many of the rooms are already reserved, even up to a year in advance. Most of the rooms are sold in large blocks to organized groups with names like "The Third Eye Society" or "The Brimstone Club."

Alex McCall, a semiretired Illuminati agent, has taken on the role of hotel manager. After helping close a portal to the Hell Dimensions in the original motel, he feels obligated to keep an eye on its successor. He's pretty sure the new owners have their own supernatural schemes in mind for the place. If they come to fruition, he intends to either put a stop to them or ensure they benefit no one but the Illuminati.

ATLANTIC ISLAND PARK

When industrial magnate Nathaniel Winter began building Atlantic Island Park in the early 1970s, it seemed a good investment. Tourists were starting to discover Solomon Island. They were already coming for its quaint shops and picturesque views. It made sense that they would stay even longer if there was an entire amusement park to enjoy and explore.

The locals weren't convinced. The land the park would be built on was centered on the old Henderson farm, which was said to be cursed. Winter persisted. And he paid the price.

Park construction was plagued with horrific freak accidents. Workers died. Some killed themselves. Nevertheless, Winter persisted.

Atlantic Island Park opened in 1978. The accidents continued, killing more workers and guests. Stories arose of ghosts and other monsters lurking around the park. But it wasn't until a park employee, dressed in a chipmunk costume, stabbed two teens to death that the park finally shut down.

Today, the rusted carcass of the old park still looms over the Savage Coast. The Solomon Island Outreach Committee has tried many times to find a buyer for the blood-soaked property, but Winter's son and heir, Nicholas Winter, seems incapable of selling. Whatever curse lies upon that land appears to have infected its owners as well.

Wise locals know to avoid the abandoned park. The young and foolish who visit after dark report rides moving on their own, bloodthirsty phantoms, and strange voices calling for help.

The park hasn't claimed a victim recently, but it's only a matter of time. Smugglers have been using it as a rendezvous spot for their deliveries from the ocean, and a pack of wild dogs is said to sleep in the shadows of the old midway. The park isn't done killing yet. It will never be.

BLUE MOUNTAIN

The Native American tribe known as the Wabanaki have long lived in the foothills of Blue Mountain on Solomon Island. Time and again, they have fought to protect the Gaia Engine buried beneath the mountain from the Dreaming One cultists who would seek to destroy it.

For the past two centuries, the Wabanaki were locked in a deadly dance with the various mining companies who would dig up the mountain and expose its secrets. Though the Wabanaki protested and warned them, the companies proceeded to dig, unleashing horrors upon

themselves and the land. The mine closed. Then the mine reopened, and the dance began again.

But with each generation, there were fewer Wabanaki who still believed in the evil beneath the mountain. There were fewer Wabanaki on the island at all. It grew harder to fight. Finally, in 2005, the tribal elders sold the mine land to an anonymous international corporation and set the tribe on a new path of profiting off tourism and gambling. The council was bitterly split over the decision, and soon afterward dissolved.

Today, the Blue Mountain region is dominated by two enterprises: the Blue Ridge Mine, which is back in operation, and the Golden Wigwam casino.

BLUE RIDGE MINE

If asked about the mine, any local will say, "The Blue Ridge Mine is great for the island's economy!" They can't recall what mineral the mine produces ("Silver, I think. Or maybe zinc.") and don't know anyone who actually works there, but they still say, in unison, "The Blue Ridge Mine is great for the island's economy!"

The corporation that runs the mine has little interest in actual mining. On paper, they are "conducting exploratory digging" deep beneath the ground. In reality, their staff of geologists, engineers, and theoretical physicists are more concerned with excavating and studying the Gaia Engine buried beneath Blue Mountain.

Crews of miners tunnel blindly through the rock in patterns that only their overseers can fathom. They don't get paid much, but they don't need money. The company feeds, clothes, and houses them. They are without families. They are often immigrants, often without paperwork. Once they enter the mining facility, they rarely come out again.



The mine is a jumble of pits and shafts that have been dug up over the past hundred years. While heavy machinery can be seen moving earth around on the surface, the actual digging goes on underground in three main zones.

In the first zone, workers are carefully carving out the ground surrounding the Gaia Engine. The company hopes to study the Engine in order to manipulate it to its own ends. Researchers maintain several small labs in this subterranean area. They realize there is danger in being so close to the Dreamer, and they wear protective gear while in the zone in hopes of keeping it from affecting them.

The second zone is an experiment. In it, the miners are instructed to dig endless, looping tunnels that bring them dangerously close to the Gaia Engine. Company researchers theorize that this constant exposure to the Dreaming One will influence the workers, and they want to study that effect. These miners are kept under quarantine, and they are regularly examined by the scientists. Many of them are, in fact, infected. Their minds are clouded with Filth. They're given to manic, occasionally violent outbursts. When the infection reaches a critical mass, the workers will likely break quarantine and try to infect everyone else in the facility.

The third zone does not officially exist. The company doesn't know about it. But some of the foremen have instructed miners to dig "back door" tunnels from the deepest parts of the mine to outside the mountain. As the Dreaming One produces excess Filth, this Filth escapes out of the tunnels and into the island. While it's likely the foremen are themselves infected, it's also possible they are moles, working for either a rival organization or a cult with its own agenda.

The mine complex is surrounded by dilapidated fences that serve more as boundary markers than actual barriers. While the company does have its own armed security personnel, they are few in number and spend most of their time watching camera feeds.

Those Wabanaki who remember the old tales and know that danger lurks beneath the mountain do their best to keep an eye on the mine. They've given up trying to stop the digging through legal means or public protest. They're prepared to take direct action. They hope their surveillance and investigations will reveal when and where to take that action.

GOLDEN WIGWAM CASINO

Flush with cash from selling the Blue Ridge Mine, the Wabanaki built the Golden Wigwam casino and hotel. Now the cash is gone, but the casino remains.

When the Golden Wigwam first opened, visitors poured in from the mainland to empty their wallets at the tables and fill their bellies at the buffet. But as other, closer casinos opened in the region, traffic slowed to a steady trickle. Tourists surge in during the summer, but during the off-peak months, it's mostly the local regulars who keep the lights on.

Casino management puts on a brave face. They assure the rest of the Wabanaki that the downturn is temporary and things are going to pick up in the next few months. "The Outreach Committee has some great initiatives coming up!" they say. Behind closed doors, however, they are willing to try anything to attract more visitors.

One such attempt has involved bringing in a new set of slot machines. The machines, called "Serpent's Kiss," are all networked together, and they share a physical connection with a ring of network cables overhead that the documentation refers to as "Kukulkan." The games feature a snake motif and are unusually addictive. Those who play them are filled with euphoria even as they themselves grow weaker. Management suspects the machines are not what they seem, but they are too reliant on the money they generate to look into the situation.

The casino provides several "ceremony rooms" in the basement where the Wabanaki can perform their traditional rituals. Most see these rituals as foolish superstition, but they set aside the space to keep peace within what remains of the tribe. These rooms are where the followers of the old ways perform the ceremonies that help keep the Blue Mountain Dreaming One in its stasis. If the rituals aren't performed regularly, the Dreamer may stir in its slumber—or worse.

Rumor has it that gamblers who find themselves in need of money are sometimes approached by individuals who offer them casino credit in exchange for very specific favors: changing a spreadsheet at work, for example, or shoplifting a specific item, or turning off a certain switch at a certain time. Those who claim to have been visited by their "credit agents" can't describe what they look like, aside from saying they are "tall."

EGYPT

One of the oldest civilizations in the world, Egypt has persisted through every Age. Echoes of its past reverberate through its modern cities. Beyond those cities, its ancient deserts hide equally ancient secrets. Tombs, palaces, and temples lie beneath the sand, waiting for the time of their discovery and awakening. Of course, these places are not without their protectors—human and otherwise.

The Valley of the Sun God is one such desert region. It's far enough from the cities to be ignored—or even forgotten—by the mundane world. Yet it's close enough that, should the valley fall to darkness, it will soon take all of Egypt with it.

SECRET HISTORY

During Egypt's 18th Dynasty, the Dreaming Ones infected the mind of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV. Identifying itself as an aspect of Ra, the Egyptian sun god, the Dreamer introduced itself as Aten, the sun disk. Aten demanded worship and obedience, which the pious Pharaoh gladly supplied.

Amenhotep changed his name to Akhenaten in honor of his new god, and outlawed the worship of any other deities in the Egyptian pantheon. He moved the nation's capital from Thebes to Amarna. At the urging of his god, he established massive, elaborate new construction and excavation projects deep in the desert.

One of these projects involved tunneling deep beneath the sands and through the bedrock to discover a vast underground chamber full of liquid Filth. This Filth, Akhenaten told his followers, was the condensed breath of Aten himself. It could not yet survive the sunlight, so the Pharaoh constructed a subterranean temple here, called the Ankh, to allow his cult to bask in Aten's glory and bathe in his breath. Akhenaten and the cultists exposed to the Filth were changed. They were imbued with supernatural abilities and cursed with madness.

The cult flourished within the Ankh. Its priests infected countless pilgrims and even mummified many to ensure their loyalty and service beyond death. Even the Filth itself grew in strength, evolving into a writhing new physical form immune to the power of the sun. Flush with power, Aten had a new task for Akhenaten.

Venturing once more into the desert, Akhenaten was led to a desolate valley walled in on all sides by impassable cliffs. He declared this the site of his new capital: the City of the Sun God. At the center of this immense construction project was the Black Pyramid, which he built over a cache of Third Age artifacts—and the Gaia Engine itself, which held the Dreaming One known as Aten.

Though construction on the pyramid was completed, the rest of the city was never finished. Before Akhenaten could do so, he and his cult were destroyed by an army of Egyptian rebels led by Tutankhamen, his son. The heart of this rebellion was a group known as the Marya, or the “young warriors.”

When Tutankhamen took the throne, he ordered the Ankh, and the remains of its army of Filth-infected cultists, to be sealed up beneath the earth. He ordered that his father be interred in the Black Pyramid and his name stricken from history. Ptahmose, one of the Marya and the former high priest of Amun, knew that Egypt would never be safe if there was a possibility of Akhenaten rising from the dead. He sacrificed his children and himself to become Sentinels. These seven statues magically hid the valley from outsiders and guarded the Black Pharaoh's tomb.

Nevertheless, the Cult of Aten persisted. For millennia, the worship of the sun disk was passed down from one generation to the next, its rituals performed in secret, its dark legends preserved.

The Marya likewise kept the faith over the centuries. Over time, they transitioned from a vast army actively hunting Atenists and Filth creatures to a small band of zealots keeping watch over the Valley of the Sun God, always prepared should the Black Pharaoh somehow return.

In 2012, an earthquake revealed one of the secret entrances to the City of the Sun God. Locals explored the area, then an Orochi Group research team slipped inside and started stealing artifacts—including one that had kept Akhenaten in stasis. Awakened at last, the Black Pharaoh touched the minds of his cultists and called them to his side. Led by Abdel Daoud, the prophet of Aten, the cult swelled its numbers by infecting the locals with Filth, setting in motion the events that would lead to the “Filth bomb” detonation in Tokyo.

Agents from the Templars, the Dragon, and the Illuminati descended on Egypt to help the Marya prevent the Atenists from releasing both Akhenaten and Aten itself. They discovered that the Ankh had been reopened, and supernatural horrors were washing over the desert. With the help of the Orochi Group, they were eventually able to slay Akhenaten again—hopefully for the last time.

In the decade since the apparent death of the Black Pharaoh, the Atenists have receded into the shadows. They remain a threat, however, and have become more active in the past few years. The Marya have done what they can to keep the cult in check, but their numbers have dwindled, even as the Atenists have grown in number, resources, and cunning.

HIDDEN POWERS

While the three largest secret societies have interests in Egypt, the Valley of the Sun God itself is dominated by four other groups.

The first and oldest of these groups is the Cult of Aten. For thousands of years, the Atenists prepared the world and themselves for the resurrection of Pharaoh Akhenaten and the arrival of their “god,” the Dreaming One that calls itself Aten. Under the leadership of Abdel Daoud, the cult maintains a low profile while infecting others, eliminating anyone who gets too close, and searching for a way to free Aten from its Gaia Engine.

The Marya originated to defend the world against the Atenists and are also an ancient group by any standard. While they remain a faction of warriors, they have expanded their mission in the past ten years to include a more sophisticated surveillance network. Led by Shani, they maintain a network of secondary agents. They don’t necessarily carry weapons or fight directly, but they know the signs of Aten, and report what they see and hear.

The Kingdom has also long been a part of the Secret World of Egypt. A criminal syndicate focused on smuggling, arms dealing, and the occult, the Kingdom is run by a cabal of dapper mummies—suave, dried corpses in expensive suits. They were all part of a group that performed a ritual of immortality back in ancient Egypt. The Kingdom claims to care for nothing but profits, but it has been known to oppose the Cult of Aten ... if only to make up for inadvertently helping the cult flood Tokyo with Filth some years ago.

(They sold a Third Age artifact to Philip Marquard that resulted in the Filth bomb incident.) A very important figure in the Kingdom is a hedonistic mummy named Saïd. After the chaos of “that Black Pyramid mess,” Saïd has expanded the Kingdom’s operation into Europe and Asia, where Egyptian occult relics fetch top prices.

Despite losing hundreds of employees in the aftermath of the 2012 quake, the Orochi Group can’t seem to stay away from the Valley of the Sun God. They’ve learned to be more careful in their efforts. For the past few years, they’ve financed independent archaeology and geology teams to explore the desert and report what they find. Working out of its Cairo office, the Orochi subsidiary Plethron has been testing new high-durability seeds in the hidden valley. It may be a cover for something else entirely, but the seeds are said to flourish even in the desert.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Valley of the Sun God is far enough out of the way that while it’s not truly hidden, few people go there without a specific reason. Even ten years after the turmoil of the Atenist uprising, there are still rumors throughout the surrounding regions that the area is not safe. People warn of gun-toting isolationists—and then, in quieter tones, of old gods, evil spirits, and the madmen who worship them.

THE SCORCHED DESERT

The sun beats down on the desolate landscape just as it has for thousands of years. While the valley still bears the scars of the near-apocalyptic battle some ten years ago, its people have largely recovered. They don’t like to speak of the chaos that followed the earthquake and are wary of anyone obviously connected to the Secret World.

AL-MERAYAH

The town of al-Merayah was nearly overrun by Filth and destroyed during the war against the Atenists ten years ago. The town has since more than recovered. It’s larger and more prosperous now than it’s been in centuries.

As the main gateway to the region, al-Merayah has benefited from an increasing number of visitors over the past few years. Many of these are Secret Worlders, who use the town as a staging area before pressing deeper into the desert. Other visitors are guests of the newly established Sunblest Wellness Center, which



caters to an affluent clientele that helps sustain al-Merayah's local economy.

During the Atenist invasion, the guerrilla fighters of the Marya defended al-Merayah from the horrors beyond its borders. The warriors have now made the place their home. The town's central location allows them to keep an eye on the valley while staying in contact with the outside world. Their base of operations is a large house ostensibly owned by a wealthy merchant with dozens of relatives who come and go at all hours. The locals don't believe this charade, but they gladly repeat it to any visitors who start asking questions. They owe a debt to the Marya and will never betray them.

In addition to the Marya headquarters, al-Merayah features a few other sites worth visiting.

Police Station. The small police station features an office, a few jail cells, and a basement that serves as storage for evidence, paperwork, and prisoners who need more specialized handling. The chief of police is Mazen Bahar. He does his best to keep the peace in the area, and he is thoroughly corrupt. Every secret society in the region has bribed him to tip them off whenever he learns of something strange or important. If a citizen is kidnapped by a jinn, for example, he's more than willing to tell all his patrons about the

incident and let them figure out how to deal with it. Chief Bahar is a good source of rumors for anyone from out of town, though he may expect payment in return.

Hotel Wahid International. The old hotel has seen better days, but the rooms are clean, the ice is cold, and the lobby is always full of interesting people. As the only hotel in town, it often has Secret Worlders as guests, either here to conduct business or to rest up before setting out on their secretive desert missions. The mummy Sa'id occasionally lounges here, distractedly sipping a drink while tapping away on his phone.

Invisible Market. The actual location of the Invisible Market moves around, but it can typically be found in the warehouse district on the edge of town. In addition to weapons, drugs, and other mundane contraband, merchants here also offer artifacts that they claim were revealed during the quake and have recently resurfaced. Much of what they sell is useless junk—forgeries and the like—but those who know what to look for can find genuine items from Ages past, some of which have magical abilities. The dealers claim ignorance of where the items come from. They say they purchase the goods from sellers who emerge from the desert, then disappear again.

THE ANKH

After the Black Pharaoh was defeated a second time, the Ankh was resealed, locking away its vast pools of Filth and infected creatures for eternity. In theory, at least. In reality, there are cracks in the seal, and every wall has its weak points. Filth is not intelligent, but it is persistent. In the decade since the Ankh's collapse, the Filth has leaked out in one form or another on numerous occasions.

At least a few members of the Marya are usually stationed at the Ankh. Part of their standard rotation is to monitor the site for signs of Filth. Anything unusual is reported back to the base at al-Merayah, and the Marya guards stand ready, with machine guns and flamethrowers, to destroy anything that comes slithering out of the ground.

Of course, the Filth has help from the outside. Atenists and other cultists dedicated to the Dreamers often sneak onto the site in hopes of finding their way in. Some of them find it, and some of them even sneak back out, either with Filth in their possession or possessed by Filth. The cultists must be careful. The Marya soldiers are more interested in eliminating threats than taking Atenist prisoners.

Other visitors to the site include scholars with what appear to be purely scientific motives. They are usually archaeologists or geologists, drawn to the region's ruins and history of unusual tectonic activity. All of them have impeccable credentials and all the right permits from the government. None of them can be traced to the Orochi Group in any way whatsoever.

SUNBLEST WELLNESS CENTER

The Sunblest Wellness Center is a high-end "spa retreat" catering to wealthy clients who prefer the privacy of the remote desert while relaxing with mud wraps, massages, and gentle yoga sessions.

The center is a walled compound inside five square miles of chain-link fencing. Inside the walls are guest dormitories (each room would look at home in a luxury hotel), swimming pools, tennis courts, a gymnasium, and a garage for the center's vehicles. The main building contains spacious lounges, a full cafeteria with gourmet food, and dozens of spa treatment rooms. Guests typically stay for a week at a time, but some enjoy themselves so much, they stay longer.

As some in the Secret World have started to suspect, the Sunblest Wellness Center is a product of the new, more subtle Cult of Aten. Abdel Daoud, the prophet of Aten, is the mastermind of the center. While he is often on-site to oversee its operation, he keeps out of sight and allows the center's director, Alima Harb, to play the gracious hostess and tour guide.

The goal of the center is to infect people in positions of power with microdoses of Filth. Watered-down Filth is inserted into the guests' spa treatments, food, and drinks. The minimal dosage means that those infected don't immediately transform into hive-minded mutants (usually) but instead become sleeper agents. They return to their lives of privilege and authority, where they can be triggered as needed by the Dreaming Ones to carry out their schemes. (On rare occasions, a guest does change into a rampaging Filth monster. Daoud hates to lose such an asset, but he is willing to kill in order to cover up what the Center is doing.)

Sunblest Wellness Center employees are thoroughly contaminated with Filth. They retain some of their own will and personalities but are largely reduced to a zombie-like existence. Most of them were impoverished loners recruited from off the street in Cairo, then transported to the desert with no way out. Some unwitting locals from al-Merayah have tried to get jobs at the center, but they've been denied. Daoud refuses to take chances with employees he hasn't personally vetted.

The Center has armed, uniformed guards (cultists all) patrolling its perimeter and standing watch at the gate. Security is much more lax inside the compound. Daoud wants to keep his clients feeling at ease, so internal security personnel are called "hospitality guides," and they also provide basic guest services. They carry no weapons beyond collapsible batons.

One of the jobs of internal security is to keep guests out of the restricted areas where the Cult of Aten performs its heinous rites. Their primary ritual space is in a locked subbasement with holes drilled into the floor. It's Daoud's dream to drill deep into another pocket of Filth.

Despite the cultists working in secret at the center, Daoud is careful to distance the place from the Filth-maddened, violent Atenist lunatics found elsewhere in the valley. He's invested too much into this project to have it exposed by a

dead-eyed mutant with a machine gun. However, some of the local officials have begun to voice their own suspicions ...

THE CITY OF THE SUN GOD

At the height of his power, Pharaoh Akhenaten followed the Voice of Aten to an obscure valley, where he set about building a whole new complex of temples, tombs, and monuments dedicated to his god. Akhenaten was killed before he was able to finish this new city, but many of the original buildings were completed. Thanks to the protection of the Sentinels, those buildings are still here, and many still hold secrets of Ages past.

Now that the Sentinels are no longer bound to the city, the Marya have taken up the task of protecting it from outsiders and hiding it the best they can. Allies of the Marya can access the city with a little diplomacy, but civilians are turned away, and cultists are shot on sight.

The City of the Sun God is not a safe place. While it's no longer overrun with cultists, ghouls, and jinn, it still attracts unnatural predators such as giant scorpions and scarabs. Part of the Marya's duty here is to protect the outside world from these creatures. But it's an endless task. An impossible task. And every so often, strange creatures from a bygone Age slip past their defenses and into the open desert.

Among the ruins of the half-built city, a few sites stand out as the most noteworthy.

THE BLACK PYRAMID

The Black Pyramid still stands at the heart of the city. Inside it is a maze of tunnels, chambers, and hallways, many of which are hidden behind secret doors and false walls. Though there have been numerous expeditions into the pyramid over the years, the secret societies have found only a fraction of the enigmas and treasures to be discovered here. Of course, exploration is not undertaken lightly. The Black Pharaoh may be dead, but his tomb still has its teeth. Traps and puzzles ensnare the unwary, while ancient (immortal?) enemies prowl the darkness, hungry for blood.

Beyond traps and monsters, the real danger of the Black Pyramid is the Filth.

A thin layer of the stuff appears on the walls, and in pools in the dark corners. It has a psychic presence as well: a constant black weight that presses in on the mind. Those who spend too much time in the Pyramid hear voices, whispers,

and thoughts that are not their own. This permeating Filth aura can drive one to madness ... or infection. For this reason, the Marya keep a dedicated eye on the Pyramid, tracking who goes in and out, in hopes of preventing this madness from taking hold.

Nevertheless, the Marya can't catch everyone. Cultists slip into the Pyramid seeking dark wisdom; many fall into pits of Filth, never to return. Some who do make it back out into the sun claim to have spoken with Aten, and to be the Dark Pharaoh reincarnated. The Marya make note of this claim, then gun them down before they escape the city. Eventually, one of these reincarnates will successfully reach the Scorched Desert and spread word of their return to the other faithful. While the Marya and the secret societies don't believe these madmen are truly Akhenaten returned, they acknowledge the chaos they could unleash with a reinvigorated Cult of Aten at their command.

MARYA TRAINING CAMP

The City of the Sun God is the perfect place for the Marya to conduct their training. For one thing, it's hidden enough from mundane eyes that the Egyptian military won't receive reports of organized desert folk shooting automatic weapons and using explosives. For another, the ground is still tainted from the incidents of ten years ago. While it's not as extreme as it was during those dark days, monsters are still common in the area; keeping the city clear of them is good combat practice for the Marya soldiers.

The camp is run by Nassir, an expert in explosives and making friends. The charming movie buff has set himself up as the liaison between the Marya and any visiting secret society agents. He is glad to share his tips for bomb making and to show his guests where the best monster hunting is. He's less enthused about outsiders helping themselves to the ancient artifacts. "You'll bring that back when you're done studying, right?" he says, his hand on his gun.

Nassir also trains more than a few locals in the camp. They aren't part of the Marya, but they recognize the ongoing threat of Atenists and their monstrous allies and want to learn how best to defend their homes. These "auxiliary" fighters are vetted by Shani, and may be called up if the Marya need their help.

SENTINEL STATUES

Though the Sentinels that once kept the Dark Pharaoh asleep with their song have been released from their duty, the enormous statues dedicated to them remain. These seven statues are shrines not only to the Sentinels themselves but also to the gods of the Egyptian pantheon they represented. For three thousand years, they were conduits between the land of the living and the world of the supernatural. Even now, threads of that connection remain.

Secret Worlders who know of the statues visit them in hopes of gaining mystical enlightenment or insights into the spirit world. Most go away disappointed (or deluded), but a few are blessed with words of wisdom spoken directly to their spirits. They say the words of encouragement come from the Sentinels who, though free of the sun god's city, still maintain a voluntary connection to the site where they spent so much time. Some are skeptical, however. They suspect the voice is that of Aten or some other Dreaming One, hoping to find another willing servant in Egypt so that the Black Pharaoh may be born once more.

Of course, once the Cult of Aten caught wind of the rumors that their god was speaking through the statues, it was only a matter of time before they started sneaking into the city to offer worship and horrific sacrifice. Some claim that Aten has spoken to them. A few of these even offer supernatural power as evidence. These claims encourage still more Atenists to descend upon the statues, so now the Marya uses cultists as well as monsters for their training exercises.

TOKYO

For over a thousand years, the city now known as Tokyo has been the center of Japanese culture and politics. Tokyo has always pulsed with dynamic life. Innovation flourishes here, but it is filtered and channeled through tradition, keeping the city vibrant without collapsing into chaos.

The hub of Secret World activity in Tokyo is the Kaidan district. It's surely no coincidence that it resides in the shadow of the Orochi Tower, the corporate headquarters of the Orochi Group. Through its underworld network, Kaidan exerts vast control over Tokyo and all of Japan. It can be a dangerous place, especially for the uninitiated.

For unlike many such hubs, Kaidan isn't "ruled" by any one secret society. It truly is a no man's land, where anything goes.

SECRET HISTORY

The underworld organizations of Tokyo have long been comfortable working with supernatural entities to achieve their aims in the mortal world. This practical (and profitable) mingling of the two worlds made the city the perfect location for the headquarters of the Orochi Group. The group has a history of experimenting with Gaia Engines, the Dreaming Ones they imprison, and the Filth those Dreamers produce. Those experiments occasionally yielded positive results. More often, they ended in madness, violence, and death. Nevertheless, Orochi persisted. In the eyes of the corporation, these occult catastrophes were merely the price of doing business.

Ten years ago, the Orochi Group almost paid the ultimate price for its hubris.

An offshoot of the Dreamer cult the Morninglight, led by Philip Marquard, acquired a Third Age device from Egypt and smuggled it into Tokyo. They intended to detonate the device at Orochi Tower.

Unfortunately for the cultists, the "Filth bomb" exploded in the subway before it reached the tower. The blast sent a vast wave of Filth through the subways and up into Kaidan, destroying or mutating every creature it touched.

The entire neighborhood was immediately quarantined and put under military lockdown; no one got in or out without authorization. The official story was that a terrorist bomb had gone off, contaminating the area with unknown pathogens.

The secret societies did what they could to retake Kaidan from the Filth. They were aided in their efforts by the local gangs, which had their own supernatural ties. The feuding societies and rival gangs put their differences aside and united to save Tokyo. Together, they held the corruption at bay until a mysterious entity known as "Anima" appeared on the scene and cleansed it of Filth.

While Kaidan has recovered in the decade since the incident, it still has a reputation as a dangerous place. Mundane folks are reluctant to visit it for fear of lingering toxins and chaotic street violence. The locals encourage these rumors. They have no interest in hosting visitors from outside the Secret World.

The unofficial peace treaty brokered a decade ago still stands. The transformed neighborhood is truly neutral territory. Supernatural creatures and Secret Worlders of all types come here to mingle, trade, and scheme.

HIDDEN POWERS

Kaidan is run by three gangs, each of which has a connection to one of the secret societies.

The gangs are rivals, competing for influence over not only Kaidan but all of the Tokyo underworld. As part of an unspoken agreement to prevent their rivalry from turning into all-out war, they “allow” Kaoru, a representative of the Phoenician secret society, to serve as arbiter of disputes, spokesperson for the area, and overseer of its reconstruction. An outside observer might say that Kaoru is the true leader of Kaidan. Both Kaoru and the gangs would humbly disagree.

The oldest gang in Kaidan is the House-in-Exile. Banished to Earth from the Hell Dimensions during the Edo Period, this oni mercenary group accepts contracts from underworld organizations across Japan. One of their major clients has been the Illuminati, with whom they maintain a mutually beneficial relationship. The leader of the House is the hedonist demon Inbeda, who is usually found luxuriating in the Jigoku no Yo bathhouse. Under Inbeda’s leadership, the House

helped Kaidan fight off demonic invaders during the Filth bomb incident. This wasn’t an altruistic act. Inbeda was defending his territory against his oni rivals. Since then, some of the invaders have joined the House-in-Exile—while others have sworn revenge.

The gang most directly opposed to the House-in-Exile is the Jingu clan. Though reduced to little more than a street gang when they arrived in Kaidan ten years ago, the clan is a secret order of samurai—a demon-slaying bloodline dating back to the time of Queen Himiko. Jingu appeared in the district shortly before the Filth bomb and the demon invasion, guided by the prophetic visions of their leader, Gozen. Under her guidance, they have since swollen their ranks with new recruits who help fight the oni—and other supernatural creatures—throughout Tokyo. Gozen holds court in Susanoo’s Diner, where she can sometimes be seen conferring with her Templar allies.

Arguably the most powerful gang at the moment is the Korinto-kai. The gang started out as a crime syndicate based on the pre-yakuza tradition of *bakuto*. In the 1920s, the gang’s founder returned from New York inspired to invest in pachinko gambling, and the Korinto-kai expanded their operation into the Secret World. Thus they became an occult branch of the yakuza, involved in magical arms dealing,



occult smuggling and shipping, and supernatural protection rackets. As true believers in the power of chaos, they maintain their headquarters in the Zeroes Wild pachinko parlor and are closely allied with the Dragon. In the aftermath of the Filth bomb incident, the leader of the Korinto-kai, Daimon Kiyota, took on the role of Mouth of the Dragon, amplifying his chaotic genius throughout the Secret World. Daimon's former office above the pachinko parlor is occupied by the clan's new leader, Baku Kawabata, though it's rumored that Kaoru is the one who actually calls the shots.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Kaidan is a hub of criminal and occult activity. Operating from behind a wall of rumors, bribery, and threats, the gangs exert their influence throughout the city without fear of police raids or the locals ratting them out. Not that there are many civilian locals; those who survived the initial wave of Filth either fled the quarantine (believing a "mass hallucination" cover story) or became part of the Secret World themselves. Between these hardened residents and its regular visitors, the neighborhood has enough people to support its own microeconomy and a few small businesses.

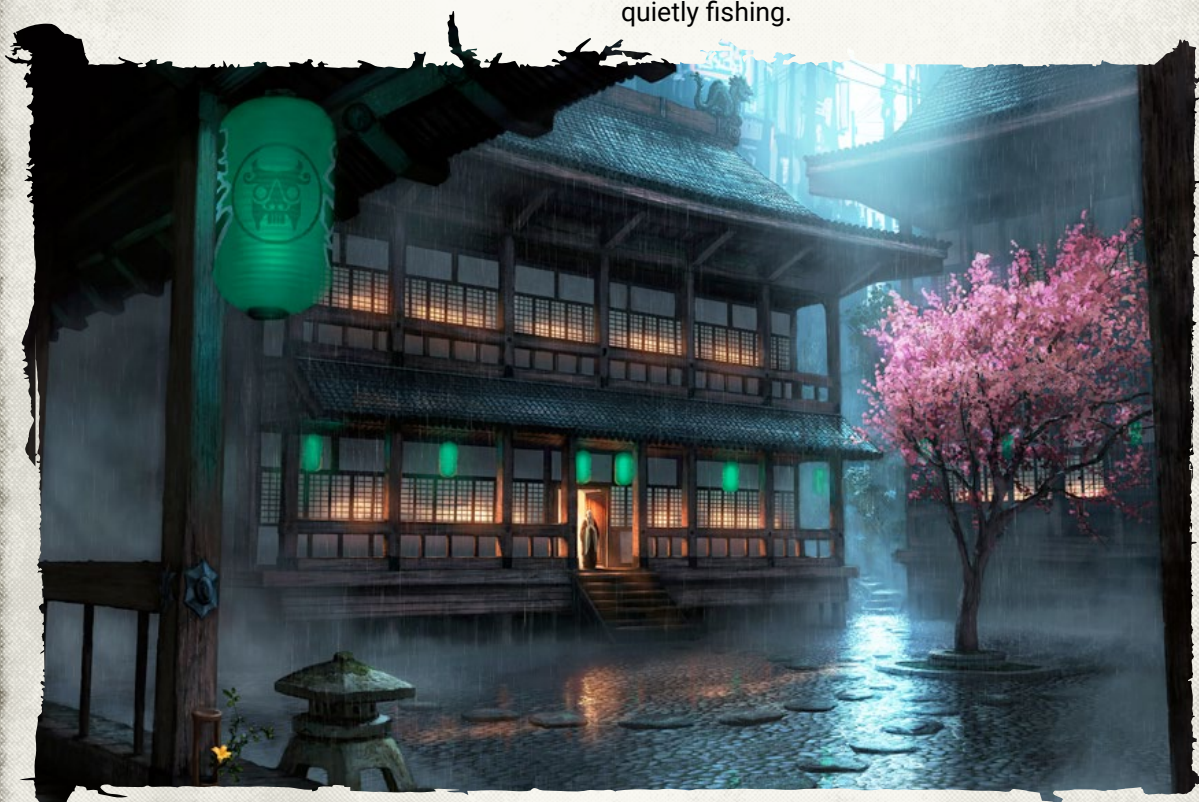
GINPACHI PARK

Once merely a few acres of urban green space, Ginpachi Park has grown into a community garden. Fruits and vegetables grow lush and delicious in its plots, bushes, and trees. The food is free to any who need it. The park is generous. No one needs to go hungry.

The caretaker of the park is Ricky Pagan, a self-styled "leather-clad environmentalist vigilante." Ricky has been touched by Gaia and is dedicated to preserving the natural world by any means necessary. Ricky's also been touched by rockabilly music; from his biker jacket to his pompadour to his Elvis-inflected way of speaking, rockabilly defines his personality.

Ricky started off guarding the park against the Filth. Over time, his mission from Gaia went from defending her turf to feeding her people. He recruited like-minded folks from the neighborhood to join his gang—the New Pagans—and together, they now tend the park gardens.

In addition to the gardens, the park features a bandstand (often showcasing rockabilly music), a large picnic shelter that's been converted into living quarters for Ricky and his gang, and a deep pond stocked with fish suitable for eating. On sunny days, people are often found at the pond quietly fishing.



SUSANOO'S DINER

When Gozen's visions led her down to Kaidan from the Jingu clan's mountaintop training camp, she ended up in this small restaurant. Then the bomb went off. The diner's management disappeared, so Gozen and her lieutenant Akashi took over the place and have been running it ever since.

For the past decade, the restaurant has been a sanctuary to those fleeing the Filth creatures, demons, and other monsters found on the streets of Tokyo. Gozen has expanded the diner to accommodate hundreds of people and added crude but comfortable sleeping quarters. The Jingu clan protects the diner and all its guests.

Many of those guests have joined the Jingu clan themselves. After seeing the demon slayers in action, they have taken up arms, and Akashi has trained them in their use. This new generation of slayers can be found throughout Tokyo, hunting oni and other supernatural dangers. After each mission, they return to the diner to report back to Gozen and feast on delicious noodles.

ZEROES WILD PACHINKO PARLOR

This gambling and pachinko parlor is more popular now than it was before the Filth incident. Its forbidden nature makes it more exciting for outsiders to visit, and its isolation means that it's free from any sort of regulation. While pachinko is still the casino's main attraction, Zeros Wild features numerous other games of chance as well.

Since the Filth bomb, the Korinto-kai have expanded the casino's operation. They have taken over neighboring business spaces and converted them into additional gaming areas. They've also set up comfortable "safe houses" on the property where their clients can avoid the authorities or rival underworld organizations. (Before the bomb, they maintained such safe houses throughout Kaidan, but it's more efficient now to keep them all under the same roof.)

JIGOKU NO YU BATHHOUSE

This sprawling bathhouse serves as the headquarters for the House-in-Exile. While it does host some brave human clients, most of the creatures soaking in the luxurious baths are oni from the Hell Dimensions. Oni soldiers patrol the walled facility in case their rivals attempt another invasion—or the Jingu clan gets any ideas about cleaning up the neighborhood.

The demonic gang maintains a "job board" in the bathhouse. Most of these jobs involve violence, intimidation, and massive destruction of property—which are perfectly suited for the demons of the House-in-Exile. But a few jobs are more subtle. They could benefit from a more human touch. Inbeda, the head of the House, likes to outsource these jobs to any agents of the secret societies who come to visit.

THE DREAM PALACE

If Kaidan is Casablanca, then the Dream Palace is Rick's Café.

This multistory love hotel still offers the discreet services it always has, but it is now primarily known as a neutral ground within a neutral ground. On the levels above the themed "romance rooms" are private conference rooms of many sizes. Here, Secret Worlders can negotiate clandestine deals, swap secrets, and otherwise engage with each other in safety and security.

Not that the Dream Palace has many security personnel. Rather, the rooms are secured through advanced electronics and mystical wards. Scrying magic fizzles, surveillance equipment shorts out, and recording devices capture nothing but static here.

The Phoenician agent Kaoru, who runs the love hotel, has her hands full these days. In addition to managing the hotel (which is busier than it has ever been), she also serves as the unofficial mediator and representative for Kaidan. She's often shorthanded and turns to other Secret Worlders for help with her less *sensitive* jobs.

SEOUL

Founded over two thousand years ago, Seoul has gone through countless changes in its transformation into a modern metropolis. Large portions of the city have been torn down and rebuilt hundreds of times. Yet the roots of the city run deep, and they provide the people with a firm foundation on which to build whatever comes next. On the surface, Seoul is a showcase of order and efficiency, but chaos brews in the shadows as yet another wave of change swells on the horizon.

SECRET HISTORY

Seoul was once a city of walls, of planned mazes set in tile and clay. Careful geomancy was observed in every angle, welcoming spiritual fortune and shunning evil influence. As it grew into a megacity, however, the new mazes of concrete and neon were not built to follow the old methods. Seoul's psychic fortress was compromised by dreams of change and renewal. As its defenses dissolved, the Dragon insinuated itself into the city.

HIDDEN POWERS

Today, the Dragon touches every part of Seoul. Maintaining its "butterfly wings" approach, the society mostly monitors the city's politics, economics, and supernatural machinations, then positions itself to take advantage of those things that rise and fall. When the Dragon does nudge events in a particular direction, it does so with the quietest whispers and the gentlest touch.

Of course, individual members of the Dragon may take a more active hand in shaping their environment. The locals who know that things are not what they seem may come to them with problems that can't be solved by traditional means. Dragon leadership is silent in regard to these independent actions. Dragon leadership is silent on most things.

The Orochi Group maintains a presence in Seoul through its Anansi Technologies, Faust Capital, and QBL Media subsidiaries. The Dragon is aware of these companies, and knows that they are in the process of buying up their local competitors. If the leadership knows what Orochi is up to in Seoul, they prefer, as always, to keep that information to themselves.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Dragon has its own district, hidden somewhere in Seoul. It is foggy, unclear, caught between times—or it may even exist outside of time. The district is a forbidden city, its winding streets imperceptibly doubling back on themselves. The air is heavy with rain and coincidence. People are wary and subdued, unsure of what brought them to this place or what prevents them from leaving it again.

THE DRAGON TEMPLE

The heart of the Dragon district is the Dragon temple, which serves (for now) as the society's headquarters. Here can be found the Golden

Child, and Daimon Kiyota, the newly installed Mouth of the Dragon. Here is where new Dragon recruits are brought for training in body, mind, and spirit.

KUMIHO HOTEL

Sooner or later, anyone who enters the district finds themselves in the Kumiho Hotel. Its garish sign welcomes all. Dragon initiates undergo their first initiation here, and are reborn with eyes to see the Secret World around them.

SEOUL METROPOLITAN POLICE STATION

The police station inside the Dragon district receives all the weird and unusual cases in the area. The police learn what they can about these incidents, then refer them to the Dragon.

LONDON

For centuries London has squatted astride its great river, collecting the desperate, the hopeful, and the ambitious, those with more dreams than common sense. Each wave of newcomers brings its own legends and fears, creating layers of mythology that tie the city to Europe and the rest of the world.

SECRET HISTORY

London has long been a hotbed of conspiracy and supernatural power-brokering. Before there was an England, there was a London, and those who lived here could feel its power.

In the 18th century, the Templars chose London as the site of their headquarters. In the decades that followed, they set about cleansing the city of other secret societies, supernatural creatures, or anything else that could challenge their power. Those that weren't destroyed were driven either deep underground or out of London altogether. Some of those surviving entities have long memories, and no love for the Templars.

Today's Templars are a more tolerant lot. So long as the other members of the Secret World keep themselves hidden and their appetites under control, they are welcome to stay. This has turned London into something of a hub of supernatural commerce and socialization. This is part of the Templars' plan. It's easier to keep an eye on potential threats when they get together for drinks just outside one's front door.

HIDDEN POWERS

The Templars rule London. They have spies and agents embedded in law enforcement, media, and every industry worth infiltrating.

Nevertheless, as the informal social hub of the Secret World, London hosts agents from the Illuminati, the Dragon, the Phoenicians, and any number of other, smaller secret societies. These agents work their own agendas, but they know that the Templars are forever looking over their shoulders. It's a risk. If the Templars see the agents' schemes as a threat to themselves or the clueless civilians they've sworn to protect, they won't hesitate to eradicate every member of that society.

The energy company Sycoil and the biotech company Váli, both subsidiaries of the Orochi Group, have facilities in London. Their people have been spotted poking around Ealdwic, speaking in hushed tones with shadowy figures and subtly offering "contractor work" to those who might be interested.

POINTS OF INTEREST

If London is the hub of the Secret World, then the Ealdwic neighborhood is the center of that hub. It's home to not only the Templars themselves, but to the sites that make London such a popular spot for Secret Worlders.

Ealdwic is currently under complete police lockdown, keeping mundane eyes away from the bustle of activity within. All three secret societies are currently mobilizing, thrown together on these streets in numbers not seen for centuries. Other parties have come to observe for their own cryptic purposes. They can all feel a storm brewing.

TEMPLE HALL

The Templar headquarters casts a long shadow over Ealdwic. The massive stone building stands like a fortress, wrapped in Templar banners and guarded by agents in Templar uniforms. The Templars' message is not one of secrecy but defiance: "We are here, and we are not afraid."

It's here at the hall that the faction's Bees meet and coordinate with Richard Sonnac, who keeps them busy with Templar assignments and keeps Templar leadership out of their hair. Temple Hall also offers extensive combat training to those who want it, as well as those who need a refresher course.

BRITISH MUSEUM OF THE OCCULT

A nondescript two-story building hides an enormous underground museum dedicated to the horrors of the Secret World. Once a thriving institution, the museum is now reduced to dozens of empty display cases and a single employee: its mysterious curator. (If asked what happened



to the museum, the curator merely shakes his head and says, "It all went downhill after the incident.")

Agents of the secret societies are encouraged to help refill the displays with trophies and knowledge gained during their adventures. They're also encouraged to help the museum through charitable contributions. Those that support the museum can have their names immortalized on plaques—or even earn the right to name a room or an entire wing.

HORNED GOD

This pub is a popular neutral ground for Secret Worlders who want to socialize. Here there are no faction politics. There are no mysteries to solve or conspiracies to unravel. Shop talk is frowned upon, and violence (or the use of offensive magic) will get patrons kicked out or even banned from the premises. No one wants to get banned from the Horned God.

DARKSIDE MARKET

Hidden within the labyrinthine streets of Ealdwic is an open market where Secret Worlders and supernatural entities do business. Contraband weapons, magical artifacts, tomes of forgotten lore—it's all here, for a price. While the market claims to be neutral ground and remains under the jurisdiction of the Templars, it can still be a dangerous place for the unwary. Those who venture into its darker corners may find themselves mugged, drugged, or worse.

NEW YORK

New York never sleeps, but it dreams. A relatively young city, what it lacks in history it makes up for in future. Its people are always on the move, striving for more. They adapt and grow as they try not to drown in a melting pot of cultures and traditions from across the globe. New York pulses with life—rampant, uncontrollable life—a tumor in designer clothes with a fortune in credit card debt.

And that's just on the surface.

SECRET HISTORY

Since New York's founding, freedom of religion has guaranteed its inhabitants the opportunity to experiment. To create new philosophies, new magic, new masters. When the city opened its arms to the huddled masses, immigrants flocked in from hidden places too. Occult influences

shaped its growth into a new power base for the Secret World.

Recognizing this new power, the Illuminati transferred its headquarters here from New England. They bought what they could, stole what they had to, then bent the rest of the city to their will. They planned the new urban landscape of black glass towers, golden capstones, and energy field—disrupting sculptures.

Today's paranoid see the Illuminati behind every political scandal, corporate coup, and major policy decision in New York. The paranoid would be right. The secret society has its eyes and manipulative fingers everywhere in town. It's safe to say that anyone with power in this city is a valid target for Illuminati surveillance and manipulation.

If you know they're watching you, you know you've truly arrived.

HIDDEN POWERS

New York City is the Illuminati's town now. Their control is discreet and hands-off, while still reassuringly expensive. They pull the strings of credit and industry from Wall Street out to JFK. Those looking for the puppet masters, however, will only find traces in the uncaring black eyes of CCTV cameras, the slurred stories of muttering street people, and the hieroglyphic graffiti left on certain underpasses.

The Orochi Group has a number of subsidiaries in New York. Faust Capital and QBL Media maintain offices downtown, where their people can have the greatest effect. Plethron and Zagan also have facilities in the city, where they develop new biotechnologies to help feed and heal the world. The companies have warehouses in shady neighborhoods, where they conduct deniable experiments and maintain cells full of "volunteer" human test subjects.

POINTS OF INTEREST

In the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge, the neighborhood above the subterranean Illuminati headquarters is a ghetto for conspiracy theorists, magical burnouts, and those who deal in occult goods and paranoia. Members of other secret societies are neither welcomed nor forbidden by the Illuminati ... at least, above ground. The "diplomatic incidents" resulting from encounters with the Labyrinth's military-grade hardware and Rockefeller wards have become urban legends of their own.



THE LABYRINTH

One of the many nondescript warehouses along the East River opens into the Illuminati's headquarters, known as the Labyrinth. This sprawling, high-security structure, removed from the distractions of human life, has been a gathering place for the order's movers and shakers for hundreds of years. Amid its angled ramps and cavernous workspaces, Illuminati agents can find training, as well as access experimental medical services from Dr. Zurn and sharp-tongued mission briefings from Bee handler Kirsten Geary.

THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

For the Secret Worlder who needs to disappear, there's no better way to vanish than to totally change one's face. The procedure is neither painless nor cheap, but it is effective, and it's a testament to the skills of Dr. Aldini, plastic surgeon.

Aldini and his assistants work out of a makeshift clinic in the basement of an automotive garage in

Brooklyn. The space was, until very recently, an underground slaughterhouse. Pig carcasses still hang from hooks overhead. Aldini himself is a cackling mad scientist who considers himself an artist working in the medium of human flesh. He may be insane, but no one can doubt his skills.

NEW YORK SEWERS

This vast network of pipes collects waste and rainwater from throughout the city, and it is home to those that New York would love to ignore, forget, and abandon. Some of the city's homeless population have created their own societies down here at various times, and a few have lasted years. The fabled albino alligators and their ilk hunt in the sewers—former pets flushed away and turned to vicious predators in their unnatural habitats. The darkest tunnels are the lairs of the cannibalistic underground dwellers, who are barely even human anymore. And through it all, ever present and ever watching, are millions of hungry rats.

TRANSYLVANIA

This land of deep forests and jagged mountains has seen dozens of rulers over thousands of years. It's been overrun by empire after empire, from the Huns to the Romans to the Soviet Union, and never without bloodshed. But through it all, the people of this Romanian region have persevered. They stand resilient, for they know, no matter what human rulers may say, that the land can never truly be conquered by mortal hands. For Transylvania is more than a mortal land. Humans share the realm with creatures of myth, legend, and nightmare. And these creatures will never be completely vanquished.

SECRET HISTORY

While the history of Transylvania goes back thousands of years, the source of its current state began in the 15th century with a young rebel nobleman named Vlad Dracula and his wife Mara—the queen of the vampires.

Despite centuries of legends to the contrary, it was Mara, not Dracula, who filled the Transylvanian nights with blood and terror. She reveled in cruelty. She loved spawning vampire minions to spread chaos and despair. Her husband tried to kill her, but couldn't. Nevertheless, she was chased out of Transylvania, and Dracula established an order of monster hunters, the Drăculești, to protect the land from the creatures of the night.

Transylvania had long been home to numerous supernatural creatures. With Mara gone, a truce was brokered between all these creatures and humanity. Under the terms of the truce, both sides swore to respect each other's territories. Faeries, nymphs, and forest spirits were to coexist with moroi, pricolici, and capcaun. Humans were to remain in their villages and farmlands, which were off limits to other creatures. The truce held for centuries. Emboldened by its protections, fey from across Romania moved to the area, where they could live in relative peace.

Centuries later, the region was again invaded, this time by the Red Hand. The Red Hand was the Soviet Union's top-secret occult warfare division dedicated to developing supernatural genetics, robotics, and even space travel techniques. The group was drawn to Transylvania for its remoteness and the unique magical energy that emanated from the Earth itself. They built bunkers, elaborate facilities, and hidden bases

in which to conduct their experiments. Many of these structures still exist. Many are still hidden.

One of their research projects was an attempt to create super soldiers using vampire genetic material. They sought out Mara, who agreed to create progeny for them to experiment on. She liked the idea of having her own army of enhanced vampire soldiers. The program was only partially successful, and it was shut down when its test subjects started escaping. Rather than risk another outbreak, the government sealed the facility with everyone inside. Unfortunately, the scientists themselves were infected at this point, and they spent the following decades working in isolation.

Decades after the Red Hand abandoned Transylvania, the Orochi Group moved in. They, too, were attracted by the magical radiation in the area, but they knew exactly what it was: a Gaia Engine, buried beneath the mountains.

In order to reach and claim the Engine, the corporation collected and trained children with extraordinary abilities. The most powerful of these test subjects were brought to the mountain laboratory called the Nursery for high-intensity training and testing. Using paranormally gifted children in this way was a long shot. But it worked.

One of their test subjects succeeded in tunneling into the mountain and unearthing the Engine. In doing so, she created a rift in reality called the Breach. Her masters were thrilled ...

And then Mara struck.

The vampire queen charged back into the region with an army of her progeny by her side. At her command, they conquered the Breach, then set out to conquer the entire area. Mara swelled the ranks of her army with frenzied werewolves, and hordes of enhanced vampires released from their Soviet-era facilities. At last, she would have her revenge on Transylvania—and the world!

No one can say what happened to Mara. At her moment of triumph, amid the chaos of her "vampire crusade," she simply vanished.

Without Mara to lead them, the vampires and werewolves were eventually dispersed or killed by the Drăculești and the Secret Worlders who had come to defend Transylvania.

The war was over.

Today, a decade later, Transylvania is much as it was a century ago. Werewolves, vampires, and dangerous fey lurk just beyond the light of civilization. The Red Hand and the Orochi Group

are nowhere to be found. The Breach no longer exists. It may have never existed. It may have just been a dream.

But still the region calls to those who seek power, or answers to questions best left unasked. Visitors come in search of old Soviet bunkers, artifacts, and relics from a previous Age. Occult scientists seek new ways to turn corruption into triumph. And the ancient powers find new ways to survive and thrive in a new era.

HIDDEN POWERS

For a traditional land that has changed little over the past thousand years, Transylvania hosts a surprising number of groups vying for power and executing their schemes in the region.

Packs of werewolves have long been a threat in the area, but they've changed in the past five years. While still a deadly hazard to those who wander the forests alone, they're no longer the feral savages they once were. The packs are smarter now. More organized. Instead of simply attacking the territories they want to control, they threaten the occupants and offer them "protection" in exchange for their fealty and bribes.

Vampires have also remained a constant danger. Even now, the unthinking, frenzied leftovers from the vampire crusade lurk in the deep places or inside abandoned bunkers. While these beasts have no schemes of their own, they are useful pawns to the remaining intelligent vampires, who are trying to expand their influence into the world beyond Transylvania.

Finally, there are the fey. The air spirits, the kindly ones, and all the other supernatural creatures that call this region their home just want to be left alone per the conditions of the truce. But as humanity ventures once again where it does not belong, the fey won't stand by and let their home be corrupted.

The Drăculești oppose werewolves, vampires, and other troublesome creatures. Also known as the "Order of the Dragon," the group consists of Romany descendants of those who swore an oath to Vlad Dracula to hunt the creatures of darkness. The Drăculești are dedicated to defending the humans of the region, whether they want this protection or not.

Both the Soviet-era Red Hand program and the more recent Orochi Group Nursery project were obsessed with transforming people through magic and science. Neither organization remains

here, but their atrocities have left lasting scars on the land and its inhabitants. Their abandoned facilities are death traps for the unwary. Their abandoned abominations still stalk the night.

The inheritor of the Nursery project, the Bachman Institute, tends to keep a low profile. Nevertheless, there are those who are curious about its activities, and their curiosity might get them killed—or worse. The Institute has little interest in controlling the area, but it will apply influence (and force) as needed to ensure its privacy.

After the incidents of a decade ago, the Council of Venice decided to permanently assign its agent Carmen Preda to keep an eye on the region. If things get out of hand again, the Council may call on the other secret societies to bring order to the chaos.

POINTS OF INTEREST

BESIEGED FARMLANDS

In the shadow of the Carpathian Mountains, the farmlands of Romania maintain the ancient ways of sowing and harvesting, prayers and offerings, and rituals of protection against the creatures of the night.

When the centuries-long truce broke down, the region was overrun by vampires, werewolves, and other creatures of myth. Nights of blood followed. The carnage continued until the queen of the vampires was killed, and the werewolves were restored to their natural order.

Today, the farmlands have returned to a semblance of the stability they once knew. While the ancient enemies of humanity no longer menace the area with claws and fangs, the remnants of that onslaught a decade ago still stalk the night and hunt the unwary.

Other outsiders are here too. The secret societies who helped hold back the tide of horror now seem to have an interest in the place; their agents are often sniffing around at one mystery or another. Even more troublesome are the unenlightened explorers looking for abandoned Soviet facilities in the name of science, history, or fame. It would be easy to dismiss these fools as thrill-seeking tourists, but some of them are suspiciously well funded.

HARBABUREȘTI

The farm village of Harbaburești has changed little over the past five hundred years. Farmers bring their harvest. Merchants sell the goods

brought in by outside traders. And everyone understands that they live in a world where the supernatural lurks just outside the light. Others might see superstitions. But the villagers know that their traditional ways of life are all that keep them from being devoured by the ancient things of forest and stone.

Outsiders are viewed with suspicion in Harbaburești—and with good reason. Between the Red Hand, the Orochi Group, and the Drăculești, outsiders have brought nothing but horror, bloodshed, and tragedy to the valley. This is especially true of those from the Secret World. The locals see them as arrogant and dismissive of local traditions—such as the truce that previously maintained the stability of the region for centuries.

Nevertheless, the spirit of the truce remains. Like faeries, vampires, or other creatures of the supernatural, Secret Worlders are allowed to visit Harbaburești unmolested so long as they don't cause trouble.

While in the village, agents may find food, drink, and rumors at the Owl and Eagle pub.

CUCUVEA'S TREE

For thousands of years, the immortal wise woman the locals call Cucuvea, or “the owl,” has resided within an enormous tree within walking

distance of Harbaburești. Cucuvea is dedicated to protecting all the creatures of the area, both human and otherwise. They are one and the same to her: just people trying to survive and thrive as best they can.

To that end, Cucuvea orchestrated the truce centuries ago that, until recently, kept the valley from tearing itself apart. It was only when Orochi and the vampire crusade violently broke the pact that chaos and bloodshed reigned. Those days are past, but Cucuvea works to ensure that they never return.

Cucuvea still lives in her tree. It's a local landmark, but the locals avoid it out of respect and caution. They recognize Cucuvea's power and fear annoying her. Furthermore, supernatural creatures tend to congregate at the tree, and where they gather, humans are often unwelcome.

Cucuvea generally welcomes Secret Worlders to her tree. She enjoys visitors from beyond the valley. She offers her wisdom freely, and may even offer to teach her magic skills to those willing to serve as her eyes and hands in the outside world.

Recent visitors to the tree report that Cucuvea has been frequently absent. No one knows where she goes, and she doesn't say. If asked, she merely chuckles. “You don't think I spend all my time here, do you? A lady has responsibilities.”



THE BROKEN BUNKER

Once things settled down in the farmlands of Transylvania, word got out that old Soviet-era bunkers were lying buried and hidden in the area, and “urban explorers” set out to rediscover them.

This exercise in danger seeking could have ended with a few dead YouTubers and that would have been the end of it. Instead, the first wave of “bunker hunters” found exactly what they were looking for: a small metal and concrete complex, buried in a shallow gully, that was only uncovered when someone got lucky with a metal detector.

Inside, the bunker had little of occult or even historical interest. The front door opened into a control room of some sort, with 1960s video screens, some desks, and a broken chair. Beyond the control room, the bunker contained some storage closets, a cramped office, and sleeping quarters still furnished with a handful of rusty cots.

While the place originally had electricity, it's not clear where that power came from. Visitors suspect there was probably a generator at one point. It's also unclear what the video screens were attached to. The most popular theory states that this was an observation station, used to watch for intruders in the other facilities nearby.

Over the years, the bunker has become a staging area for amateur “bunker hunters.” Even those who don't continue their search often stop here to take pictures, soak in the atmosphere, and maybe spend the night. Remnants of countless campfires litter the ground outside. Inside, there is graffiti, broken wine bottles, and torn and rotten sleeping bags.

Some visitors to the bunker say it's haunted. They've heard voices speaking Russian in the middle of the night. Monitors flicker to life, showing static or the interiors of other abandoned structures. Others swear there are secret panels leading into a deeper facility below this one. If anyone has found such a secret passage, they haven't reported it.

It's possible that these rumors are all lies. Maybe they're just bait to draw the curious to a secluded spot where the local vampires can make a meal of them.

THE FACILITY

Abandoned Soviet structures in Transylvania attract a certain type of tourist. None is more attractive than the mysterious underground Facility 9. Once the home of a

Red Hand experiment dedicated to creating an interdimensional cosmonaut, the place appears empty and looted, but it is still dangerous.

The locals know this place is trouble. They have barricaded the door and put up warning signs in multiple languages. The area outside the doorway is littered with makeshift memorials to those who have vanished or died inside. Wise people stay away. But as happens too often in Transylvania, the bold and foolish charge in, laughing and dismissing the warnings until it's too late.

Beyond the bunker doors, horrors await. Echoes of dead cosmonauts haunt the ruins, ghostly creatures composed of memory and Filth. They are enraged that they can't remember who they are or why they are here, and they release that rage in violence on any who intrude on their domain.

Contact Core, the artificial intelligence that once ran the bunker, has been corrupted by Filth and taken on a malevolent sentience of its own. Its computerized voice taunts, tempts, and cajoles visitors to proceed deeper into the facility, where the worst dangers await.

Through the AI, the Filth can corrupt any electronics that remain inside the facility for too long, or those plugged into any of its many sockets. Explorers here often complain of a “weird Russian virus” that infects their phones and computers. As a manifestation of Filth, the taint can infect the devices' users and those around them.

PIET DE VRIES WINDMILL

An enormous white windmill stands atop a small hill in the farmlands. This gleaming tower is easily the largest building in the region, but it hasn't been used for actual milling for over two hundred years. Nevertheless, it is a beloved local landmark.

Built by an obsessed Dutch occultist in the 1700s, the windmill has long been something of an enigma in the area. Windmills are rare in the region (water mills are more common and more practical), and windmills of this size are unheard of. According to rumor, its construction was inspired by mad dreams and prophecies. It took on a new life when werewolves surged through the area, and the windmill served as a sanctuary that the evil monsters could not enter. It was warded and protected, it turns out, by magic seals.

In the aftermath of the vampire crusade, some of the locals took it upon themselves to restore the windmill. They replaced the rotted boards, repainted it gleaming white, and patched up the cloth of its sails. Someone even refreshed the magical wards. No one is taking credit, but the place seems more secure than ever.

Today, the windmill is considered neutral ground between humans and supernatural creatures. Once a year, the locals have a feast here to celebrate its protection during the nights of blood, and to present food offerings to the creatures of the Secret World in thanks for their protection and understanding.

THE CARPATHIAN FANGS

Looming above the fields and forests, the peaks of the Carpathian Mountains are covered in snow much of the year. They are soaked in centuries of bloodshed. Unpredictable weather and treacherous terrain make the region hard to reach, and therefore attractive to those who want to avoid scrutiny—or hostile invaders.

Deep beneath the mountains lies a Gaia Engine. It's likely no coincidence that powerful entities—those powerful enough to free the imprisoned Dreaming One—have been drawn to this place. First the Red Hand. Then the Orochi Group. And then the queen of the vampires herself. The last two actually reached the Gaia Engine, and the Shield is the result.

Now another entity has arisen in those forbidding mountains: the Bachman Institute. Whether or not this new bastion of mad science will resist the Dreamer's siren call remains to be seen.

ROMAN BATHS

Some two thousand years ago, long before the Red Hand or the Orochi Group, the Romans invaded the Carpathian Basin. As part of their colonization efforts, they dug deep into the mountainsides to form cavernous baths in the classic style of Rome. But the natural hot springs they thought they'd found were actually bubbling pools of Filth. The Romans were corrupted. The construction stopped. And the baths remained hidden in the ancient caves for millennia.

The baths are still hidden, but more than a few locals know how to find them. The original corrupted Romans are gone, but the Filth remains, and it tends to collect its own servants and guardians. Whenever a hiker vanishes, then

reappears as a violent madman, the Roman baths are likely to blame.

THE SHIELD

In a narrow valley between two peaks, where an old Red Hand facility is littered with abandoned Orochi equipment, an old road runs right up to the mountainside, where it stops abruptly. The stone wall appears almost as if it were once split open in a massive breach, which would have allowed anyone on the road to travel into the heart of the mountain itself. But that's just a trick of erosion. There is no breach. There is only a wall of earth.

No one can say what was going on at this facility. The Red Hand is long gone. Most of the Orochi personnel who were here ten years ago are dead. The few who remain can't quite remember details from that time. They just remember claws, fangs, and so much blood.

Nevertheless, the area attracts more than its share of visitors. Many are cultists of the Dreaming Ones. Others are geologists or mine engineers with no obvious connections to the Orochi Group or any secret society. All of them are looking for a way into the mountain. None of them have found one. Yet.

THE BACHMAN INSTITUTE

Igor Bachman was a researcher at the original Nursery, working for the Orochi Group. He specialized in fungi, hallucinogens, psychotropics, and biological engineering. He was specifically researching how to use the Filth-infused fungi of the area to help enhance the abilities of children with supernatural powers.

Bachman was out of the country when the Nursery was locked down and turned into a carnival of horror. Though he continued to work for Orochi at different labs on different projects, he remained drawn to Transylvania and his work there. He felt he had unfinished business in those mountains.

When he visited the old facility six years ago, he was overwhelmed with the desire to pick up where he left off. He was also struck by two epiphanies.

The first was that his fungal studies were the key to unlocking human potential. He had just barely scratched the surface of his work with the local fungi when the operation was shut down.

The second was that child test subjects were not ideal. Beyond the logistics and security concerns that arise with mass kidnappings, the children were hard to work with. Stubborn,

frightened, confused ... they were not *partners* in the mission. If they cooperated at all, it was under duress.

No. He would need a new breed of test subjects. Test subjects who *wanted* to be there. Who were willing to help.

Thus the Bachman Institute was born.

With his employer's blessing and funding, Bachman made arrangements with the Romanian government to take possession of the old Nursery site. The authorities were more than happy to sell the property, since it meant that they didn't have to deal with the cleanup or answer any questions about the lab's purpose or destruction.

In addition to his new laboratory, Bachman set up a network for acquiring new test subjects. The subjects are all volunteers. Through a series of internet quizzes, potential subjects identify themselves as possibly gifted with supernatural abilities. Those who pass this first level of screening are invited to in-person interviews at anonymous hotel conference rooms. Bachman's agents expose the highest-scoring candidates to mind-controlling fungal spores. While under the spores' influence, the subjects set out for Bucharest, from whence they are taken to the Institute.

Bachman cultivates specific, Filth-infected mushrooms in and around the laboratory. The fungi are known for their psychotropic and hallucinogenic effects, and for how well

they spread inside human flesh. Those whose minds have been opened by the fungus are receptive to both supernatural influences and basic commands. Their own minds are largely overwritten. They *want* to be here. They are glad to help.

The Institute is a warm, moist environment. It smells of earth and decay. Test subjects are infected with fungus through food, drink, topical exposure, injection, and even live insertion. The fungus always takes hold, but it has different effects depending on its type and the person infected. Some subjects develop super strength and durability; others unlock psychic potential. Bachman talks about using their powers to help and improve humankind, but he has no interest in actually doing so. He has bigger plans for them.

Ever since he returned to Transylvania, Bachman has had dreams of something powerful trapped beneath the mountain. This thing—it's some sort of psychic fungus, he's sure of it—guides him through his dreams, offering suggestions for new experiments and new types of fungus to use. It's Bachman's hope (and that of the Dreamer) that he will be able to develop an enhanced person with enough psychic power to burrow to where the entity lies imprisoned.

THE SHADOWY FOREST

The forests of Transylvania are alive. They are home not only to an astonishing range of wildlife but also to werewolves, faeries, and countless other supernatural creatures.



There are humans here as well, but they aren't like most people. Their senses are attuned to the ways of the Secret World, and they are themselves predators in nature's vicious cycle of life. Visitors to the forest would do well to listen to the wisdom of the locals. Those that don't may find themselves haunted, hunted, or worse.

ROMANY CAMP

Yes, this is the place where the Romany had their camp a decade ago. No, they haven't been here the whole time. They've traveled throughout Romania and Hungary, but they like to check up on things every few years. Now just happens to be time for one of their check-ins.

The Drăculești here are concerned that the werewolf packs are growing smarter and more organized. Some of them want to take advantage of the lycanthropes' apparent clarity of mind to start up a dialogue. Most of them are vehemently, violently opposed to the idea.

It's a moot point anyway. The Drăculești don't have the numbers to investigate the werewolf situation and defend the region from more immediate supernatural threats. While dubious of outsiders, the monster hunters may appreciate help from competent Secret Worlders.

The leader of the Drăculești is a veteran hunter named Milosh. Due to age and injuries, he's slower than he used to be, and he often defers field command duties to his daughter, Emilia. He points out that as a woman, she cannot truly lead the Drăculești. She agrees, then proceeds to issue orders in her father's name.

CAMP OF THE BLOOD CLAWS

The Blood Claw pack is the largest and most organized werewolf pack in the region. Unlike many packs, which consist of young beasts who are still overwhelmed by their violent urges, Blood Claw is made up of older werewolves who can control themselves. The eldest of these is Necul, who has a vision for the werewolves of Transylvania.

Necul and the Blood Claw arrived in these mountains some five years ago. Since then, they have sought to dominate the other, more simpleminded packs and guide them toward what Necul calls their "glorious future." However, Necul's future has no place for the werewolves mutated by Mara or the Orochi Group. Their blood is tainted, he says. They cannot be purified. They must be destroyed.

The Blood Claw camp is crude but comfortable. Long, primitive tents provide shelter from the mountain elements, and rock-lined firepits provide heat. The area around the camp is riddled with outcroppings, boulders, and ledges where werewolves can hide ... or launch themselves into an ambush. Necul and his pack defend their home if necessary, but they don't thoughtlessly attack anyone who happens to stumble into it. As Necul often reminds the others, "We are civilized, though we wear the bodies of beasts."

Necul is willing to speak with Secret Worlders who approach him with an attitude of respect. If asked, he explains that his goal is to turn Transylvania into a true home for werewolves: a place where they can hunt and be free. He's willing to negotiate and compromise to help turn this dream into a reality, but he's just as willing to kill and destroy.

BOSTON

One of the oldest cities in the United States, Boston has long been a place of new beginnings. Immigrants have been coming here for centuries to start new lives. Revolutionaries came here to start a new nation. And politicians came here to shape that nation in ways that served their true masters, the Illuminati, who have been pulling the strings ever since.

SECRET HISTORY

The seed of Boston was planted by English colonists in the 1620s. It was then tended and watered by the Illuminati, who ensured both its survival and its place as the center of colonial culture for the next century and a half. During that time, the Illuminati encouraged the locals to use their inborn supernatural gifts (also known as "witchcraft") to help the colonies. But when the witches' power began to rival their own, the Illuminati betrayed them to the Puritan leaders. The witches were persecuted, exiled, and even killed. The descendants of those who survived still live in the area—and have not forgotten the Illuminati's betrayal.

In the late 18th century, Boston was a focal point of the American Revolution. Under the cover of the war, the Templars tried to seize control of the city and the fledgling nation. Their efforts were rebuffed by the Illuminati, who used the opportunity to lock down their own defenses. In the century that followed, the Illuminati

thoroughly infiltrated the region and helped the city grow in power and wealth. Its control of Boston was unchallenged.

Until now.

A few months ago, a mysterious and supernatural fog crept into the Boston Harbor, and it has been there ever since. Enough thin spots remain that shipping traffic is not affected, but the islands of the harbor have been completely swallowed up by the all-consuming mists. Those who have escaped the islands report hideous aquatic creatures crawling up from the water and attacking anyone they can find.

None of the other secret societies claim responsibility for this attack. In fact, they're just as concerned about this enigmatic incident as the Illuminati are, and they have sent their own people to investigate.

Many of those people have vanished, but the mystery remains.

HIDDEN POWERS

The Illuminati have always been in Boston. Under the watchful eye of Theodore Walkins, the local branch is particularly interested in international shipping and American politics. They also have an unspoken rivalry with the New York office. New York pretends there is no competition (they are, after all, the worldwide headquarters), but this only makes it that much sweeter for Walkins when his office can show them up.

Boston has a long history of witchcraft in all its forms. Today's covens trace their lineage all the way back to the founders who helped protect the colonists from dark magic, disease, and the common medical ailments of the 1600s—all while the Puritans slandered and hunted them. There are several active covens in the area. Some are more public than others. Some are more ambitious. All of them claim they're dedicated to preserving nature and protecting various sites of power, but many are more interested in increasing their own influence and wealth. This has led to conflicts between the covens (some subtle, some not so much), though there hasn't been open violence between them since the 1920s. While the covens have their differences, they officially agree that the Illuminati are not to be trusted.

The "Black Book" is an informal group of former US intelligence personnel committed to protecting their nation against supernatural

threats. Members of the intelligence community are occasionally exposed to the Secret World. It rarely goes well for them. Most learn to keep their mouths shut about what they've seen, lest they be considered mentally unfit for duty. Others are kicked out. Those who have "seen things" find their way to this loose-knit "club" of former spies who defend the US from the forces that their various agencies refuse to admit exists. They are very aware of what's happening in the harbor, and they're concerned. It looks like an attack, though by whom and for what purpose, they can't say. They're going to find out, and they might need help. The spies are aware that the Illuminati exists, but they are not keen to work with them. They are patriots, and don't trust the secret society to have their backs.

Boston is full of ghosts. Like most ghosts, the vast majority of these phantoms are mindless things that simply act out the most important parts of their lives (or deaths) on a loop, or lash out mindlessly at the living around them. But some are intelligent. Some are ambitious. Some contact the living, and offer up their ability to access people and places that physical entities cannot. In exchange, they require bodies they can possess for a time, in order to experience once more the sensations of the flesh. These ghosts are organized into a hierarchy, and the most powerful spend the majority of their time wearing their "flesh suits" and making arrangements for their underlings to take on jobs for them. There are rumors that some who take possession never give it up again.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Boston is a sprawling coastal city. While it has its own official neighborhoods, it also bleeds into the surrounding towns and even onto the ocean, absorbing everything it touches into its Illuminati-influenced web. Below are some of the locations of note in the Secret World.

BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS

Boston Harbor is dotted with dozens of islands of various sizes. Over the centuries, they've served as defenses, ports, and even holiday vacation spots. Today, they are the sites of a supernatural siege.

A dense fog has crept up out of the harbor and is slowly choking out the islands. It started with a few larger islands, but it has spread, and it is creeping its way, island by island, toward

the mainland. The fog dulls noise and chills the bone; those who approach it are overwhelmed with a deep sense of nameless terror. So long as there remains a fog-free route for ships to pass through to Boston itself, the authorities take no official interest in the fog, which they say is a strange but totally natural phenomenon.

Under cover of the fog, undead sailors known as draug crawl up onto the islands. These inhuman things stalk the people of the islands; those that they catch are dragged under the water, where they are drowned and transformed into draug themselves.

Thompson Island. Once a popular tourist destination, Thompson is home to dozens of small shops, eateries, and beachfront amusements, as well as a handful of houses for the residents who live here year round. Another feature of the island is the Exagua Atlantic Aquarium, which serves as both a scientific research center and a tourist attraction. The scientists here are as intrigued by the fog and its creatures as they are horrified. There are no tourists on Thompson now, and the residents who remain are fighting for their lives against the draug and other things that writhe in the fog. They can only hold out so long, but they have been unable to contact the authorities for help.

Fort Akens Island. During the Civil War, the military built a fort on this island to defend Boston against Confederate ships. The fort still stands, though much of it has been rebuilt and turned into a museum. Today, it has once more taken up a defensive role, as islanders have gathered behind its thick walls to hide from the draug. The draug hammer at the doors and try to climb the besieged fort, as if attempting to reach some artifact held in the museum's basement.

Rampart Island. This island is a historical preservation site containing ruins from the colonial and precolonial eras. Visitors are restricted and aren't allowed without special permits. Under cover of the fog, however, treasure hunters are digging through the ruins in search of valuable (and perhaps mystical) artifacts from previous Ages. They risk the draug, and not all of them make it back.

Other Islands. There are dozens of other fog-covered islands in the harbor. The fog has changed some of them. In addition to the threats of draug, some have spawned their own monsters. Others have moved, grown, or changed in other ways. According to some reports, one island has people from the 1600s living on it, as if the island has become unstuck in time.



Shipwrecks. There are over a hundred known shipwrecks in the harbor, and dozens more that have slipped from public memory. One of the largest of these forgotten wrecks is a sort of “nest” for the draug; those who are exhausted or wounded from their attacks on the islands can retreat here, beneath the waves, to recover their hideous strength.

BOSTON CENTRAL

Central Boston is a mixture of historic, diverse neighborhoods that go back centuries and modern commercial zones packed with skyscrapers, parking garages, and soulless office buildings. The further out from the downtown business district one travels, the more sites there are worth seeing.

Hancock Building. This skyscraper is the tallest building in Boston, and it's home to the Illuminati. The secret society owns the entire building, but its people are scattered throughout various offices and businesses on all the floors, so it's harder to track where exactly they are. The other factions know the tower is a key Illuminati holding and have carried out supernatural attacks against it, but aside from some broken window glass, the building's wards have withstood the assaults.

Linton Square. This historic, privately owned park is surrounded by old, expensive homes and is the gathering place of the Boston witches. It's surrounded by tall fences and thick bushes, which hide the park's interior from view. Inside are centuries-old buildings and open ritual spaces where the witches meet and perform their ceremonies. All the covens claim the right to use the park, but because they don't all get along, they must schedule their time in the square carefully in order to avoid conflict.

Minuteman Pub. According to local legend, this pub has stood on the corner since the 1750s and was once a meeting place for Revolutionary soldiers. Regardless of whether this is actually true, the Minuteman is currently the meeting place of the Black Book, which owns it through a shell company. While the bar looks like a standard middle-class saloon and eatery, it's actually a spy safehouse. Surveillance cameras monitor the exterior, while signal-jamming equipment inside ensures that private conversations stay private. The back room looks like a standard storage space, but it conceals three hidden rooms, two secret exits, and a high-security door leading to

a set of neighboring apartments. This residential area also houses occult tomes, artifacts, and reams of classified documents related to the old spies' adventures.

Boston Common. Founded in 1634, the Common has long served the city as a social and recreational hub. In the colonial days, it was the site of public hangings and militia training. More recently, it's become a focal point for rallies, demonstrations, and rabble-rousing speeches. Today, the Common is also the site of an ak'ab infestation. The hideous insect-like creatures reside in tunnels beneath the ground, and emerge to feed on park visitors.

HARVARD SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

This neighborhood includes Harvard University and the surrounding area. Some of the country's brightest scholars can be found here, along with those dedicated to assisting and exploiting them.

Omega House. While not an official Harvard fraternity or sorority, Omega House is generally known as an exclusive organization that recruits only the best students. Despite its name, the House has no physical location to claim as its headquarters. Instead, its members meet in the locked rooms and forbidden passageways of the university. Omega House finds, grooms, and recruits the most intelligent, creative, and ruthless candidates into the Illuminati. The organization sponsors several “open house” events throughout the year, which are held in secret locations. All potential recruits are welcome to attend, but they must overcome numerous obstacles (physical and mental) in order to do so.

Greater Things Community Lounge. While the Fear Nothing Foundation of Tokyo has been publicly discredited as a cult, Morninglight has managed to keep its American version, the Greater Things Community, going strong. The GTC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to offering fellowship, counseling, and encouragement to any young person who needs it. The lounge is within walking distance from the university, and attracts thousands of teens and young adults each year. Many are burned out, homesick, depressed, or otherwise questioning their place in the world. The lounge offers a place to hang out, with free food, movies, and video games, and GTC staff are always willing to listen and offer words of advice. This advice

is often repackaged Morninglight doctrine, and it's eventually reinforced through mind control.

Central Academic Financial Advisors. Some students' parents would sell their souls to get their offspring admitted to Harvard. CAFA is here to accept that offer. These financial advisors are literal demons with a network of contacts throughout the university. With this network, they can guarantee the placement of any new student, but at a price. Though that price isn't always someone's literal soul, it can be. They also accept mystical artifacts, indentured servitude, and vast sums of material wealth. CAFA also offers student loans.

PARIS

For over a thousand years, Paris has been a seat of power, culture, and style. Its influence leads the way for not just France, but all of Europe. But the city of lights casts many shadows, and for every shining beacon of art and beauty, there is an equally dark hole full of horror and despair. In the Secret World, these holes are known to devour people—and sometimes, those people come back.

SECRET HISTORY

Originally settled by the Celtic Parisii tribe, the city now known as Paris was first established by the Romans, then grew into a powerhouse in the Middle Ages. It was a center of learning and the arts, and became the capital of France in the 9th century.

As the population and influence of Paris expanded, so did the Templar presence. Paris was a major base of operations. It was from here that the secret society dispatched its agents and monster hunters throughout Western Europe.

Starting in the 1300s, miners tunneled deep beneath the surface of areas that would eventually become part of Paris. Over the centuries, they sought limestone and gypsum, which were used in the city's construction. But as they dug deeper, some miners began to hear things. Voices from below called them, sang to them, whispered their names. Some fled what they assumed to be demons, but others dug deeper yet, revealing tunnels and caverns never touched by human hands. Very few dared explore these ancient holes; fewer yet ever returned, and their minds were damaged by the experience. By the 1600s, Paris had overgrown the mines. Miles

of twisting tunnels snaked their way beneath the foundations of the city, unmarked and largely forgotten.

During the 1700s, the graveyards of Paris began to overflow. Due to the vagaries of medieval city planning, Paris had swallowed up its cemeteries as it grew and was running out of room to bury its dead. The abundance of poorly buried bodies led to a huge influx of ghouls. In order to contain the problem, the Templars had several cemeteries emptied and their corpses interred in the tunnels beneath the city, creating catacombs of the dead. This strategy not only solved the problem of overcrowded cemeteries but also forced the ghouls back underground, where the Templars could deal with them out of sight.

During the French Revolution, the Templars discovered that the rulers of France were demons. Specifically, they were shapeshifting demons who take the form of humans to disguise themselves. The demons had the support of the Illuminati, who wanted to undermine the Templars' power in Europe. The Templars helped the people in their revolt and killed as many of the demons as they could find.

In 2012, something shifted below the catacombs. The voices from the ancient caverns began to whisper once more. Ghouls emerged from their warrens, corrupted with Filth. Dark, alien creatures began to slither upward toward the tunnels and Paris itself. The Templars sealed off the contaminated passages and killed anything that slipped through. They weren't so naive as to think the problem was solved, but it was contained, and it remained so until recently.

Once more, there are rumblings from underground. Once more, the ghouls are swarming up out of their warrens in numbers not seen in over a century. And once more, the demons walk among Paris's elite power brokers, shaping policy toward their own demonic ends.

Once more, the Templars must go to war. And this time, they may welcome any help they can get.

HIDDEN POWERS

The Templars of Paris are a bit less posh and a bit more battle scarred than their compatriots at the head office in London. They've been at war for centuries. Then the demons, and then the ghouls again, plus all sorts of creatures that come slithering and skittering out of the catacombs.



They're not bitter, though. The Templars are in it for the fight, and in Paris, there is plenty for them to fight against.

The ghouls have always been one of their main enemies. These foul creatures are no longer content with feeding off the dead, but they now stalk the living as well. They snatch their victims from shadowy back alleys, dragging them below ground to suffer, die, and be consumed. While most ghouls are feral, tunneling beasts, their leaders in Paris are intelligent and wield magic. They have a plan, but the Templars don't yet know what it is.

The demons are holding the reins of government power, not only for France but for the rest of Europe as well. They take the forms of influential people they want to replace. Their goal is to establish portals and infrastructure so that demons can colonize Earth from the Hell Dimensions. Although the Templars thought they had destroyed most of these demons during the Revolution, in truth, the invaders had simply changed their shape and gone into hiding. Over the years, they have continued to live among the movers and shakers of Paris, studying those they wish to replace, then striking when it's time to do so. The eldest among them have cycled through

hundreds of nobles, merchants, and politicians over the years.

The subterranean rumblings of 2012 brought the Orochi Group to Paris in force, and their research continues to this day. As with the site in Egypt, the Orochi team of scientists and security personnel have dedicated themselves to exploring the area of the new energy source. Specifically, they strongly suspect there is a Gaia Engine beneath the catacombs. It's their mission to find it, secure it, and discover a way to either harvest its energy at its current location or bring it to a secure site. After the fiasco in Egypt in 2012, they are being more careful this time around. This time, they're doing everything right. This time, it won't end in disaster. They're certain of it.

POINTS OF INTEREST

As a center of arts, education, and political power, Paris has long been an important part of the Secret World. Every neighborhood has its own history of secrets, conspiracies, and bloodshed, as well as its own monsters, heroes, and tragic figures.

Below are several such locales of special interest to Secret Worlders.

CATACOMBS

When the city of Paris emptied its cemeteries into the old mining tunnels, it transformed that section of the tunnels into an ossuary. Years later, that ossuary, referred to as the “catacombs,” became something of an attraction. Today, the entire tunnel network that runs below the city of Paris is referred to by this name, and most of it is largely off limits to visitors. The ossuary portion is more popular than ever, though, and tours visit it regularly. But in the shadowy realms beyond the tour guide’s light, danger lurks.

Templar Headquarters. After driving the ghouls underground, the Templars followed them and set up their own base in the tunnels beneath the streets. Most of the headquarters occupies a secure portion of the tunnels, from which the Templars can monitor many of the other passages. While the subterranean base is somewhat cramped, it provides all the modern amenities. A staircase leads up from the cave to an apartment building at ground level, which the group owns and uses as an aboveground entrance.

Deep Tunnels. Below the old mines are even deeper tunnels. These tunnels are dug by ghouls and other creatures, and they connect to both the mine tunnels and the caverns below. The deep tunnels are treacherous. They are tight in places, often lined with jagged rocks or littered with traps. The Templars have made many sorties into the deep tunnels, but this is ghoul territory, and they are rarely defeated on their own turf. Today, these tunnels are also home to other Filth creatures in addition to the Filth-infected ghouls.

Orochi Field Office. Officially, Orochi is helping map the old mine tunnels and reinforce them so the city can build larger structures more safely and efficiently. They even have permits to reflect this. But in reality, Orochi is obsessed with finding the Gaia Engine that they’re positive lies somewhere beneath both the catacombs and the deep tunnels. The field office is a makeshift HQ with science labs, gun lockers, and desks galore. The corporation has leased the old house above it, and its agents have shunted power from the house to their underground operation. Though the people in the office don’t realize it yet, Sarah El Kobrossy from the Council of Venice has infiltrated them. She is aware of the Orochi fiasco in Egypt, and hopes to prevent such a thing happening here in the heart of Paris.

INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Outside Paris proper are rows of factories, warehouses, and immense, brutally functional brick buildings of unknown purpose. While some parts of the district are as old as any tourist attraction, there are no tourists here.

Zagan Research Center. An Orochi subsidiary dedicated to mass-producing food and drinks, Zagan has insinuated itself into Paris’s famous cuisine. It offers experimental new ingredients to local restaurants from its test labs: special seasonings, synthetic flavors, and lab-grown meats and vegetables. In exchange for the company’s cutting-edge food technology, the restaurants agree to let Zagan monitor and test their patrons’ reactions to the meals. Some of the test ingredients cause addiction; no one has a problem with that. Others cause hallucinations, anxiety, or physical mutations. The restaurants are less happy with these side effects, but they are generally unwilling to violate their NDAs and say anything.

Warehouse Zero. During the German occupation of Paris, the invaders took over many industrial locations. This warehouse is one of them. Records from that time are spotty, but it’s generally believed that the Germans were conducting experiments here. When the Allies liberated Paris, they found the warehouse was abandoned but full of strange objects, so they locked it down. When they went to inventory their spoils that night, the equipment had vanished. The warehouse has sat empty ever since. It’s said to be haunted, or maybe cursed. At night, people see the lights on, and hear exclamations of both pain and ecstasy in German. The warehouse owner stopped renting it out after his third tenant in as many months killed himself.

Greenway Square. In the middle of all this industry is a small green space covered in tough native grasses, weeds, and park benches. Dead bodies have been turning up here, each covered in what look like insect bites. There have been four in the past three months. The victims come from all walks of life, but they all attended the same elementary school in Paris.

GOVERNMENT DISTRICT

The 6th and 7th arrondissements are home to the most important government buildings in France. This is also where one is most likely to encounter the shapeshifting demons who secretly influence the nation. These demons take

on the speech and mannerisms of those they impersonate, so it can be hard to detect them without the use of magic or special tools. While they aren't looking for a fight, they will defend themselves, and will gladly kill anyone who might threaten to expose them. Perhaps ironically, the government district is more dangerous for crusading Templars than the deep tunnels are.

THE LOUVRE

In addition to its world-renowned public displays of art, the Louvre Museum also contains vaults full of mystic artifacts. Many of these were stolen from other countries during the days of the French empire, and many of them are cursed. For the right price, museum officials may allow members of the secret societies to examine or even borrow these artifacts. The Council of Venice has been pressuring the museum to return the stolen items, along with any nonmagical artwork, to their countries of origin.

The Louvre is also the headquarters of the private security firm known as the Pyramid Guard (named for the glass pyramid in the museum's courtyard). The Guard is responsible for not only protecting the artwork of the Louvre, but also securing and retrieving stolen museum pieces from throughout Paris by any means necessary.

The Pyramid Guard is currently trying to figure out why the portraits in a collection from the 1600s are changing. No one has touched them—they're under glass and subject to constant surveillance—and yet the people pictured have become increasingly aged and deformed.

EIFFEL TOWER

The iconic tower was built as an aetheric transceiver, which has been captured and repurposed a dozen times since its creation. At the moment, the demons are using it to broadcast mood-altering sonic waves across the city, which they use to sway public opinion. The tower is heavily guarded by both mundane and magical means.

LA PETITE CEINTURE

This abandoned railroad line runs around the outside of the city, often vanishing into darkened tunnels for kilometers at a time. The tunnels attract tourists, petty criminals, and worse. Some of these tunnels are linked to the ghoul warrens, and they serve as portals through which the ghouls come to the surface to hunt. Others are full of rats, some of which are filled with

Filth and swollen to twice their normal size. The worst rat nests are occupied by rat kings: balls of Filth-infected rats, each the size of a large child, attached at the tail and moving as a single, blob-like entity.

NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL

A large nest of ghouls, led by a scheming ghoul mage, made the cathedral their home for years before the Templars discovered them. In the ensuing battle to purge the place, the cathedral caught fire and has since been closed for repairs. Notre Dame is now under direct Templar protection. Nevertheless, fresh waves of ghouls keep trying to retake the place. No one knows why, but there's clearly something here that they desperately want.

PÈRE LACHAISE CEMETERY

The most famous cemetery in France is infested with ghouls, of course, but since it contains so few fresh bodies, the ghouls here are hunting tourists. After dark, visitors risk being snatched up and dragged through ancient graves into the tunnels below.

The cemetery is dotted with other signs of the Secret World. For instance, one mausoleum bestows life-altering dreams upon those who spend the night on its marble floor. Ghosts attack anyone entering certain parts of the grounds. And a recent rash of bizarre grave robberies have occurred: the entire grave simply vanishes, leaving nothing but a smooth-walled void perfectly cut through the soil and stone.

MUMBAI

As an ancient city, Mumbai has seen everything: theocrats, tyrants, foreign invaders, demonic invaders, and more. Rather than break in the face of such turmoil, Mumbai has embraced the chaos, and grown all the stronger for it.

SECRET HISTORY

Mumbai has been a vital port city for millennia. Though the city itself has changed hands many times, it has withstood the tumult of history with the subtle and occasional assistance of the Dragon.

When Portugal conquered Mumbai in the 16th century, the Templars followed shortly thereafter. The Dragon did nothing to prevent the crusaders from clearing the land of dangerous monsters and troublesome demons. In fact, they helped

the Templars transition when the British took over the city in the 1660s. It wasn't until India achieved independence in 1947 that the Dragon encouraged the Templars to leave with the British. (The Templars reject the idea that they were simply doing the Dragon's work for them during their time in Mumbai.)

During the upheaval in 2012, a surge of jinn was unleashed upon the world. Many found themselves in Egypt, fighting the humans whom they hated but missing the power they once had. In the aftermath of that time, numerous jinn congregated in Mumbai, where they hoped to establish a new power base on Earth.

HIDDEN POWERS

The Dragon is here. They have always been here. Mumbai is a city of chaos, held in check and guided by ancient traditions, so the Dragon is right at home. Its agents are everywhere in the city, prodding the chaos, pushing the traditions, and guiding the city into its next evolution, known only to themselves.

A colony of jinn has now taken up residence in Mumbai. They don't have vast, elaborate plans for controlling the world. They just want

to watch humanity suffer. To that end, they have established a reputation for answering the prayers of those they deem worthy—that is, those who are most willing to sacrifice and debase themselves. The jinn serve as cruel, capricious gods, and that's the way they like it.

The rebel Host Samael (also known as Samuel Chandra, the head of the Orochi Group) has subtly overseen the resurrection of the ancient cult of Kali in the city. Following the Tokyo incident, the Host banished Lilith to a place outside our reality. Her husband hopes to bring her back someday. One way is to strengthen the connection between her and the Earth through traditional goddess worship. The cult doesn't worship the same Kali found in Hindu tradition, but rather a twisted version that embraces only her role as mother and destroyer, for this is the form of Lilith. The cult wears a pretty face. But beneath that mask, its adherents breed monsters and commit murder in the name of their goddess. They pray for Kali's return to Earth, opening the way for Lilith.

The Orochi Group has a sizable presence in Mumbai. Its manufacturing companies dominate their own zone in the city's industrial area, and



its tech firms employ thousands of information workers. After the group's massive losses in Tokyo, it had to refocus its efforts on rebuilding, and many of those efforts are happening here in Mumbai. It helps that the CEO now has an office in the city. While he oversees the cult of Kali, he can help direct the Mumbai Orochi operation.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Mumbai is an enormous city, full of history, life, and traditions from a hundred different cultures. Some important locations go back thousands of years. Others were built just yesterday. What follows is an overview of those that are of interest to the Secret World.

OROCHI INDUSTRIAL ZONE

The industrial zone is home to multiple factories, laboratories, warehouses, and offices for the various Orochi Group subsidiaries. Of particular note are the Váli labs (which are working on both diseases and their cures), the Manticore Research factories (with their insane quotas for workers), and the Anansi Technologies data farms (where thousands of white-collar drones generate computer code until their minds burn out).

The area is surrounded by polluted fields and canals full of toxic sludge. Blocks of company-subsidized apartments stand on the edge of the zone, where workers are encouraged to take up residence. It's convenient for both the workers (who have no commute) and the corporations (who can monitor their employees for strange mutations and signs of burnout.)

The zone has recently been subject to acts of sabotage and theft. There's been no sign of the perpetrators. Some theorize they are members of an anti-corporate activist group. Others suggest they're a rival secret society, such as the Dragon. Perhaps even the Swarm, a faction dedicated solely to the Immaculate Machine and her preservation.

DRAGON TEMPLE

The Dragon's Mumbai headquarters is situated in a building known only as "the old temple" in the Mahim neighborhood. With so many temples, shrines, and churches in the area, this particular building blends in so well, the locals forget it's even there, much less know what *kind* of temple it is. The Dragon agents at the temple ensure the neighborhood streets stay clear of crime or supernatural threats.

THE KALI EXPERIENCE

The temple to Lilith-as-Kali looks more like a modern office building than the center of an ancient religion. Its decor is bright and cheery, with a vaguely feminine feel to it. It features multiple conference rooms and fitness studios, and a full gymnasium. The building, and the cult it houses, is referred to as the "Kali Experience."

The Experience (as the cult leaders call it) looks like a New Age, feel-good celebration of female spirituality that has just adopted the goddess as branding. ("Visit the Kali Experience to find the new you!") The first floor of the temple certainly reflects this.

Advanced members of the cult can access the second floor, where they find shrines to the various forms of Kali. Here they learn that they truly are worshipping a version of Kali—one who is both a mother to monsters and a destroyer of men.

Those who pledge their loyalty to this warped image of Kali are allowed to access the third floor. Here, they are indoctrinated into the darkest secrets of the cult. They partake in ritual consumption of the goddess's flesh (supplied by Zagan) and give birth to their own monsters (with help from Váli). Cultists who are in this deep are typically insane, and committed to destroying the weakest parts of the modern world to prepare the way for their warrior queen.

The Kali Experience maintains a series of much smaller offices and meditation centers throughout the city, and is looking to expand into other regions.

TEMPLE OF FIRE

On the edge of one of Mumbai's famous slums is an empty stone building that was once an apartment block before it was burned down. The locals have cleaned up the interior and used the wreckage to build a shrine there. Fire dances along the edges of the interior ruins. Even though there is no fuel, it still burns. The so-called Temple of Fire is the gathering place of Mumbai's jinn. These immortal creatures have no love for humanity. They do not grant wishes. All the same, like most such beings, they feed off the worship and adulation of humans; the emotions feed not just their egos but their souls as well. And so they allow people to come with their offerings, sacrifices, and supplications, begging for the jinn to answer their prayers.

They do answer prayers. Not often, and not always in the way that the supplicant intended or hoped, but the jinn deliver enough results that desperate people keep coming back.

The jinn delight in human suffering. They demand ever-greater sacrifices of their worshippers. They especially enjoy seeing their supplicants inflict pain and humiliation on themselves or others. The Temple of Fire is known as a place of dark power. It's a bad place that good people do not want to visit, but those who are desperate may feel they have no choice.

Prithvi Neighborhood Clinic

The members of the Swarm who fled to Mumbai are holed up in this neighborhood clinic. They stumbled upon the place, which is run by a supernatural creature claiming to be an asura. They help out as they can. They think they are keeping a low profile, but the Dragon know every step they've taken in Mumbai. The jinn also know they are here, and they are curious if there is some way to feed off the Bees' anima directly. The clinic is small and humble, but known to be effective and low cost. People come here to offer trade for medical services.

Nagari Road

Something is terribly wrong in this poor neighborhood. Every few weeks, someone is found wandering the streets in an amnesiac state, with no memory of who they are or how they came to be here. At the same time, other

strangers are found panicking, for their memories do not match the bodies in which they reside. The locals mutter that the "memory thief" has returned, but they go silent when outsiders ask about it.

Corbyn Estate

The Corbyn Estate has stood in this residential neighborhood since 1862. Montgomery Corbyn has been master of the estate since 1867 and has no intention of giving up the title anytime soon. The old man still lives like a colonial lord, commanding his household staff as if they were his indentured servants, not his employees. It's almost as if time has slowed behind the estate walls. Time has still passed since the 1800s—Corbyn is an old man—but he retains his wits and mobility. The streets just outside the walls are likewise affected, and the locals react as if Corbyn is actually someone worth considering.

Colaba Square

This historical, tourist-friendly neighborhood appears to be under the protection of some sort of supernatural entity. While most tourist areas have more than their share of pickpockets, muggers, and worse, Colaba is relatively crime-free. The authorities like to think it's a result of their enhanced policing policies, but the truth is that would-be criminals know to avoid the area. They don't want to end up torn to shred by mysterious, tiger-like claws, or to vanish altogether, only to have their bodies wash ashore, half-eaten.

Well, well, well—if the little Bees aren't all buzzing again. It's been a while since I last got up close and personal with your kind. An Age, some might say, or what passes for one these days.

*I'm Säid. That should go without saying, of course, but you lot have a habit of being rather tight lipped about these things, historically speaking. If you've come to me—and look at you, you **obviously** have—then it's likely you want for information, yes? Lucky for you, that's rather my thing.*

Now let me be clear: I don't work for free. Nor is this a gift or a favor; your "organization" is footing the bill. I've no care for your colors, either. Here in the Valley of the Sun God, all that glisters really is gold.

What, not one for clichés? Pity, as I've got another one for you: Histories, even the secret ones, repeat themselves. You're stirring up echoes, my friend. Hopefully you're prepared for what you hear.

*Or in this case, **read**. These dossiers should get you up to speed on the whole "who's who" element of this supernatural popularity contest. Here, I'll AirDrop them to you. Or, if you don't have an iPhone, I suppose I can send you an email. What's your address? Honeybee69@aol.com?*

*Anyway, here they are—heavily edited, of course; your betters aren't entitled to **everything** the Kingdom knows, regardless of what they may believe. Say, "Thank you, Uncle Säid." Actually, on second thought, don't mention it. Ever. To anyone.*

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm right in the middle of a thrilling game of digital Scrabble with Nassir, and I'm not about to lose my twelve-point lead on account of silly politics. You can go now. My work here is done.

— Säid of Erasmus

PERSONS OF INTEREST

FACTIONS

THE TEMPLARS

NAME: DAME JULIA BEATRIX TYBURN

RANK: SUPERVISORY AGENT,
SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS

REGION: TEMPLE HALL, LONDON,
ENGLAND

"Every time someone finds some new bloody artifact, everything goes tits up."

One of the most senior members of the Templars—both in rank and age—Dame Julia represents the order's old guard. The Templars are nothing if not bound by tradition. In an ever-changing world, they are stalwarts standing fast, a constant that can be relied upon.

Dame Julia strives to embody this constancy, having served since before the Great War, though it's best not to ask her age. Even so, she is not unable to evolve, however begrudgingly that evolution might take place. Rather, she values the moments that have come before, and believes they are worth honoring and learning from.

In the wake of the Tokyo disaster, Dame Julia was assigned to represent the Templars at the Council of Venice with increasing frequency. Though her diplomatic contributions were certainly valuable, the arrangement reportedly displeased her, as she was loath to "ride a desk" for the rest of her career. Lamenting that the creeping threat of ageism would present itself even in such an ancient institution as the Templars, Dame Julia has recently reinserted herself into the field, attempting to infiltrate the New Eden cult compound Philip Marquard has established in the heart of the Congo. Worryingly, the order has lost contact with her since then, leaving her current status—and whereabouts—unknown.

NAME: RICHARD SONNAC

RANK: HANDLER

REGION: TEMPLE HALL, LONDON,
ENGLAND

"I'm very pleased you can follow directions on the back of a card. It is the basis for us getting along famously."

If Dame Julia embodies the Templars' past, Richard Sonnac hopes to embody their future. He serves as the liaison between the order and the Bees in its employ. He does his level best to ensure the latter are fully equipped to tackle the Secret World's demands while attempting to assure the former that no, a lack of uniform isn't disrespectful, it's *fashion*, and yes, the youths are a bit reckless these days, but so were we at their age, and we weren't nigh *immortal*.

He deftly straddles the line between traditionalism and modernity, though his deeds are sometimes overshadowed by those of his ancestor, Guillaume de Sonnac, Grand Master of the Knights Templar. The man's likeness looms in portraiture behind Richard's desk, much to the younger Sonnac's annoyance. "Feels like I'm being watched, if I'm honest," he says, shaking his head at the bad idea rendered in oils. "Then again, I suppose I am."



While he and the higher-ups haven't always seen eye to eye, they can no longer deny the efficacy of his methods. Since the Tokyo Disaster, Sonnac has focused primarily on his relationship with existing and incoming recruits, sowing loyalty among the Templars' ever-increasing army of Bees. Their affection for him ensures he remains a mainstay of the order, allowing him to wield his influence in a campaign for meaningful change. Rumors abound that Sonnac is partially responsible for Dame Julia's reassignment to a more outward-facing political position, thus affording him more control over the goings-on at Temple Hall.

NAME: PIT AND PENDULUM

RANK: ENFORCERS

REGION: TEMPLE HALL, LONDON, ENGLAND

Their embossed business cards read: NECESSARY EVIL.

When the Templars describe an experience as "unpleasant," it's typically code for "hellish." This is certainly true in the case of the Pit and Pendulum, the top brass's figurative attack dogs and literal masked villains. They serve as the harbingers of consequence, couriers of their masters' displeasure and the corporal punishment that comes with it. Everything about them is imposing, from their burly statures and dreadful silence to the way they never show their faces, covering them in a chipped and flaking Greek comedy mask and an ancient Knights Templar helm and hood, respectively.

In fact, the more one examines them, the more one discovers how eerie the duo truly are. The dates of their service are difficult to pin down, requiring a deep dive into texts most easily accessed through the Sunken Library rather than Temple Hall. References to their employ begin around the time of King Solomon's reign, prompting speculation that the pair were among the seventy-two demons he summoned.

Their current whereabouts are more easily determined. With Richard Sonnac's ascension came their reassignment to Venice, where they were tasked with looking out for Dame Julia and other Templar interests. Her recent disappearance, however, has left them *sans*

collar or leash, committing them to the veritable viper's nest of their own devices. Perhaps they've sensed a change in the weather, as they've been spotted in New Carthage, ostensibly gathering intel on Dame Julia's whereabouts. This does not, however, explain why the duo have stopped sending in their reports, or why Sonnac recently received a bloodied Greek tragedy mask in the post.

THE ILLUMINATI

NAME: KIRSTEN GEARY

RANK: EXECUTIVE RECRUITER

REGION: THE LABYRINTH, NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, USA

"Make me look bad, and I'll mount your head on my wall as an object lesson to the next fuck-up."

A self-professed former Valley Girl, Kirsten Geary now serves as the Illuminati's executive recruiter and handler for the anima-imbued. Blunt, matter-of-fact, and painfully honest, her charms lie in badassery rather than charisma; you'll always know where you stand with her, even if it's in front of a firing squad. Her offices inside the Labyrinth, the Illuminati's sprawling underground base of operations, reflect the face she shows the world: sleek, cold, and unfathomably expensive, with edges sharp enough to sever an artery. But those worthy of her confidence find this impression is just one facet of the gem that is Kirsten Geary, though what lies beyond her sparkle is no less deadly.

As cataclysmic events unfolded in Kingsmouth, Egypt, Transylvania, and Tokyo, Kirsten and her compatriots at the Illuminati worked to contain, counter, and control the fallout, a method known as "The Three Cs of the Apocalypse." They soon discovered that the Filth had spread far beyond anyone's predictive models, forcing them to cede ground as well as issue pink slips to several alleged prophets on their payroll. "Please, they should've seen that comin'," she says of the debacle, an inch of ash holding on for dear life to the rest of her cigarette. When asked whether she's referring to the chain of disasters or their termination, she shrugs. "Both."

These terminations, combined with increased pressure from her bosses, ultimately convinced Geary to take a new approach to personnel management: installing behavioral modification chips in her subordinates' brains. For this project, she tapped Dr. Charles Zurn, head of the Illuminati's research department, and together they created an army of "little Gearys" responsible for handling the small stuff while she focuses on the bigger—and bleaker—picture ahead of her. With this hive mind at her disposal, she's able to directly control and influence every aspect of her domain; after all, if you want something done right, it's best to do it yourself.

NAME: DR. CHARLES ZURN

RANK: LEAD RESEARCHER

REGION: THE LABYRINTH, NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, USA

"You may be feeling some discomfort from the microchip I grafted to your spinal column. As your doctor, I advise you—strongly advise you—not to try removing it. Okay?"

As head of the Illuminati's research department, Dr. Zurn boasts quite the résumé. He first began his work in cognitive alteration and enhancement for the National Institute of Mental Health, and later headed up the CIA's Special Activities Division, overseeing the unofficial extension of its MK-ULTRA program. By the time the Illuminati recruited him, he'd already begun pushing the boundaries of human experimentation, making him a shoo-in for a position that would have him overseeing the secret society's research programs, including those on inhuman subjects. While his exposure to eldritch energies has left him at somewhat of a social disadvantage, there is no one more suited to the role he plays for the United States' flagship secret society.

Despite how much has changed for everyone else this past decade, Zurn's day-to-day remains much the same. He continues his Illuminati-funded experiments, and as of late he's taken a particular interest in the Mitsubachi, a contingent of Bees working directly for Orochi. Combined with a newly documented example of a Bee's successful, albeit unconventional, suicide, he has begun to delve into the metaphysical effects that



exposure to the Buzzing inflicts on an otherwise human brain, which he wryly categorizes as "meataphysical." Some data suggests that even Gaia's Chosen are not entirely immune to psychological degradation, implying that agents who host emissaries of the Education Protocol may experience a gradual degeneration of sanity.

"The Filth warps the body as much as the mind," he says, observing the EEG readouts from a subject suspended in a chamber filled with thick, golden sap. The observation window reflects the furrows on Dr. Zurn's face, some smooth as a cardiac flatline, others as jagged as the waves on his monitor. "Why not anima?"

NAME: RONELLE WASHINGTON

RANK: ASSASSIN

THE LABYRINTH, NEW YORK

REGION: CITY, NEW YORK, USA

"No hard feelings."

In another life, Ronelle Washington wanted to be a performer. She got as far as auditioning for Julliard, debuting a dance routine she was certain would capture their interest. Instead it drew the attention of an older and even more exclusive organization. The same day Julliard rejected her application, the Illuminati extended her an invitation to join their team of Magicians.

Now Ronnie specializes in making people disappear, shifting the eyes of the city away from the criminal tendencies of the rich and powerful,

ensuring that any "accidents" these people might orchestrate remain tragically unsolved. She is a professional, an expert in the vanishing acts that take place all over the city. Even now, so far from the stage, her performances are flawless.

Her next showing is scheduled to take place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically at the New Eden compound where Philip Marquard has dug in his heels. His split from the more public-facing branches of the Morninglight has only increased the number of people willing to pay for his silence, or his death. The Illuminati, never keen to miss an opportunity for glory (especially after their failure in Kaidan), recently sent several Magicians to take care of the problem. None have returned. They've dispatched Ronelle to get the job done, and if possible, to find out what became of their missing agents. She has yet to report back, and Philip Marquard still lives.

THE DRAGON

NAME: DAIMON KIYOTA

RANK: MOUTH OF THE DRAGON

REGION: SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

"Luck be a lady who shivs you in the shower."

Ping-ping-pang-ping-ping. A pachinko machine clangs in the darkness, dispensing prophecy from the Third Age. Cloistered inside his offices above the Zeroes Wild pachinko parlor, Daimon Kiyota has read them all with a grin so sharp it could cut these fortune cookie strips in half. He knew what was coming long before it arrived. Then again, the yakuza often do.

Kaidan drowned in a tide of Filth that Daimon let slip past the docks. Yet in the roiling aftermath, while Orochi and the other warring factions faced the whirlwind, he managed to secure a promotion, adding "Mouth of the Dragon" to his résumé alongside "playboy of probability" and "*kumicho* of the Korinto-kai." For was it not he who brought chaos to the city, and from that chaos forged a tremulous unity between those who had, until then, known only war? Was it not he who snatched victory from the jaws of defeat and fitted it with a crown of emerald scales?



His new title, however, has forced him to delegate, and his relocation to Seoul, South Korea, has opened the door for others to fill the vacuum in his wake. Kaoru, the Phoenician agent who runs the Dream Palace love hotel in Kaidan, has assumed many of Daimon's duties, acting as an arbiter for the many local factions—both natural and supernatural—that still operate in the city. Some say Daimon gave her his blessing after he'd finished overseeing the cleansing of the Filth from Kaidan's streets. Others say Kaoru stole the territory right out from under Daimon's nose, using his absence and her organization's connections to carve out a kingdom of her own. Either way, the Crown Prince of Crime seems content to allow her regency to continue ... for now.

NAME: BONG CHA

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

"I ... I have this awful feeling that I've missed something important."

Before she was the Mouth of the Dragon, Bong Cha was a university student studying for her exams. The Dragon saw potential lurking beneath her surface, fathomless depths not yet charted. And so she was recruited, another thread unspooled from destiny and sewn into a tapestry of emerald scales.

She was groomed to serve the Golden Child, to give voice to his silent commands and execute his will. With these duties in mind, she tended her army of Bees, molding them into the servants the Child would someday need. But then something in Kingsmouth ruptured, Egypt began to bleed, and the Carpathians yawned around a hole in the world. Tokyo was Bong Cha's final failure. Her memories were wiped by the same monks who then escorted her to her exit, stage left, and into her spotlight stepped Daimon Kiyota.

But even the man who toes the line between chaos and synchronicity could not have predicted her next step. A few weeks after her departure, Bong Cha showed up at the Dragon's door, having sleepwalked out of the psychiatric treatment center where her amnesia had landed her. Some part of her knew how to return home—something buried deep beneath the damage the Silent

Monks wrought. To the surprise of everyone involved, the Golden Child welcomed her back with open arms, seeming to recognize that she was no longer the Bong Cha that he, or anyone else, remembered. She was someone new, her slate as cleanly wiped as her hippocampus, a curiosity comprised of recycled parts. She is grateful the Dragon saved her when she was lost. She does not know they were the ones who cast her into the dark. And what will Daimon Kiyota do if she finds out?

NAME: THE GOLDEN CHILD

RANK: HEAD OF THE DRAGON

REGION: SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

" "

There is a legend that flows through all Ages. It goes like this: In times more ancient than can be fathomed, in a pool so clear it might have been glass, a child glimpsed the Dragon's tail. She grabbed hold, reaching past the nanosecond equations of ripples in the water, and inhaled its words until they filled her lungs in place of air. That night, her half-drowned body regurgitated a prophecy of a nine-headed naga, each of its jaws dislocated to expel nine discordant truths. These truths vibrated on her death rattle, and those who heard them became the Dragon's first converts.

There is a tradition that flows through all Ages too. It goes like this: A child shall lead them, and when that child dies, another shall be born, and the Silent Monks will find them. Through a series of rigorous tests, they will prove that the child is the reincarnation of the first and the last, and every child in between them. Other contenders are disposed of, while the chosen one—the Golden Child—takes the throne, their will interpreted by the Mouth. And when the Golden Child is no longer a child, they become a sacrifice, and the cycle repeats.

Such has been the fate of the last Golden Child of the Fourth Age. When the Dragon claimed victory in Kaidan, the beast they serve made known its desire to slither in a new direction, necessitating a complete changing of the guard. The new Golden Child, a ten-year-old girl from the Gangwon province, represents the wind of change blowing through reality, her impassive eyes glimmering like a pair of emerald scales.

THE TOKYO INCIDENT TEAM

NAME: ALEXANDER MCCALL

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"I love a good fight—it's just that these trousers are bloody velvet."

Formerly a private investigator, Alex McCall had his first run-in with the supernatural while looking into a series of ritualized murders in Manchester. After finding out the killer wasn't human, he stumbled upon the Illuminati, who were only too happy to accept someone with latent supernatural abilities into their ranks. Particularly fond of chaos magic and elementalism, Alex styles himself as an urban mage, all the while retaining the cynical—and somewhat crass—demeanor befitting a detective. As he is wont to mutter to new acquaintances, "Harry Dresden, I am not."



Prior to the Tokyo incident, Alex was dispatched to Kaidan to investigate the possibility of a looming supernatural threat. Though the entire city was built on ghost stories, new intelligence suggested something much bigger was coming, something that would be catastrophic on a hitherto undocumented level. He arrived just in time for a front-row seat to the event, along with a Templar agent named Rose White, a Dragon operative named Mei Ling, an independent Haitian shaman named Zuberi, and a Council of Venice representative named Sarah El Kobrossy. Together they formed the Tokyo Incident Team, first responders in a new and deadly chapter of the war for reality. Step one was fighting their way out of the Filth-infected subway. Not all of them would make it to the surface.

In the years since Kaidan's fall, the Illuminati has dispatched Alex to a number of locations, including Kingsmouth, where he has helped with Solomon Island's recovery. His work at the Overlook Motel rid the area of demonic stragglers and closed the portal to the Hell Dimensions for good, at least in Room 13. As Solomon Island moved on from the disaster of 2012, he chose to stay behind, acting as an undercover agent and taking over the newly reconstructed hotel. "Only so many times you can save the world," he mutters around an unfiltered cigarette. "Reckon me and my arthritic fingers have reached our limit." Still, as tales of a new catastrophe unfolding in Boston make the papers, Alex McCall also reckons that there's no such thing as retirement.

NAME: ROSE WHITE

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: KAIKAN, TOKYO, JAPAN

"Make every shot count."

Despite her age, Rose's dedication to the Templars remains unquestioned. After a revenant killed her father, she spent the next seven years hunting it down, never wavering in her quest for revenge. Once it was gone, she thought she'd be on the road to recovery from her loss, but somehow it only made her more restless, more eager to eradicate the evil lurking in the shadows.

When word began circulating through Temple Hall that something big was about to go down

in Tokyo, Rose was the first to volunteer to investigate. Her itchy trigger finger took her all the way to Kaidan, where along with Alex McCall of the Illuminati, Mei Ling of the Dragon, Sarah El Kobrossy of the Council of Venice, and a Haitian shaman named Zuberi, she got a firsthand look at the aftermath of a Filth bomb detonated in the city's subway tunnels. As the infected passengers took to the streets, she and the rest of the Tokyo Incident Team pursued, with Rose hoping all the while that at last, she had found the quarry whose destruction would ease her grief.

While she couldn't singlehandedly save the city, she was instrumental in its reconstruction, working with Gozen of the Jingu clan to maintain order in the territory Daimon Kiyota awarded them post disaster. She continues to act as their liaison to the Templars, helping to establish a foothold for her order there, no matter how tenuous. Kaidan may have become neutral ground, but that doesn't mean it will be neutral forever, and when the contesting begins, Rose will carve out the best bits in the shape of the Alisee.

NAME: MEI LING

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: MUMBAI, INDIA

"Before the Dragon came knocking, my idea of chaos was a messy apartment."

Unlike many of the other members of the Tokyo Incident Team, Mei Ling's journey through the Secret World did not begin with a supernatural catalyst. The Dragon headhunted her for her innate abilities, ones she did not even know she possessed before the faction entered her life. Formerly an anthropology major, she is valued for her vast knowledge of folklore and skills with a blade, as well as the elemental magic she imbues her weapons with.

Mei Ling was dispatched to Tokyo just before the Filth bomb destroyed Kaidan's subway system. Having evaded the initial blast and the wave of Zero-Point Pathogen that followed, she struck an uneasy truce with Alex McCall, an Illuminati operative; Rose White, a Templar agent; Sarah El Kobrossy, a Council of Venice representative; and Zuberi, a shaman with close ties to Gaia. Together they set out to stop the Filth-infected from reaching the surface, not



yet realizing how outnumbered they were. Their containment measures could not hold, and the Blackworm Jism spilled out onto Kaidan's streets.

Though her faction was ultimately successful in their mission, Mei had experienced too much horror to remain behind and gloat. She left Kaidan as soon as she could, returning to Seoul to recuperate while the Dragon assessed whether Philip Marquard and his compound in New Jerusalem were valid threats. When it became clear the Morninglight would not recover anytime soon from its administrative schism, she was sent to Mumbai to gather intelligence on the rise of the cult of Kali.

NAME: SARAH EL KOBROSSY

RANK: INVESTIGATOR

REGION: PARIS, FRANCE

"My name is Sarah, and I'm still on this planet. My name is Sarah, and I'm still on this planet ..."

Born in Cairo, Sarah El Kobrossy grew up learning about ancient Egyptian artifacts from her father, a purveyor of goods for high-profile clients such as the Kingdom. Under his tutelage, she also learned to defend herself; though she specializes in blades, particularly those she can dual wield, her father's most important lesson was that if she had to draw a weapon, she'd already failed. Information, in his estimation, was the greatest power one could hold. When his wealth of knowledge made him a target, he used his connections to send her to Venice, where she joined the Council under Arturo Castiglione's leadership.

In time, Sarah became Arturo's protégé, which is why his proposal to send her to Tokyo surprised her so much. She had worked as a

field investigator before, certainly, but never for a matter so steeped in mystery, or so far away. Without knowing what she was getting into, she arrived in Kaidan just before the Third Age artifact aboard the subway detonated, showering all those inside with pure Filth. Though she survived the explosion and the horrible transformations that came after, Sarah—along with Illuminati operative Alexander McCall, Templar agent Rose White, Dragon initiate Mei Ling, and a shaman named Zuberi—would have to fight her way out of the underground tunnels to stand any chance of containing the sentient virus. Unfortunately, a structural collapse separated her from her comrades, leaving her trapped and infected—a psychic conduit who would relive her agonies again and again as the factions sent their Bees to tramp through her mind, all in the name of learning exactly what happened in Tokyo.

With the Gaia Engine's restoration of the city, Sarah was finally recovered, first by Orochi, then as the result of a prisoner exchange with the Council of Venice. The abilities she manifested as a result of exposure to the Dreaming Ones have positioned her as an even greater asset, though her severe PTSD required her to take an entire year off before returning to service.



Though the Council has provided her with the very best in complex trauma therapy, she remains marked by her experience in the Kaidan underground; her nightmares have a bad habit of becoming reality, leading many to wonder just how touched by the Dreamers she is, and how much of her remains human.

NAME: ZUBERI

RANK: SHAMAN

REGION: UNKNOWN

"Even when the Filth corrupts, Gaia's power endures."

While most anima-imbued choose a side in the secret war between the factions, some follow a different path. Zuberi blazes his own trail, forging his own connection to Gaia through years of training as a shaman and root doctor, using his abilities to help, harm, and navigate the roads leading to and from this world. He is a master of the horizons, an explorer who claims no colors, save for Gaia's honeyed gold.

Zuberi claims that a warning—perhaps more of a fever dream—made him aware of a disaster about to unfold in Tokyo. Zuberi didn't answer the call to stop it, but rather to save those who were caught in the blast: Alex McCall, Rose White, Sarah El Kobrossy, and Mei Ling. He'd run into these agents on previous missions, but none so dire as the situation they found in Kaidan, one which would require complete cooperation to overcome. Zuberi took on the role of the voice of reason, making full use of his life experience and spiritual knowledge to guide the others through the worst of the disaster.

The aftermath only cemented his belief that Gaia's honeyed emissaries can only truly serve her by pledging their loyalty directly. He had long flirted with the Big Three secret societies, making ample use of their resources and goodwill without committing to a cause. Unbeknownst to them, he was also courting—and influencing the direction of—the Swarm, a faction dedicated solely to the Immaculate Machine and her preservation. Their hive is where he ultimately decided to put down roots, installing himself as a mentor figure to those Bees who choose to bear only Gaia's standard.





THE COUNCIL OF VENICE

NAME: AMPARO OSORIO

RANK: LIONESS OF THE COUNCIL OF VENICE

REGION: THE SUNKEN LIBRARY, VENICE, ITALY

"I believe, with all my heart, that the Council is needed, and that it is possibly our only hope for the future ... which is why it's so frustrating when we get mired down in pointless rhetoric and conflict, again and again and again."

Ever vigilant, ever faithful, Amparo Osorio embodies everything the Council of Venice was meant to be. Originally from San Basilio de Palenque, a small village in southern Cartagena, she grew up in the embrace of her grandmother's *brujería*. Even now, Amparo longs for the simplicity of that magic; the mysticism of the Secret World is infinitely more foreign, more complicated, and more dangerous.

Take Egypt, for example; when the Council spoke of a cult uprising, Amparo imagined fewer meteors. Golems, ghouls, and Black Pyramids didn't factor into her travel plans at all. Yet she arrived in al-Merayah to find a city besieged by all of the above, smoke rising from the human sacrifices the Atenists were burning in the streets. The Council had downplayed the situation to a disturbing and suspicious degree. She needed to know why, and she vowed to find out.

This dedication to her job, and to the ideals of the Council as a whole, led to her ascension to its highest position: Lioness. She replaced the former Lion, Arturo Castiglione, shortly after the Egyptian crisis ended and his conspiratorial liaisons with the Phoenicians came to light. Amparo has done her best to maintain the courage of her convictions despite all the politicking and backroom diplomacy lurking around every corner, instigating a changing of the guard and enacting policies designed to implement a more efficient system of checks and balances for both Council agents and the secret societies they govern. While some see this as a veritable renaissance within the ranks, others see it as an

opportunity to sow chaos and discord, seeking to seize the Council's coveted seat of power for themselves. As Amparo struggles to hold together the Secret World's last bastion of ethical accountability, she faces more snakes than she did in the desert—both from within and without.

NAME: ARTURO CASTIGLIONE

RANK: FORMER LION OF THE COUNCIL OF VENICE (RETIRED)

REGION: BALARI, NEW CARTHAGE

"In chains, yet still bold."

In spite of everything else said about Arturo, he is a man aware of his sins. His backroom dealings with the Phoenicians endangered not only the sanctity of his own organization, but also the rest of the world. His dispatch of Sarah El Kobrossy to Kaidan just before the bomb went off was a tragedy he could not have foreseen, but he could have prevented it if he'd summoned the mettle of his youth. Cynical, bereaved, and desperate, Arturo's flagging leadership left the other factions in a lurch, wondering just who they could depend on in these times of crisis—and how, perhaps, they could manipulate them now that the Council wasn't looking.

To shore up their defenses, members of the Masked Circle—the council within the Council—voted in favor of deposing Arturo. A senior agent named Amparo Osorio took up his mantle, a transition of power Arturo was *encouraged* to make seamless in order to stave off outside threats. Given the gravity of his mistakes, he stepped down gracefully, retiring to a Tuscan villa to contemplate his future. This is where the Phoenicians found him once more; maybe the Council was willing to let him off their leash, but the Brotherhood was not.

Now he occupies a gilded cage in Balari, New Carthage's bustling maritime district. From there he has both forged and nurtured numerous political connections, yet again positioning himself as an indispensable fixture of the Secret World—one he hopes the Phoenicians cannot easily discard. Even so, his captors keep a close eye on him, allowing him only an exquisite view of the sea he will never cross again, all his regrets buoyed on its foam.



NAME: CARMEN PREDA

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: HARBABUREȘTI, TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

"Blades against darkness, whatever the cost."

A Transylvanian native and former Templar, Carmen Preda has long operated as the field investigator for Romania, using her rapport with the locals to keep an eye on supernatural developments. The vampiric uprising was of particular interest to her; in a region where the Secret World is not so secret, organizations like the Red Hand operated with a disturbing amount of freedom, and even newcomers to

the area such as the Orochi Group enjoyed a certain ease of machination. Carmen reported it all to the Council, trusting they would handle the diplomatic aspects of such conflicts. No one calls upon her to do so anymore—not after she lost her eye, a hazard of taking a lycanthrope lover.

Carmen was a field agent operating out of Harbaburești when Mara raised her armies in 2012. Her service there did not go unnoticed; not only did she act as the liaison between the Council and incoming Bees from all factions, but she sent back reports on the Filth’s effects on the local flora and fauna as well, noting changes to the ecosystem from a practical standpoint rather than a purely scientific one. It was through these missives that the Council came to better understand the nuances such a threat posed to creatures of legend; not even Cernunnos, the Forest God, was immune to the taint creeping through his lands.

This method of information-gathering—from the perspective of someone both indigenous to the area and well acquainted with its nuances—led the Council to begin recruiting intelligence agents who would remain embedded in their home territories, gauging the severity of supernatural conflicts before they escalated into another Egypt, Transylvania, Kingsmouth, or Tokyo. Carmen Preda now oversees this task force, coordinating with agents all over the world to assess and respond to emergent threats, though she does so largely from her home in Bacăș County. “These days,” she says, removing from her mug a tea stirrer shaped like a miniature wooden stake, “anyone can work remotely.”

NAME: LORRAINE MAILLARD

RANK: AGENT

REGION: UNKNOWN

“They offered me Gaia, and I took her because I didn’t have a choice.”

Not all agents join the Council of Venice willingly. Some are drafted, press-ganged under threat of far worse fates. Lorraine Maillard is one such agent.

It’s been four decades since she lost her son at the Atlantic Island Park—four decades since Nathaniel Winter’s corrupting influence used

her hands to plunge a knife into young Callum Maillard’s heart. Four decades since a Venetian recruiter expunged her record in the name of cultivating her latent psychic sensitivities. Four decades since his ilk strapped her to a table and forced a Bee into her brain. They afflicted her with immortality when all she wanted was to die. When she unexpectedly birthed a second child, Emma, during her Council tenure—the result of an affair with another agent—they took that from her too, stripping her of her only chance at redemption. Better, they thought, to let her believe the babe had been born sleeping, but the infant’s absence cut like an unhealed C-section scar either way.

Eventually, Lorraine found a way to dismantle the biomechanical terrorist inside her. It took years of blood, sweat, and oh-so-many tears, but in the end, Lorraine used all she’d learned from the Council to terminate her contract—permanently. She became the first of the anima-imbued to complete suicide, hoping to join Callum at last. But good help is hard to find, and the Council under Arturo Castiglione’s oversight was not in the habit of allowing high-value targets to escape that easily. Thanks to a particularly nosy Secret Worlder, Lorraine was forced to rebond with the Buzzing and continue her service. Clearly, destroying her Bee was not enough. This time, she’ll have to burn down the whole hive.

THE PHOENICIANS

NAME: TANIS (BIRTH NAME UNKNOWN)

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: MUMBAI, INDIA

“The day will come when I will have this gun pointed at your head and I will pull the trigger. Lucky for you, that day is not quite here yet.”

Long ago, when Tanis still answered to her birth name, she was struck by a snake. As its venom pounded through her veins, she begged her parents to let it escape unharmed, for as she and the serpent exchanged blood and bane, so too did they forge a connection. Forever after, Tanis could see through the eyes of vipers, and speak to them as if she were one of their own.

Some would argue that a snake is exactly what she is; as a supernatural arms dealer, she's hewn compromises from stony resistance, earning a reputation for both ruthlessness and efficiency. In time, the Phoenicians dispatched her to Egypt and entrusted her with seducing the Kingdom into relying on the Brotherhood of Sailors as a purveyor of magical artifacts. But the deal couldn't last; as the Atenists in al-Merayah rose to power, Tanis struck yet another deal, one which fell apart as every other client abandoned her— save the Morninglight.

After Akhenaten's defeat, Tanis briefly retreated to New Carthage to regroup with the rest of the Phoenicians. Her connection to the Morninglight shattered when the organization split into two, though she eventually found a foothold with Che Hansson in Costa Rica, supplying him with the exotic spiders used as an aphrodisiac among his cult members. When a particularly vocal sect of Kali worshippers began cropping up in Mumbai, she traveled there to establish a business relationship. What she found plunged her into the center of an arms race once more.



NAME:	ELLIS HILL (REAL NAME UNKNOWN)
RANK:	UNKNOWN
REGION:	UNKNOWN

"Spare the rod, spoil the abomination."

Some people are born to be fixers; Ellis Hill is one of those people. In his experience, there isn't a problem on Earth that won't yield once he applies the right tools to it. Sometimes the right tools are alchemy and a little siphoned jet fuel made into Greek fire. And sometimes they're just a strong pair of hands wrapped around an innocent man's throat, making sure he dies so that a ruse can live.

The death of the real Ellis Hill haunts his impostor. He thinks about it every time he hears the crackle of his fellow sailors on his radio, the gurgling interference reminding him of his namesake's death rattle. He believes he was justified, believes he did the right thing to make sure the Phoenicians got a foothold at Ground Zero before the fog rolled in. Hell, looking out over the water, he figures he may have done that man a favor.

NAME:	LIDIYA PAVLICHENKO
RANK:	UNKNOWN
REGION:	KAIDAN, TOKYO, JAPAN

"Say whatever you want about the Phoenicians, but we never back out of a deal, we never double-cross anyone, and we always deliver—always."

Although the operative known as Lidiya was not always a Phoenician, little is known about her previous life, save that for a time she worked as a KGB agent. Reportedly she also knew Dragan Dzoavich of the Orochi—some would suggest biblically—though it would seem the two have ended up on opposite sides of the chessboard. Lidiya specializes in acquiring ancient artifacts, often through deception. Sometimes, however, it's as easy as sauntering through abandoned Soviet facilities and plucking arcane treasures from the ashes.

A decade ago, she was sighted in both Venice and Romania. In Venice, her dealings with Arturo Castiglione garnered her some unwanted attention from the Big Three secret societies; in Romania, her affiliation with a certain Bee led to the destruction of her helicopter, which she

miraculously, or perhaps infuriatingly, survived. Though she's been accused of selling out her values in favor of profit, Lidiya does seem rather loyal to the Brotherhood; how loyal they are to her after so many failures, however, remains to be seen.

More recent events have placed her in Kaidan, where the nature of the liberated city allows her to move more freely. Under Kaoru's reign, it has become a haven for all who would not be welcome in other territories, as well as those who are willing to defy the Secret World's rules in order to get what they desire. The Phoenixians thrive here, though even they cannot truly call it home. For Lidiya, her presence is a way to reestablish her worth to the Brotherhood of Sailors: by becoming integral to the factions' information network.

NAME: KAORU KAJI

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: THE DREAM PALACE, KAIDAN, JAPAN

"There are no problems here; only solutions."

Those who brave the sea have many sayings. They talk about red skies and sailors' delights, and any port in a storm. Kaoru seeks to be these things for the people who step beneath the ruby-red lights of the Dream Palace: placid as the surface of a looking glass, and very accommodating of their needs.

But beneath the stillness she so carefully cultivates, a maelstrom whirls. Her intersex body, and the children who laughed at it; her attempt at suicide-by-sea, and her father's sacrifice to save her; the last man she loved, and the way he recoiled from the purple sails tattooed upon her thigh —these monstrous memories frighten her more than the Filth outside, gnashing their jaws even as she dreams of conquering her fear of the depths so that one day she might escape her shame. More than anything, she longs for the Phoenixians to bring her peace in a way the Fear Nothing Foundation never could.

As the dust settled in Kaidan, she assumed a new, more forward-facing role: the Prince of Ghosts. She has stepped into Daimon Kiyota's

empty shoes, overseeing the city's reconstruction and eventual rehabilitation as a supernatural DMZ—the Casablanca of the Secret World. Much of her job revolves around maintaining the peace between non-neutral parties: the Jingu and the House-in-Exile; the Templars, Dragon, and Illuminati; the Phoenixians, and just about everyone else. The only unwelcome organization is the Council of Venice, which strives to restore order in the region, unable or unwilling to recognize that Kaoru has already established order there in the form of chaos. The criminal underworld has become more of an overworld since the wall fell, its streets awash in the neon glow of the Korinto-kai's magical tattoos.

THE MORNINGLIGHT

NAME: FREDERICK "FREDDY" BEAUMONT

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: UNKNOWN

"I'm free, and I don't plan on anything—or anyone—changing that."

Not all gods go to heaven. Some behave so badly they are banished from their divine realm, consigned to wander the material plane and eke out an existence among mortals. One such outcast is Frederick Beaumont, operational overseer of the Morninglight's Solomon Island chapter and ancient Norse deity, who once set Kingsmouth ablaze in the hopes of sifting Mjölnir from its ashes. Later he did much worse, using Excalibur to fracture the Gaia Engine beneath Blue Mountain in the name of Ragnarök—an apocalypse that would not unfold on Odin's terms, but on those of his abandoned son.

While his plans for Armageddon failed to bear fruit, he did manage to expose his whereabouts and weaknesses to the Illuminati, who—after pursuing him for centuries—were only too happy to lock him away in Arkham State Hospital, bereft of his magic, his chance for revenge, and the sword he'd sacrificed so much to procure.

Recently, however, Beaumont cast off these chains, escaping his cell to orchestrate a reckoning. Next, he needed an ally. Beaumont

contacted the Swarm and manipulated them into assisting with his complex scheme. First, he convinced the Swarm that a “soft reset” of the Fourth Age was their brilliant idea ... and then Beaumont “helped” them achieve it, hoping to turn the tides of fate in his favor at last. But he has fallen short of his goals again, always trailing in someone else’s wake; with Excalibur at her disposal, Cassie King has managed to retain her grasp on reality, leaving Beaumont chasing after her once more, crossing oceans of space and time in order to realize his ascension at last.

NAME: CASSANDRA “CASSIE” KING

RANK: RECRUITER

REGION: UNKNOWN

“Do you have any idea who I am ... or who I am about to become?”

Many Georgia girls grow up under the sway of the fantasy of the Southern Belle. For Cassie, such dreams didn’t last long; Daddy’s little peach took off the first chance she got, crammed into the back of a VW bus with a big yellow sun painted on the inside roof. In those early days, she’d stare at those rays, hoping for the kind of enlightenment that’d finally get her off her back, out of the shadows, and into the light where she belonged.

This was the standard Morninglight promise, and when Freddy Beaumont took a shining to her, Cassie thought they’d made good. When it turned out he only wanted her for the same reason every other man in her life did, she realized he wasn’t a reward—he was an opportunity. All she had to do was play the honeypot one last time, let him underestimate her the way everyone always had, and then finally, the power she’d deserved all along would be hers.

Undeterred by Beaumont’s metaphysical meddling, she has maintained custody of Excalibur, allowing her to pursue access to the island of Avalon, King Arthur’s fabled resting place. Recent reports have placed her in Paris, France, searching for an artifact referred to only as “the Key,” an integral piece of the puzzle of her machinations. What those machinations are remains to be seen, but there isn’t a secret society on Earth that wouldn’t like to know.



NAME: PHILIP MARQUARD

RANK: ASCENDANT

REGION: NEW EDEN, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

“We are all made of stars.”

Philip Marquard has long been the wholesome face of the Morninglight. He was placed there as a figurehead by Lilith (in her guise as Lily Engel). Marquard and his self-help cult were meant as tools for Lilith to harness the power of the Dreaming Ones.

Lilith did not reckon that Marquard had encountered a Dreaming One directly, in his youth in the Congo. He already belonged to them. Through the silent urgings of the sleeping cosmic horrors, Marquard acted outside of Lilith’s knowledge, dedicated to the purpose of waking and releasing the Dreaming Ones. The cult was truly his, and he was fully submitted to the will of the blasphemous alien titans.



The Dreamers granted Marquard a lavish home and family, the better to masquerade as a mere human. Through the muttering of profane prayers and obscene sacrifices, he ruled the Morninglight—the smiling face reminding his eager followers of how their molecules taste.

But after the publicity nightmare that was Kaidan, the Morninglight had to split into two entities: the public self-help religion and the Marquard-led cell of cult fanatics. Philip Marquard retreated into the Congo with his army of True Believers, while Che Hansson took over as the face of the “real” Morninglight and publicly denounced his predecessor.

In the Congo, Marquard has established New Eden, a commune many have compared to Jonestown. Satellite images reveal a fertile land hosting hundreds of residents, though recently, the overgrowth has interfered with reconnaissance, leaving the truth of what lies behind the living, verdant veil a mystery. Either way, Marquard is home. He frequently visits the old well where he first heard the whispers of a Dreaming One all those years ago.

NAME: CHE GARCIA HANSSON

RANK: SUPREME GURU

REGION: PANDORA, COSTA RICA

“Can’t escape the light, my friend. It’s all-fucking-encompassing.”

People do a lot of strange things in the midst of a drug-addled haze. If you’re Che Garcia Hansson, you join a cult, especially if they’re willing to ensure your supply never runs out. Though his memories of that era are deliciously fuzzy, he credits the Morninglight with saving his life, minus a toe.

Valued at last for his debaucherous prowess, Che was awarded the rank of Enabler and dispatched to Japan, where he met John Copley, a member of the Fear Nothing Foundation, the cult’s regional offshoot. Through the same methods the Morninglight had used to bring him into the fold, Che convinced John to carry a Filth bomb onto Tokyo’s subway and detonate it under Orochi Tower in Kaidan. Though John missed

the mark, Che doesn't see it as a failure, noting that it brought about the catastrophic change the world needed, and that the Morninglight has long prepared for.

As years passed, however, Che became disenchanted with the Morninglight's leader, Philip Marquard, as well as his South African colony, New Jerusalem. After some digging, Che discovered Marquard had been using him as a pawn, a role that didn't sit well with the notoriously rebellious delinquent. As the organization began distancing itself from Marquard's increasingly disturbing gospel, Che saw his chance to return the Morninglight to its old ways. With the help of the Black Signal, he released numerous records detailing the horrors of New Jerusalem, a leak later referred to as "the Prieska Papers." He then publicly denounced Marquard and his ambitions for the Morninglight, positioning himself as its new leader in Costa Rica, where he retains his loyalty to his first mentor: Frederick Beaumont.

NAME: JOHN COPLEY

RANK: THE BLACK SIGNAL

REGION: ALL

"You know why I call you 'Chuck,' don't you? It's 'cause you're all just meat to me."

John Copley's early life was a perfect storm of tragedies. His mother's death in his formative years coupled with his father's addiction to his office set the stage for isolation and neglect. These traumas manifested as social deficiencies in school, and rejection from his peers made him reliant on a series of vivid, manga-fueled fantasies wherein John finally got to play the beloved hero.

By the time the Fear Nothing Foundation began its work on him, his potential was already ripening. All he needed was a little push to become the deliverer of the Morninglight's Great Message. Che Hansson primed him for his meeting with Philip Marquard, ensuring John was just confident enough to believe he was capable of greatness, yet pliant enough to take orders, no matter how terroristic they seemed. It was he who carried the Third Age artifact rigged as a Filth bomb onto the Kaidan subway. It was he who plunged his thumb into the detonator and drank the Sleepers' liquid dreams. In doing so, he



became the Boiling Meme, the Empty Fortune Cookie, the Zero-Point Signal—a sentient word-virus commandeering the airwaves to spread his brain-melting hiss.

After the fall of Orochi Tower, John was free to spread throughout the world via the internet, a medium that allowed him unfettered access to much of humanity. But with his newfound freedom came uncertainty; after all, John was accustomed to following orders. He had never been expected, or allowed, to devise his own agenda. Perhaps this is why he has embraced chaos, choosing not to pursue a specific goal but to become an inexorable part of humanity itself. He lurks behind every creepypasta, every Information Age legend—and most recently, within the code of every new AI art and chatbot program. The more often people use them, the more they see his face. Perhaps he is still following the tenets of the Fear Nothing Foundation after all. Perhaps he has finally attained a level above human.

OROCHI GROUP

NAME: SAMAEL "SAMUEL" CHANDRA

RANK: CEO

REGION: MUMBAI, INDIA

"You are an exceptional footnote in a text one could not even leaf through in a star's life cycle, so I invite you to contemplate how quickly my eyes gloss over you. Don't take it personally."

Before there were Ages, there were angels. They called themselves the Host, a collective allied around the common goal of creation. From this fellowship sprung the Immaculate Machine, and with it, a conflict that would tear the Host apart. But even then, Samael knew that sometimes, the only way to win is not to play.

Millennia later, he is realizing that perhaps he was wrong. Even when you don't play the game,

you can still lose. He has lost so much as of late: the tower he erected in celebration of his own glory; his wife, Lilith, who in the end proved willing to sacrifice their love for the power the Dreaming Ones promised; his pride, stolen by both the Grigori and the secret societies Samael thought himself above. His stoic facade threatens to crumble like the ruins of the many civilizations annihilated in his wake. Despite the human trappings he surrounds himself with, he is still an angel, and the prospect of divine retribution sizzles eagerly in his veins.

The destruction, and eventual reconstruction, of Kaidan has given Samael much to consider, as has the absence of his wife at the hands of the Host. Frustrated by his losses, he has spent his time observing other pieces as they move across the board—Frederick Beaumont, for example, and his interference with members of the Swarm. Samael knows he needs only bide his time before Beaumont makes possible Lilith's rescue from her interdimensional prison; and besides, it wasn't like the woman couldn't do with a good time-out, anyway. Samael was in Mumbai when the shift in reality finally happened, reviving worship of Lilith under the guise of Kali, one of her many names, to strengthen her attachment to this plane. Yet jailbreaking what amounts to a demigod is no easy feat, and though Samael has indeed created the foundation for her return, he may need help in order to free her from his brethren's clutches.

NAME: LILITH "LILY" ENGEL

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: UNKNOWN

"Every monstrous silhouette that haunts every legend, every myth, every night terror—they all trail umbilically back between my legs, and I dissolved entire civilizations in the sizzling afterbirth."

Abeko. Abito. Amizu. She has walked the Ages four times over, an exile of Eden and mother of monsters. *Batna. Elio. Ita.* She has lain with gods and angels, and both have worshipped at her feet. *Izorpo. Kea. Kali.* Generations of names trail behind her like the train of a gown, each sway of her hips inspiring a susurrus of terror. *Odom. Kokos. Partasah.* She may look human—the body



she wears may fit her like a glove—but she is farther removed from our species than most animals. *Patrota. Podo. Satrina.* And from the top of Orochi Tower, she once overlooked the city of Kaidan, plotting to make the same mistakes all over again.

Talto. Lilith. Ki-siki-lil-la-ke! When the Nephilim bound her at last, this is the name they used—her most secret eighteenth name, and the one with which she began her existence. Her imprisonment ensured that her connection to the Dreamers was severed, sparing reality a repeat performance of her last attempt to control Those Who Slumber. But while that stopped the bleeding, it did nothing for the wound, which festers even now. Samael is most displeased, and like any immortal, he has the luxury of waiting for the right time to exact revenge in Lilith's name.

That right time is now. The Swarm has damaged the integrity of this reality, making it possible for Lilith to slip through the bars of her cage. She has been waiting ever so impatiently, uncertain whether she'd been cast aside by her angelic lover in the wake of the destruction she wrought. But he will come for her now—she's sure of it. She can feel her bond to the world she left behind strengthening, can hear millions of souls calling out for Kali, and at long last, she is ready to answer.

NAME: DRAGAN DZOAVICH

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: LAST SEEN IN THE CARPATHIAN FANGS

"It isn't easy to be forgotten."

Dragan Dzoavich is used to being left behind. Before he joined Orochi, his government left him as a KGB agent and dhampiric Red Hand experiment without a cause. Then there was Lidiya, his comrade who abandoned him for the Brotherhood of Sailors, sacrificing their history for profit. Finally there were the Orochi themselves, who tasked him with finding out what happened at the Breach in the Carpathian Fangs long after everyone else had been evacuated. Sometimes Dragan wonders if he really likes working alone, or if it's happened so often that he's simply come to terms with it. Either way, his talent for slipping between the cracks has earned him the codename "Ghost."

It's little wonder, then, that he would gravitate toward someone who could see him—*really* see him—as was the case with Emma, an Orochi asset who also happened to be an innocent young girl. After learning that Lilith had abducted her in the wake of experimenting on her at a secret facility called the Nursery, Dragan made a choice to save the one truly good thing in his life, even if that meant being the one to walk away from everyone else for once.

Now, after watching Emma slip through his fingers yet again, he finds himself descending once more into the belly of the beast. He has rejoined the Orochi Group, hoping their nigh-unparalleled resources will help him locate the missing girl. For even after all this time and with all he's learned, Dragan still holds fast to a single truth: that Emma Smith gave his half-life a purpose, and that he'll do anything to get her back.

NAME: ANIMA (FORMERLY EMMA SMITH)

RANK: VIRGULA DIVINA

REGION: UNKNOWN

"The lullaby must never end. If the Dreamers wake, all that is ... won't."

Firestarter. Test subject. *Virgula Divina.* Rarely has the girl once known as Emma Smith been allowed to be just that—a girl. Her inborn psychokinetic powers were of immediate interest to every paranormally affiliated organization in existence, leading to a tug-of-war that eventually landed her in an Orochi facility known as Amity House. Under the supervision of Váli, the branch of the Orochi Group responsible for genetic research and bioengineering, Emma's powers blossomed. Soon she was chosen for the Virgula Divina project in an attempt to locate a supernaturally powered being who could open the fissure in reality known as the Breach in the Carpathian Fangs.

It was here that Emma spent time in stasis overseen by Dr. Schreber, an Orochi scientist and head of the Nursery, the conglomerate's facility for children demonstrating paranormal aptitude. Amid a slew of horrific experiments involving lycanthropy, possession, and Filth exposure, Emma and her compatriots were kept docile using auditory hypnosis set to the tune the

THE MARYA

Gaia Engines emit, called the Sleepless Lullaby. After abducting Emma, Lilith also attempted to use this method of coercion, hoping to keep the girl's powers dormant en route to Kaidan, where Emma would be used to cleanse the Filth and commune with the Dreamers. One of Gaia's Chosen, however, was able to remind Emma of her true identity—that of Anima, a being composed of the sap which drips from the World Tree—and in doing so, unleashed her full potential on the world.

Anima was instrumental in the liberation of Kaidan, a feat she achieved through communion with the Gaia Engine beneath Orochi Tower. In the early days of the cleanup, Daimon Kiyota, and later Kaoru, brokered a peace agreement between the warring factions to help Anima focus on her task. It was always the Dragon's intention, of course, to then harness Anima and the Engine for themselves. Perhaps aware of this plan, Anima and the Gaia Engine both disappeared in what many news outlets first believed was a nuclear flash. They have been missing ever since.

NAME: SHANI SHUTA

RANK: MUSHIR (GENERAL)

REGION: AL-MERAYAH, EGYPT

"The Marya took up the burden of memory so Egypt can forget. When ancient walls are uncovered from the desert sands, her people should never know what those walls shielded them from."

Although she was born into the Marya, Shani was not a child soldier; her training began with the rise of the Atenists, as was the story for many who inherited their membership to the order. Her natural leadership abilities and levelheaded pragmatism set her apart from the others, however, earning her an officer's commission—and later, as the conflict escalated, the rank of commander.

As the Marya's numbers dwindled, Shani began soliciting help from outside sources, namely the Bees, regardless of which secret faction they belonged to. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and she was not about to let her pride get in the way of procuring the assistance her army so badly needed. She even turned to the Council of Venice for aid—anything to stem the tide of feral cultists and the wrath of the Sun Eater they worshipped.

Ten years later, she maintains control of the Marya forces at the training camp outside the city. Though the Black Pharaoh was defeated, the Atenists have not entirely dispersed from the region; they've only assumed less conspicuous forms. With Nassir at her side, she does her best to prepare a new generation for the fight against evil, always keeping one eye on the glint of Orochi technology burrowing in the distance.



NAME: **NASSIR KHAMWAS**

RANK: **FARIQ (LIEUTENANT GENERAL)**

REGION: **AL-MERAYAH, EGYPT**

"They call me Nassir, the Boom-Boom Man. They call me this because I make things go boom-boom, yes?"

Nassir has a long history with the Atenists, and one more intimate than most. After losing his sister to a monster from the mountains, cultists abducted his mother and killed his father, who had pursued them to save her. Anyone else would have been consumed by despair, but Nassir instead enlisted with the Marya, hell-bent on ensuring his tragedy would befall no one else.

His career has been a storied one. He trained with a covert subset of American special forces, who educated him in dimensional demolitions. He led an attack on the Atenists' last remaining headquarters in al-Merayah, virtually atomizing his targets with plastic explosives and freeing their civilian captives. After learning of a plot to smuggle another Third Age artifact out of Egypt—an Ark that housed a device capable of tremendous Filth-spreading power—he aided the secret societies in stopping the train Abdul Daoud had hijacked to transport it and recovering the Filth bomb it contained. Through this act of heroism, he gained an ally within the Kingdom and strengthened the Marya's position in the region.

In the aftermath, Nassir has joined Shani in running the training camp outside al-Merayah's walls. He knows better than anyone that a time of peace is no excuse for resting on one's laurels. The peace in the Valley of the Sun God is only comparative, anyway; all conflicts pale in comparison to the one that saw bodies burning in the streets and the formation of a great Black Pyramid out in the desert. Conflicts these days are more centralized and, thank the gods, less numerous. Even so, his teeth remain permanently on edge, and sometimes, when the morning sun hits the dunes just right, he swears he can see old blood staining the sands.

NAME: **SAÏD OF ERASMUS**

RANK: **TRADE PRINCE**

REGION: **AL-MERAYAH, EGYPT**

"Everything goes through the Kingdom. Everything has its price."

From his lily-white suit handcrafted from Milanese silk to the shrink-wrapped texture of his leathery skin, Saïd is a walking contradiction—a three-thousand-year-old accidental mummy with a smart phone. Despite his shocking appearance, he remains as much of a hedonist now as he was circa 1700 BCE, having morphed his predilection for decadence into a career of black-market crime. No one knows the value of ancient artifacts, supernatural or otherwise, quite like Saïd, nor can they boast his level of access to them.

His reputation, however, is not as pristine as his suit. Ten years ago, he made the mistake of trading with both the Morninglight and the Phoenicians, two factions he had dealt with many times before, though never in such close concert. The result was catastrophic; the Morninglight detonated a Filth bomb in Tokyo, leaving Saïd responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands—and much worse. To get the red out of his ledger, he cut off both parties and began working with the Marya, hoping to eradicate the Atenists and their strongholds in the region. Maybe, just maybe, preventing history's most hated Pharaoh from eating the sun would stave off any karmic retribution linked to his previous errors.

I am telling you this, of course, in the greatest of confidences—wouldn't want word getting back to Nassir. I haven't forgotten his promise to explode me.
—S

Over the past decade, Saïd has extended the Kingdom's operations into Europe and Asia, reigniting old fascinations with ancient Egyptian relics and a demand that hasn't been this prominent since the Victorian era. While he remains allies with the Marya, the very nature of his business often puts them at odds, and relations would be further strained if they knew what else he was doing. Anticipating yet another Age-ending conflict, the Kingdom has begun creating a new slew of undead operatives using an updated version of the ritual that turned Saïd and his ilk into mummies in the first place. To do this, they sometimes poach Atenist initiates from the Sunblest Wellness Center, believing that, in their own way, they are doing their part to once again eliminate the cultists.

THE INNSMOUTH ACADEMY

NAME:	HAYDEN MONTAG
RANK:	HEADMASTER
REGION:	KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA
<i>"I have always striven to maintain a clear delineation between obsession and madness."</i>	

Though he has become synonymous with the school, Hayden Montag was not always the Innsmouth Academy's headmaster. His tenure began out of desperation rather than ambition. His desire to impart occult knowledge led Montag to abduct supernaturally gifted children in order to teach them. The ensuing criminal charges forced the Illuminati to better direct Montag's pedagogical fervor. His role at the Academy allowed Montag to craft curricula that involved his students' consent; the school benefited from his meticulous rigor; and the Illuminati ensured future generations of erudite occultists. Everyone was happy.

But then the fog came, its siren song luring most of the Academy's residents into the sea. Even Montag could not stop them, nor could Annabel Usher, the Academy's head archivist.

They could only save a single student: a natural psychokinetic named Carter Kane, with whose help they erected and maintained the wards keeping the Filth out of their sanctuary's hallowed halls. Montag would not realize until much later that it was already too late; the fog itself was an airborne strain of atomized Filth, and with every breath he and his compatriots took, the roots of the infection already within them shot ever deeper into their meat.

Unwilling to allow this to stand, Montag used his time barricaded within the Academy wisely, taking advantage of its well-equipped labs and impressive stock of relics and ingredients. Through a series of invasive experiments, he managed to eradicate the Filth from his two friends (though they barely survived the procedure). Montag is doubtful he could replicate the results or reacquire the rarest of the ingredients used. Even if he could, this method would only work during the earliest stages of infection. Unfortunately, this no longer applied to him. While he was able to save his surviving colleague and star pupil, he could not reverse the damage he'd done to his own body in the name of occult science.

The three of them were, however, able to contain his Filth infection in a magical stasis, slowing its progress to a crawl and hiding its more monstrous symptoms behind an illusion while they seek a cure. "I've never invested much stock in redemption," Montag says from behind his desk. Though only his two gloved hands move to straighten a photograph, a wet, tentacled chorus sounds from somewhere unseen. "Though having, in my youth, unleashed the Yazidi death curse that killed my mother and eleven innocents, it feels as though this was the least I could do."

Then came the Long Night, the soft reboot of reality, a decade blurred in the communal memory. The apocalyptic problems of Solomon Island seem to have faded. The undead hordes living again. Everyone smiling strained smiles. All back to normal? Yet the shadows are still long and weird on Solomon Island.

Montag's preternatural senses twitched. Something was not right. Through a series of meditations and communal rituals, he, Annabel, and Carter managed to split their perceptions and see the reality of before. The undead fog was gone, but a mental fog gripped the island's

residents, not letting them remember how things happened the first time around.

Montag, Annabel, and Carter may be the only ones who fully remember how things were supposed to happen. Over the years, the three have continued to investigate the fracture in reality. This irresistible puzzle keeps Montag’s mind from falling into madness.

NAME: CARTER KANE

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, USA

“Just so you know, things are about to get kinda gross.”

Those not chosen by Gaia can only access the power of anima through ritual and extensive study. This has been common knowledge for centuries, yet Carter Kane somehow began manifesting psychokinetic powers at birth, a developmental milestone her parents tackled by prohibiting metal furniture and decor in her nursery. By the time she enrolled in school, her abilities were beyond anyone’s control, even her own. In the race to court her allegiance, the Illuminati beat the others to the punch. They offered her parents the opportunity to have their daughter educated at one of the nation’s oldest and most prestigious institutions—free of charge, of course. Thus, Carter became the Innsmouth Academy’s youngest student. At the age of twelve, she was virtually consigned to the Illuminati in exchange for more appropriate educational opportunities among those who would know how to make the most of her potential.

But her friendships outside the classroom were what saved her. She’d taken a shine to a boy named Danny Dufresne, who boasted no arcane abilities despite his leadership position in the local children’s club: the League of Monster Slayers. They bonded over their mutual involvement with the paranormal, and when Danny began insisting something terrible was coming with the fog, Carter alone listened. Doing so saved her life, in addition to the efforts of her headmaster, Hayden Montag, and the school’s head archivist, Annabel Usher, with whom she sheltered inside the Innsmouth Academy’s formidable walls.



These days, Carter works for the Illuminati, a fate both she and Annabel once did everything in their power to avoid. In the end, however, it was Carter’s choice. She knew if she wanted to repay Hayden Montag for his sacrifices to preserve her life, she would have to commit to a faction that could supply her with the appropriate resources while having no qualms about her methods. Her Illuminati superiors also allow her frequent side trips to Solomon Island. They keep an eye on Agent Kane, intrigued at what she and her two friends dig up regarding the Long Night.

Recently, Carter traveled to Boston to combat the draug infestation there, and to gather real-time data on how airborne Filth spreads and what can be done to stop it. What she saw shocked Carter with painful bursts of déjà vu. The events in Boston are the same as those on Solomon Island, ripped from the past and shuffled back into time and space by whatever caused the Long Night. Excited by this new lead, Carter is currently investigating the events in Boston with renewed vigor.

NAME: ANNABEL USHER

RANK: HEAD ARCHIVIST

REGION: KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"Flick through the Guinness Book of Disasters, and you'll have a hard time finding something we didn't start."

Sometimes becoming affiliated with a secret society is a matter of lineage. This was meant to be the case for Annabel Usher, whose Scottish roots ran deep with the Templars. But familiarity sometimes breeds contempt, and having grown up surrounded by all the holier-than-thou scheming and color-coded plots such associations tend to breed, Annabel chose another path, one not governed by shades of red, blue, or green.

Her skillset earned her a place at the Innsmouth Academy, where she preferred to believe she worked on behalf of the students rather than the Illuminati agents who signed her paychecks. Here, she managed the school's storied records and occult inventory, cataloging the place and purpose of each item, enrollee, and faculty member. Some she found difficult to classify, particularly Hayden Montag, with whom she forged an unlikely friendship. Others she recognized all too well, as with Carter Kane, whose struggle to remain autonomous from within the belly of the great Blue Beast she deeply empathized with. It is for this reason that Annabel sought to protect her ward, not just from the Filth and other horrors lurking outside the Academy's walls but from the factions desperate to snatch the girl up. Either way, she worried that Carter would be consumed.

Ultimately, she could not prevent the girl from having to choose a side, especially not after Hayden Montag's heroic—and unexpected—sacrifice to preserve their lives. She and Carter have done all they can to delay the inevitable, but that is not enough, and while Carter searches for answers in the Illuminati's halls, Annabel remains at the Academy to care for the ailing headmaster. Using her connections with the Templars and other esoteric orders, she leans hard into her research, determined not to lose either of her hard-won friends. In addition, Annabel investigates the Long Night and the Mandela

Effect that seemingly envelops the world. She keeps in frequent contact with Carter, recording the events currently happening in Boston that should have happened on Solomon Island a decade ago.

SOLOMON ISLAND

NAME: HELEN BANNERMAN

RANK: TOWN MANAGER

REGION: KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"I reckon I must be all thumbs when it comes to secret handshakes."

Not all heroes wear capes or surge with anima-imbued superpowers. Helen Bannerman is the very popular town manager of Kingsmouth. No one quite remembers when she took office, but it was by a landslide. Wasn't it? Helen was once Kingsmouth's levelheaded sheriff, and she led the town through a dangerous disaster. No one quite remembers what it was. When they try to remember, they frown or even cry, but their power to focus on the subject is weak, and soon they're smiling again.

At night, Helen dreams of being Sheriff Bannerman again. She dreams of an evil fog, of an undead apocalypse, of leading the resistance of human survivors. In her dreams, Helen shines like a lighthouse in the dark days, guiding desperate folk through the doom that encroaches upon the island from all sides. In the morning, the memories slip away like sand through a clenched fist.

What Helen lacks in supernatural knowledge, she makes up for with pragmatism. The way she sees it, it's her job to have the answers, even if she doesn't. She does the best she can with what she's got.

Sure, the island's weird, but it was always weird, always a place where legend and lore came home to roost. Sure, people sometimes get confused with phantom memories, but they're right as rain in no time, and smiling. It's important that they smile. Helen does her best to keep her town moving toward the future, always looking forward, never behind. It's important to keep everyone looking forward.

NAME:
ANDY GARDENER

RANK:
SHERIFF

REGION:
KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"What town doesn't have a little trouble with cultists?"

Andy always dreamed of being a police officer, and now he's the sheriff! Years ago, he was a deputy, the right-hand man of Sheriff Bannerman. He helped her during some kind of emergency, but exactly when or what that was always slips his mind. It's on the tip of his tongue ... then it's gone, and duty calls. But something definitely happened, something that compounded the psychological damage caused by his father. Andy has always been a little different, but he's taken to being aggressively cheerful to mask his pain and confusion.

These days, Solomon Island is as close to normal as it ever gets. Though no longer a deputy, Andy still walks the beat, strolling the streets to make sure he still knows everyone in town. Andy might not be the brightest bulb, but he's warm enough and genuinely wants to protect the people of Kingsmouth. Especially now that he knows there's worse things out there than fathers who drown kittens.

Years ago, during that emergency—what was it!—Andy saved a drifter and biker named Sandy “Moose” Jansen, though Andy can no longer remember what he saved him from. A friendship eventually grew into inseparableness. They were married sometime later at the sheriff’s station and celebrated with a reception at the docks, surrounded by friends and family in Kingsmouth. Neither of them can remember the anniversary. Neither seems to mind.

Things are getting hard, lately. The confusion and imposter syndrome grow. Is Andy really meant to be sheriff? The job is easy—too easy. Problems work themselves out. Missing people show up. Everyone smiles. Andy can't explain it, but some of his friends and fellow townsfolk shouldn't be there. He shakes a hand, and it's cold, clammy, and putrid. Just for a second, some of these people are rotting cadavers. Then they're warm and living and smiling again. Stranger still, some of the locals are having memory troubles and haunting insights into some trouble brewing in Boston. Andy tried to bring all this up to Helen

Bannerman, but something he said struck her wrong. It's the only time she ever snapped at Andy. He doesn't know who to turn to.

NAME:
MADAME ROGÊT

RANK:
PSYCHIC

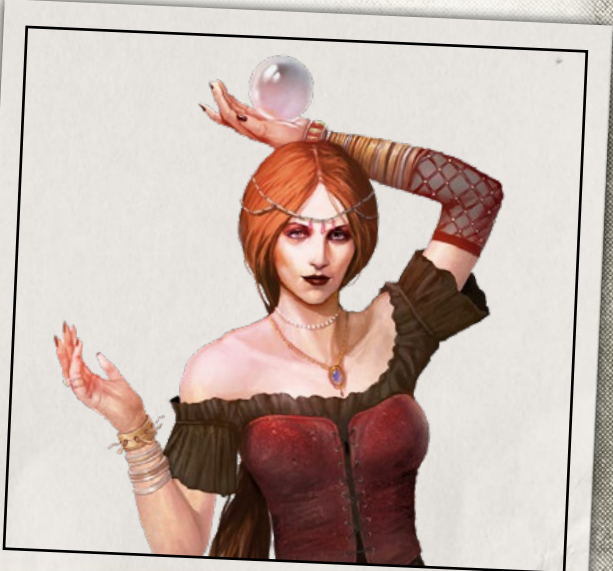
REGION:
KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"More often than not, my most vocal detractors have been among my most frequent visitors."

Frequently found at her shop, Raven's Knock, Madame Rogêt is a self-professed psychic and purveyor of occult items. When she first put out her shingle, all her readings were fake, but something happened maybe a decade ago, some traumatic event the town can't seem to fully remember. Whatever it was, it unlocked genuine precognition in Madame Rogêt.

The psychic's powers are erratic, and lately they give her terrible visions of eldritch horrors attacking the town. More often than not, she gives clients made-up fortunes. Like her readings, most of the trinkets in her shop have no true power, but someone who really knows what they're looking for may find a few useful items.

Madame Rogêt is a favorite subject for the gossips of Kingsmouth, being both a (relative) newcomer and a divorcée. Rumors have linked her to affairs with married men (including the former mayor) as well as hinting she may be involved in prostitution. Madame Rogêt prefers not to dignify those rumors with comment.



NAME: DANNY DUFRESNE

RANK: SHOP OWNER

REGION: KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"I'm thinking ancient blood curse. It's always a curse."

Danny was a normal American teenager before the supernatural fog rolled in a decade ago. He helped his father with the family business, loved video games, and hung out with the kids his age: even the strange ones from Innsmouth Academy. Danny became the leader of the local (and secret) children's club, the League of Monster Slayers, through sheer enthusiasm for monster lore. When the dead started rising, Danny was almost a little excited. Years of zombie comics, games, and movies primed him to fight the undead. Reality crashed in, people died, but Danny survived.

Of course, like the rest of the town, Danny has trouble remembering the particulars of all that ...

Danny's father has been doing poorly the last few years, so Danny's had to take over running Dufresne & Son Marine Supplies to keep the business open and support his parents, leaving little time for childish monster hunts. Danny feels abandoned now that Carter is off working for the Illuminati, and he has become a bitter young man.

When he's not manning the shop, Danny spends hours searching the internet for more information on the Secret World, particularly regarding the Illuminati. He's taken over Tyler Freeborn's blog and has vastly expanded on it. As they did with Tyler, the Dragon makes a point to keep the blog going, over the objections of others such as the Illuminati and the Orochi Group.

Weirdly, some of the blog entries from 2012 are missing ... or maybe they're there, but the words slip out of Danny's mind the minute he stops reading them. He wishes Carter would visit and help him get to the bottom of all this.

NAME: TYLER FREEBORN

RANK: BLOGGER

REGION: KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"For those who don't believe me. For those who laugh at me ... I have the evidence."

Tyler Freeborn was a descendant of the Wabanaki whose family had lived on Solomon Island for generations. He ran a blog called *Monsters of Maine*, describing cryptids and other creatures he believed lived in the area. Some were based on family or tribal legends, and some he claimed to have witnessed himself. Before the fog, Tyler had also begun investigating the Orochi Research Base in Blue Mountain. Through his blog, Tyler tried to warn the town of impending danger, but no one took him seriously.

Carter and Danny Dufresne followed the blog, but never had a chance to meet up with Tyler himself. During the fog, Tyler had increasingly disturbing dreams and was sure there was more going on than the military or anyone in charge was letting on. He began recording his investigation, which eventually led him to suspect the fog was supernatural in nature. He willingly walked into the fog to test his theories and unfortunately died in the process. The Orochi Group later recovered his body and has been running tests on it to study the effects of the fog.

However, this was all before the Long Night. The folk of Solomon Island know Tyler mysteriously vanished, but no one quite recalls how. Whether or not the Orochi Group retained his body after the reality reboot remains a mystery.



NAME:	RED
RANK:	SHOP OWNER
REGION:	KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"Responsibility sure is a sack of rocks, even in better times."

Red was born into the Wabanaki tribe, but he became estranged from them over the treatment of his niece, Ami. Red's brother was the tribal medicine man and after he was murdered, Ami inherited his powers. The tribe cast her out so Red took her in and is very protective of her. Red runs a bait and tackle shop in the southern part of Soloman Island and mostly keeps to himself.

Being well versed in his tribe's legends, Red was not surprised when the fog rolled in and has a fatalistic attitude about the Secret World. His only real concern is protecting his niece and her daughter. Though he doesn't have any powers, he knows how to construct wards for a degree of protection.

Then came the Long Night and the great forgetting. Red retains some memories of the evil fog, but he does not fully trust those memories and keeps them to himself for now. In the years since, Ami has started reconciling with the tribe, but Red isn't feeling very forgiving. While Ami always has a place with him, he keeps his distance from the rest of the Wabanaki.

NAME:	AMI DEXTER
RANK:	SHAMAN
REGION:	KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"You can't run away from who you are."

Amitola Dexter, better known as Ami, is a Wabanaki and daughter of the previous tribal medicine man. Her mother died when she was a child, and her father was murdered by the foreman at the Blue Ridge Mine. After her father's death, the tribe turned their back on her and she went to live with her uncle. Even after she married and had a child of her own, her Uncle Red's place was still home. Ami and her husband Bill were estranged for several years, but she still made sure to include him in their daughter Kyra's life.

Bill vanished mysteriously a decade ago. Sometimes Ami dreams of fog and death striking

the town a few days after Bill's disappearance. She always awakens from such dreams drenched in sweat.

Ami uses her powers to help defend the island from monsters, particularly the ak'ab that have been infesting several caves. For a long time, she felt weighed down by tradition and responsibility, but surviving the fog left her with a new appreciation for what she had been given (even if she no longer remembers the fog itself). She's spent much of the time since working to reunite the Wabanaki tribe, with some success. Though she has not been made "official" as a medicine woman, many still turn to her for help with spiritual matters. Ami has been carefully training her daughter so Kyra feels more prepared when Ami passes to take on the power for their tribe.

NAME:	SANDY "MOOSE" JANSEN
RANK:	DEPUTY
REGION:	KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"I'd go to the ends of the world and back for Andy."

Though you'd never know it to look at him now, Sandy was once a corporate type, right down to the cubicle and jockeying for a promotion. When he started getting sick, he realized he'd been trapped in a dead end and needed a change. He gave up his job and apartment for an old motorcycle and started cruising the country. Sandy spent over two decades crisscrossing the United States before winding up in Kingsmouth. Along the way, he saw more than enough to convince him that there were things that go bump in the night, and a whole lot more going on in the world than most people knew about. Sandy claims that all three major factions of the Secret World have tried to recruit him over the years, but he isn't the type to take sides. Still, he's more than willing to fight evil, particularly with his self-taught explosives skills.

When the fog crept over Solomon Island, Sandy was almost lured in, but he was saved by Deputy Andy. In gratitude, Sandy has devoted his life to helping Andy, whether he wants it or not. Though his memories of the fog were swallowed by the Long Night, his devotion and love for Andy remain.

Once Andy Gardner took over as sheriff, Sandy was first in line to replace him as deputy. Since no one else was clamoring to be a deputy on an island full of rumored weirdness, he got the job.

Sandy can certainly be ...unorthodox in applying the law, but he does his best to maintain law and order and will always back up Andy in a heartbeat.

It wasn't long after Sandy arrived in Kingsmouth and started helping Andy and then-sheriff Helen that he began developing feelings for the dedicated lawman. Andy was hesitant at first. However, after a few late-night picnics and Sandy's determination, Andy couldn't keep pretending he felt nothing in return. Helen Bannerman officiated their wedding at the sheriff's office and later held a reception near the docks.



NAME: JACK BOONE

RANK: INDEPENDENT

REGION: KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"Most myths are ninety-nine percent warning."

The original cowboy, Jack has been part of the Secret World for a *long* time. In fact, he and his partner John Wolf are part of a mysterious cabal of immortals called the Four and Sixty. The two traveled the world to fight against the darkness threatening it. They showed up at Solomon Island even before the fog arrived, because they sensed something coming. When all hell broke loose, Jack set up camp near the Agartha to protect it from the ravaging undead, as well as to study them. Jack figures the more you know about your enemy, the closer you are to getting rid of them for good.

Jack and John stuck around Solomon Island even through the Long Night. Though their recollections of the fog have become hazy, something in their preternatural natures has allowed them to maintain some knowledge of the shifting reality. They remain to study the phenomenon. They've settled into a small apartment in Kingsmouth proper (can't live in a tent in the woods forever), and they take odd jobs to support themselves. Jack makes frequent trips back to the Agarthan portal to keep an eye on who's coming and going by it and ensure nothing evil travels back to the World Tree.

NAME:	JOHN WOLF
RANK:	INDEPENDENT
REGION:	KINGSMOUTH, MAINE, USA

"As long as there's darkness, we will carry the torch."

Where Jack Boone is, there also is John Wolf. The two traveled together in their battle against the darkness for longer than a mortal lifetime but have started to put down roots in Kingsmouth. John appears to be Native American, but he is not a member of the local Wabanaki tribe. Where Jack is very practical, John has a much more philosophical bent. John is often known to quote Zen Buddhist monks from various nations over nearly a dozen centuries. An amateur magician, John says it took him nearly thirty years to learn a basic spell, but he's spent the last few years increasing his skills.

John claims to have once visited a mystical place called Miracle, but has not been able to find it again. He believes he will someday return, but only 'when Miracle wants him back.' In the meantime, John continues to fight evil by Jack's side, even if they don't always agree on the specifics.

NAME:	MARIANNE CHEN
RANK:	CDC SPECIALIST
REGION:	ATLANTA

"Boy, I'd love to be a Bee right now and ... buzz-buzz away."

Solomon Island became Marianne Chen's personal hell. Marianne was part of a team of CDC scientists sent to the island to investigate a possible outbreak. What they thought was a simple illness proved so much worse, and Marianne was the only survivor of the team's encounter with the Filth. Marianne was frustrated by the lack of information the government gave them before sending them to investigate, but she views the private sector in general, and the Orochi Group in particular, with even more suspicion.

Then came the reality reboot and the Long Night ... Now Marianne is back in Atlanta. She doesn't quite remember what happened on Solomon Island ten years ago, but it led her to a big promotion. Marianne had already been somewhat aware of the Bees, but her experiences on the island led to an obsession. She is now head of a secret division in the government dedicated to studying Bees and attempting to replicate their powers in other humans.



EGYPT

NAME: AMIR

RANK: PYROTIC SULTAN

REGION: CITY OF THE SUN GOD

"Spare me the jabbering reproach of a talking monkey."

Most folks you meet in the Secret World are still human, even if they've been changed by anima or other forces. Amir is an exception. He is a jinn—an immortal spirit of elemental fire, exiled to our world from his home in the Hell Dimensions. Like his fellow jinn, Amir has a burning hatred for humanity, but unlike others of his kind, he does not wish to kill them all. He settles for merely insulting and belittling people.

Amir has a deep reverence for Gaia and as such can sometimes be persuaded to aid Bees in their fight against the Filth. He may even fight against other jinn to help Gaia, particularly if the other spirits have been corrupted by the Filth. Amir currently resides in Egypt; he likes the heat of the desert.

NAME: ABDEL DAOUD

RANK: CULT LEADER

REGION: AL-MERAYAH

"A dead bee creates no honey."

Abdel Daoud was a resident of the small desert town of al-Merayah. He appeared to be a simple merchant, managing his date farms and relaxing at the local café. The breaking open of the Black Pyramid gave way to the truth: Daoud was a member of the Cult of Aten, the secrets of which were passed down by his family for centuries. He planned to use captured Bees to further the cult's goals. Abdel somehow obtained the power to temporarily negate a Bee's abilities, but he was stopped before he could capture one to enact his plan. Daoud even appointed himself leader of the cult before a team of Bees allegedly killed him on a train carrying another Filth bomb. However, a body was never recovered, so it's impossible to say if Abdel Daoud is truly gone.

NAME: BERIHUN

RANK: SMUGGLER

REGION: UNKNOWN

"There are forces out there older than the Kingdom, older than the sun, with power unwitnessed by the likes of you."

Little is known about Berihun, including even his full name. Although he clearly has contacts around the world for buying and selling goods (legal and otherwise), the "Suited Man," as he's often called, remains a mystery. He has a particular interest in obtaining magical artifacts and will go to any lengths necessary to secure them.

No known faction will claim him as one of their own, but he seems to know them all. His dealings with the Cult of Aten suggest he is perfectly fine with waking the Dreamers, and he has certainly wielded power alongside the group even though he was not technically a member. Berihun disappeared after the resurrected Akhenaten's apparent death, but he is almost certainly still out there, serving his unknown masters.

NAME: AKHENATEN

RANK: BLACK PHARAOH

REGION: THE BLACK PYRAMID

"..."

Amenhotep IV became Pharaoh of Egypt at a young age, promising to be a just and pious monarch. That changed when one of the Dreamers whispered to him in his sleep, presenting itself as a new sun god: Aten. The ruler was completely taken in by the lie and made sweeping changes across the kingdom: the worship of all previous deities was banned, and only Aten could be revered. The Pharaoh even changed his name to Akhenaten and began grand construction projects devoted to his lord. Dissension was punishable by long imprisonment or even death, and slavery and cruelty flourished under Akhenaten's rule.

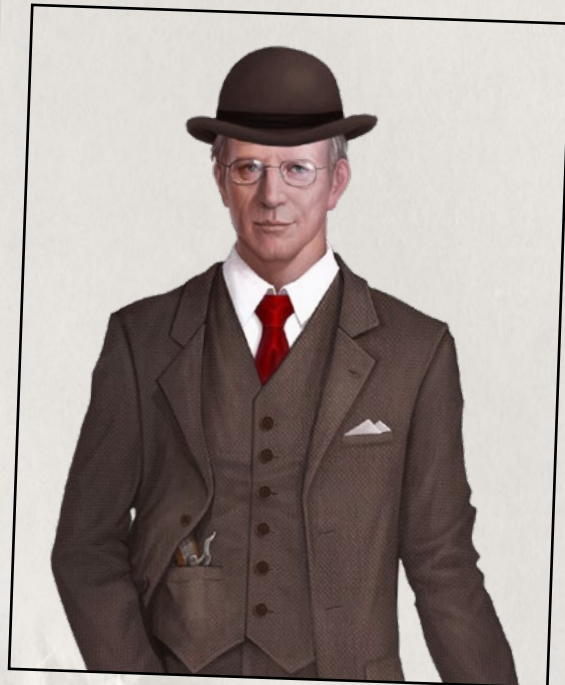
The end began when Akhenaten undertook a pilgrimage into the desert at his master's bidding. Many slaves perished from digging, but eventually they uncovered a source of Filth.

Cultists were bathed in the vile substance, and Akhenaten's priests made blasphemous mummies. Akhenaten's wife, Nefertiti, pleaded for the madness to stop, only for the Pharaoh to murder her in cold blood. Tutankhamen, his son, swore to rid the world of his father's madness and called on Agarthā—and the Bees—for help.

With the help of the anima-infused Bees and many fed-up Egyptians who called themselves the Marya (young warriors), Tutankhamen led a revolt against his father. Akhenaten was busy constructing his new City of the Sun God in the isolated desert, though only the Black Pyramid was ever finished. The Marya clawed the kingdom back from the Cult of Aten and eventually slew Akhenaten in battle. Seven mystical statues called Sentinels were created to magically hide the valley from outsiders and prevent Aten from resurrecting Akhenaten.

Despite the Marya's efforts to wipe every trace of the Cult of Aten from existence, a few followers survived and carried on the traditions secretly for centuries. When an earthquake in 2012 revealed a long-hidden entrance to the City of the Sun God, it attracted the attention of both locals and outsiders. The Orochi Group wasted no time investigating and began plundering artifacts, including one of the Songs of the Sentinels that was keeping Akhenaten in his eternal slumber. The Black Pharaoh awakened and began reaching his mind out to his hidden followers, who quickly worked to grow the cult once again. Abdel Daoud amassed an army of new cultists, many of them twisted by exposure to the Filth. A group of Bees, sent to investigate the unrest in the area, uncovered the cult and its plans to raise Akhenaten. Though the cultist's army was massive, the Bees eventually prevailed with help from the Marya and the Orochi survivors. They interrupted the ritual before Akhenaten regained his full power, and they killed him again—this time hopefully for good.

However, even if Akhenaten has been permanently destroyed, the danger has not passed. Members of the cult still survive, and the Filth that corrupted them still bubbles under the desert. The body of Abdel Daoud was never found, and it's possible the cultists have secreted it away to try to create a new Black Pharaoh.



NAME: MONTGOMERY "MONTY" DE LA ROCHE

RANK: PROFESSOR OF ARCHAEOLOGY

REGION: THE SCORCHED DESERT

"I'm a holdover from the past, when the Secret World stayed politely secret."

Montgomery "Monty" de la Roche is a professor of archaeology at Lazarus College, part of Oxford University. A proper British gentleman, he has long been obsessed with all things Egyptian and is knowledgeable about occult matters. Monty is quite familiar with the Secret World, but he does not care much about it as long as it does not interfere with his research. He has taken Arun Singh under his wing, professionally and personally, and the two are near inseparable (despite periodic squabbles about differing interpretations of apocalyptic texts).

After surviving the onslaught of the Cult of Aten, Monty briefly returned to Oxford to share their updated findings. He received a chilly reception from his fellow scholars, who were unwilling to hear radical theories despite the evidence. He returned to Egypt, where he continues to dig in the desert and pester the local mummy population with questions.

NAME: ARUN SINGH

RANK: GRADUATE STUDENT

REGION: CENTRAL AMERICA

"The only way to experience occult history is to go out there and get stuck into it, don't you agree?"

Arun Singh is a young Turkish man who was studying archaeology as a graduate student under Montgomery de la Roche. Arun is much more open to using modern technology than his mentor and tends to be more "hands-on" as well. These differences in technique and opinion led to periodic squabbling between the men.

One of the biggest points of contention was Arun's belief in what he calls "The Big Terrible Picture." He theorizes that history is cyclical, and all of us are unconsciously guided by hidden memories of previous Ages. This leads to patterns repeating throughout time that will eventually cause an apocalypse to wipe the earth clean and start over.

Arun believes that what happened in Egypt was the first of several signs that another apocalypse is imminent. When Monty refused to agree, the two parted ways. Arun left for Central America to further study Mayan ruins, as he believes that the next sign will occur there.



TRANSYLVANIA

NAME: CUCUVEA

RANK: THE OWL

REGION: HARBABUREȘTI, ROMANIA

"Your Secret World is my regular world. It's always been like that here."

Cucuvea is an immortal who lives in an enormous oak tree near the village of Harbaburești. She is ancient, and some believe she actually hails from a prior Age. Cucuvea hints that she may be Lilith's sister, and she spent a long time searching for her to stop her evil. She settled in this area after finding a cult that Lilith had granted immortality; Cucuvea sealed them away to prevent them from harming others. Besides keeping the cultist trapped, Cucuvea is a gifted healer who uses her powers to help and protect the local villagers.

Her age is catching up to her, and Cucuvea's memory is not what it once was. She rarely likes to leave her tree, except when she shapeshifts into the form of a white owl. Though she can no longer fight herself, she is happy to help those who do still battle the Filth, and Lilith in particular.

NAME: MARA

RANK: VAMPIRE QUEEN

REGION: HARBABUREȘTI, ROMANIA

"The red nights are coming."

Mara is a vampire who was once the wife of Vlad Dracula. However, she fell under Lilith's evil influence and seduced their friend Callisto instead, breaking Dracula's heart. Lilith made her a vampire and set her loose upon Transylvania. Sometime later, Mara allied herself with the Red Hand to attempt to create vampire-human hybrids for use as soldiers. Though the program ultimately failed, Mara kept some hybrids for herself and used them to perform such atrocities in Romania that she earned the name "The Beast of Bucharest."

In 2012, Mara unleashed her vampire army on Transylvania, attempting to conquer it as a vampire queen, most likely at Lilith's bidding.



She took over the Orochi camp in the Carpathian Fangs and was continuing their research when a Bee and her former lover Callisto tracked her down. The two were able to summon the spirit of Vlad Dracula, who removed Mara's vampirism, turning her human again, before killing her for her crimes.

NAME: VLAD DRACULA

RANK: PRINCE OF WALLACHIA

REGION: HARBABUREȘTI, ROMANIA

"Love never dies."

Vlad Dracula was the noble prince of Wallachia (present-day Romania). A feared warrior and monster hunter, he founded the Drăculești to help him subdue supernatural threats to humanity. The long campaigns away from his castle gave Lilith the chance to seduce his wife, Mara, and turn her against Vlad. Though Mara had become a vampire, Vlad could not bring himself to kill her and banished her instead. He knew someday she would return, so he entrusted the Drăculești with the prophecy of the Eagle, the Owl, and the Dragon and sealed away part of his essence in a crypt.

When Mara did return, the prophecy was fulfilled and Vlad Dracula appeared before her. He defeated Mara and made her human once again, only to do what he could not before and stab her to death. The two died in each other's arms, reunited after centuries.



NAME: CALLISTO

RANK: VAMPIRE

REGION: HARBABUREȘTI, ROMANIA

"That is why I sealed myself away from the world. I could not face my shame"

Born Allesandro Farussi, Callisto was an Italian poet living at the court of Vlad Dracula and his wife, Mara. Callisto allowed Mara to seduce him, and she made him a vampire. The two wreaked havoc on Transylvania for a time, until Dracula's forces managed to defeat Mara. Callisto was ashamed of what he had become, and Dracula confided in him a plan to stop Mara for good if she ever returned. While he waited for that day, Callisto exiled himself to an underground cave to protect humanity.

Callisto is a melodramatic type who regrets his nature and will fight against other vampires when able. When Mara returned to Transylvania, he allied with a Bee to play the part Vlad Dracula had arranged centuries ago. Mara was returned to human form, which allowed her to be killed. Once the deed was done, Callisto returned to his cave. Though he laments his existence, he cannot bring himself to end it.

NAME: OCTAVIAN

RANK: THE EAGLE

REGION: HARBABUREȘTI, ROMANIA

"The irony of immortality. I've been seventy years old for near on two millennia, with every ache and pain that comes with it."

Another immortal living in the Transylvanian woods, Octavian is a gruff and bitter man. Legends suggest he's lived since at least the time of the Roman Empire. He arrived in the area as a leader of the Sol Glorificus cult, but when he saw the true nature of the Filth, he turned on the cultists and killed them. Centuries later, he was an ally to Vlad Dracula, who entrusted him with a powerful artifact to use if Mara returned.

The intervening years were hard on Octavian, who was already an old man when he became immortal, and he grew very world weary. For a long time he kept to his homestead, wanting only to be left alone. However, a local young woman named Emilia helped him regain a measure of hope and convinced him the world was worth saving. With Emilia's encouragement, he released the artifact in his possession to the Bee who was chasing Mara to bring about her downfall. Despite the disapproval of her father, Emilia and Octavian have only grown closer, and he has started to engage more with the world again.

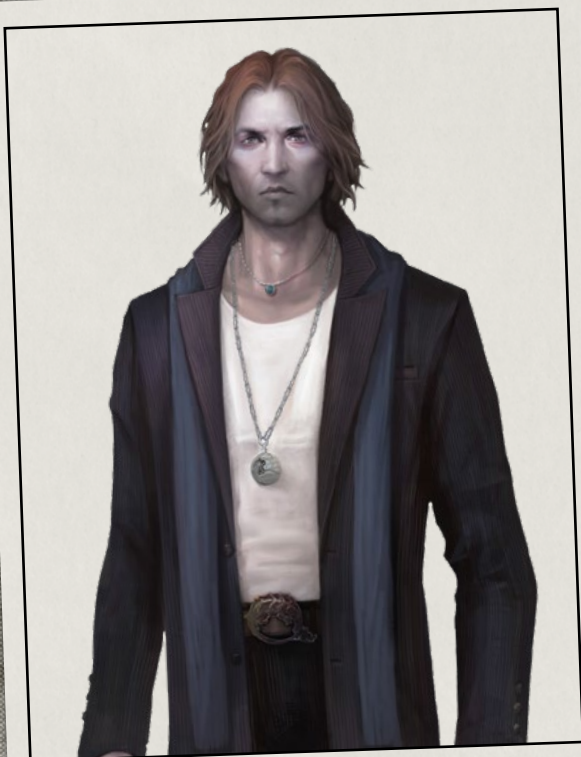
NAME: MOSUL

RANK: UNKNOWN

REGION: HARBABUREȘTI, ROMANIA

"I tell you there is power, much power, in stories and stones."

Mosul is an old man who can frequently be found fishing off a bridge in the Shadowy Forest region of Transylvania. The locals regard him as merely a clever storyteller and will pay him a few coins for one of his tales. Mosul claims he is an immortal, and some of his stories suggest he has lived through two Ages of history. He can be a source of information on the past, at least if listeners can decipher his cryptic telling.



KAIDAN

NAME: JUNG

RANK: SUBJECT 28

REGION: KAIDAN, TOKYO, JAPAN

"The world is not secret to me. All of your minds scream so loudly."

Jung is one of the youngest Secret Worlders you're likely to ever meet. Almost from birth, he exhibited tremendous psychic powers (as well as an oversized cranium) and soon attracted the attention of the Orochi Group. The corporation labeled him Subject 28 and placed him in Happy Smiles Kindergarten, one of their schools secretly designed to study and develop supernatural talents. However, after the Kaidan bombing, Orochi abandoned the school and Jung made it his home. Despite being not even five years old at the time, he was powerful enough to keep monsters at bay.

Jung is far more intelligent than his age suggests and is capable of reading minds, even controlling them if he so chooses. As he aged, Jung felt more need for human contact and began venturing out from the playground more frequently. The aftermath of the bombing limited his powers to the immediate area, so he began testing those boundaries. Now a teenager, Jung has become even more self-conscious about his enlarged head and has taken to finding ways to disguise it—particularly when talking to girls.

NAME: HARUMI NAKAHARA

RANK: HACKER—
NEUROMANCERQUEEN99

REGION: KAIDAN, TOKYO, JAPAN

"Bingo! Bingo! Bingo! The clock says you're mad! Drink Bingo! Bingo! It explodes the sad! Bingo! Bingo! Bingo!!!"

Harumi was a teenage hacker and gamer, content to make digital mischief and go on raids with her online friends, until the Filth bomb went off. She lost both her parents and many of her friends in the aftermath, but she was determined to survive and guard her traumatized older

brother, Yuichi. With that in mind, she booby-trapped the hell out of their apartment building and tapped into the Tokyo surveillance network. Fueled by an upbeat attitude and an addiction to Bingo Cola, Harumi was even able to hack into Orochi-owned mechs to fight back against the Filth.

Eventually, Harumi realized she and her brother couldn't stay in their parents' ruined apartment building forever and used her hacking skills to get them passage out of the quarantine zone. Using funds she "liberated" from an Orochi shell company, she bought another small apartment for her and her brother to share near the Kaidan zone. She supports the two of them with various hacking jobs, and the Council of Venice has even approached her about using her skills to help them keep the various council members in check.

NAME: YUICHI

RANK: HIKIKOMORI

REGION: KAIDAN, TOKYO, JAPAN

"Word viruses, music pollution, rogue memes, yellow noise, laughing bacteria—always getting in. Always!"

Before the Tokyo bombing, Yuichi was a shy but otherwise normal young man. He started to come out of his shell after meeting a group of new friends and even found a girlfriend among them. Unfortunately, they were actually members of the Fear Nothing Foundation who were grooming him to become a suicide bomber. FNF intended for Yuichi to deliver the Filth bomb on the subway, but he couldn't go through with it. The experience left him a paranoid and neurotic mess, barely able to hold a conversation or care for himself. His little sister, Harumi, became his de facto guardian after their parents were killed in the bombing, and she is fiercely protective of him.

The passing of time and online therapy (excruciatingly vetted by Harumi) have left Yuichi slightly more able to cope with life. However, he very rarely leaves their apartment and still frequently wears his helmet and mask for protection. Though the Rabbit Killer has not been seen in Tokyo for years, Yuichi worries he will one day end up being her target again.

NAME: JAKE HAMA

RANK: PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

REGION: KAIKAN, TOKYO, JAPAN

"People used to look at me and see a loser, but now they see a detective, a man who'll do just about anything to find out the truth. Or the near-truth. Or a lie that they are willing to pay for. Whatever. As long as I get paid."

The self-proclaimed "Love Hotel Detective" had made a career of staking out local love hotels to catch clients' spouses committing infidelity and selling the proof to the highest bidder. That is how he met Masao Tanaka, who hired him to find his missing daughter Naonomi in the aftermath of the Tokyo bombing. In reality, Naonomi Tanaka was a member of the Fear Nothing Foundation who had gone into hiding after finding out the Rabbit Killer was after her. Despite his less-than-stellar detective skills, Jake did uncover evidence of the Rabbit Killer's involvement. However, his alcohol-induced plan was to dress in a giant rabbit suit himself to draw out the killer, who would lead him to Naonomi.

The plan failed miserably and Naonomi was assassinated by the Rabbit Killer. Afterward, Jake dove even deeper into the bottle and has hardly come up for air since. Masao Tanaka was furious that Jake allowed his daughter to die, but rather than kill him, he now treats Jake as

practically an indentured servant, forcing him to work off the "debt" created by Naonomi's death. As a high-ranking government official in charge of the Kaidan quarantine, Tanaka has many dirty and dangerous jobs for Jake to perform.

NAME: UTA BLOODY VALENTINE

RANK: ASSASSIN

REGION: UNKNOWN

Uta never speaks

Also known as "The Rabbit Killer" or "The White Rabbit," Uta is an assassin working for Lilith. Uta showed supernatural powers from a young age but also manifested three separate personalities (allegedly from consuming two siblings in the womb). This caused her parents to abandon her in an asylum, where Lilith later groomed her. Each personality served as a member of one of the three secret societies at some point in her past, but she abandoned all of them to work freelance. After the Filth bomb explosion, it seems Lilith had Uta track down and kill anyone with knowledge of the bombing plans.

In the years since the Tokyo bombing, rumors of a killer wearing a rabbit mask and schoolgirl outfit have been reported around the world, but her current employer is unknown, and no pattern has emerged in the targets.



CHAPTER SEVEN: RUNNING THE GAME

This chapter offers guidelines, suggestions, and rules for running adventures in the Secret World. These pages are intended for Game Masters, as many of the overarching plots and themes that players may investigate are discussed here at length. We're not saying that hexes and curses will befall players who read this section. However, it may take away some of the magic and wonder of anticipating what might happen in future sessions.

To the Game Master: by now you know that calling it "The Secret World" is a misnomer. The true state of reality is one rife with magic, filled with dark entities plotting to manipulate humankind, and nightmarish creatures waiting to drag the unsuspecting off into the bowels of chthonic domains. These things have always been here, even before the advent of humanity. This is why our legends and folklore are filled with stories about unique heroes standing up to wretched monsters and diabolic entities. The only thing different is that now your player characters are aware of all this.

The Secret World is perpetually poised on the edge of falling into the maw of screaming madness and oblivion. Forces that have kept our world safe, whether they be ancient orders or machines created by almost-forgotten entities, are starting to falter, showing numerous cracks from the constant assault. Long-slumbering ancient horrors are beginning to stir. Should they fully awaken, everything we know will end. Many secret cults are rising to grasp forgotten knowledge and ancient powers for themselves.

Even the Age itself is found lacking. Anima, the energy of magic, creation, and life, is fading, growing thin when it is needed the most. This means the forces that defend our world find themselves running out of proverbial ammunition. Entities that were content with what they had are now scavenging anima from new feeding grounds, and otherworldly, avarice-filled eyes find that the wards that kept them exiled into the outer night are weakening. In short, all manner of rough beasts are about to come,

not slouching but charging, howling madly, into whatever version of Bedlam you wish to imagine.

This is the world you've stepped into as a Game Master. At first glance it may seem overwhelming, but don't fear. While there is a large amount of lore to grasp and numerous machinations endlessly churning within the game setting, what makes the Secret World unique breaks down into a few core concepts:

- **This is Heroic Horror**
- **Recognize that Everything Is True**
- **The Past Echoes into the Present**
- **Reveal the Mundane as Secretly Fantastic**
- **Realize that an Age Is Ending**

So, grab your favorite drink and your most potent protection wards. We will now delve into the guts of what makes the Secret World tick. Even if that ticking is the minute-by-minute countdown of a doomsday clock.

HEROIC HORROR

The Secret World occupies a unique space. Primarily it is a horror game, concerning itself with monsters and inhuman entities stalking through modern-day cities as well as inciting a feeling of dread and uncertainty throughout the story. At the same time, the heroes of this game are hardly the clueless victims common to most horror movies and literature. They have been granted fantastic powers, and they have access to libraries of information on what they might face. The result is something more akin to an action movie, where the heroes know some of what they have to confront, and with their knowledge and spells, they have at least an even chance of prevailing. This blend of genres is called Heroic Horror.

The horror genre is wildly popular, fueling numerous books, movies, and TV shows annually. It also covers a wide range of subgenres, from the screaming teens of slasher

films to the incomprehensible and alien entities that comprise cosmic horror. At its core, horror boils down to three key concepts: **Fear of the Other, Dread, and Uncertainty.**

Fear of the Other, in regard to horror, is the unease created by something abnormal intruding upon the mundane. The odd family that lives in the secluded house on the edge of town, the child that seems to be staring through you, the curiosity shop that displays a shrunken head on its checkout counter—all are examples of **Fear of the Other** being used to set tone and mood. Any of those examples could be harmless, but there is something about them that feels out of place and unnatural, and that makes them something to be wary of as a natural reaction.

In planning a game, use **Fear of the Other** to subtly accent how the unnatural intrudes upon our everyday experience. This element challenges the characters to mess with it, to prove it really isn't the haunted house or cursed graveyard that everyone thinks it is. **Fear of the Other** is also indirect. It calls into question whether something is truly unnatural or just a personal bias. The technique relies on conflating elements that may seem individually mundane but are collectively sinister. For example, Mrs. Constantius may just be a reclusive old woman with a skin condition who certainly doesn't have to steal the flesh from children to survive, despite living next to a daycare where four children have gone missing in as many years. **Fear of the Other** never spells things out, but rather insinuates that something is unusual or out of place. Use it to build tension with your players. Make them second-guess their own intuition, to wonder if they are just fearful of something outside their personal experience, or if what they perceive as a threat is genuine.

A technique for applying **Fear of the Other** is to narrate the situation in multiple layers. In the initial description, mention how something appears odd. When the players encounter it a second time, add some additional detail that further emphasizes its oddity. This can be done multiple times, with each use giving increasingly unsettling descriptions. Here are some examples that build upon one another:

(1st) The house seems to draw shadows to it, as if light refuses to linger there.

(2nd) Even in broad daylight, the place seems as if it is in perpetual twilight, with the shadows causing the windows to resemble the sunken eyes of a withered face.

(1st) As you approach, the air about the janitor seems to grow still and cold.

(2nd) The janitor's eyes watch you, his gaze sending a primal chill through you that you can't help but shiver from.

(1st) A late autumn wind blows through trees, making their bare branches sway down from the pale sky.

(2nd) As the wind picks up, the branches drift lower, like angry talons trying to rake at you for intruding.

Again, **Fear of the Other** is best used to color things with subtle, cumulative differences. It makes a specific element of the setting stand out in a manner that will give players pause to consider how they should act. Is this truly a threat, or is it just prompting the character's own bias?

"So this could get worse before it gets better?"

"Oh no. I shouldn't think it would get better."

—Dr. Annabel Usher, PhD in Wiccan Studies, to Innsmouth Academy Headmaster H. J. Montag

Going hand in hand with **Fear of the Other** is the second element of horror: **Dread**. While **Fear of the Other** makes the common seem alien or unnatural, **Dread** is a creeping sense of doom that permeates the session. It is the rising sense that if the players do not take action swiftly or decisively, horrible and unfortunate circumstances will follow.

Think of **Dread** as a ticking clock the Game Master runs between acts of the story. At the end of each act, that doomsday clock tolls and precipitates some unfortunate event. With each toll, the stakes are raised and the consequences of failure worsen. In this sense, **Dread** is a motivation for the players to act and drive the story forward.

A good formula for pacing out **Dread** and its consequences is, "If [something] doesn't happen by a certain time, then [something worse] occurs."

This is a very general formula, but it breaks down what needs to be done to prevent the event from happening, and what will occur if the event comes to fruition. Here are some examples of the **Dread** formula in practice:

- If the head of a supposed warlock isn't buried in a Catholic graveyard by midnight, a fog will roll over the town where the adventure takes place and cut off all communication with the outside world.
- If a cursed dagger isn't found before the thirteenth day following a new moon, three more victims will be slain on the steps of the old clock tower.
- If the characters don't get back to town before the last light of the shortest day of the year, they will be considered an offering to a twisted forest deity.

And taking this one to the next tick of the clock

...

- If the party does make it back before dusk, they must find a way to appease the twisted deity before its gnarled root minions assault the town, dragging the unsuspecting townsfolk into the nightmarish forest that now surrounds it.

Each act of the adventure should be punctuated by these proverbial ticks, which raise the consequences of failure and drive home the point that matters are getting worse. During each act, the players should have a chance to uncover a clue or some bit of information that will help them mitigate the impending catastrophe the next tick will bring. However, do consider that the players may not investigate in a set path or find clues before the deadline. Ideally, they find out what needs to be done in the nick of time. Unfortunately, this is mostly a horror game, and nothing is certain, which leads to the game's third and final horror element.

Good horror thrives on **Uncertainty**. Think about the comfort we take in the supposed constants of our daily life: access to food, clean water, electricity, safety inside our homes. Remove those comforts, and worry creeps in. Suddenly we are concerned with the necessities of daily life and how we will see to our safety. We move from a place of stability to a precarious situation. Our routine has been disrupted; we can't anticipate what will happen next.

Uncertainty is primarily used to create doubt for the players, to make them worry. Have they done enough research to know what they are facing? Have they had enough time to prepare? Will their tactics even work? The Game Master will, of course, know how correct the actions of the party are, but the characters, and the players to some degree, should be concerned about the outcome. **Uncertainty** is not meant to be mean spirited. Rather, it is a way to pull the players to the edges of their seats and get them further invested in the feel of the session. After all, if they are certain they can stop a master vampire from enslaving a small town, where is the challenge? But if they are worried that their plan might be doomed to failure because they are missing critical facts, that builds tension in the story. It makes them apprehensive of the outcome. To help establish this degree of **Uncertainty**, the GM should employ phrases that accentuate the possibility of flawed or inaccurate information. Whether or not the players know the truth, the implication of doubt creates fearfulness. Here are some potentially useful phrases:

- "As far as you know ... that is how vampires feed."
- "From what you were able to gather ... you should be safe in a church."
- "If the legends are true ... then you should be safe in the daylight."
- "Yes, those are the best ways to stop a curse ... that you are aware of."

Uncertainty should be mixed in with truth. If the party feels that too little of the information they have acquired is reliable, there is a risk of paralyzing them into inaction. A good rule of thumb is to tell them one questionable detail for every two verifiable facts.

For example, if the party is trying to stop a lesser vampire from creating massive numbers of minions, they might know for certain that daylight will weaken the minions, and that the minions' powers are already weaker than a full-fledged vampire's. The party may not be certain if the condition is reversible. This could lead them to debate if they should try to save the infected victims, or even if they have time to do so.

Uncertainty frequently works in tandem with **Dread** to create tension. By using both, the characters are drawn in two different directions. On one hand, **Uncertainty** generates the urge to wait until more information is revealed. At the

same time, **Dread** pushes them to act before the worst happens. This is the classic conundrum of most horror plots: act now and possibly lose everything, or wait and have the choice to act taken away.

We can see **Uncertainty** and **Dread** at work in most slasher films. The audience knows someone is going to be slaughtered, but not necessarily how or when. The tension builds as the camera follows a character through the dimly lit basement. The setting is right for the killer to jump out from behind some stacked boxes, or turn off the lights and stab wildly at the unsuspecting victim, but will it happen now, or in the next scene? This is an example of **Dread** and **Uncertainty** playing off of one another. While **Dread** pushes the story forward with the threat of an impending menace, **Uncertainty** causes the players to question when that doom will fall. Will it be at night, or at midnight, or just past dawn? Like the audience watching the slasher film, the players know a strike is coming, but not exactly when.

The GM should set a scene with details that allude to something lurking in the proverbial shadows. If the party is investigating a murder, then mention how it happened on a foggy night, and describe the fog rolling in like the tide the moment the sun goes down this evening. If witnesses mention smelling something sweet in the air, describe the group catching an elusive cloying scent as they approach the site, only to have it grow to nauseating intensity when they arrive.

The addition of small details signals to the players that something wicked this way comes. Events are building toward disaster, but, again, the players don't know when the sword of Damocles will fall. Give them several separate moments to react to before dropping the blade.

Alternatively, you could elect to use **Uncertainty** to its fullest extent and have the calamity *not* happen. In this case, the small details are used like a jump scare in a movie; the unexpected noise turns out to be nothing more frightening than a cat. This technique is used to set a false expectation, making the characters think something bad will happen, only to deflate the tension when it turns out to be trivial. You may cycle through this once or twice before the actual event strikes. If you're doing this well, the characters (and their players) should begin writing the foreboding details off as mere background noise to set the mood, rather than the Event circling, sharklike, building to its final explosion of violence.

Putting together **Fear of the Other**, **Dread**, and **Uncertainty** will help you create an atmosphere conducive to a horror setting. The goal is to help immerse the players in a story that compels them to discover what is happening, while still giving them the feeling of not being entirely in control. They should feel confident enough to act, but still sense that they are under a deadline that is approaching too quickly.

Now that we've covered the "Horror" side of this sub-genre, let's talk about the "Heroic" aspects of the Secret World, as its characters are heroes of no small measure. The player characters are chosen by Gaia, a semi-sentient entity that is the embodiment of life, magic, and creation. These individuals are normal people who have been given fantastic powers and abilities literally overnight, gifts that would take anyone else a lifetime to learn, if ever. They travel to places few



can access. They see things normal people can't perceive. They are tasked with nothing less than saving the world.

Needless to say, the heroes of the Secret World are a far cry from the screaming teens of slasher films, or the clueless academics that stumble unawares upon some cosmic menace. They may sound like superheroes, and in fact, the parallels are strong between the two settings. What makes the Secret World roleplaying game lean more toward **Heroic Horror** is the treatment of the protagonists and their powers, the challenges they face, and the final outcome of their adventures.

Think of Gaia's Chosen, also called Bees, as modern-day equivalents of the heroes from folklore. Odin's Wanderer persona, Katoyis the Blood-Clot Boy of the Blackfoot people, or even the legendary Gilgamesh may have been previous agents of Gaia. The times have certainly changed, as now the players can Google rituals and incantations with the right app, but the purpose of these Chosen remains the same: to stand as a champion in times of great strife, and to protect their people by fighting monsters and wrestling order out of chaos.

While these characters have phenomenal abilities that set them apart from the victims of other horror settings, these Chosen are still very much human. Yesterday they might have had satisfactory jobs, been planning on owning a house, or worried about their student loans. Overnight, all of that changed. Now they hear voices in their heads, have weird compulsions that send them into dangerous places and dire situations, and face creatures from the most twisted nightmares imaginable.

That would be a lot for a normal person to deal with. But since these are Gaia's Chosen, there is something about these individuals that made them worthy of this power. They can deal with their new horrifically fantastic circumstances without being horrifically traumatized from the experience. This transition may not be automatic.

As the characters encounter aspects of the Secret World, let them have time to absorb the scene and respond to the moment. Let them react to the first walking corpse they see, or ask what they're feeling when they see a car-sized moth devour a dog in one crunchy bite. They may have been given fantastic powers, but they aren't necessarily immune to fear, revulsion, or just being overwhelmed by a situation. Granted, they

are heroes, not victims. After a few encounters, they should build up some resistance to more commonly seen phenomena.

A strong tool to help draw out the characters' reactions to the game world is nonplayer character (NPC) interaction. While the Chosen may be able to come back from the dead, the majority of the world isn't so lucky. If it isn't in character for the Chosen to be afraid, make them confront the fear by dealing with an NPC. Their rideshare driver might turn hysterical after seeing tentacle-mouthed dogs. Do they try to calm him down or let him run off by himself? The librarian who pointed the party in the right direction bursts into tears over a strange book the characters gave her. Will the players be held accountable for her distress?

When used correctly, NPCs reflect the emotion and tone of the setting, to which the Chosen might be immune. The Bees may have seen fire-wreathed jinn or ship-swallowing leviathans, but the NPCs are probably limited in their experience of horror to the last time they saw a George Romero movie. They are foils, used to manifest the players' internal reactions within the game world. Like real people, NPCs respond to the fantastic in different ways. Some might turn into a sobbing mess, while others take on protector roles. Use their reactions and attitudes to nudge the players along. If the Chosen don't save these folks, who will?

How the Chosen can use their powers is another point of differentiation between genres. While the Bees have been gifted with fantastic abilities and armed with knowledge from both their secret societies and the Buzzing, there are plenty of strings that restrict their autonomy. There are prices to pay for everything, especially when some nearly godlike entity taps you to be its champion.

Bees are prized by all the factions as potent assets. In fact, Bees will often find themselves tapped for hazardous, if not outright suicidal, missions. After all, if your prize agent can come back from the dead, why bother sending expendable mortals? Most of the time, the goals of these organizations align with Gaia's, and they are more than willing to lend resources to the characters' endeavors. After all, if the world ends, *everyone* loses. However, the factions will expect their Bees to prioritize the society's goals first, which may cause conflict with what Gaia instructs her Chosen to do.

One might assume Gaia would be the most benevolent of patrons, being that she is the embodiment of life and growth. Unfortunately, the exact opposite is true. Gaia is one of the few entities that knows how close the Filth truly is to taking over. She is desperate to find a solution, and can thus appear erratic to the outside observer. In previous Ages, she would pick and choose her Bees. Now, with the hour growing late, Bees are being made by the dozens. Even so, Gaia's desperation makes her incredibly demanding of her Chosen.

When Gaia wishes her Chosen to deal with a problem, she will send them a compulsion that draws them to the location where their power is needed. The urge, the pressure from a force that doesn't directly talk to you, can grow stronger or weaker, but ultimately, the Bees always possess free will in their choices.

The Bees' incredible abilities come with equally incredible costs. What they wield in magical power requires the loss of autonomy. The secret knowledge they now possess exacts a toll of service. That isn't to say the Chosen don't have time for their own pursuits—they just have to fit those pursuits into Gaia's schedule.

Heroes are measured by the foes they face, and the Chosen have no end of challengers intent on making them legendary, even (or especially) if it is posthumous. The majority of foes, like the ak'ab or the creatures spawned by the Filth, will present a physical threat, usually ending in combat. The really dangerous foes, though, are those that challenge the Chosen's morality. They try to lure the Chosen with offers of power, to remake the world with their guidance, or these dark minds promise to spare them when whatever machinations they have conjured come to fruition.

Focused on the larger picture, these foes will tempt the heroes with "true" secrets of the world, offering to free them from serving as unwitting pawns of Gaia and whichever secret faction they are aligned with. Of course they would just be trading one leash for another, but the ones making the offers downplay that part.

Usually, these diabolic masterminds appear across an entire story arc and are a threat unto themselves. Perhaps they know the secret to removing a Bee's powers, or they have favors they can call in from long-forgotten deities.



Some are government officials or executives of major companies that have hundreds at their command, while others might have just a few fanatically dedicated followers ready to give their lives for a dark cause. What makes the masterminds dangerous is that they have time to plan, and they are patient enough to wait for the right opportunity: a moment of weakness, a moral compromise, a lapse in judgment from any of the Chosen. At that point, they swoop in with an offer or solution. The character just needs to join them, or at least step aside and let the masterminds carry out their plans. Is that so much to ask?

Equally important is the resolution of each adventure. Sometimes there will be a definite conclusion. The day is saved, order and peace are restored, and the heroes return to accolades from their benefactors. The Secret World, however, is still a horror game. Things seldom end so cleanly.

Make no mistake, at the end of the session the players should feel that their actions mattered, that they made a difference through their involvement in the story. They should feel like the heroes they are. However, there should usually be doubt about the conclusion. This may take the form of simply wondering how long it will be until the crisis surfaces again. Events in the Secret World tend to be cyclic, recurring through various Ages. Usually, there is someone to oppose these recurrences. Usually.

There is also the matter of scope. In a world full of secret societies and shadowy cults, any given crisis is usually a symptom of a larger threat. An outbreak of undead in a small Arizona town, for example, is caused by an Orochi mining team extracting an ancient totem that originated in the Second Age. While the Chosen resolve the zombie outbreak, questions should arise about how the Orochi knew where to find the totem in the first place. What are they planning to do with it? There should be a sense of closure when an adventure is done, but it must also come with an equal sense of foreboding.

Of course, everything could go wrong. A key ritual doesn't work, or a critical NPC perishes despite the party's best efforts. Failure is always a possibility. If it occurs at your table, pause, and give the players time to let their characters reflect on what happened. The best advice in handling situations such as this comes from

Templar Richard Sonnac: "You won't be able to save everyone. Rather than lament this endlessly, use this to galvanize your resolve and continue forward."

The Secret World blends the constant looming threat of horror with the optimism of heroic adventure. The result is a setting where the characters face down seemingly insurmountable odds that would paralyze normal people with terror or drive them to madness. These Chosen are heroes. They can make a difference, as lights in an ever-darkening world.

STORY ALCHEMY

With the genre now defined, let's discuss the other elements within stories of the Secret World. Specifically, these elements are **Everything Is True**, **The Past Echoes into the Present**, **The Mundane Made Fantastic**, and **An Age Is Ending**. When crafting adventures, Game Masters are encouraged to keep these concepts in mind as, when woven together, they punctuate the unique setting of the Secret World.

What follows below are descriptions of each element and examples of how GMs can utilize them when creating their own games. Think of it as a mathematical equation, or better yet as parts of an alchemical formula, with each element serving as a step toward an arcane result. At the end, we'll give examples of how you can fit these elements together in crafting scenarios for your own table.

EVERYTHING IS TRUE

No seriously, "everything" is true. Every myth, legend, alternative history of the world, fringe theory of anthropology or archaeology, and far-fetched conspiracy theory you have ever heard of is true within the setting of the Secret World. Granted there is always an additional bit, a previously unknown detail or forgotten fragment of knowledge that colors the known story into something more checkered and dire that fits into the Secret World's continuity.

This inclusion of everything odd, occult, and ancient is part of what makes the Secret World a unique setting. The game setting takes a “yes, and ...” approach to its lore, inviting Game Masters to expand upon something known, then add an element of mystery for the characters to discover. This new element not only expands upon what the players may already know, but adds a detail that ties it into the themes of the Secret World. After all, who wants to play in a known and tired story? By adding a small fact that elaborates further, the GM keeps the players eager to discover something new, and gives a fresh look at what may already be known to them.

A good example of this is seen in the original multiplayer online game with the story of the Pharaoh Akhenaten. What history remains of him records Akhenaten as a radical leader who converted Egypt to a monotheistic belief system during his reign. After his death, however, all monuments to him were destroyed and his name stricken from most records as the Nile empire converted back to its polytheistic beliefs. That is what is known in our world, and it is written off as the backlash of an unhappy population who returned to their traditional ways after Akhenaten passed, and who so loathed his rulership that they chose to destroy any record of his reign.

The Secret World adds to this as, within the game setting, Akhenaten is known as the Black Pharaoh. He allied with the Filth to gain power and forced his people to worship the entity that is known in the present-day game world as the Black Sun. Akhenaten’s allegiance with those dark powers and his willingness to sacrifice his own people are given as the reasons his name was scoured from all records, only to be remembered as a cautionary tale. Of course nothing stays forgotten, but we’ll discuss that later on.

The Black Pharaoh is a good example of taking something known from history, then adding a detail to it that not only ties it to the game world but also allows for a mystery that the players can uncover. This gives the GM a wide array of knowledge to draw from, making everything from recorded history through pop culture available for use when designing adventures.

The key to being inclusive is, again, assuming that everything is true. The second part is to add a twist, a portion of the story that we don’t know. This could be a hidden bit of lore, or a heretofore unknown fact about the situation. This new

information ties the lore into the Secret World and creates a mystery that the characters will uncover during their adventure.

This may seem overwhelming, or at least trigger decision paralysis, as having all histories, mythologies, and real-world lore to draw from might seem daunting. Fortunately, a good evening of internet searches will reveal several great places to start. The following steps are meant to help you research and adapt almost any topic to the setting of the Secret World.

START SIMPLE

Begin by taking a well-known concept or event. This could be something as simple as an odd phrasing in a political speech or a well-known disappearance. It should be something commonly known, or at least heard of. Examples of this would be President Regan’s “extraterrestrial threat” speech, the abduction of the Lindbergh baby, or sightings of the Michigan Dogman. A good rule of thumb is if it shows up in the top three results of an internet search, then it is common enough to use.

TAKE A DEEP DIVE

This is where the fun starts. Don’t be afraid to explore tangents and odd rants while doing your primary research. Usually, these searches will yield more esoteric knowledge, and more importantly, odd and obscure facts about the initial concept. Doing this helps the GM become more of an authority on their subject, and draws forth something interesting about the incident.

WEAVE IN THE WEIRD

Now is where the Game Master asks themselves, “Why is this important to the Secret World at large?” Does this involve one of the factions, or a key member of Orochi? Is this something that is just a mystery of the past, or is this a recent development?” Once you have wrapped your initial concept in strangeness, it can be further developed with the scenario.

To show this in action, we’ll use the popular creepypasta cryptid of the Michigan Dogman.

Starting Simple, the dogmen are a popular cryptid featured in several online horror stories. They are usually presented as malicious beasts that walk like humans but possess an oversized canine head and elongated limbs.

By taking a **Deep Dive**, we find that they gained recent popularity in 1987 when radio station

WTCM-FM created and played a novelty song about the legend of the Dogman as an April Fool's Day stunt, but were then inundated with calls from people stating they had encounters with the dogmen.

Weaving in the Weird, we ask ourselves, "Why are there so many dogmen sightings in the modern age? What changed?" Perhaps the dogmen are sensing the change in the Age and, feeling emboldened by this, are looking for easy prey, or urban expansion has encroached upon land and removed some totem or ward that kept these cryptids at bay.

By using all the above steps, a GM can take any piece of history, news, or myth and weave it into the beginning of a scenario. Again, it is important to remember to be inclusive with this, as everything is true. There is just an extra, unknown bit of information that offers a mystery to be discovered, and acts as the call to action for the characters.

THE PAST ECHOES INTO THE PRESENT

The Secret World is old and riddled with stories and histories that no one clearly remembers. Its history runs across three Ages, with the current Age coming swiftly to an end. There is no repository of what has happened in the past. What remains are fragmented tales which suffer from poor recording. This could be due to a bias of the record keeper, embellishment from one oral tale-teller to the next, or the fact that no one fully understands the scope and impact of the circumstances.

Indeed, much has been lost and forgotten in the Secret World. Regardless of how buried or lost something is, however, the past finds a way to crawl out of whatever spider-haunted dark recess of the world it was buried in and cast its shadow over an unsuspecting present Age. While this bears ill omen for the campaign world, it is excellent news for Game Masters designing their own adventures.

When using the forgotten past, there should be some shred of knowledge present in the current Age. Again, everything is true, so there could be some small kernel of the forgotten event that still resides in folklore. The difference is that the

reality of what occurred has become so garbled that only the most surface-level details remain. In fact, the truth might be scattered across various records throughout several different cultures.

A good example is the flood myth that appears in almost every culture throughout our world. At some point in our history, a global event wiped out the world as we knew it. Only a select few people survived, such as Noah of the Christian belief, Manu of the Hindu teachings, or Atrahasis from Babylonian lore. It is these people who repopulated the Earth and gave things a fresh start.

The true event that caused the actual flood, and why these specific people were chosen over their peers, remains unknown. It is through the unknown that the GM can start to conjecture what really caused that catastrophe. Additionally, there are three other questions the GM needs to ask: What caused this event to resurface in the present, how will the heroes find out about this knowledge, and is this something that they need to deal with?

There are numerous reasons that a forgotten event might recur in the present, but the most common theme is that someone wants it to be so. This may be a cult, an agent of the Dreaming Ones, one of the lesser secret societies wanting a larger share of global power, or the Council of Venice. There are numerous players within the Secret World that might cause something better forgotten to resurface. It may even be for what they believe are the "right" reasons. Regardless of who this agent of catastrophe is, the GM should determine their motivation for dragging something buried in the mists of time into the present.

Once the antagonist of the story is known, the next problem to solve is, how will the players find this information out for themselves? This could be a series of adventures, leading from tombs to lost lands to raiding the libraries of a major corporation. Since the knowledge of this ancient event is mostly unknown, it should require effort from the players to discover what is going on. This effort should also reveal why the antagonist has reintroduced the forgotten ancient element to the present day and what they hope to accomplish with it. Do not take this to mean that everything must be spelled out for the player characters. Rather, this is where they realize the consequences of the action and who is chiefly responsible. This should be a call to

action, or at least a point where the characters decide if they should act.

The final element draws upon the uncertainty of the horror genre: Should the characters act upon the information they have? Is this something they wish to stop? Perhaps the ancient “something” that is returning brings a degree of power to one of the big three factions, or has the potential to defeat one of the major enemies the characters have made in their adventures. Certainly such a force should be considered for their own use.

Don't be afraid to tempt your players with those thoughts of power, or bring some level of justice on their terms. Remember that it is a forgotten “something” that no one else has, or may not even know about outside of the player characters. Of course they have the free will to decide for themselves, but wrestling with such a decision gives the players a chance to explore how their characters think and what they believe in.

Rarely does something good ever come out of the forgotten past. It was buried for a reason. Without its presence, the world has, for the most part, prospered. Keep in mind that while the player characters are heroes and face heroic challenges, this is also a horror game where few things turn out pleasantly, and happy endings are a rarity.

THE MUNDANE MADE FANTASTIC

The supernatural is all around us, but only a select few notice its existence. This is a repeated theme in the Secret World. This also opens up opportunities to incorporate local history and current events into story design.

Every town has a place that seems odd: an abandoned school, a run-down house at the edge of town, a lone water tower that just doesn't seem right even in the daylight. People frequently comment on how strange the place is, or how they feel unsettled by it. Now extend those real-world places into the Secret World where that aura of “otherness” in that location has a reason for existing. Perhaps this is a place where the fabric between worlds is thin, or some old and unhealthy ritual scarred the land. Either way, something about it is unnatural and easily noticed.

The exact nature of what made this place stand out is left to the Game Master's imagination. Consider the history of the area surrounding the real-world location you wish to use. Some quick research will usually yield an odd occurrence



that can guide the GM's creativity. This might be an odd event in a town's past, or an interesting incident. Some examples might include an apartment complex built on a turn-of-the-century sweatshop where you can hear the wails of children that were burned in an accidental fire; an old schoolhouse whose bell tolls on Sunday mornings at 9 a.m. even though the bell has long since been removed; a housing development in a forested area where children report seeing kids in the forest that want them to come out and play with them at night.

On the national and international levels, there is no shortage of global and current events that can help fuel a story. One just needs to watch any news program and think, "What if there is another truth 'they' are hiding?" In this case, "they" can be anyone from the Big Three secret societies, a global corporation like the Orochi group, or any of the various nations of the world. Does this sound paranoid, like the mindset of a delusional conspiracy theorist? Definitely. Any headline can be woven into an adventure by letting your inner conspiracy theorist roam freely.

What is really going on? Assume that everything the major media reports is a very varnished truth, altered to distract the public from what is really happening. The purpose of this obfuscation is to limit the flow of information, alter the reporting of actual events, or distract the public eye from another situation occurring at the same time. For example, a well-regarded cable news outlet reports on a severe polar vortex that will bring record-low temperatures to North America. The news story is a ruse to distract from the alarming seismic activity in the Bering Sea. The two may be unrelated. Or that might be exactly what "they" want you to think.

Who really benefits from this? Who is actually behind the cover-up? Certainly the Illuminati are masters of spinning the media, but here is where the GM decides the true perpetrator of the event.

Finally, what is the endgame? Using the previous example, what is important about the rising island in the Bering Sea that needs to be covered up? Is it a lost temple, or the resting place of an ancient weapon?

Outside of what has been established as Secret World lore, the Game Master has free rein to add elements of history, religion, or anything else to make the newsworthy story into a conspiracy theory. Using current events is a fantastic way to

ground an adventure in the minds of your players. It takes something as common as headline news and renders it into a work of the supernatural. Again, the best advice for weaving the news into adventures is to let your inner conspiracy theorist run wild.

AN AGE IS ENDING

Nothing lasts forever. This is doubly true in a world riddled with dark entities, secret societies, and scheming cults. The Secret World has endured three prior Ages, and the current Fourth Age is being forced to end as well. This is a fact that almost every being in the Secret World is aware of, and it is not a change that is welcomed in any manner.

In the current Age, anima, the essence of life and magic, flows freely. Conflict is a constant, but there has been more progress and stability in this Age than any other. Everything has seemed to prosper for the most part. This Age allowed humankind to build and thrive. Unfortunately, the net result of their achievement means they have a front-row seat to their own inevitable extinction.

It is questionable what this new Age will be known for. Some have labeled it the Age of Filth, as the Dreaming Ones grow more restless and their influence further plagues the world. Others have marked it as the Age of Entropy, as long-held wards and barriers fail and respected institutions falter. This coming change is felt by every living thing, from the fearsome jinn to the casual human. There is a sense of something dark and foreboding descending upon the world that everyone can feel, even if they do not know its cause. This is not so much a versatile element, but a shadow that colors all interactions within the Secret World.

In game terms, this feeling of dread can manifest in the story in different ways. Nonplayer characters that should be neutral seem on edge, or are suspicious. Authority figures are more watchful of the players' actions. Entities that would normally be neutral begin skiing for boons, or something in return. In general, there is an uncertainty—not so much as to what tomorrow will bring, but if there will even be a tomorrow. This uncertainty brings with it fear and apprehension to commit to anything long term.

Granted, most of the mortal world is unaware of why they feel this way. In fact, areas with a low connection to the supernatural will feel this sense of dread less than those places that are more magically active.

Ultimately, this sense of uncertainty is a driving subtheme across the Secret World. Everyone has an intuitive sense of a terrible change coming, or at least of something beneficial being lost. Those that feel it the least may just worry over every small detail they can as a futile means of taking control. Those more aware of the true nature of the Secret world may have the unfortunate insight that they will witness their species' own extinction within their lifetime.

GAMEMASTERING THE FACTIONS

"... we're all smiles above the table, and knives poised to strike below."

—Richard Sonnac, Templar New Talent Liaison

The final elements to consider when writing adventures for the Secret World are the factions themselves. While the Big Three might seem united in their efforts against the Filth, that is only a recent alliance. They have a longer history of working against one another, and those past tendencies do not die out overnight. Even the Council of Venice, the supposedly neutral arbiter for the collected secret societies, has proven that it also has its own agenda. In brief, the same is true of every faction, and no one wants to give up the power they have. Regardless of what bonds and friendships individuals across their ranks may establish, the governing bodies of all these societies have goals that must be achieved. The ability for player characters to form friendships across factions, while still forwarding the plans of their own sponsoring society, is a dilemma within the Secret World.

A frequently asked question is, which factions are the "good guys" and which are the "bad guys"? The unfortunate answer is that all the factions are both hero and villain at any given time. To

keep what power they have, and to extend their reach, each faction must perform actions both duplicitous and heroic. What follows is a quick overview of the best and worst aspects of each of the major players within The Secret World.

THE DRAGON

The Dragon is possibly the oldest of the secret societies. As an organization, they have implemented long-term plans that span centuries before coming to fruition. For the Dragon, there is no chaos or random chance, just careful planning. They do not have the military bluster of the Templars or the avarice of the Illuminati, but what free will they seem to offer is an illusion. In fact, their recruitment process is more like a benevolent kidnapping, where candidates are abducted and then told of their membership. To be fair, from the Dragon's perspective, the choice must happen because of a larger mechanic in play. Why waste energy and time quibbling over words when there is only one inevitable outcome? This leads to a very callous attitude toward the victims of the Secret World: their fate was unavoidable. All their struggle did was prolong what was destined to happen. Even their own agents are all part of a greater plan, and will be sacrificed without a second thought if that is their fate. The Dragon's long-term goals involve fulfilling their master plans, which may have been put in motion that morning or several centuries prior. These plans are cryptic and enigmatic even to their own agents. Each mission is part of a greater puzzle that only the upper echelon of their organization truly fathoms.

THE ILLUMINATI

The Illuminati is the least secret of the secret societies. They are referenced in movies, cartoons, television, and online forums. It is like they want to be found out. In this media age though, excessive visibility has granted them fantastic camouflage. While there are many sources that will tell you what the Illuminati are about (most contradicting one another), there is no evidence anyone is actually a member. As they are masters of secrets and information, the Illuminati have flooded every channel they can with disinformation about themselves to such a degree that no source about them is seen as credible (outside of its entertainment

value). Although this society controls the flow of information, the Illuminati is seen as the most duplicitous of the Big Three. It's commonly said you can never trust an Illuminati member; you just prove how much of an asset you are to them. Many refer to the Illuminati as mercenary and ruthless. The Illuminati prefer the term "professional." As far as plans go, this faction is the most direct. They are continually expanding their power base. Much of this power is derived by managing the flow of information. The other part is uncovering secrets and discerning how best to leverage them for the organization's own gain.

THE TEMPLARS

Inarguably the Templars are the most overt of the Big Three. Even their motto speaks to a brash approach to the supernatural: "We are not in a war against darkness, we *are* a war against darkness." Certainly, if there is an out-and-out battle, the Templars will be the first to show and the readiest to fight. A strong martial tradition has prepared them to face threats and monstrosities that others would quail at. At the same time, the Templars are riddled with rigid traditions that make them appear inflexible. Only recently have they expanded their recruitment to include people who previously would have been

deemed unworthy, or worse, undesirable. Even now there is still a pecking order based on family lines and the deeds of one's predecessors. The Templars play the same games as all the other secret societies by influencing governments and lawmakers, and having their own long-term plans. That said, what they offer in martial superiority, they lack in subtlety. In general, the Templars are direct to a fault, and tend not to play at the social niceties that other factions indulge in. The long-term goals of the Templars are equally direct: find threats to the world and end them. Once that is done, they quarrel with the other factions and seek to further their own power base.

THE COUNCIL OF VENICE

Although it started as a neutral third party to arbitrate the factions, the Council of Venice is worthy of being considered its own entity within the Secret World. As a neutral party, its agents are usually the first to arrive at the scene of a crisis and assess the situation before offering what intelligence has been gathered to the other secret societies. The Council has established training facilities for coordination between the secret societies, and acts as a liaison between lesser factions and the Big Three. On the other hand, the Council has been shown to be highly corruptible, to pursue their own agendas and



undertake actions that actively undermine attempts to stop the Dreaming Ones from awakening. While this has been written off as the solo efforts of rogue members, a look at the larger picture reveals the Council's desire to become a major player within the Secret World. The right plan just hasn't worked out for them. Yet.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF PHOENICIAN SAILORS

Worth mentioning is the empty fourth seat among the Big Three: the Brotherhood of Phoenician Sailors. Although they are a force equal to the Dragon, Illuminati, and Templars, the Phoenicians have also succeeded in becoming the most hated secret society within the Secret World. The Phoenicians have none of the morality that even the Illuminati possess, letting dangerous items enter the mundane world for the right price. As an organization, they operate with little regard for the balance of the world around them. A fight with the Dragon, for example, will endanger uninvolved civilians, but the Phoenicians will initiate it just to hamper their opponent. Like the Templars, the Phoenicians' plans are very direct: profit and power. Some time back, they were inadvertently used in an attempt to awaken the Dreaming Ones. While they did come clean to the Council of Venice and shared information about the incident, they have yet to make any further amends, and they remain mutually hostile to the other factions.



FACTION COMPETITION

The major factions share several commonalities. None of them want to give up power or let another faction gain the upper hand. To this end, player characters will commonly be sent on missions against one another. That doesn't necessarily mean outright conflict but rather being ordered to get the information before a rival does, or if there is an item to secure, to make sure it comes home with them and not another faction's agent. On the best of days, cooperation between the Big Three is on very thin ice. Regardless of the relationships between player characters, their sponsoring organizations have tasks they expect to be done. Repeated failure to do so could result in loss of benefits, ridicule within the organization, and being assigned to tasks and cases well beneath the player characters' ability.

The player characters should be concerned with upholding the interests of their faction. This is the organization that not only backs their foolhardy adventures but provides them with resources, information, and some degree of influence. The question of an agent's loyalty and how well they fulfill the goals of their organization should be a constant concern for them throughout the campaign. If a character is not mindful of these interests, they will find themselves cut off from these benefits and be left to face the dangers of the Secret World alone.

It is rare for anyone to change their allegiance from one faction to another, as the organization an agent is defecting from would not want any secrets they might know being revealed to the competition. Additionally, no other faction would trust a betrayer, or risk the delicate balance they all share by harboring a fugitive. In short, the player characters have made a lifetime commitment to whichever faction they initially choose. How long that lifetime is depends upon their actions.

STORY ALCHEMY

II: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Previously, we discussed the individual elements for crafting a story for the Secret World. It's now time to put them all into action and show how they make up the anatomy of an adventure. What follows are sample story ideas that Game Masters can use whole or in part for their own gaming groups. While the inspiration for these examples comes from real-life locations and events, the details are highly fictionalized. For those curious to learn more, the Inspiration heading lists what fostered the story idea.

EXAMPLE #1: WHAT SHOULD REMAIN BURIED

Inspiration: Gobekli Tepe

Everything Is Real: Capraz Kol ("Cross Handle" in Turkish) is an archaeological dig similar to Gobekli Tepe in that both are believed to have been built around 9000 BCE. It contains monolithic stones with intricate carvings and pictograms, leading many to believe that it was used for religious practices.

- **Start Simple:** Capraz Kol has intrigued archaeologists since its discovery in the late 1990s. Its actual purpose and who built it remain unknown.
- **Take a Deep Dive:** Just like Gobekli Tepe, Capraz Kol was purposefully buried about 1,000 years after its creation. Currently, only 3 percent of the site has been uncovered. Recent excavation has uncovered living quarters and a forge.
- **Weave in the Weird:** What if the purpose of Capraz Kol was to keep something in, and to house those that dedicated their lives to this endeavor? The builders may have been the early members of one of the main factions, such as the Templars.

The Past Echoes into the Present: Much has been forgotten in the Secret World, and this is one of those missing tales. Capraz Kol was built by an early faction of Templars to contain an incursion point of the Filth. Although it was successfully sealed off, the site became untenable and was

buried to prevent tampering. Unfortunately, this information has been lost in the sands of time.

The Mundane Made Fantastic: Archaeological sites are always in need of funding, and Capraz Kol has the rare benefit of being sought after by investors. Specifically, almost everyone in the Secret World that has influence is looking to see what the site contains. The Orochi Group has offered mining equipment and some financial backing; several of the volunteers have ties to the Morninglight; and even the Council of Venice has discreetly planted agents and coaxed the Turkish government to speed along the excavation process. Needless to say, the Phoenicians have also infiltrated the site but are keeping their presence secret.

An Age is Ending: With everything of the Fourth Age weakening, the Filth's containment in the Capraz Kol structure is also suffering. Should the excavation continue, the Filth will undoubtedly be released. Also, many of the workers on-site have complained about strange dreams, and a few have been found digging the site when they should be asleep. When questioned, the workers have no idea how they left their cots and came to the site, but all have a compulsion to keep excavating.

Regarding Faction Agendas: While the Council of Venice is the arbitrator of the three major factions, it has withheld all information from this site. Unfortunately for them, the Big Three are dispatching their own agents to investigate.

- **The Dragon** know the site is important but not exactly why. Their agents are to uncover details and also observe who else is there.
- **The Illuminati** can't stand to have a secret kept from them. They are also suspicious of all the financial backing the dig site is receiving. Like the Dragon, they would like to know what is there. They also would like to uncover who in the Council of Venice ordered that the information be hidden. If they can find out, the Illuminati can use it as leverage over the Council in future negotiations.
- **The Templars** have some scant records of activity there, but the exact purpose of the site is unknown to them. They are sending agents to investigate as well, and charging them to deal with the matter if they can. This could mean fighting whatever the site contains or finding a way to disrupt the dig site and bury Capraz Kol again.

In this example there is little friction between the factions, as they are ultimately after the same means: discover the nature of the site and deal with it one way or another. There is added weight of the Illuminati to uncover the deception by the Council of Venice, and for the Templar to deal with a situation their predecessors caused.

EXAMPLE #2: LOST & FOUND

Inspiration: The Missing 411 phenomenon

Everything is Real: Unfortunately, a large number of people go missing from North American national parks each year. Many are found after searches, and some tell of odd happenings while they were in the wilderness. Recently there have been several cases of children going missing from Mount Hood National Park in Oregon. While they have been found within a few days, they do not seem "right." Worse yet, these returned children seem to want to lure other children back into the woods with them.

- **Start Simple:** The overarching conspiracy theory concerns the large number of unreported disappearances from national

parks each year. Some of the missing individuals are found in areas that had been previously searched, or in places they could not possibly have traveled to.

- **Take a Deep Dive:** Many hikers report a phenomenon called "the still" where all sound uncannily stops, even wind and insect noises. This persists for a few moments, and brings an unsettling or eerie sensation with it. Many report feeling as if the world stopped for a moment, or they were someplace else. Additionally, it's common for rescued hikers to be unaware of the passage of time. Some even report they heard no one calling for them, though they were within a few yards of a search party.
- **Weave in the Weird:** A very small percentage of those rescued have a marked desire to return to the woods. This has been considered a form of post-traumatic stress where the rescued individual becomes obsessed with where they went missing as a means of trying to understand what happened to them.

The Past Echoes into the Present: There are numerous stories in folklore of beings that mimic human voices and appearances to lure travelers



into the woods. Whatever is at work here is ancient and has been doing this for a while. The rescued children are in fact constructs of this entity sent out to lure more people into the woods, who will also go missing.

The Mundane Made Fantastic: Missing hikers are an unfortunately common occurrence. This is especially unfortunate when the missing person is a child. The source of the disappearances is an entity that seems intent on gathering people.

An Age Is Ending: With anima fading, the entity is growing bold. It judges that the forces that would act against it are also weakening from the fading magic.

Regarding Faction Agendas: This is a key adventure where the players may be called in for personal interests or from an outside party such as Zuberi.

- **The Dragon** would like to see the abductions stopped, as it interferes with their grand designs.
- **The Illuminati** want the abductions stopped as well, as they have key holdings in Portland and Seattle.
- **The Templars** are motivated to stop the abductions and confront whatever entity is causing them. If they can return the children, then that is a secondary concern.

Again, there is little friction between the factions, as the target goals are linear. Many of the factions might consider this of lesser importance since there are greater problems to address. This would lead to a good opportunity for the player characters to go off the books and do what they think is right.

EXAMPLE #3:

THE CURSE OF OAK ISLAND

Everything is Real: The legend of Oak Island states there is a treasure buried somewhere on the island, possibly by the Freemasons, or even the Knights Templar.

- **Start Simple:** Assume that everything about Oak Island is real. The next question is why, and for what purpose?
- **Take a Deep Dive:** Accounts of the treasure contained on the island vary widely, from the jewels of Marie Antoinette or the treasure of Captain Kid to the Holy Grail or the Ark of the Covenant. There is no single consistent legend, but rumors have circulated by word of mouth since the late 1800s. Also, all previous

expeditions have ended in catastrophe or the financial ruin of the backers, which has created a myth that anyone searching for the treasure is cursed.

- **Weave in the Weird:** There are plenty of options here, but we decide to go with ancient magical treasures, possibly of biblical origin. Also, if the Templars were responsible, they would know something about it. The Brotherhood of Phoenician Sailors, however, would be more inclined to hide plundered loot. The curse might be from some form of protection enchantment, or a bound entity that went out of control over the years.

The Past Echoes into the Present: A modern excavation team is able to locate and open the vault for the hidden treasure. But circling back to what might be contained within, we decide that it is something truly horrible. This could be the Horn of Joshua that destroyed the walls of Jericho, or one of the demons that Solomon enslaved to build his temple. It is now hungering for release, and in its rage it is ironically cursing the attempts to free it.

The Mundane Made Fantastic: A reality show is documenting the excavation of Oak Island. Played for sensationalism, the show uses footage of heavy machinery malfunctioning for no apparent reason, and the crew suffering accidents that should have been prevented with the most rudimentary safety protocols. Everyone else might see this as merely unfortunate, but the factions know this is something unnatural at work.

An Age Is Ending: The anima that fueled the wards keeping the demon lord bound in place are faltering. The world's fading magic has starved the protection spells of power. If there is no intervention, an angry major demon will be unleashed upon the world.

Regarding Faction Agendas: All the major players want to curtail the demon's escape and send agents to assist in this endeavor. Each faction, however, has its own side requirement.

- **The Dragon** wish to know who bound the demon, its name, as well as what wards bound it. They seek to rebind it themselves.
- **The Illuminati** are curious about the wards themselves but want to know what other treasures are held within the vault. They would like to be the first to seize these assets.

- **The Templars** see this as righting an ancient wrong, as it was their treasure the Phoenicians stole. Their first requirement is to neutralize the demon and send it back to Hell. The second is to secure the items there and prepare them for extraction back to Temple Hall.

While the players are all united in the goal of discovering the treasure vault and containing the demon, the added requirements of their factions may cause friction. Certainly, the Illuminati don't want to share the wards with the Dragon. Nor do the Templars wish to split their lost treasures with the Illuminati. Ultimately the decision is left to the players, who will then face whatever rewards or punishments await their actions.

THEMES AND TROPES

Some common themes and tropes run throughout the horror genre. While not full elements, these are small details to be added into a story to give it more flavor. What follows is not a complete list, and Game Masters are encouraged to add their own ideas.

BLOODLINES

Usually, a bloodline denotes something passed on from one generation to the next, most commonly from parent to child. The nature of this inheritance varies. It may not be something that actively places a character in harm's way, but it usually will not make their life easier. Some common examples of bloodlines are as follows:

- **Curses:** The character suffers some affliction. This may be from nightmares that leave them ill-rested and on edge, to something more major, such as lycanthropy or the need to kill their close friends.
- **Destinies:** While not obviously a detriment, destinies require the character to uphold some pact or debt made long before their conception. Failure to do this usually results in some catastrophe.

- **Duty:** Duty requires the character to make whatever they are sworn to the most important thing in their life. This means forsaking friends and other social connections to maintain what is required of them. Failure to do so will have grim consequences.

HAUNTED PLACES

Everything from ominous groves to abandoned houses to creepy amusement parks falls into this category. There is something unnatural about these locations. They may be filled with wrathful spirits, or they may slowly corrupt those that reside there, turning them into minions of some dark power over time. The locals probably know several tales about this place, and somewhere between all the stories is a dark truth.

LOST BOOKS AND SCROLLS

Knowledge is power. This may certainly be true for those who can decipher the secrets within these tomes *and* have the mental fortitude to handle the dire knowledge they contain. These writings were lost for a reason. They are known to bring suffering to those who possess them. Still, they are coveted and sought after by those craving power and a better understanding of things man was not meant to know.

MAGIC ITEMS

These can be mundane items, like a family heirloom that provides minor protection, or something esoteric, like a hex sign on a barn that wards off bad luck. The Secret World has many such charms that have been crafted and passed down over the years. Major magic items are a different story. Those tend to attract attention from powerful beings and organizations.

MONSTERS

There is nothing better for motivating a character to champion the righteous fight than a snarling, horrific face. Monsters make for direct, linear draws for action. They can also serve as metaphors for an imbalance of character, like gluttony, greed, or rage. A dire beast that eats more than it needs to, an imp that collects

anything metallic and lustrous, or a rampaging tree creature that attacks anything living just because it is there are all examples of this.

PROPHECIES

Cryptic messages and enigmatic sayings are a staple of the genre, especially when their meaning is unclear. Something may need to be done at a chosen time, or a righteous child must be found. This theme pairs quite well with the bloodline trope, each making one half of the adventure.

SECRET GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTS

Of course, no nation will sit idle and let the major factions have all the fun. And influence. And power. Government organizations such as the CIA or KGB want agents who answer to them—and whom they can directly control. Experiments such as triggering psychic powers in people or opening gateways to other dimensions are well-kept, off-the-books secrets common within the Secret World.

Again, this is not an exhaustive list. Rather, it is made to help Game Masters spark their own imagination. Many of these themes and tropes are easy to combine and elaborate upon with a quick internet search or an afternoon spent streaming horror movies.

ALTERNATIVE QUEST GIVERS

Many of the adventure hooks listed below come from Zuberi, as he is faction agnostic and makes for an easy reference point to draw in player characters from different organizations. However, a main aspect of the Secret World is its competing alliances. If the Game Master is willing to do a little extra work, they can deliver the mission briefing in a montage where each individual character receives part of it from their faction contact. This gives the GM a chance to emphasize what is important to each faction and add flavor to the adventure.



To illustrate this, we will use representatives from each faction and break down how the GM might convey the dialogue to the table. The mission is simple: investigate an art showing of one Amos Bierce, whose current exhibit, “Works in a Yellow Tone,” seems to be driving viewers into madness. The faction contacts for the player characters are as follows:

- The Dragon are represented by the erratic Daimon Kiyota, who peppers his conversation with Jazz Age and beatnik slang.
- Speaking for the Illuminati is the career-oriented, overly professional Kirsten Geary, who does not shy away from using corporate buzzwords to flavor her sentences.
- Representing the Templars is Richard Sonnac, well spoken and ready to remind new recruits of duty, honor, and sacrifice.

The GM describes how the players separately come to their faction contacts. The conversation that follows reveals the call to action in front of everyone at the table. To do this, the GM will jump between contacts, differentiating them by their choice of words (and voice, if the GM is so inclined).

Daimon: *Ducky, so good to see you again! I'm glad you made tracks here because we have a real wet blanket for you to handle.*

Kirsten: *Punctual. That's good. Tell me you went over the PowerPoint I sent and it'll be better.*

Richard: *Ah, your haste in meeting with me is most appreciated. There is an urgent matter that needs to be addressed.*

Daimon: *Are you a patron of the arts? Warhol? Lichtenstein? Big Daddy Roth? Not my scene, but hopefully yours.*

Kirsten: *There's a showing in St. Louis that's creating a buzz in the art world, and not in a good way. It's something we need to get in front of it before our metrics go pear shaped.*

Richard: *Apparently patrons are being too taken by a collection called "Works in a Yellow Tone." So much so that they end those close to them, then end themselves within a day or two of attending a viewing.*

Daimon: *We need you to get dolled up and beat feet to the next showing. Get inside and 86 whatever monkey business is going on.*

Kirsten: *We're on the clock here. That means quickly and quietly, obvs. There's also extra points if you can neutralize whatever this is and deliver it into our care.*

Richard: *But more importantly, we must make sure whatever is doing this is stopped. Were I a gambling man, I'd say this is just the start of something larger. Godspeed and good luck.*

By using this round-robin style of distributing information, the player characters' factions have more voice, potentially making them more endearing. It gives each faction a face and attitude for players to associate with, rather than thinking of them as a vast organization. Again this will require additional work on the part of the GM, but it has the potential to foster stronger connections between the players and their factions.

INVESTIGATIONS

Most missions in *The Secret World* have some element of investigation to them. The heroes are often sent into the field with a mystery to solve: Where are the school children who never arrived on Bus 207? What's causing the rash of cattle, dog, and human mutilations around the Orochi blacksite? How did a barn full of cultists disappear, and what happened to the barn?

It's up to the players to solve these mysteries. It's up to you, the GM, to create them.

CREATING MYSTERIES

While it's possible to simply throw the mystery out there and see how the heroes try to solve it, a more structured approach may help the GM keep track of loose ends, and prevent the game from losing momentum when players aren't sure how to progress.

To add some mystery and investigation to your mission, try following these steps:

STEP ONE: LIST THE ENCOUNTERS

Consider the encounters or scenes you want to include in your mission. This doesn't have to be an exhaustive list, but should include the introduction, the climax, and a couple major scenes in between.

STEP TWO: CONNECT THE ENCOUNTERS

Each encounter needs to lead to another one. Ideally, it should lead to more than one. Encounters should lead to each other in a conspiracy-like web, rather than a railroad-like straight line, though all paths should eventually lead to the thrilling climax of the adventure.

STEP THREE: CREATE THE CLUES

For every connection between two encounters, there needs to be at least one clue pointing the players in the right direction. In this case, a "clue" is any bit of information that gives the heroes a lead on how to move the story forward. It's a good idea to set up multiple clues, that can be discovered in multiple ways, by multiple heroes. While an individual clue might not tell the whole story, several in combination can lead the investigators to the next chapter in the mystery.

FINDING CLUES

It doesn't matter how amazing your mystery is if the players can't find the clues necessary to solve it. Clues are what let the heroes progress purposefully from one scene to another. As the GM, it's your job not only to create the clues, but to make sure the players can find them. Here are some tips to make your job easier, and your game run smoother:

Essential Clues: Some clues are absolutely necessary for the game to move forward. (For example, if the heroes don't read the old man's diary, they'll never learn about the pool of Filth hidden in his basement.) Reveal these clues when the heroes actively look for them; don't force your players to make skill rolls (which they can possibly fail). This doesn't mean simply handing them the clue ("Stepping into the bedroom, you see an open diary with the word 'Filth' written on its pages."), but it does mean rewarding them if they make a reasonable effort. ("We'll look around the room for notes, maps, letters—anything to tell us what he's been up to.")

Versatile and Redundant Clues: Ideally, the plot shouldn't hinge on a single clue in a single location. Shuffle essential clues around if necessary. If the heroes never go into the bedroom, for example, they can find the diary in the office. Consider back-up clues as well: if finding the diary doesn't make sense (perhaps they never investigate the house), the heroes can find out about the Filth by talking to the neighbors, noticing tracks by the basement window, or doing a field analysis of the nearby soil.

Skill Rolls: While essential clues may be found without a skill roll, such rolls can uncover extra details or additional clues that help flesh out the nature of the threat. For example, a successful Notice roll could reveal that the diary was written in three different hands, and smells of mildew.

Role of Skills: The most obviously useful clue-finding skills are Notice and Research, but knowledge-based skills (Academics, Electronics, Hacking, Occult, Repair, and Science) can often come in handy as well. Persuasion and Intimidation are useful for getting clues from other people. If players come up with ways to use other skills to find clues, so long as the justification makes sense, you should let them do so. It's better to give out too many clues than too few.



Combining Clues: Sometimes it takes more than a single clue to figure out where to go next. The players may need to find multiple clues, then deduce how they work together in order to progress. This is often the case at the start of the mystery, when the heroes have little information to go on, and need all the clues they can get.

Red Herrings: An occasional red herring can be fun. The heroes are sure they've got an important lead, but the information turns out to be wrong—or even leads them into a trap! But if it happens too often, your players may become frustrated, or stop chasing new leads.

Loose Ends: Some (non-essential) clues might not lead anywhere immediately useful. But because this is the Secret World, investigations are rarely fruitless; those looking for secrets are sure to find them. Those secrets might not be relevant to the mystery at hand. They may be dead ends. But in a world full of conspiracies, today's dead end is a key clue in discovering tomorrow's evil scheme.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

As Bees in service to Gaia, the player characters take on all kinds of missions around the globe. During their adventures, they will investigate the mysteries of the Secret World, protect the innocent, and battle the forces of darkness and corruption. As the GM, it's your job to create these missions, and this section will help.

Below are a number of "seeds" for Secret World adventures. Each one is a brief overview of a possible adventure, complete with an introductory hook, a few details of what the mission entails, and a possible twist. While these are not full-fledged missions, they provide enough structure and concrete ideas that you can flesh them out in ways that best serve your players and your campaign.

Note that a few of these adventure seeds are tied to specific locales, but most are universal enough that you can plant them wherever you'd like. Furthermore, you can feel free to change or ignore any parts of these seeds in order to make them truly your own. It's your game. Have fun with it!

FOREST PRIMEVAL

The dark and ancient forest has been the source of rumor and mystery for countless generations. At various times, it's been said to be home to wolves, witches, wicked faeries, and serial killers. Such tales are often dismissed as legends—until people start vanishing into the woods, and the bodies start piling up again.

No less than a dozen people have disappeared in the forest in the past year. The bodies of half of them have been found: torn, bloody, and mangled. Officially, they met their end at the claws and fangs of some wild beast, but the locals know better. The forest has awakened once more, and it's hungry for the flesh of the living.

The forest came to the attention of Zuberi when it was discovered that the bodies of the dead were all contaminated with Filth. Whatever lurks in that tree-filled darkness is associated with the Dreaming Ones, and it's getting stronger. It's up to the Bees to find out what it is and to put a stop to it.

Upon investigation (and perhaps with the reluctant help of a local guide), the heroes discover the source of the danger: an enormous tree with claws for branches, roots for feet, and Filth for sap. Once the center of both ancient blood rituals and more modern lynchings, the tree has become corrupted by the Dreaming Ones. Filth permeates the thing. If the Bees simply burn it down or cut it up, its millions of seeds will contaminate everything in the region with Filth.

FUN IN THE SUN

Zuberi has been tracking the Fun in the Sun outdoor music festival for years. Every spring, the festival welcomes thousands of young music lovers to a vast, remote field, which is transformed into the site of a week-long orgy of music, drugs, and appallingly unhygienic camping conditions. And every spring, in the weeks following the festival, hundreds of those who attended go mad. Some turn violent. Others, catatonic. None of them recover—and all show signs of Filth infestation.

This spring, Zuberi is sending the player characters to the festival to find out what's going on. They have been given access to fake identities as musicians, promoters, and other music industry insiders in order to infiltrate backstage at the festival. While poking around, the Bees discover that festival security is provided by Orochi—as is the main stage sound system. The corporation is using experimental "neuro-enhancement circuits" in the audio system to test a mass mind-control protocol. What they are only beginning to suspect is that the sound waves, when mixed with certain recreational drugs, make the listener susceptible to the mental manipulations of the Dreaming Ones. In the weeks that follow, the corrupting thoughts worm their way into the victims' minds, and Filth infestation is sure to follow.

Before the heroes can move to shut down the Orochi sound machine, the music masters send out a mind-control order, commanding the festival crowd to find and kill the Bees.

PUT TO REST

A vengeful spirit haunts the site of a recently constructed office building, and has already killed a number of people through horrific "accidents."

Zuberi has a team of exorcists in the building trying to get rid of the ghost and keep civilians out of harm's way, but they need the player characters' help.

The Bees are to retrieve the Rod of Eternal Slumber, a powerful artifact used for putting angry spirits to rest, and bring it to the exorcists. Unfortunately, the Rod has recently been acquired by a powerful, paranoid billionaire who has put it on display in his gallery of mystical objects. The heroes need to overcome the gallery's security, acquire the Rod, and deal with the billionaire's trigger-happy security forces who will stop at nothing to reclaim the artifact.

When the player characters arrive at the haunted office, they find that the ghost has already killed the original team. What's worse, the office workers are preparing to return to the building shortly. It's up to the Bees to reconstruct the exorcists' efforts from their notes and, armed with the Rod of Eternal Slumber, put the ghost to rest before the offices are full of clueless victims. If they don't, the halls will run red with blood.

THE NEST

A surge of vampires has been discovered in the sleepy suburb of a midsized city. The Bees need to find their nest, destroy it, and discover why this mundane setting is suddenly a hotbed for supernatural predators.

The heroes discover the vampires' nest is in a tunnel connecting a handful of plain-looking prefab houses in the heart of a residential neighborhood. They also discover that even if they destroy this nest, more vampires are likely to move in, for they are almost instinctively attracted to the blood of the people who live here.

The local water supply has been contaminated. The blood of those who drink the water is subtly changed, so that vampires find it more potent, addictive, and delicious than normal blood. Vampires can literally smell it on those who have been drinking the water for some time.

The heroes can clean up the water supply, but the question remains: who contaminated it and why?



OVERRUN

Zuberi's contacts have informed him that the small island of Otir, just off the coast, is being overrun by Filth creatures from beneath the waves. The island's tiny population needs help defending their fishing villages from the marauding monsters. That's where the Bees come in.

Zuberi sends the heroes to Otir to stop the incursion and find out why the monsters are attacking here in the first place.

Between fighting off waves of amphibious Filth abominations, the player characters discover that the people of the island have been carrying out certain rituals for generations. The rituals are tied to various configurations of standing stones. No one recalls exactly what the stones are for, but the Bees' research confirms that the rituals are those of binding. It seems the islanders have been helping keep a Dreamer sleeping beneath the waves—until now.

Armed with another ritual, the heroes find a way to keep the Filth creatures away indefinitely. But when their efforts are sabotaged, they realize the horrible truth: there are traitors among the islanders. It was they who called forth the Filth, and they will stop at nothing to release their Dreaming master.

RUST MONSTERS

Everyone in the Secret World knows who Marcus Rust is. A billionaire collector of mystical artifacts, blackmail documents, and high-ranking politicians, Rust is on a first-name basis with leaders of the Illuminati, the Templars, and the Dragon, but has declined every offer of membership. He says they have nothing to offer him. He may be right.

One of Rust's many houses stands at the edge of a steep cliff overlooking the ocean. The views are incredible, and the security is airtight. But late last night, an earthquake hit the area, and the house half-collapsed down the cliff. Rust was on the far side of the world when it happened, along with most of his security team. With no obvious casualties, this is merely an inconvenient mess for the billionaire, but it's a fantastic opportunity for those—such as Zuberi—who have been looking for a chance to raid Rust's vaults.

Zuberi sends the Bees to recover whatever they can from the ruins of Rust's house. If it looks arcane, valuable, high tech, or in the least bit interesting, they are to grab it. While doing so, they discover that Rust also collected living specimens of dangerous supernatural creatures. Those creatures are loose, and they're hunting the heroes throughout the wreckage of the house.

The creatures aren't the only hunters. Agents from various cults and secret societies are swarming to the scene as well. They're looking for the same loot the Bees are, and are more than willing to kill to get it.

While the scavengers fight the monsters and each other, the house slips ever closer to the ocean. It creaks. It groans. It shifts and bends from the strain. It's only a matter of time—hours, maybe; minutes, probably—before the whole thing collapses into the water, taking everyone with it.

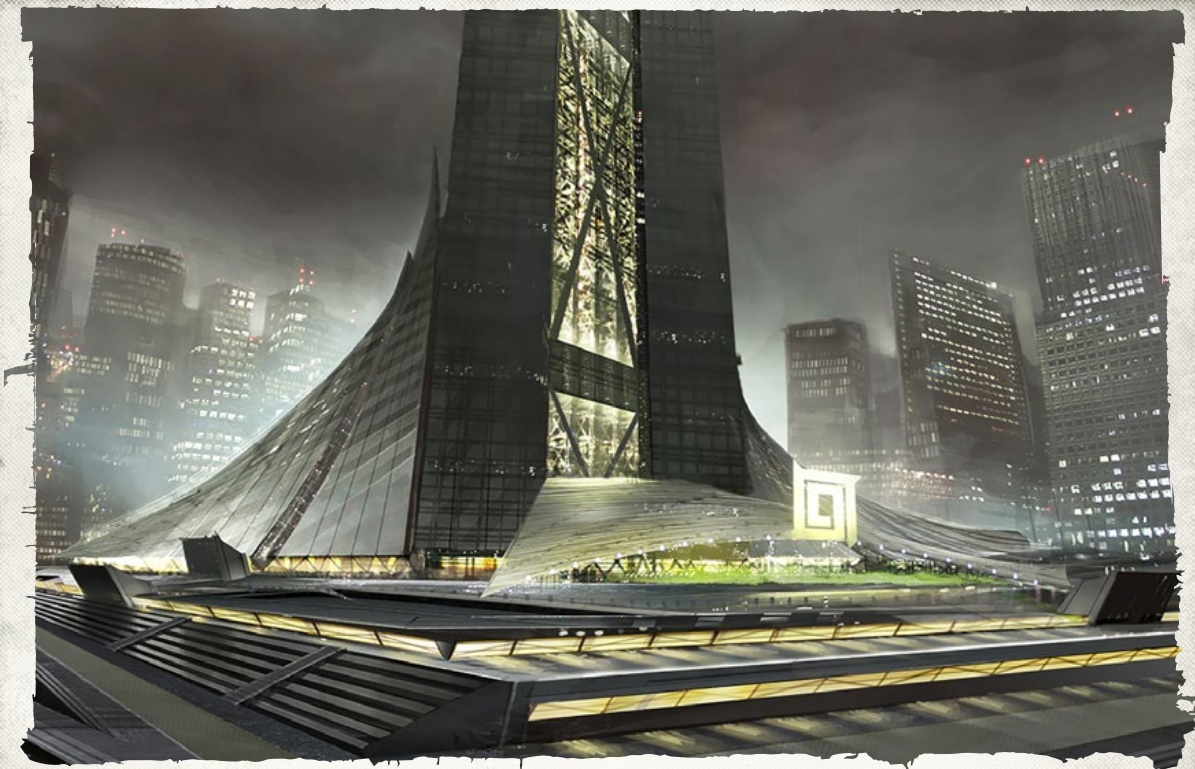
THE APOSTATE

While many Secret Worlders are aware that the Morninglight organization is the cheery public face of a powerful cult with questionable motives, Zuberi knows that its true purpose is the worship and eventual release of the Dreaming Ones. Zuberi also knows that if the secrets of the cult were to be exposed, it would lose much of its power and appeal in the mundane world.

This is why Zuberi sends the Bees to meet up with a well-respected journalist who might have the key to Morninglight's skeleton closet. This journalist, he explains, has a source inside the cult who is ready to talk. Talking to outsiders (especially reporters) about such things is strictly forbidden, of course. It's dangerous. It's the heroes' job to keep both the journalist and her source safe until the story can be told.

Unfortunately, by the time the player characters arrive on the scene, the reporter has already been killed, and much of her research is missing. Now they need to find her backup files and, from them, discover the identity of her inside source. Then, while dodging the Morninglight hit squads, they must make contact with the insider and get him to safety.

When the Bees meet with the inside man, they learn he's not the whistleblower they'd been led to believe. While he does want to publicly humiliate and discredit Morninglight, his motives are



anything but altruistic. In fact, he wants to hurt the cult so that he can steal its credibility and members to form his *own* cult—one based on his own (Dreamer-induced) vision of humanity's glorious future.

It's up to the heroes to decide what to do. Do they help this heretic expose their common enemy? Or do they shut him down before he can create a whole new Dreamer threat?

MATCHED FOR DEATH

The heroes are sent to break a murderer out of jail. The perpetrator is part of a team of hired killers who used drugs to inflict natural-looking heart failure on those they were contracted to kill. The killer knows the operation ties into the Secret World, and he has thus turned to the Secret World to offer up information in exchange for freeing him from the mundane authorities.

When the Bees interrogate the killer, they learn he doesn't know who hired him and his team, but he does have a list of victims. Working from the list, the heroes eventually realize what they all have in common. They are all participants in the consumer-facing genetic testing program known as "myDNA." Further investigation reveals the victims' bodies disappeared; 3D-printed simulacrum were buried or cremated in their place.

Working with the killer and following their own leads, the heroes discover the horrible truth. The Orochi-backed myDNA company is finding genetic matches for wealthy customers in need of organ transplants. When a suitable match is found, teams of assassins, surgeons, and other agents move into action. They kill the donor (in the least damaging way possible), replace their corpse, then transplant the necessary organ. The donors' bodies have all thus been disposed of, but traces might remain if someone knows where to look.

COVER TO COVER

Zuberi is concerned. One of the Dreaming Ones is stirring in its slumber, growing in strength as if it had collected worshippers. Yet there are no clear indications of cult activity. He dispatches the Bees to the general area where the Dreamer is said to be sleeping to find out what's going on.

At the site, the heroes find Filth and other evidence of Dreamer activity, but again, no obvious cult signs. It's only when they ask around that they learn the area has seen an uptick in "self-help tourists." The visitors are here to see the majestic wilderness that allegedly inspired their favorite book, *Stairway to Heaven: Walking the Steps of Enlightenment*.

The book is full of chants and rituals for Dreamer worship. They aren't labeled as such, of course. Rather, they are "personal affirmations" and "daily mantras for self-actualization." Anyone who participates in these cryptic ceremonies offers up a bit of their essence for the strengthening of the Dreaming One.

The author of the book is not a local. She's never seen the area. She has no idea the effect her book is having on the Secret World. She only knows that she had a series of vivid dreams that led her to write the book, and that the money from its publication keeps rolling in. If confronted with the reality of the situation, the author is disinclined to believe, and even more disinclined to help squash the book's success. Nevertheless, everyone has their price—even unwitting prophets of the Dreaming Ones.

SIGN OF THE DEMON

In a rural, sparsely populated region, livestock have been mauled to death by unknown creatures. The locals were willing to write the incidents as wildlife attacks, but now humans have also been attacked, and the wounds don't correspond to any known predators in the area. The coroner is stumped, but those in the Secret World know what's been doing the killings: demons.

The player characters are sent to the area to find where the demons are coming from, and to put a stop to their attacks. What they find is an ancient portal to the Hell Dimensions that was sealed up thousands of years ago. Time, weather, and neglect have worn away at the ancient stones that make up the seal, and ferocious, feral demons are now slipping through. And with every infernal incursion, the crack in the seal grows larger.

It's up to the Bees to find the proper ritual and physical materials to reseal the portal. Not only do they have to fend off regular demon attacks, but they also have to deal with the owner of the land on which the portal sits. He's paranoid. He's unpleasant. He's the richest man in a thousand miles, and he doesn't want strangers poking around his property.

Maybe the heroes can reason with the man. Maybe they can bribe or blackmail him. Maybe he's already under demonic influence. In any case, the clock is ticking, and every day of delays weakens the seal that much more.

NO CAPES

Through his Secret World contacts and his inherent connection to Gaia, Zuberi is a master at finding newly awakened Bees. While he doesn't try to recruit all of them to his cause, he does like to keep an eye on as many as he can. So he is perturbed when he realizes that there's a new Bee that has somehow slipped through the cracks. No one's tried to recruit him, train him, or give him any guidance. He simply woke up with strange visions and weird powers.

Obviously, he decided to become a superhero.

Zuberi sends the player characters to speak with the new Bee. They're to ease him into the reality of his situation, and discourage him from public displays of heroics, which only make him a target. When they arrive, they find his public displays of heroics have *already* made him a target. He has been captured by Orochi agents who hope to use his powers for their nefarious purposes. The Bees must rescue the would-be superhero, but his torment at the hands of his captors has driven him mad: he is now a villain, and a danger to himself and others.

THE CREATURE

A new cryptid has appeared on the outskirts of a small town. Reports are vague (It might have wings? Or antlers? Or six glowing eyes?) but steady, and it's definitely doing some property damage. Those who have seen it have suffered mental trauma, and some have been physically harmed. While descriptions are unreliable, they sound enough like a Filth creature that Zuberi sends the Bees to find out what the creature is, and to bring it (or its corpse) back for study.

The creature is not Filth-based, but an inhuman, supernatural creature the size of a horse. It's strong but stealthy, and can make itself invisible for periods of time. The heroes have to find a way to lure it into the open while also dealing with groups of rival cryptid hunters, both mundane and Secret Worlders, who are determined to get in their way.

It's not until the player characters secure the beast that they realize it's not alone. There are a dozen more like it—and they're all the offspring of a similar creature that's ten times its size and very protective of its progeny.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THREATS OF THE SECRET WORLD

The Secret World is full of dangerous creatures. While most are horrific monsters, some are merely humans with a taste for power or violence. This chapter showcases some of the threats the heroes may encounter during their adventures.

Wildcards are noted with this symbol: .

AGENTS AND ACOLYTES

Far more common than the supernatural horrors of the Secret World are the mundane humans who (usually unwittingly) serve as pawns, working for or against the various conspiracies. The entries below reflect baseline stats for the normal folks the heroes are most likely to encounter. As GM, you should feel free to adjust these stats as needed. If a character needs a certain skill or Edge to capture your vision, go ahead and add it. And if you need them to be a bit more competent and durable, make them a Wildcard.

CULTIST

Cultists aren't all robe-wearing, dagger-waving, wide-eyed zealots. Some certainly are, but just as many hide their occult beliefs and activities behind a mask of normalcy... until it's time to serve their dark masters with wide-eyed zeal.

The cultist stats here for those that are strictly human. A more advanced acolyte might have the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge. Those that delve deeper into their cultish sects are transformed into creatures that may appear normal, but are human no longer. (See the cult entries under **Creatures**, below.)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Occult d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Driven (Minor, cult's beliefs)

Edges: Brave, Connections (Cult)

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), small revolver (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d6, RoF 1).

FACTION HANDLER

The true leaders of the big three secret societies are mysterious figures whose very names the heroes are unlikely to learn. The highest-ranking members that heroes are likely to meet their handlers, who send them around the world on faction business. Handlers have dedicated their lives to their secret societies. In return, they have more power and influence than most mortals will ever know.

If a handler is expecting to go into combat, they will be outfitted with full body armor (+4), at least one more talisman, and a squad of disposable security personnel.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d8, Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Occult d6, Persuasion d8, Research d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Obligation (Major, the faction)

Edges: Command, Connections (Faction, plus at least one other)

Gear: Laptop computer, pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1), rurikid knot talisman (+1)

FIELD AGENT

Not everyone who works for a conspiracy, megacorporation, or mercenary troubleshooting outfit is a high-immortal specialist with supernatural abilities. Most agents are highly intelligent problem-solvers, as versatile as they are deadly. These stats are for both plain-clothes operatives. If going into a deadly operation, add a full set of body armor (+4) and an assault rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8+1, RoF 3, AP 2).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Driving d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Obligation (Major, employer)

Edges: Block, Steady Hands

Gear: Collapsible baton (Str+d4), Kevlar vest (+2), pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1)

POLICE OFFICER

Sometimes an ally, sometimes a foe, police tend to get involved when people start dying and buildings start blowing up. A police detective has Research d8, Smarts d8, and the Investigator Edge. A SWAT officer has Shooting d8, full armor (+4), and an assault rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8+1, RoF 3, AP 2).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d4, Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Research d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Thievery d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal (Other police officers)

Edges: Connections (Law enforcement)

Gear: Collapsible baton (Str+d4), Kevlar vest (+2), pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1)

CREATURES

Monsters born of nightmares, the grotesque blasphemies of the Secret World range from the entities we've always known but tried to deny, to the alien horrors that defy the imagination.

These are baseline stats. Each of these entities has countless variations. Depending on the heroes' abilities and the needs of your adventure, you may adjust these stats as you see fit.

AK'AB

Crawling, chittering nightmares spun into chitinous flesh, the ak'ab are a monstrous invasive species brought north by the Mayans. For centuries, an invasive population nested in the Black Goat Woods on Solomon Island. More recently, ak'ab appeared south to the woods surrounding Boston, as well as infesting its Common, scuttling on spiny legs out from the Blue Mountain's shadow. In appearance they resemble the progeny of a cicada and a moth; as a matter of biology, they boast attributes associated with cockroaches, locusts, and utter madness.

Ak'ab are a burrowing species capable—if the Wabanaki are to be believed—of spending centuries underground. Ground-penetrating radar scans have revealed an extensive network of subterranean tunnels that thread through most of Solomon Island, lending some credence to the legends surrounding both the creatures and an event called the Darkness War. Remote-controlled surveillance drones have also captured infrared images suggesting that the number of ak'ab present in these tunnels is best described as "legion."

Ak'ab possess a hive mind which allows them to work together seamlessly toward a common goal. While individual ak'ab pose manageable threats, collectively they form a hissing, quivering, army of darkness.

AK'AB QUEEN

The ak'ab queen is the enormous, grotesquely swollen progenitor of the species through which all others must pass. She only surfaces in dire circumstances; otherwise she is restricted to her birthing chamber by virtue of her size.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d4, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 2; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Chitinous armor.
- **Proboscis:** Str+d8.
- **Burrow (2"):** The ak'ab queen can dig, but does so slowly.
- **Fast Regeneration:** The queen may attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless her Wounds were caused by fire or acid.
- **Sense Movement:** Ak'ab ignore *invisibility*, *illusion*, and all Illumination penalties.
- **Size +2:** The queen can weigh over 1,000 pounds.

- **Larval Burst:** Once per day, the queen can jettison a hail of larvae from her back. This horrific burst does no damage, but potentially infects everyone within a Large Blast Template. Those within the Template can Evade. Those who succeed are unaffected, but those who fail are infested with wriggling, burrowing ak'ab larvae.

- **Larval Infestation:** The infested must make a Vigor roll at -2 at the end of each of their turns. On a failure, they suffer d6 damage as the larvae grow and feed; if they die, an ak'ab emerges from their corpse in 1d4 weeks. On a success (or on a successful Healing roll), the larvae are killed, and no further rolls are needed.



AK'AB SENTRY

Unless defending their nest, Ak'ab sentries are almost exclusively found below ground, as their primary purpose revolves around reproduction when they are not eliminating threats to the commune, though either way, their service is likely to end in death.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Chitinous armor.
- **Burrow (6"):** The ak'ab tunnel through the ground to build their nests below ground and hunt for food above.
- **Paralyzing Stinger:** Str+d6, Paralyzing Poison.
- **Proboscis:** Str+d8.
- **Trample:** If the ak'ab runs, it can trample every Medium or smaller Size creature in its path for Str+d6 damage. Those in its path may Evade.

AK'AB WORKER

Ak'ab Workers are responsible for colony maintenance and foraging; in both cases, decaying matter seems a staple material, including roadkill (and the occasional live stray cat).

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Chitinous armor.
- **Burrow (6"):** The ak'ab tunnel through the ground to build their nests below ground and hunt for food above.
- **Proboscis:** Str+d6.
- **Trample:** If the ak'ab runs, it can trample every Medium or smaller Size creature in its path for Str+d6 damage. Those in its path may Evade.

BOGEYMEN

Night stalker, innocence corrupter, devourer of children; these epithets all describe a single type of creature: the bogeyman. Spanning time, geography, and world cultures, these monsters serve as cautionary tales. Concerned parents who have exhausted all attempts at reasoning with their rebellious spawn often invoke them to deter children who might wander too far into the dark or otherwise disobey. The bogeyman, then, is often a *tulpa*, forged from society's worst fears about its vulnerable youth. But sometimes the bogeyman is something else—the last insidious remnants of a once-human predator: its hunger, its rage, its *teeth*.

Some bogeymen don't just feast on fear, they embody it. Such beings are cobbled together from terrors so powerful they took physical form.

Other bogeymen are the result of real-life evil, the kind which often spawns urban legends that are only semi-disproportionate to reality. Whether these mortals achieved grim immortality through ritual or curse, they were once human, though any vestiges thereof are either long gone or corrupted beyond recognition.

Regardless of their origins, bogeymen as a concept span the globe, haunting the places where terror thrives. Some have even immigrated with their human populations, stowaways on anxious mothers' tongues. It's been argued that bogeymen may be killed, but they can never truly die.

⌘ ABU RIGL MASLUKHA (THE MAN WITH THE BURNING LEG)

Step, step, drag. Along the narrow streets of al-Merayah lurches an animate shadow. *Step, step, drag.* With it wafts the smell of woodsmoke and the stench of burning hair. *Step, step, drag.* No, not a shadow—a man, forged from charred, crackling flesh and conflagrating muscle. *Step, step, drag.* He knows the pain of disobedience; now, centuries after the accident, it feels more like a hunger pang. *Step, step, drag.* His flames are always ravenous, always craving the only sustenance that will sate them. *Step, step, drag.* Children who do not mind their parents must be consumed.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Burning Bite:** Str+d8, targets may catch fire.
- **Devour:** A target of Medium Size or smaller hit by the burning bite attack must make an Evasion roll or be devoured! Devoured creatures are Entangled and on fire. Abu can contain only one swallowed creature at a time, and regurgitates its captive if it is Shaken or Wounded.

- **Environmental Weakness (Cold):** The Man with the Burning Leg subtracts 4 from rolls made to resist cold or cold-based effects, and takes +4 damage from such attacks.

- **Fear -2:** Those who first see Abu must make a Fear roll.

- **Fearless:** Abu is immune to Fear and Intimidation.

- **Immunity (Fire):** Abu takes no damage from fire or fire-based attacks.

- **Resilient:** The Man with the Burning Leg can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.



NATHANIEL WINTER

As a child, Nathaniel Winter was afflicted by fear. He knew it more intimately than any other emotion—even love—and in his desperation to unknow it, he forsook his humanity at the cost of so many human souls. His grand amusement park was little more than a front for his more wicked machinations, a construct through which he might generate and collect hundreds of children's screams. His rides were the altars upon which he let those children's blood, all to feed the insidious engine churning behind the scenes. Even when Atlantic Island Park fell into disrepair, Nathaniel Winter remained, fed by the urban legends and true crime podcasts that stoked terror generations down the line, his hideous form an amalgamation of childhood anxiety and parental lamentation. No, Nathaniel Winter will never again be afflicted by fear, for he has become it.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Occult d8, Persuasion d6, Performance d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Arcane Resistance

Powers: *Barrier, bolt, boost/lower trait, fear, light/darkness, teleport.* **Power Points:** 20.

Special Abilities:

- **Claw:** Str+d8.
- **Fear -2:** Those who first see Nathaniel Winter must make a Fear roll.
- **Fearless:** Nathaniel Winter is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Size +3:** Winter is a big man in the park.
- **Tentacles (2):** Winter has two extra tentacle actions and Reach 1. He may use his tentacles to bash his enemies with a Fighting roll for Str+d4 damage, or attempt to grapple instead.



SKADEGAMUTC (GHOST WITCH)

The evil that lurks within Solomon Island is as ancient as the land itself. The Wabanaki know this as surely as they know to stay away from the places in the woods where barred owls gather and the coyotes' songs won't echo. These burial grounds aren't sacred; they are cursed, laden with the burdensome corpses of Wabanaki shaman who attuned themselves to the Dreamers' black signal. Called *skadegamutc*, or ghost witches, they prey upon those who stray from the path, stalking their victims across the unhallowed ground of the gravesites they are bound to, their forms as nightmarish in undeath as their spirits were in life—monsters in every sense of the word.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Frenzy

Powers: *Bolt, dispel, elemental manipulation, entangle, fear, light/darkness.* **Power Points:** 20.

Special Abilities:

- **Antler Gore:** Str+d8.
- **Armor +2:** Thick hide.
- **Ashes to Ashes:** The *skadegamutc* can only be Incapacitated by fire. If it would be otherwise Incapacitated, it transforms into a



ball of light and teleports to its grave, where it remains until the next night.

- **Environmental Weakness (Fire):** Skadegamutcs subtract 4 from rolls made to resist fire or fire-based effects, and take +4 damage from such attacks.
- **Fear -2:** Those who first see a ghost witch must make a Fear roll.
- **Fearless:** Skadegamutcs are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Forest of the Night:** Skadegamutcs are bound to forests they have claimed as their own and only stalk these lands at night. If a skadegamutc attempts to travel by daylight or beyond its territory, it is immediately teleported back to its grave.



- **Impale:** If the witch gets a raise on its antler gore attack, the target is impaled on the creature's antlers and Entangled.
- **Resilient:** Skadegamutcs can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.
- **Size +4:** A ghost witch stands up to 12 feet tall.
- **Trample:** If the ghost witch runs, it can trample every Medium or smaller Size creature in its path for Str+d8 damage. Those in its path may Evade.

BLACK-EYED CHILD

Black-eyed children are paranormal creatures that resemble human children. They usually stand between three and four feet in height, and have pale skin and pitch-black eyes. They are most often seen hitchhiking or begging, but they sometimes knock on doors in residential neighborhoods. Though first spotted in the United States, black-eyed children have appeared all around the world.

Black-eyed children are thought to be some bizarre variant of vampires. They seem to feed on the life force of their victims, and they also share some of the same limitations as their more well-known cousins, such as not being able to enter a house without first being invited and a dislike of sunlight.

Black-eyed children travel in packs, with never fewer than two in a group and often far more than that. Groups of as large as ten have been seen, though they usually travel in groups of around five. Black-eyed children usually behave like ordinary children. They may gather in small groups on street corners, ride public transportation, play games with other black-eyed children, or frolic in otherwise empty public playgrounds. They are often heard singing nursery rhymes in low, monotone voices. They might congregate near abandoned buildings or empty streets. Unlike most children, black-eyed children are usually only spotted at late hours, after most parents would have called their kids inside. But when they are hunting, it quickly becomes apparent that they are not normal children in any way.

When on the hunt, black-eyed children approach a house or a car parked by itself. They knock on a door and ask to come inside. They might ask to use the phone or to go to the bathroom, beg for some food, or request a ride. They'll come

up with any reason to come inside—someone bad is chasing them, or they're lost, or they're waiting for their mother but it's cold and raining outside. Their requests may seem innocent, but observant people might notice warning signs that something isn't right about these children. They avoid all eye contact, but speak forcefully and often in an adult's voice.

If a would-be victim denies their plea, they become angry and look directly at them, revealing their unnatural black eyes and attempting to control the victim's mind. Apparently they cannot enter a home or car unless invited in—though the invitation can be magically coerced. If the victim still refuses to let them in, they remain outside for some time, staring silently at the house or chanting nursery rhymes in an unsettling manner, then vanish from sight by the time dawn arrives.

If a person allows the black-eyed children into their home or vehicle, the children mentally paralyze their victim and feed on them. When they are done feeding, there is nothing left of the poor soul, not even a skeleton. Some researchers believe black-eyed children are responsible for a great number of unsolved missing persons cases every year. No one knows where the black-eyed children came from—if they are actually the spirits of lost children, or just some horrible undead parody of youth and innocence.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Persuasion d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Life Drain:** A target touched by the black-eyed children or hit by their Fighting attack must make a Vigor roll. On a failure, the target's Vigor is reduced by a die type. If this would reduce their Vigor below d4, they are Incapacitated instead, and must make a Vigor roll at the end of their next turn or disintegrate into dust. Those who survive recover one die type every 24 hours, or per success and Raise with the *healing* power.
- **Mind Control:** Black-eyed children can use the *puppet* power using their Spirit as their arcane skill. They can cast and maintain the power indefinitely, but may only affect one target at a time.

- **Silent Communication:** While within sight of each other, black-eyed children can mentally communicate with each other.
- **Size -1:** They're the size of young children.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.
- **Weakness (Invitation Only):** Black-eyed children cannot enter a private home or vehicle without being invited—though the invitation can be magically coerced.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Black-eyed children are Distracted while in sunlight.

BÊTES NOIRES OF GÉVAUDAN

The Beast of Gévaudan, thought to have been some sort of wolf, hyena, lion, or tiger, haunted the French province of Gévaudan between 1764 and 1767. The creature—whatever it was—was deadly, killing as many as 500 people in the three years it was active. There were so many attacks, many people felt there must have been more than one beast. Moreover, it seemed preternaturally intelligent, able to avoid snares, traps, and large hunting parties with ease. The animal was supposedly killed in June of 1767, but the corpse was lost, so no one truly knows what it was.

But in fact, the Beast of Gévaudan had cubs, and those beasts continued its genetic line, up until this very day. Each generation has grown more intelligent, more cunning, and much more deadly. They aren't werewolves, exactly, but instead are large and dangerous animals with intelligence that rivals humankind's. Though most still live and hunt throughout France, they've spread across all of Europe and into Western Asia as well.

The Beast wasn't exactly a wolf, though it shared some lupine characteristics. Its coat was reddish gray, and it had a long, panther-like tail. Its head and legs were short-haired and the color of a deer. It had a black stripe on its back and huge talons on its feet. Some contemporary drawings of the Beast show it with a shaggy mane, indicating it may have had characteristics in common with a lion.

Bêtes noires hunt in small packs of three to five beasts, carefully stalking their prey—often for days—before they strike. Their preferred prey is humankind, though they will attack livestock if they deem it too dangerous to go after people. When they strike, they are clever enough to avoid leaving clues as to their nature—footprints or spoor. They are adept at hiding the ravaged bodies of their victims, and they never hunt in the same spot twice.

The Beast of Gévaudan was so large it decapitated many of its victims with its teeth. It was described by eyewitnesses as being as large as a calf (or sometimes even a horse). It feared no hunter, though it tended to attack only those who were alone. It hunted late at night or very early in the morning.

The original Beast of Gévaudan is said to have been shot, stabbed, and poisoned many times, but each time, it got up again to continue its reign of terror. Its descendants have inherited the original's seeming invulnerability to harm. The beast's wounds close quickly, and even otherwise fatal attacks seem to be merely inconveniences to these creatures.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d10, Notice d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick hide.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Fast Regeneration:** The beast may attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless its Wounds were caused by fire or acid.
- **Hardy:** If Shaken, a second result does not cause a Wound.
- **Low Light Vision:** The creature ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Pack Tactics:** Bêtes noires add their Gang Up bonus to Fighting damage as well as the attack roll.
- **Size 2:** The creature is up to 8' long and weighs nearly 1,000 pounds.



CHUPACABRA

The chupacabra (which literally translates to “goat sucker,” from the Spanish *chupar*, “to suck,” and *cabras*, “goats”) is a small, vampiric cryptid commonly found in Central and South America and the Caribbean. It mostly feeds on the blood of goats and other small livestock, but sometimes supplements its meals with humans, particularly children.

The first documented attack attributed to the chupacabras occurred in the mid-1990s. Eight sheep were discovered dead in Puerto Rico, each with three puncture wounds in the chest, completely drained of blood. These killings were originally attributed to Satanic cults, but eventually people began seeing the creature responsible—a reptilian beast roughly the size of a small bear, with a row of spines reaching from the neck to the base of the tail.

Although native to the Americas, people have reported spotting the chupacabra as far away as the Philippines and India.

Chupacabras are nocturnal by nature and only hunt at night, when their victims are mostly likely to be sleeping. They have excellent night vision, but can also hunt by smell. During the daylight hours, they rest in caves, abandoned buildings, or shallow burrows which they have dug in the ground. Though they are generally solitary hunters, dozens of chupacabras can share a lair, so rooting them out in their resting spots can be a dangerous proposition for would-be chupacabras hunters.

A chupacabra attacks by leaping onto its victim and biting into its flesh. It then drinks the victim’s blood until it is sated or the victim is dead. While feeding, the chupacabra relies on the razor-sharp spines along its back to keep it safe.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4. On a successful bite, the chupacabra is attached to its victim, which is Entangled.
- **Blood Sucking:** While attached to its victim, the chupacabra cannot move or attack any other targets, but can spend an action to deal



damage equal to its Strength as it sucks the victim's blood. It can detach from its victim as a free action.

- **Low Light Vision:** The chupacabra ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination (but not Pitch Darkness).
- **Spines:** Anyone making an unarmed melee attack against the chupacabra takes 2d4 damage from its back spines and becomes Distracted. The attacker remains Distracted until they spend an action to remove the barbed spine from their flesh.

CULT OF ATEN

Awakened after centuries of dormancy, the Cult of Aten has quickly spread throughout Egypt, claiming a stronghold in al-Merayah. Opposed by both the Prometheus Initiative and the Marya—albeit for very different reasons—these Filth-touched zealots seek to scorch the world in preparation for the arrival of their monstrous god. Though the Seven Sentinels' song still echoes through the Valley of the Sun God, it is only a matter of time until the Atenists find a way to silence it, and in doing so raise their deity's corpse from the fathomless void ... unless an even higher power intervenes.



The base of the Atenists' Black Pyramid scheme are soldiers, sentinels, and brainwashed villagers. Known as acolytes, these servitors are little more than cannon fodder for higher-ranking cultists, their sight clouded by tears of blood and their minds warped by Filthy whispers. Above them are Aten's priests and prophets, his Voices from whom profane sermons spill, worming and rooting in the minds of all who would listen. At the top are Akhenaten and his honor guard of Filth-infected mummies, the Vessels of Aten himself, who guard the fathomless chasm below the Black Pharaoh's burial chamber—and the Gaia Engine whispering within it.

ACOLYTE OF ATEN

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Scimitar (Str+d6).

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Blind Faith:** The acolyte's bleeding, bubbling eyes afford it infravision in place of standard vision.
- **Fearless:** Atenists are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Zealotry:** Followers of Aten are fanatical; they gladly sacrifice their lives in service to their dark master.

⌘ HAND OF ATEN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 13 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Ancient breastplate and shield.
- **Breath of Aten:** The hand spews a gout of Filth from its mouth in a Cone Template, dealing 2d8 damage. This can be Evaded.
- **Environmental Weakness (Fire):** The hands subtracts 4 from rolls made to resist fire or fire-based effects, and takes +4 damage from such attacks.

- **Fear -2:** Those who first see the mummified warrior must make a Fear roll.
- **Fearless:** Atenists are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Filthy Khopesh:** Str+d8.
- **Shield Bash:** Str+d4, those damaged must make a Vigor roll or be Distracted.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.
- **Zealotry:** Followers of Aten are fanatical; they gladly sacrifice their lives in service to their dark master.

VOICE OF ATEN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Occult d6, Persuasion d4, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic)

Powers: *Blast, bolt, elemental manipulation (fire), light/darkness, puppet.* **Power Points:** 15.

Special Abilities:

- **Black Pharaoh's Blessing:** When it Incapacitates an enemy, the Voice gains +2 Toughness until the start of its next turn.
- **Black Pharaoh's Gospel:** The Black Pharaoh speaks through the Voice of Aten. Enemies who can hear the Black Pharaoh's words must make a Fear roll at -2. Those who succeed are immune to the sound for 24 hours.
- **Blind Faith:** The cultist's bleeding, bubbling eyes afford it infravision in place of standard vision.
- **Fearless:** Atenists are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Purifying Touch:** Str+d6, anyone struck by the attack, damaged or not, has a chance of catching fire.
- **Zealotry:** Followers of Aten are fanatical; they gladly sacrifice their lives in service to their dark master.

CULT OF MORNINGLIGHT

One of the more obvious cults of the modern era, the Morninglight's recruitment efforts rival those of the Manson Family, Heaven's Gate, and Aum Shinrikyo, put together. It's not surprising, then, that their organization borrows heavily from all these fanatical institutions, using the trends of multi-level marketing and New Age self-help to attract society's most vulnerable rejects across the globe. Their South African compound adds a dash of the Peoples Temple to the mix, echoes of Jonestown reverberating through the Secret World like a warning bell. Their attack on Kaidan only solidifies their status as a terroristic threat, not just to the world, but to reality itself.

Similar to the Orochi Group, the Morninglight has split into a variety of entities, all of which lead back to the church and its leader, Philip Marquard. Its hierarchy persists throughout, but is particularly obvious in smaller offshoots, such as the hippie commune outside Kingsmouth. Their New Dawn compound follows a similar structure, separating foundlings from the anointed and the favored. The higher in rank these disciples ascend, however, the less human they become, hemorrhaging enlightenment from bodies swollen with event-horizon hunger.

MORNINGLIGHT FOUNDLING

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4).

Edges: Strong Willed

Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** Followers of the Morninglight are immune to Fear and Intimidation.

MORNINGLIGHT ANOINTED

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Gear: Sledgehammer (Str+d8).

Edges: Strong Willed

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Kevlar vest.
- **Fearless:** Followers of the Morninglight are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Morning's Glory:** A raise on the anointed's Fighting roll adds 2d6 additional damage, instead of the usual 1d6.

MORNINGLIGHT FAVORED

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Occult d6, Persuasion d6, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Gear: Bound dagger (Str+d4+2).

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Strong Willed

Powers: *Blast, bolt, boost/lower trait, light/darkness, smite, summon ally (filth guardian).*

Power Points: 15.

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Kevlar vest.
- **Blinded by the Light:** The favored has been gifted with *infravision* in exchange for its eyes.
- **Fearless:** Followers of the Morninglight are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Filth Summoner:** The favored can use its *summon ally* power to summon a filth hound, filth spider, or filth bird at the cost of 10 Power Points each.
- **Weapon Bond:** The favored can make the bound dagger appear in its hand or disappear as a free action.

CULT OF SOL INVICTUS

The predecessor to many of today's sun cults, though certainly not the first of its kind, Sol Invictus emerged in ancient Rome around the 4th century BCE. Nearly a millennium later, the followers of the Unconquered Sun fled the city just ahead of its ruin, forsaking the kingdom of Constantine and its persecutory obsession with Christendom. Some descended south into Africa, some north to Romania, prophesying with each step the inevitable return of their earthbound sun god who whispered to their prophets from its underground tomb. Those who settled in Egypt were absorbed into the Cult of Aten, while those in the Carpathian Fangs met a Filthier fate,

a punishment for digging where they were not welcome. These unfortunates still wander the ancient Roman baths as thirsting shades, their eternal death agonies feeding the Gaia Engine they dared trespass against so many years ago.

True followers of Sol Invictus are few and far between these days, at least when it comes to living specimens. Those who haunt the Roman baths of the Carpathians are no exception; their humanity has been adulterated, their lifespans lengthened to torturous degrees, all to sustain Neesh-Um, the Stalker of Nightmares. Where this particular abomination came from is unclear, though it clearly has something to do with the black calamity that bubbles and froths beneath the bathhouse ruins.

NEESH-UM, STALKER OF NIGHTMARES

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d4, Spellcasting d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 21 (4)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic)

Powers: *Blast, bolt, fear, illusion, teleport.* **Power Points:** 20.

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Rubbery hide.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Filthy Bile:** Neesh-Um expels a fountain of Filth up to 24" that deals 3d6 damage onto all targets within a Medium Blast Template. This can be Evaded. For each creature that fails to Evade, a thirsting shade appears, per the *summon ally* power.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a Wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Light Drain:** Neesh-Um feasts on light from the room, reducing visibility until the end of its next turn, per the *light/darkness* power.
- **Nightmare Orb:** Neesh-Um can fire a magical sphere (Range 6/12/24, Damage 2d8) at a single target. Anyone hit by the orb is overwhelmed by nightmares and must make a Fear roll at -4.
- **Otherworldly Nature:** Neesh-Um doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.
- **Size 8:** Neesh-Um weighs several tons, and is more than 30' across.

THIRSTING SHADE

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** While not in bright light, the shadows provide the shade protection from harm.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fountain of Filth:** With a Shooting roll, a thirsting shade may spew a torrent of Filth as an action (Range 3/6/12, Damage 2d4). Anyone hit by the Filth must make an Agility roll or be Entangled by the viscous substance. They take an additional 1d4 damage at the end of each of their turns that they remain Entangled.
- **Light Drain:** The thirsting shade feasts on light from the room, reducing visibility until the end of its next turn, per the *light/darkness* power.
- **Shadow Paths:** The shade can activate the *invisibility* and *teleport* powers while it's in darkness, using Spirit as its arcane skill.
- **Wall Walker:** The thirsting shade can move normally on walls or upside down while on all fours.

DEEP ONE

The humanoid fish-frog creatures known as deep ones hail from the cold black depths of the ocean, where they build their cities among the thermal vents, far from the distant sun's rays. In their native habitat, they pose no danger. But now they've surfaced, and humanity will suffer.

When the draug invaded Solomon Island a decade ago, they brought the deep ones with them. Though they are two different species, they share not only their aquatic origin, but their worship of the Dreaming Ones. The deep ones saw the draug as priests and prophets of their own sleeping gods, and followed them ashore to hunt for prey.

Though deep ones can inhabit any of the world's oceans, they currently infest the New England coastline. They have developed a taste for human flesh. They like to sink boats just beyond the sight of shore, or to grab lone

swimmers who venture too far from the beach. They drag their victims beneath the waves, drowning them, and then drag them deeper still, until the pressure tenderizes the flesh.

Deep ones are slow and awkward on land. Their frog-like legs are not made for walking, and their steps are deliberate and clumsy. But in the water, few sharks can compete with the deep ones' speed and grace.

Over the centuries, deep ones have regularly mixed their genetic stock with humanity's. In isolated coastal towns the world over, there are people with a certain fishy look. Their eyes are too big. They move with a hopping gait. They gaze too longingly at the waves. Some of them, in time, venture into those waves, and never return.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Edges: Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick rubbery flesh.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 12.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Low Light Vision:** Deep ones ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Pressure Bubble:** As an action, the deep one can create a mystic bubble around itself, giving it +2 Toughness until the start of its next turn.



DRAUG

Once upon a time, the Wabanaki of Solomon Island faced a tide of darkness. At their sides stood a band of Norsemen chosen by Odin himself to cross the raging seas in defense of lands and peoples not their own. It was upon these distant shores they fought and died, sacrificed for a future free of the Black Sun's shadow.

Yet those who did not perish faced a crueler fate. The Filthy fog they'd banished half a world away found them on the sea, and with its song, led them to ruin beneath the waves. It ran fingers of corruption through the Norsemen's darkest fears, and from them plucked the legend of the draug—creatures neither living nor dead, guardians of palaces and tombs—and *twisted*.

On the ocean floor, the draug sloughed and contorted, victims of perverse carcinization. It was only when the fog returned to Solomon Island that they walked again, foot soldiers in a battle to wake the Sleeping Snake Under the Mountain, the same ancient evil whose fitful slumber the Norsemen's brethren had died to preserve. The draug have been sighted again in Boston, heaving themselves from the sea like an undead stranding. Sometimes when Boston Harbor is quiet, you can hear their humanity still screaming inside their monstrous shells.

DRAUG BLOATED QUEEN

Similar to the behemoth, the bloated queen is a titan spawned from the marriage of Zero-Point sensibilities and the denizens of oceanic gyres. Unlike that monstrosity, the queen is imbued with twisted magical abilities of her own.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d4

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14 (4)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic)

Powers: *Blast, bolt, entangle, fear, zombie.* **Power Points:** 20.



Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Barnacle-covered flesh.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 4.
- **Bloodbound Frenzy:** The bloated queen expels a cloud of atomized Filth in a 6" radius. All allied creatures within the cloud gain the Fury and Reckless Abandon effects of the Berserker Edge for five rounds.
- **Claws:** Str+d6, Reach 1.
- **Fearless:** Draug are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Size 3:** The queen is bloated indeed.

DRAUG BEHEMOTH

Not all draug retained their blatantly human shapes. Some have undergone more radical transformations. The alien lens through which the Dreaming Ones interpreted the Norsemen's legends rearranged their DNA in kaleidoscopic fashion, merging it with that of the creatures haunting the deep sea trenches to create beasts such as the behemoth.



Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 15 (4)

Edges: Frenzy, Sweep

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Barnacle-covered flesh.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 4.
- **Claws:** Str+d8, Reach 1.
- **Fearless:** Draug are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Ground Slam:** Every other turn, the behemoth can strike the ground causing a Large Blast Template centered on the Claw strike. Those within Template must make an Evasion roll; failure causes 3d8 damage. Additionally, the area becomes Difficult Ground until cleared. Each 6-foot-square portion of area requires at least 1 minute to clear by hand.
- **Resilient:** Behemoths can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.
- **Size 3:** The behemoth stands 10' tall or more.

DRAUG INCUBATOR

Not quite dead, not truly alive, the incubator exists to host and defend the hideous seed of the draug invaders.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d4, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Barnacle-covered flesh.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 6.
- **Bile:** The draug incubator spews a gout of necrotic fluid from its mouth in a Cone Template, dealing 2d8 damage. This can be Evaded.
- **Claw/Bite:** Str+d6, Mild Poison.
- **Fatal Burst:** When the draug incubator is Incapacitated, it explodes in a burst of necrotic fluid. Each creature within a Large Blast Template centered on the incubator must make an Evasion roll. Those who fail take 2d8 damage.
- **Fearless:** Draug are immune to Fear and Intimidation.

DRAUG MAULER

These warriors act as frontline combatants. They patrol farther up the shore than their brethren, leaving behind the tide to guard the broodpods dotting the dunes.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Gear: Barnacle Club (Str+d8).

Edges: Brute, Sweep

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Barnacle-covered flesh.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 7.
- **Fearless:** Draug are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Resilient:** Maulers can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.

DRAUG SEAWITCH

When the Norse shamans fell into the Sargasso Sea, the alien infection that claimed them faced a dilemma. Years of mental and spiritual training had inoculated the shamans against total domination of their will. Thus the Filth trapped them in an eternal trance, manipulating their unreality so the shamans remain unaware they serve a Dreaming One. Their song does not call their herds from pasture but lures innocents to their deaths; the fields they sow are the bodies of drowned denizens of the coast, incubators seeded with malignant embryos that feed on their rotting flesh. The seawitches are the most tragic of the draug, for truly they know not what they do.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Occult d6, Performance d10, Persuasion d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Barnacle-covered flesh.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 6.
- **Fearless:** Draug are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Siren Song:** The seawitch's song is as alluring as it is treacherous. Every creature within 300

feet of the seawitch that can hear her song must make a Spirit roll at -2. Those who fail fall under her control, per the *puppet* power with a standard success. The seawitch uses the power to draw her victims towards herself via the most direct route, which often causes them to walk into the sea to drown.

- **Surface Tension:** The seawitch can move across the surface of any body of water as if it were solid ground.
- **Tentacles (3):** The seawitch has three tentacle actions and Reach 1. It may lash with its tentacles for Str+d6 damage.



DRAUG SPIKER

Spikers are crude wielders of magic, and stand with the maulers in defense of the broodpods.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Gear: Coral Spike (Str+d8).

Edges: Brute

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Barnacle-covered flesh.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 7.
- **Bolt:** Spikers can use the power *bolt* using Spirit as their arcane skill.
- **Fearless:** Draug are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Resilient:** Spikers can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.

FILTH

In Sumer, they called it the Eater. In Babylon, it was Nergal's Rot. From there it spun into a thousand other names: the Blackworm Jism, the Devouring Plague, the Zero-Point Pathogen, the Dark Homunculus.

The Filth.

Whatever its name, the danger it poses is the same. The Dreamers' dreams were never meant to be our own, never meant to take root in our minds. Our sanity cannot sustain them. The boundaries of our flesh rupture at their probing. That which it possesses, it remakes in its own alien image, sculpting muscle and bone like clay and leaving no synapse, no human impulse, intact.

The Filth is, quite literally, the stuff of nightmares.

Filthy Humans: It begins with a thought—a vagrant thought—intruding upon an otherwise linear train of cognition. Then that thought swells, festers, and bloats, its infectious tangle of rhizomes snaking through all the lumpy gray matter it can find. It propagates in these crevices, becoming a voice that is not your own; a familiar face rearranged into something uncanny; a cyclone of repetitious desires, spiraling ever deeper into your own psyche. Filth-infected humans gibber and jerk, spasm and froth in shades of ruinous black. Like insects captive to the whims of *Cordyceps*, they climb to great heights, dancing like fevered flesh in an electric chair as they wait to spore. They are caught in a nightmare from which they will never wake; their only hope is to find others they can drag into madness. Misery loves company, and the Filth does not want to be alone.

Filthy Fungi: Animals are not the only creatures capable of thought. Plant matter can be bent and twisted too, forced into blasphemous shapes only the Dreamers recognize. A collective consciousness bubbles beneath the earth, a fungal network always growing, always spreading like a membranous net weaving into something thicker. The most evolved among them walk on two legs, striding through fens and forests like the monsters of legend, contaminating all they tread upon with just a touch. According to recent studies, even normal fungi possess some hitherto uncharted intelligence. What does it mean for such alien sapience to come up against something more alien still?



Filth Guardians: Not all manifestations of the Filth have been spun from preexisting DNA. The Dreaming Ones can affect reality in other ways, imbuing their seething mucous with abominable life. These creatures are mockeries of the ones we know, animal shapes interpreted by half-lucid interlopers to our material plane. They sup on the compromised consciousness of every creature they corrupt, and from them spit hideous amalgamations of everything they most fear. The Hound; the Bird; the Arachnid; they are all guarding something the Dreamers define as *precious*. But what?

FILTH BIRD

The largest of the filth guardians, the filth bird resembles an enormous bird with a long neck and long tail. It can snatch up its enemies in its talons, dive at them from the sky, or vomit a steam of pure Filth at them.

Attributes: Agility d12+1, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d10, Notice d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 16

Edges: Alertness

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6, Reach 1, AP 2.
- **Deadly Dive:** If the filth bird spends a turn diving at its target before making a successful bite or talon attack, that attack deals an additional 2d6 damage.
- **Dirge of Despair:** The filth bird screeches at an impossible volume. Enemies who can hear the screech must make a Fear roll at -2. Those who succeed are immune to the sound for 24 hours.
- **Fearless:** Filth creatures are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Flight:** Pace 16.
- **Immunity:** The creature is immune to damage from non-magical sources. It can be Shaken, but can't take Wounds from any attacks that aren't magical.
- **Low Light Vision:** The creature ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Membranous Tempest:** The filth bird exhales a cloud of Filth in a Cone Template. Those caught in the blast must make a Vigor roll at -2. Those who fail are Shaken.
- **Seething Innards:** When the filth bird is Incapacitated, it explodes in a burst of viscous fluid, and its body dissolves into a pool of bubbling Filth that slowly leaches into the ground. Each creature within a Large Blast Template centered on the bird must make an Evasion roll. Those who fail take 3d8 damage.

Additionally, the pool of innards contaminates the area beneath the Template for the next 5 rounds: Those entering or remaining inside the Filth zone suffer 3d8 damage each turn.

- **Size 8 (Huge):** Filth birds sport a wingspan over 100'.
- **Talons:** Str+d6, on a raise, the target may be grappled if it is of equal or smaller size. While grappled, the bird can't use its talons on another target.
- **Zero-Point Pathogen:** The filth bird regurgitates Filth in a line 24" long and 1" wide, dealing 2d8 damage to everything along that path. This can be Evaded with an Agility roll at -4.

FILTH HOUND

The filth hound is a filth guardian that barks and bites like a dog, but is no one's best friend.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d10, Notice d10, Stealth d8, Survival d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Alertness

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Fearless:** Filth creatures are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** A second Shaken result in combat doesn't cause a Wound.
- **Haunting Howl:** The Filth hound emits a bloodcurdling cry. Enemies who can hear the howl must make a Fear roll at -2. Those who succeed are immune to the sound for 24 hours.



- **Immunity:** The creature is immune to damage from non-magical sources. It can be Shaken, but can't take Wounds from any attacks that aren't magical.
- **Low Light Vision:** The creature ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Seething Innards:** When the Filth hound is Incapacitated, it explodes in a burst of viscous fluid, and its body dissolves into a pool of bubbling Filth that slowly leaches into the ground. Each creature within a Medium Blast Template centered on the hound must make an Evasion roll. Those who fail take 2d8 damage. Additionally, the pool of innards contaminates the area beneath the Template for the next 5 rounds: Those entering or remaining inside the Filth zone suffer 2d8 damage each turn.
- **Size 3:** The Filth hound is over 12' long and weighs more than a ton.
- **Teleport:** As a limited free action, the Filth hound may teleport to any point within its line of sight, per the *teleport* power.

FILTHY HUMAN

The most common strain of Filth affects reality's humanoid population, twisting their proportions and outfitting them with appendages previously undreamed of by evolution. Some retain a similar form and stature, while others swell into great, hulking fiends pulsing with annihilative intent: all their rage, their sorrow, their horror at what they have become hemorrhaging from their eye sockets, searing their faces with trails of cadaverous black. They are somewhere in there still, longing to burst, boil, and dissolve.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fearless:** Filth creatures are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Low Light Vision:** The creature ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Seething Innards:** When the Filthy human is Incapacitated, it explodes in a burst of viscous fluid, and its body dissolves into a pool of bubbling Filth that slowly leaches into

the ground. Each creature within a Medium Blast Template centered on the human must make an Evasion roll. Those who fail take 2d6 damage. Additionally, the pool of innards contaminates the area beneath the Template for the next 5 rounds: Those entering or remaining inside the Filth zone suffer 2d6 damage each turn.

🕸 FILTH SPIDER

Unlike other manifestations of the Filth, guardians are amalgamations of the Dreamers' imaginings woven into their own interpretation of flesh. They drip with malignant antimatter, appropriating animal archetypes while perverting them into something vile, something new. One such guardian, the filth spider, appears as a hideous, spider-like creature that secretes Filth-covered webbing.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d10, Notice d10, Shooting d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Alertness

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6, on a raise, the target may be grappled if it is of equal or smaller size.
- **Burrow (6"):** The Filth spider can burrow through solid rock at half its burrowing speed and leaves a 5-foot-wide, 10-foot-high tunnel in its wake.
- **Fearless:** Filth creatures are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Immunity:** The creature is immune to damage from non-magical sources. It can be Shaken, but can't take Wounds from any attacks that aren't magical.
- **Low Light Vision:** The creature ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Maddening Chitter:** The Filth spider emits a gleeful cacophony of sound. Enemies who can hear the chittering must make a Fear roll at -2. Those who succeed are immune to the sound for 24 hours.
- **Seething Innards:** When the Filth spider is Incapacitated, it explodes in a burst of viscous fluid, and its body dissolves into a pool of bubbling Filth that slowly leaches into the ground. Each creature within a Medium Blast Template centered on the spider must make an Evasion roll. Those who fail take

2d8 damage. Additionally, the pool of innards contaminates the area beneath the Template for the next 5 rounds: Those entering or remaining inside the Filth zone suffer 2d8 damage each turn.

- **Size 3:** Atop its spindly legs, the spider is over 12' tall.
- **Spitting Strike:** With a successful Shooting roll, the spider spits a wad of Filthy web (Range 3/6/12, Damage 2d8) at its target. On a raise, the target is Bound by the web, and takes an additional 2d4 damage at the end of each of their turns they remain Bound or Entangled. The web has a Hardness of 4.
- **Wall Walker:** The Filth spider can move normally on walls or upside down.

FUNGAL STALKER

Many of the same viruses communicable among humans are *almost* communicable among fungi. This is similarly true for the Filth, which in mycelium finds a perfect marriage of human and alien DNA. Less like plants than creatures, fungi seem to share an intelligence while simultaneously possessing awareness of their individual selves, blending a hive-mind mentality with a desire for self-preservation. Fungi are masters of decay all on their own, often using rot as fertile soil for their propagation. In this, they and the Filth share a goal.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 1; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Environmental Weakness (Fire):** Fungal stalkers subtract 4 from rolls made to resist fire or fire-based effects, and take +4 damage from such attacks.
- **Fast Regeneration:** The stalker may attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless its Wounds were caused by fire.
- **Fearless:** Filth creatures are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Fertile Strike:** Str+d8, Reach 1.
- **Fungal Spore:** If an enemy is killed by the stalker's fertile strike, it is implanted with a Filthy fungal spore. Unless the spore is destroyed, the corpse animates as a fungal zombie after 24 hours. The spore is destroyed

if the corpse is destroyed, targeted by magic such as the *dispel* power, or raised from the dead.

- **Ravening Spores:** The fungal stalker's cap releases a cloud of spores. Those within a Large Blast Template centered on the stalker must make a Spirit roll at -2. Those who fail fall under the stalker's control, per the *puppet* power with a standard success, and must move as close to the stalker as they can.
- **Resilient:** Stalkers can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.

FUNGAL ZOMBIE

Those killed and infected by a fungal stalker do not rest easy. The stalker's fungus spreads within them, turning them into obscene, undead parodies of their former selves.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4-2, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Notice d4, Stealth d4

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claw:** Str+d4.
- **Environmental Weakness (Fire):** Fungal zombies subtract 4 from rolls made to resist fire or fire-based effects, and take +4 damage from such attacks.
- **Fast Regeneration:** The stalker may attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless its Wounds were caused by fire.
- **Fearless:** Filth creatures are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Fungal Rebirth:** If the fungal zombie is Incapacitated but not destroyed, the spore within it fully matures within the next seven days. The zombie melts away into a puddle of Filth while a new fungal stalker blooms from its viscera. If the zombie is destroyed prior to this, the spore within it perishes as well.
- **Resilient:** Stalkers can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.

GHoul

Ghouls are pale-skinned humanoids who eat the rotting flesh of the human dead.

Ghouls are the trash disposals of the Secret World. They have no higher agendas or long-term goals; they simply are what they are, following the scent of rotten flesh, digging up the dead for their morbid repast. Other supernaturals tend to treat them with disgust. Humans instinctively avoid those burial spots that become ghoulish feeding grounds. The ghouls fill their gross niche.

The jinn claim to have created the ghouls, just as the Host created them, to serve as their slaves in the First Age. During the wars between their masters and mankind, ghouls would feast on the flesh of dead humans. Often, there would be more than they could eat, and bodies would start to rot before they could clear the battlefields. In this way, ghouls developed a preference for aged flesh. The story could be a baseless fable from the jinn, but it could just as easily be true. Given their disdain for humans, it is not so far-fetched to imagine the jinn deriving glee from the notion of human burial in the guts of ghouls.

Ghouls are found throughout the world, congregating around graveyards, battlefields, and the scenes of accidents and natural disasters. If they can't find any cadavers, they will attack living creatures, leaving the remains to rot or burying the carcasses to feed on later.

While often mistaken for zombies, ghouls are more intelligent than the walking dead, and they are highly sensitive to changes in occult energy. They are instinctively drawn to locations flooded in dark magic, perhaps another trait that evolved from their days as vassals to magical masters.

Some ghouls are solitary, while others live in permanent packs, clans, or tribes with their own customs, rituals, and dialects.

Most ghouls live underground, in caves, or in other dark locations like abandoned crypts and basements. While they are able to function during the day, they prefer the night. In daylight, they are easily spotted, and their prey can fight back. Hunger can draw them out during the sunlight hours, as can the presence of wars, accidents, or occult incidents that tip the balance in their favor.

The many known variations indicate that ghouls are susceptible to mutation and magical transformation. Inbreeding produces unusual traits, and mad science experiments have been

known to create highly intelligent ghouls. Truly ancient ghouls are said to live for millennia, grow larger than humans, use magic, and navigate blindly through sonar and sense of smell.

COMMON GHoul

The most common type of ghoulish is as tall as a human and paler than the shambling ones. These ghouls have long and elegant fingers with terrible claws, and their mouths are filled with sharp teeth perfectly suited for ripping apart rotten meat. They are faster than their less intelligent cousins and more independent.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Thievery d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4, Mild Poison.
- **Corpse Sense:** The ghoulish can smell rotting flesh up to a mile away.
- **Immunity (Disease and Poison):** As creatures of corruption, ghouls take no damage from poison and cannot catch diseases.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ghouls ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Magic Sense:** Ghouls can *detect arcana* as an action, once per turn, without making a roll. They can detect the presence of any magical item or person, including those with Arcane Backgrounds, even in pitch darkness.

GHoul LEADER

The oldest ghouls ascend to leadership roles, where their hard-won wisdom can help their ghoulish communities stay safe and grow prosperous.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Arcane Resistance, Combat Reflexes, Command, Frenzy (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4, Mild Poison.
- **Corpse Sense:** The ghoulish can smell rotting flesh up to a mile away.

- **Immunity (Disease and Poison):** As creatures of corruption, ghouls take no damage from poison and cannot catch diseases.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ghouls ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Magic Sense:** Ghouls can *detect arcana* as an action, once per turn, without making a roll. They can detect the presence of any magical item or person, including those with Arcane Backgrounds, even in pitch darkness.

GHoul SHAMAN

Though drawn to magic, few ghouls have the knack to wield it themselves.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Occult d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4, Mild Poison.
- **Bleaching of Bones:** The ghoul unleashes a stream of magic in a Cone Template, dealing 2d8 damage. This can be Evaded.
- **Corpse Sense:** The ghoul can smell rotting flesh up to a mile away.
- **Immunity (Disease and Poison):** As creatures of corruption, ghouls take no damage from poison and cannot catch diseases.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ghouls ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Magic Sense:** Ghouls can *detect arcana* as an action, once per turn, without making a roll. They can detect the presence of any magical item or person, including those with Arcane Backgrounds, even in pitch darkness.
- **Resilient:** Ghoul can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.



SHAMBLING GHOUL

A hierarchy exists between the different types of ghouls. At the bottom of this social order are the shambling ghouls. With their blank, hungry stares and perpetually hunched backs, they are the thugs of their species, weak on their own but dangerous in numbers. They reproduce faster than others of their kind, but their lives are shorter. They sometimes appear in daylight, despite their light-sensitive eyes, and they will even eat meat that has barely begun to decompose. Other ghouls detest and avoid them.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Thievery d4

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4, Mild Poison.
- **Corpse Sense:** The ghoul can smell rotting flesh up to a mile away.
- **Immunity (Disease and Poison):** As creatures of corruption, ghouls take no damage from poison and cannot catch diseases.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ghouls ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Magic Sense:** Ghouls can *detect arcana* as an action, once per turn, without making a roll. They can detect the presence of any magical item or person, including those with Arcane Backgrounds, even in pitch darkness.

GHoul SHAPESHIFTER

Rare and elusive are the shapeshifter ghouls, who assume the shapes of other carrion eaters such as ravens, hyenas, and wolves. Thus disguised, they stalk their unsuspecting prey.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Thievery d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4, Mild Poison.
- **Corpse Sense:** The ghoul can smell rotting flesh up to a mile away.

- **Hyena Form:** Ghoul shapeshifters can spend a full turn to transform into a raven, hyena, or wolf per the *shape change* power. (Use the Dog/Wolf profile in the core book for hyena stats, and the Raptor profile for the raven.)
- **Immunity (Disease and Poison):** As creatures of corruption, ghouls take no damage from poison and cannot catch diseases.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ghouls ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Magic Sense:** Ghouls can *detect arcana* as an action, once per turn, without making a roll. They can detect the presence of any magical item or person, including those with Arcane Backgrounds, even in pitch darkness.

JINN

The jinn are a race of demons, created by the Host before the First Age, who swore to protect Gaia. When Gaia chose humans to be her champions and protectors, the jinn burned with hatred against the talking monkeys who they believed stole this honor from them.

When wars broke out between those who supported humanity and those who wished it destroyed, the jinn fought to destroy mankind. In the end, they lost the battle, lost the war, and lost their place in this dimension. They were exiled to the darkest abyss, an abandoned place known as the Howling.

During their eons of exile, the jinns' rage only grew. They knew nothing but hatred. They wanted nothing but revenge.

The Dreaming Ones answered their call for vengeance. They reached into the jinns' minds and offered to free them from the Howling if they would agree to serve them and wage war once more against the humans. Some jinn rejected the offer; their loyalty to Gaia and opposition to the Dreamers was greater than their spite. But others gladly accepted. They would betray Gaia the same way she had betrayed them, if only they could have their retribution.

But when the newly freed jinn returned to the world, they saw their beloved Gaia corrupted, bleeding, and suffering at the hands of the Dreaming Ones. Realizing the true horror of the situation, they betrayed their Dreaming benefactors. They would be no one's servants but Gaia's. They would fight on their own terms

against humans, Dreamers, and anything else they saw as a threat to their holy mother or their cause.

The jinn still hate humans. But they understand that the lengths necessary to wipe humanity from the earth would harm Gaia too much to make it worth the sacrifice. Some turn their efforts to purging the Dreaming Ones and their influence, and may even grudgingly work with humans to do so. Others embrace their rage and lash out without reason or a long-term agenda; they have suffered and want to make everything but Gaia suffer as well. In their anger, some jinn have turned against each other.

This means that not all jinn are dedicated to immediately destroying all humans. They may see the Dreaming Ones and their Filth as a greater threat to Gaia, and be willing to set aside their ancient anger for the greater good ... for now.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Occult d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: First Strike

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fast Regeneration:** The jinn may attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated.
- **Firepower:** A jinn can use the *blast* power using their Spirit as their arcane skill. Those caught in the area of effect may catch fire.
- **Hardy:** A second Shaken result in combat doesn't cause a Wound.
- **Immunity (Fire and Poison):** Jinn take no damage from fire or poison.
- **Napalm Bloom:** The jinn can use the *burst* power using their Spirit as their arcane skill. Those caught in the area of effect may catch fire. When rolling damage, the jinn can take a level of Fatigue to roll 4d6 (or 5d6 with a raise).
- **Size 3:** Jinn stand up to 12' tall.



LOCUST

The chaos in Egypt ten years ago awoke more than Aten and his cult.

Arbeh, a god of locusts, arose once more from the ancient past to reclaim his place in the modern world. Arbeh spawned his own army: vast swarms of giant locusts. These vile creatures descended upon the land, devouring crops, animals, and even human flesh. The hidden valleys of Egypt were thick with the creatures; if not for the constant vigilance of the Secret Worlders, the locusts could have easily overrun the whole region.

Today, Arbeh's locusts are still common in parts of Egypt. They aren't as numerous as they once were, but they've now spread throughout the Middle East and Africa, and into Europe. It's unclear whether this is a natural pattern of reproduction and migration (if anything about these abominations can be considered "natural") or part of Arbeh's grand scheme. There has been little sign of the locust god in recent years (aside from the locusts, of course), but there are rumors of Arbeh cults popping up in Libya and France.

GUARD LOCUST

The giant locusts typically appear in two varieties. The first, the guard locust, is a smaller breed found in dense swarms where food is plentiful.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

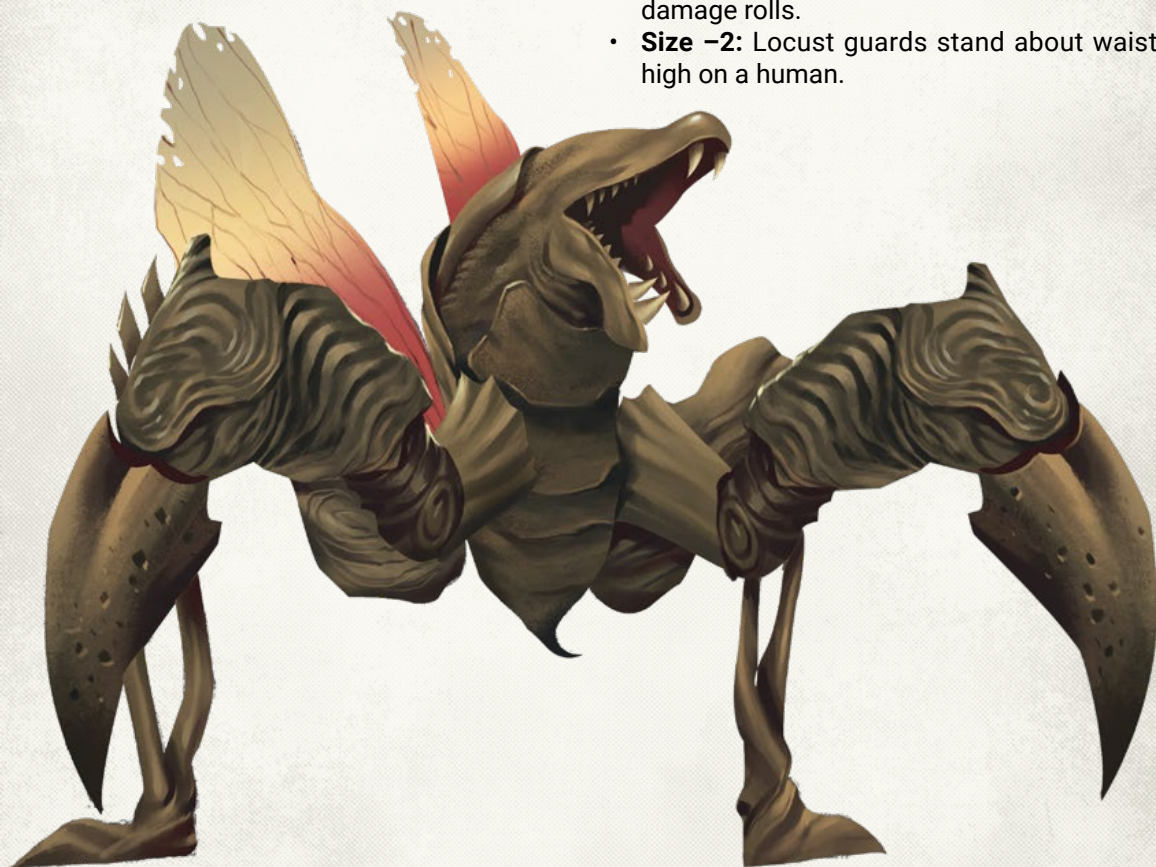
Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5 (2)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Chitinous armor.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Digestive Goop:** With a successful Shooting roll, the locust spews a glob of toxic goop (Range 3/6/12, Damage 2d6, Mild Poison) at its target. On a failed roll, the glob deviates and creates a Small Blast Template where it lands. For the next 5 rounds, those entering or remaining inside the goop suffer 1d6 damage and Mild Poison from the fumes.
- **Flight:** Pace 7.
- **Pack Tactics:** Locust guards attack in groups, adding any Gang Up bonus to their Fighting damage rolls.
- **Size -2:** Locust guards stand about waist-high on a human.



WARRIOR LOCUST

The warrior locust is much larger than the guard. It's a solitary feeder, and doesn't mind hunting larger prey (such as humans) in more civilized environments.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Chitinous armor.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Digestive Goop:** With a successful Shooting roll, the locust spews a glob of toxic goop (Range 3/6/12, Damage 2d6, Mild Poison) at its target. On a failed roll, the glob deviates and creates a Small Blast Template where it lands. For the next 5 rounds, those entering or remaining inside the goop suffer 1d6 damage and Mild Poison from the fumes.
- **Flight:** Pace 12.
- **Size 2:** Locust warriors are taller than humans and weigh up to 1000 pounds.

MRS. PATTERSON, THE MEAN OLD LADY

There it stands, an old house on the end of the cul-de-sac, once majestic but now looking a little run down, a little neglected, perhaps even a little sinister. The place could do with a new coat of paint. The shingles on the roof need replacing. The lawn requires some care, overgrown in some parts but dried out and dying in others. The trees are what a real estate agent might euphemistically call "mature," but mostly they're just old and tired. The sidewalk is cracked and dirty. The wrought-iron fence that surrounds the property is rusty and sagging.

No one in the neighborhood minds much, though. "The nice old lady who lives there, Mrs. Patterson, has a hard time keeping things up," folks say. "Ever since her husband passed away, it's just been too much for her. She's just a lonely old lady, living by herself, with only her cats to keep her company."

At least, that's what the grown-ups say. The kids in the neighborhood, though, know differently. Mrs. Patterson isn't a nice old lady.

Her name isn't Mrs. Patterson. She's not even a lady at all; she's something else, something horrible. And if you're not careful, she'll get you!

Mrs. Patterson, sometimes known as the Mean Old Lady, is a dangerous, parasitic demon who sometimes appears on Earth to build a nest and feed. Where it comes from originally, no one has ever been able to determine. It disguises itself using a powerful but subtle psionic influence that permeates the area in which it has perched. Once established in an area, it begins to feed off the unconscious psychic energy of its neighbors, slowly transforming a vibrant community into a sterile, soulless place.

When the Mean Old Lady settles in an area, she chooses an empty house or apartment and settles in. Due to her powers, people in the neighborhood will soon "remember" that she has always lived there, and will not question her sudden appearance. Her home will always have a slightly run-down appearance, enough that people will naturally tend to avoid it but not so much that the local housing board or health department feels the need to pay her a visit.

As the Mean Old Lady feeds, her influence can spread from neighborhood to neighborhood and eventually infect an entire town. The city will begin to fall into ruin as people give into despair, industry moves away, crime rates rise, and the infrastructure decays. Eventually, the Mean Old Lady will drain all the life out of an area and vanish as mysteriously as she appeared. Perhaps she's gone back to wherever she came from, or maybe she's moved on to a new, unsuspecting town.

The Mean Old Lady seems basically harmless. Even in her natural form, she is not physically imposing. However, she feeds off people's psychic energy, draining away their personalities over time. Men and women become hollow versions of themselves, going through the motions of life but without any joy or interest. If allowed to prey on the neighborhood for any length of time, she siphons off that which makes each person unique and alive. Individuals grow listless; they become unable to summon the energy to get out of bed, and eventually die of a mysterious ailment that no doctor can cure.

The Mean Old Lady's true form is that of a withered, harpy-like creature standing approximately four feet tall. Bedraggled wings jut from its back. Its mouth and eyes are abnormally large for its size, giving it a horrifying cast. However, because of its psychic disguise, most

people see the Mean Old Lady as a harmless septuagenarian, thin and slightly bent with age, with thick glasses and silver hair pulled into a tight bun.

Though she is not a towering danger, the Mean Old Lady is not without her defenses. Although physically weak, she usually has five or six cats living in her house. But these are not ordinary cats; they are a loyal cadre of imps who act as her eyes and ears throughout the neighborhood and, when necessary, operate as her enforcers.

These imps, disguised as normal cats, patrol the neighborhood at all hours, ignored and unseen by most, keeping an eye on things for her and reporting back anything that might be construed

as a threat. Those who dare to oppose the Mean Old Lady must keep a careful watch for these ever-present watchmen, not just because they might report her enemies' activities back to their mistress, but also because anyone who angers her too much has been known to vanish mysteriously in the middle of the night. Usually, those who vanish are children.

The Mean Old Lady's psychic power means that the adults of the neighborhood soon forget that the missing child ever existed, or that they died of a common, fatal childhood illness. But the kids know what happened; they remember, and if the Mean Old Lady has properly instilled fear in them, they do not bother her any longer. What happens to the missing



children? Nobody knows, and nobody really wants to find out.

Most folks will never have any idea of what is going on. However, children under the age of about twelve seem to be immune to the Mean Old Lady's mental influence. They see her as she truly is—an alien creature, a parasite draining the life from their elders. Of course, parents are generally unwilling to listen to their children's "wild stories," and often punish them for speaking ill of a harmless old widow.

Children have always been the first line of defense against the Mean Old Lady. Though they instinctively fear her, they are also drawn to challenge her, to protect themselves and their families. Adults don't believe them, so they will attempt to drive her away in the only way they know how—by pulling pranks that can quickly escalate into an all-out war with the Mean Old Lady.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Persuasion d10, Notice d8, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Arcane Resistance

Powers: *Blast, boost/lower trait, confusion, disguise, illusion, mind reading, puppet.* **Power Points:** 20.

Special Abilities:

- **Cat Servitors:** The Mean Old Lady has 1d4 +1 imps shapechanged into cats. They have standard cat stats, but have d6 Smarts and can telepathically communicate with the demon and each other.
- **Fearless:** The Mean Old Lady is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Immunity:** The creature is immune to damage from non-silver, non-magical sources. She can be Shaken, but can't take Wounds from any attacks that aren't magical or from silvered weapons.
- **Psychic Disguise:** Mrs. Patterson can cast the *disguise* power to take on the form of the Mean Old Lady at no cost, and with no duration.
- **Psychic Vampire:** The demon slowly drains the life out of all vegetation, animals, and people in the neighborhood. Living creatures' Spirit dice are reduced by one die type every

1d4 months; when they would be reduced below d4, the victims slip into a coma and die. (In combat, Mrs. Patterson can perform a more intense version of this vampirism with her *blast* power.)

- **Weakness (Children):** Children under the age of 12 add 2 to their Notice rolls to see through the demon's *disguise* and *illusion* powers.

MOTHMAN

The Mothman was first spotted in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, in the mid-1960s. It is a tall humanoid creature with bat-like wings and glowing red eyes. It stands at least seven feet in height, though some reports say it's even larger than that. Most sightings take place at or near the scenes of catastrophes, hours or days before they occur, so many people view the Mothman as a prophet of destruction.

Mothman is capable of flying at least 100 miles per hour (160 kph), more than fast enough to keep up with a speeding automobile. A feeling of cold dread seems to accompany it. Its presence interferes with television and radio signals, and can cause car engines to mysteriously stop working for a time. Many people believe that Mothman is an alien due to these strange powers, and the fact that the initial appearance of Mothman coincided with extensive UFO sightings in West Virginia and the surrounding states.

When it was originally spotted, the creature was seen in and around McClintic Wildlife Management Area in West Virginia, which was also the site of a World War II munitions storage depot. But creatures similar in description to Mothman have been spotted all around the world, always heralding some tragedy. Mothman-like creatures have been spotted in Ukraine, Germany, China, Wales, Vietnam, and all the way across the United States. Whether Mothman is a singular entity or an unknown species is left up to conjecture.

Mothman's presence in an area signals that some great disaster is about to happen. This disaster can occur hours or days after Mothman makes its appearance. Whether Mothman causes these disasters, or is attempting to warn people about them in advance, is unknown to anyone except the Mothman itself.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

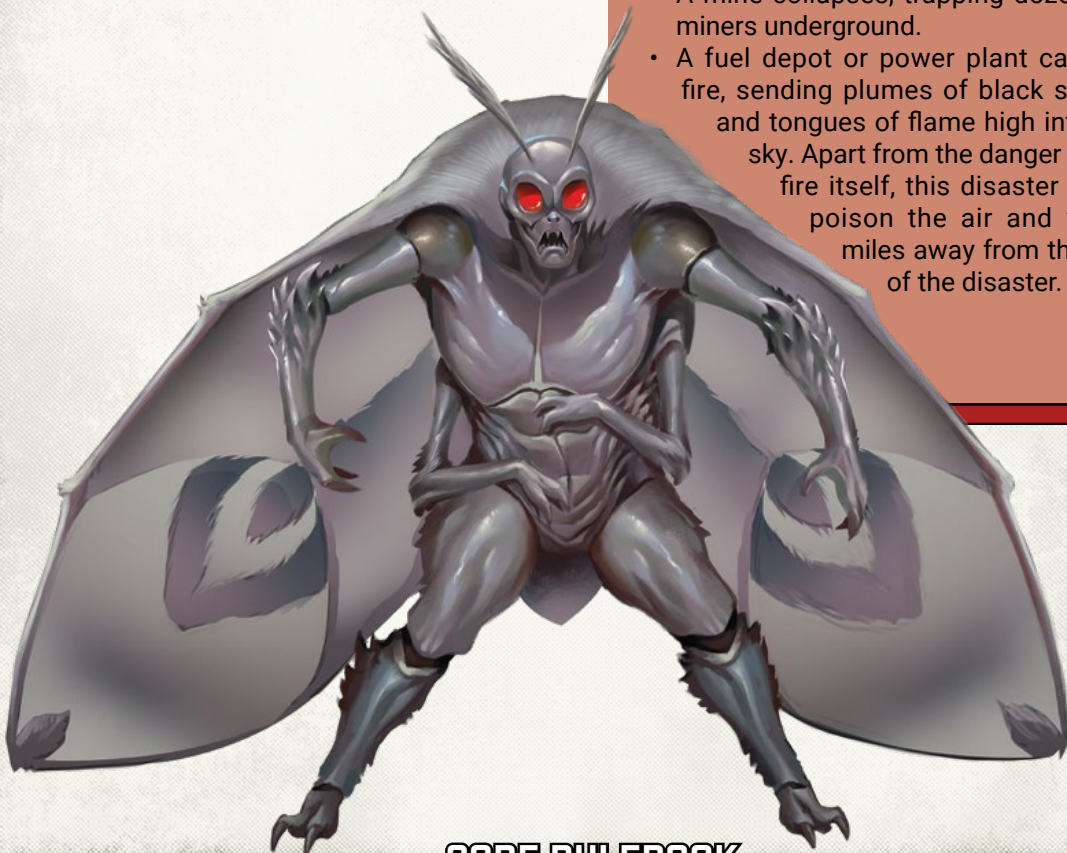
Special Abilities:

- **Fear -2:** Those who first see the Mothman must make a Fear roll.
- **Flight:** Pace 20.
- **Frightful Presence:** By turning its gaze upon someone, the Mothman can force that person to make a Fear roll at -4 (even if they previously passed the initial Fear check). Those who succeed are immune to the effect for 24 hours.
- **Shut Down:** All motorized vehicles within 30 feet of the Mothman simply stop working. Cars and motorboats slow to a halt. Aircraft fall out of the sky. This effect lasts for one minute, or until a successful Repair roll is made.
- **Static Effect:** Radios, televisions, and other electronic communication devices within 120 feet of the Mothman become inoperable for one minute. Those who attempt to use these devices hear only hissing static.
- **Wing Buffet:** Str+d6.

LOOMING DISASTER

The region around the Mothman sighting is about to suffer a disaster. Use one or more of the following ideas:

- A powerful earthquake rattles the region, causing major destruction for miles around (as the earthquake spell, with a radius of 5 miles).
- A dangerous thunderstorm strikes the area, bringing with it torrential rains, deadly lightning, and flooding (as the control weather spell).
- An unseasonal blizzard hits, bringing freezing temperatures, heavy snow, and downed power lines along with it (as the control weather spell).
- A bridge or other major piece of infrastructure fails suddenly, collapsing at the worst possible time—during rush hour, or while a train is passing.
- A nearby dam breaks, flooding the immediate area.
- There is an outbreak of a deadly plague that spreads rapidly.
- A mine collapses, trapping dozens of miners underground.
- A fuel depot or power plant catches fire, sending plumes of black smoke and tongues of flame high into the sky. Apart from the danger of the fire itself, this disaster could poison the air and water miles away from the site of the disaster.



ONI

The oni are demonic warriors from the Hell Dimension renowned for their skill and resourcefulness. Though most commonly seen in Japan, they can be found throughout the Secret World, working as assassins and mercenaries.

The oni are divided into nine houses, which constantly compete and feud with each other. The houses are grouped into three tiers: the Tier of Blood, the Tier of Fire, and the Tier of Earth. While outsiders might expect houses within the same tier to get along, they would be mistaken.

Oni take their contracts very seriously. While they aren't above legal trickery, they won't knowingly violate the terms of whatever job

they are currently working. This makes them fantastic, loyal allies for those who can afford their fees—and ruthless enemies to whoever breaks a contract with them.

TIER OF BLOOD ONI

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Gear: Kabano War Club (Str+d8).

Edges: Frenzy, Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Demonic hide.

TIER OF EARTH ONI

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Gear: Kabano War Club (Str+d8).

Edges: Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Demonic hide.
- **Earthen Embrace:** As a limited free action, after making a successful melee attack, the oni can use the *entangle* power against the same target, using its Spirit as its arcane skill, as slabs of earth and stone restrain its victim.

TIER OF FIRE ONI

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Gear: Kabano War Club (Str+d8).

Edges: First Strike, Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Demonic hide.
- **Flaming Shroud:** At the end of the oni's turn, all adjacent enemies take 2d6 damage and may catch fire.
- **Immunity (Fire):** The oni takes no damage from fire or fire-based attacks.



PUKWUDGIE

Pukwudgies are small but vicious humanoid creatures native to what is now the northeastern part of the United States. First described in Wampanoag folklore, the name translates roughly to “little wild men of the forest who vanish.” The Wampanoag believe that pukwudgies were once friendly to humans but have since turned against them. A person who catches the attention of a pukwudgie might be subject to nasty tricks. Pukwudgies are known to kidnap people, push them off cliffs, lure them to their deaths in dangerous bogs, and attack their victims with short knives, spears, and poisoned arrows.

Pukwudgies were once friendly, but no longer. They used to help lost travelers, and sometimes rescued people who were drowning or who were trapped by wildfires. But after a number of run-ins with Native Americans, and later with European colonists, the pukwudgies have come to believe that humans are wicked and untrustworthy, and that feeling has only grown over the last several centuries.

Pukwudgies brew a variety of different poisons from natural ingredients found around their homes. They have been known to poison their enemies’ food and water, and they coat their arrows with a deadly unguent.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d10, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5 (2)

Hindrances: Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Dodge, Extraction

Gear: Short bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, Lethal Poison), spear (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Layer of quills.
- **Animal Form:** A pukwudgie can turn into a naturally-occurring animal up to Size –1, per the *shape change* power.
- **Fey Magic:** Pukwudgies can use the *invisibility* and *sound/silence* powers, using Spirit as their arcane skill.
- **Size –2 (Small):** These creatures are no more than 3 feet tall.



REVENANT

There was a time when folk instinctively knew to burn the cadavers of certain murderous souls rather than bury them or leave them dangling in the gibbets as a vermin feast. These were not the raucous spectacles of a common public execution. Everyone stood silent and weary. Archers held bows drawn and quivering, ready to shoot any animal—rat, cat, or crow—that should wander near the fire. No one blinked until the flame reduced all to ash and bone.

Revenants hold an especially reviled place among the restless dead. They are not crudely revived clay, but animate fragments of an evil life, devious and clever, a self-aware plague. They sup on terror and pain. They possess no voices of their own, speaking only in phrases that can be mimicked by a chorus of crows. They can smell death, and they foretell even further misery.

The seed for a revenant waits in the soul of those consumed by a drive to spread misery. When conditions are just right, a messy death—

often via magic—can ensure that a revenant takes shape. The malevolent psyche fractures, spreading into a swarm mind, manifesting as creatures associated with darkness and disease: ravens, rats, spiders, worms, moths, and many other manners of crawling beasts.

Revenants wield foul magic and disease. Poison and putrescence coat their rusted weapons, seeing to it that if the blade itself doesn't kill their prey, infection will. Escaping a revenant is difficult—they leap great distances, crawl up walls, turn into terrible swarms, and squeeze through the narrowest of cracks—but destroying a revenant is even more arduous. They can re-form from the smallest of fragments, and their diseased blood and minds infect everything

around them. Worse yet, they're cunning. They stalk their prey with no sense of urgency and delight in trickery, provoking their targets to take risks that ultimately cost them their lives. The abduction of children, destruction of homes, and violence against loved ones are among their favorite lures.

Seeing a revenant is an ill omen. They are drawn to areas where disasters, both natural and human-made, are imminent. They proved instrumental in spreading history's plagues: the Black Death, smallpox, typhus, and measles. With their dark hoods and their sharp blades, many have mistaken them for the Grim Reaper. And the revenants are gathering in greater numbers again. Dark days are coming. Dark days are here.



Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Gear: Festering blade (Str+d6, Mild Poison), leathery cloak (+2).

Special Abilities:

- **A Flurry of Wings:** When Incapacitated, the revenant's body transforms into a murder of crows, which immediately takes flight. After 24 hours, the revenant's soul reconstitutes its corporeal form and heals all Wounds.
- **Environmental Weakness (Fire):** Revenants subtract 4 from rolls made to resist fire or fire-based effects, and take +4 damage from such attacks.
- **Fast Regeneration:** The revenant may attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless its Wounds were caused by fire.
- **Low Light Vision:** The creature ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Quarry:** The revenant may spend an action to name a creature within line of sight as its quarry. The quarry knows it has been chosen. When dealing damage to its quarry, the revenant deals an additional 1d4 damage.
- **Quarry Crusade:** The revenant knows the distance to and direction of its quarry, even if it is on another plane of existence. If the quarry dies, the revenant knows.
- **Quarry Hunt:** As an action, the revenant instills terror into its quarry. The quarry must make a Spirit roll at -2. On a failure, the quarry is Stunned.
- **Resilient:** Revenants can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.
- **Shadow Shift:** As a limited free action, the revenant may teleport to any point of Dim or Dark Illumination within its line of sight, per the *teleport* power.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.
- **Wall Walker:** The revenant can move normally on walls or upside down.

SCARECROW

To create a traditional scarecrow, one needs only some old clothes, some sort of bag to serve as its head, and a whole lot of hay.

To create the animated abomination also known as a scarecrow, one needs magical oils, clothes stitched with runes, and the fresh organs of an unwilling human victim.

Scarecrows are created by dark magicians working from twisted grimoires. Copies of the ritual exist, with minor variations, throughout the world. Scarecrows often serve as immortal protectors of a person or place. When left to their own devices for too long (such as when their creator dies or goes away), scarecrows have been known to lie dormant, appearing inanimate unless roused by someone violating whatever they are charged with protecting. At other times, they forget their commands and simply run amok.

The scarecrow must obey its master, whether the one who created it or the one its creator designated. Of course, when a scarecrow is causing problems, it's almost always because the master is either missing or actively encouraging the creature's bloodlust.

In times past, scarecrows wielded scythes, sickles, or other farming implements. In the modern era, their makers arm them with chainsaw, shotguns, and magical foci (typically a child's toy doll). A scarecrow's weapons are infused with the magic that created them. As such, they cannot be taken away, and they never run out of fuel or ammunition.

MAGIC SCARECROW

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Burning Man:** While the scarecrow is Shaken, it is engulfed in flames. This magical fire does not actually burn it, but it can burn others. At the end of its turn, all adjacent enemies suffer 2d6 damage, and may catch fire.
- **Fearless:** Scarecrows are immune to Fear and Intimidation.

- **Pediophobia:** As an action, the scarecrow can make an opposed Spirit roll against an enemy it can see within Smarts range. On a success, the scarecrow deals 2d6 psychic damage, or 3d6 on a raise. So long as the scarecrow succeeds on the attack, and the target remains within range and line of sight, the scarecrow may attack the target on subsequent turns as a limited free action.
- **Resilient:** Scarecrows can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; does not breathe or suffer from disease or poison.
- **Weakness (Fire):** While immune to their own magical flames, scarecrows take double damage from fire and catch fire on a 4+ instead of the usual 6+.

MELEE SCARECROW

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Chainsaw (2d6+4, Critical Failure hits user).

Edges: Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Burning Man:** While the scarecrow is Shaken, it is engulfed in flames. This magical fire does not actually burn it, but it can burn others. At the end of its turn, all adjacent enemies suffer 2d6 damage, and may catch fire.
- **Fearless:** Scarecrows are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Resilient:** Scarecrows can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.



- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; does not breathe or suffer from disease or poison.
- **Weakness (Fire):** While immune to their own magical flames, scarecrows take double damage from fire and catch fire on a 4+ instead of the usual 6+.

RANGED SCARECROW

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Shotgun (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1–3d6, RoF 1).

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Burning Man:** While the scarecrow is Shaken, it is engulfed in flames. This magical fire does not actually burn it, but it can burn others. At the end of its turn, all adjacent enemies suffer 2d6 damage, and may catch fire.
- **Fearless:** Scarecrows are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Resilient:** Scarecrows can take one Wound before they're Incapacitated.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; does not breathe or suffer from disease or poison.
- **Weakness (Fire):** While immune to their own magical flames, scarecrows take double damage from fire and catch fire on a 4+ instead of the usual 6+.

SPECTRE

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Quick

Special Abilities:

- **Claws of Oblivion:** Str+d4. A target struck by the spectre's claws must make a Vigor roll.



SPECTRES

Every life echoes across eternity, a single note in the symphonic infinity. Sometimes, those notes are bent into discords, warped beyond all recognition or sanity. Spirits of the dead are incorporeal, though some are less intangible than others. We speak of the restless dead, the hungry dead, the spectres.

On a failure, the target takes a level of Fatigue that can lead to death.

- **Fear (-2):** Those who see the creature must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Fearless:** Spectres are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Incorporeal:** As a limited free action, a spectre can make itself incorporeal until the start of its next turn. While in this state, the spectre can pass through physical obstacles, can't make physical attacks, and is immune to non-magical attacks.
- **Low Light Vision:** Spectres ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound

penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.

- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Spectres are Distracted while exposed to sunlight.

❁ WRAITH

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Counterattack (Imp)

Gear: Scythe of Oblivion (Str+d10, -1 Parry, requires two hands).



Special Abilities:

- **Blade of Oblivion:** A target struck by the wraith's scythe must make a Vigor roll. On a failure, the target takes a level of Fatigue that can lead to death.
- **Fear (-2):** Those who see the creature must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Fearless:** Wraiths are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Incorporeal:** As a limited free action, a wraith can make itself incorporeal until the start of its next turn. While in this state, the wraith can pass through physical obstacles, can't make physical attacks, and is immune to non-magical attacks.
- **Low Light Vision:** Wraiths ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Reap Soul:** Immediately after killing a mortal (not a Bee) with its Scythe of Oblivion, a wraith may harvest the soul of its victim. The target's spirit rises as a spectre from its corpse, and is under the wraith's control.
- **Teleport:** The wraith can utilize the teleport power, using its Spirit as its arcane skill.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Wraiths are Distracted while exposed to sunlight.

VAMPIRE

The vampires of the Secret World resemble those of myth and popular culture, but they are different enough to offer surprises to those who have never faced them before.

Vampires are neither undead nor undying. Rather, they simply age very slowly. Their hearts beat slower than those of normal humans, and their body temperatures are significantly lower. They are not dependent on water or food, but their cellular metabolism still requires oxygen. Only through consumption of the hemoglobin in red blood cells can the vampire live, so they must regularly feed on large quantities of human or animal blood to survive. Because they can store the oxygen in the stolen blood, they are able to remain underground or underwater for long periods of time.

Vampires were created during the First Age. They began in Lilith's laboratory as biological experiments on humans. She then improved on the design by mixing these mutants with demons. She achieved a hybrid, a creature of significant demonic power, swaddled in humanlike flesh.

Eventually, Lilith distilled this process down to a blood-borne agent that, when infused into a human's blood system, would mutate the DNA and start the physical metamorphosis. Lilith also administered the agent into her own body. Already an immortal, she never transformed into a vampire herself. Instead, she gained the freedom to create new demonic children outside of her laboratory—by feeding a subject her blood. She then truly became the Mother of Monsters.

Just as centuries of legends, novels, and television shows have warned, vampirism is a highly contagious condition. Unlike many such stories, however, a vampire simply biting a human, or even draining them of all blood, does not transform the victim into a vampire. Only when a human ingests a large amount of vampire blood will that human turn into a vampire themselves.

Once turned, the human body changes—drastically at first, then slowly for the rest of the vampire's life. Their entire biological system transforms until it bears little resemblance to that of a human. Their personality is likewise changed. They become callous and cold, until virtually nothing remains of the person they once were. (This coldheartedness likely helps create and maintain the myth that vampires are unliving creatures. In truth, they are still alive, even if their souls are dead inside.)

As their humanity melts away, a vampire's strength, reflexes, and stamina surpass those of the strongest and fastest humans. They become impervious to pain. And so long as they've got blood in their system, their wounds heal at a supernatural rate, making it hard to kill them through the standard applications of violence. They are no longer human. They are so much more.

Not every vampire tale is true. Crucifixes, holy water, and garlic do nothing against these creatures. A vampire's image is reflected in a mirror. Running water does not present an obstacle to them.

The vampire's legendary weakness to sunlight, however, is totally true. They have an absolute intolerance for strong ultraviolet radiation, and

can die from only a few moments in direct sunlight. Vampires who must go about in daylight cover themselves in heavy clothing, hoods, and masks that protect them from the sun.

Other traditional weaknesses based in reality include fire, decapitation, and the destruction of the vampire's heart. Note that this destruction doesn't need to come from a wooden stake, or a stake at all; a well-placed shotgun blast can be just as effective.

While animal blood can keep a vampire alive, they prefer blood from humans. Human blood empowers them, but its potency creates an unavoidable addiction. If ignored, the thirst eventually leads to a rabid blood rage, during which the vampire loses control and attacks anyone in sight. Though some vampires pledge to survive on only animal blood, they cannot avoid the blood rage forever.

As vampires age, they become faster, stronger, and better able to control their urges. But while age is power, lineage is even more important. A vampire who descends from Lilith's own creations, or in some rare cases, directly from her, is far more powerful than one who is thousands of years old but several generations diluted.

ELDER VAMPIRE

Elder vampires are older, stronger, and cleverer than mongrels. They are masters of avoiding attention. They feed in secret, often on the willing, and slowly grow in power and influence. But for every elder vampire who manipulates the Secret World from behind the scenes, there is at least one who simply wants to live a peaceful, anonymous existence. Make no mistake, however: even the most peace-loving vampire is, at its core, a ruthless predator.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d10, Battle d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Occult d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Frenzy (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claw:** Str+d4.
- **Invulnerability:** Vampires can only be slain by sunlight, the destruction of their hearts, or the destruction / removal of their heads

(see those Weaknesses, below). They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never Wounded.

- **Low Light Vision:** Vampires ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Weakness (Head / Heart):** A vampire hit with a Called Shot to the head or heart doesn't take extra damage, but must make a Vigor roll versus the damage total. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it's immediately destroyed.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** While exposed to sunlight, vampires are Distracted and take 2d4 damage per round.

MONGREL VAMPIRE

The youngest vampires are called "mongrels." They are drawn from the ranks of misfits and criminals to become the lowest level of foot soldiers in the vampire hierarchy. Only recently changed, they are new to their power, and unprepared for their blood lust. They are far less powerful than their elders and are especially vulnerable to sunlight. Mongrels are bred in large numbers, and their zeal makes up for their weaknesses.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Edges: Frenzy (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Sun-blocking armor.
- **Bite/Claw:** Str+d4.
- **Blood Frenzy:** If dealt a face card in combat, the mongrel must move towards the nearest enemy and make a Wild Attack, if able.
- **Invulnerability:** Vampires can only be slain by sunlight, the destruction of their hearts, or the destruction / removal of their heads (see those Weaknesses, below). They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never Wounded.
- **Low Light Vision:** Vampires ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Weakness (Head / Heart):** A vampire hit with a Called Shot to the head or heart doesn't take extra damage, but must make a Vigor roll versus the damage total. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it's immediately destroyed.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** While exposed to sunlight and outside their special sun-blocking

armor, mongrel vampires are Distracted and take 2d4 damage per round.

PUREBRED VAMPIRE

Purebred vampires the oldest, most powerful of their kind. They trace their lineage directly to Lillith, and have powers that their younger kin can only dream of.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Athletics d10, Battle d10, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d12, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Occult d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d4, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Frenzy (Imp)

Powers: *Beast friend, deflection, fear, fly (self only), protection (self only), puppet, shape change, slumber.*

Power Points: 20

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claw:** Str+d4.

- **Fast Regeneration:** The purebred vampire may attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated.
- **Invulnerability:** Vampires can only be slain by sunlight, the destruction of their hearts, or the destruction / removal of their heads (see those Weaknesses, below). They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never Wounded.
- **Low Light Vision:** Vampires ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Weakness (Head / Heart):** A vampire hit with a Called Shot to the head or heart doesn't take extra damage, but must make a Vigor roll versus the damage total. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it's immediately destroyed.



- **Weakness (Sunlight):** While exposed to sunlight, vampires are Distracted and take 2d4 damage per round.

WENDIGO

The wendigo is a legendary Native American cannibal who preys on travelers and hunters lost in the winter wilderness. Descriptions of wendigo vary, but most depict the monster as a tall, emaciated human, covered with fur, with abnormally large teeth and claws. Its face is blackened by frostbite and its lips and cheeks are missing—because it chewed them off in its hunger for human flesh. Its eyes are sunken in and glow red. A foul stench or sudden, unseasonable chill might precede its approach. The voice of a wendigo can be a thin whisper like a mountain breeze, or a thunderous howl like the scream of a blizzard. The wendigo's heart and spine are made of ice, which can be heard cracking and popping as it moves like the ice of a frozen river. According to folklore the best way to kill it is to pour hot liquid, such as stew or boiling grease, down the creature's throat, which will melt its frozen heart.

A human can transform into a wendigo. Usually, this occurs when one person eats the flesh of another. A person can also become a wendigo when they have dreams of the wendigo calling their name, telling them to eat the flesh of their friends or family. Some people are said to have become a wendigo while lost in the forest in the dead of winter; the loss of hope transforms them into something other than human.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Stealth d10, Survival d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Edges: Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Always Behind You:** The wendigo can activate the *invisibility* power while it's out of sight, using Spirit as its arcane skill.
- **Armor +2:** Thick hide.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Environmental Weakness (Fire):** A wendigo subtracts 4 from rolls made to resist fire or fire-based effects, and takes +4 damage from such attacks.
- **Immunity (Cold):** A wendigo takes no damage from cold or cold-based attacks.
- **Inside Your Head:** Once per night, a wendigo can telepathically torment a sleeping target it has previously seen, filling the victim's dreams with horrifying scenes of bloodshed and cannibalism. The victim must make a Fear roll at -2. On a failure, they awaken with a level of Fatigue that can't be recovered for 24 hours. If they are attacked and fail again within that 24 hours, the levels of Fatigue stack, and can lead to Incapacitation. Once Incapacitated, the victim falls into a nightmare-riddled coma; unless they receive healing, or the wendigo is killed, they will die the next time they fail the Fear roll.



- **Low Light Vision:** The wendigo ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination (but not Pitch Darkness).
- **Size 1:** Despite its gauntness, a wendigo is quite dense, and can stand up to 7' tall.

WEREWOLF

Like the beasts of legend, the werewolves of the Secret World are ferocious, fur-covered humanoids that walk like men but kill like wolves.

Unlike those legends, however, werewolves are not true shapeshifters. They do not change from human form to wolf, but remain in a constant wolf-man state. Nor are they affected by the moon (at least, no more than anyone else in the Secret World). They are just as vicious and deadly during a new moon as they are when the moon is full.

Combined Creation. In the beginning, Lilith combined humans and wolflike demons, producing something savage and powerful. Her creation spread and grew in number. They were useful in her wars, yet they proved too short-lived to reach their potential and too hard to control. The so-called Mother of Monsters lost interest in her bestial children and left them to their own devices. Feared by humans and discarded by their mistress, the werewolves became outcasts, hunted by mortals and immortals alike.

The werewolves are trapped between the worlds of man and monster, welcome in neither and shunned in both. The other children of Lilith treat them as little more than failed experiments, and relegate them to the bottom of every pecking order. Humanity offers them nothing but fear and violence.

So the werewolves have become nomads. Without homes, they travel in packs, keeping to themselves and

striking out against those who get too close to them or violate their territories. Even within their packs, a strict and brutal hierarchy means that acceptance and camaraderie are hard to come by, and must be earned. They can never rest, never relax, never let down their guard. They must always remain alert for new threats, fresh prey, and their next kill. Werewolf life is harsh. Only the strongest survive, and fewer of them make it to the spring each year.

Werewolves could live for centuries, but few live past fifty. Young werewolves follow instinct rather than intellect. In their first decades, they have little control over their aggression, and they lash out blindly while their demonic blood rages uncontrollably in their veins. They're easy targets for manipulators (such as the vampires of Transylvania), who can



stir up their anger and point them at what the werewolves believe to be their enemy.

If the werewolf survives these violent years, time and hormonal changes ease their temperament, and they become elders.

Elder werewolves are calmer, wiser, and seemingly more intelligent than their younger pack members. They desire to rehabilitate their younger cousins, hoping to stop the decline of their species. Elders are rare. It's said that when werewolves truly transcend their rage, they journey to a hidden haven deep in the Ural Mountains where they can finally live in peace.

Werewolves were common in Transylvania in the time leading up to the apocalyptic vampire invasion ten years ago. Since then, they have scattered throughout Europe, hunting, wandering, and surviving as best they can.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d4, Stealth d8, Survival d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Edges: Alertness, Berserk, Frenzy (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Armor +2:** Thick hide and fur.
- **Rampage:** Up to three times per turn, when a werewolf Incapacitates an enemy, it may take another action that turn without incurring a Multi-Action penalty.

ZOMBIE

Zombies in the Secret World come in a wide variety of types based on their environment, how they died, and how they came back to life. In addition, some zombies undergo mutation after their undead rebirth.

HULKING ZOMBIE

A hulking zombie sometimes appears in places where "normal" zombies are common, resulting when one of them becomes mutated. Some theories regarding the source of the mutation include Filth infection, dark magic, or simply gorging on vast quantities of rotten flesh. Regardless of where they come from, these lumbering monstrosities are a terrible threat to the innocents around them.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12

Edges: Sweep

Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hulking Fist:** Str+d4.
- **Size 2:** A hulking zombie stands up to 9' tall and weighs nearly 1000 pounds.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.
- **Unthinking Hunters:** Zombies try to move directly toward loud noises and obvious movement, regardless of the dangers in their path. Clever characters can use this trait to lure zombies into fire and other hazards.

STANDARD ZOMBIE

If there is such a thing as a "usual" zombie, it is described below.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Stealth d4

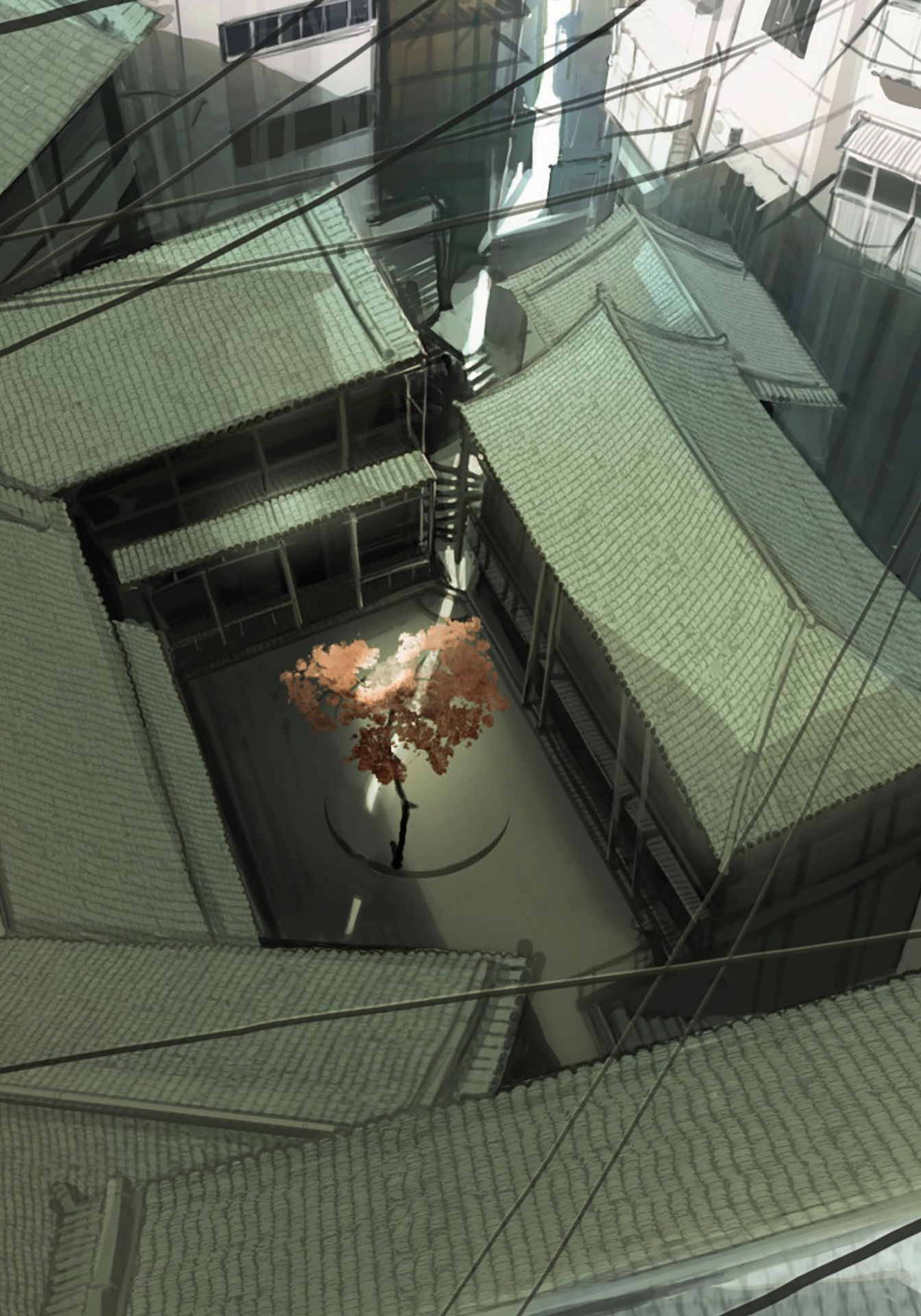
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.
- **Unthinking Hunters:** Zombies try to move directly toward loud noises and obvious movement, regardless of the dangers in their path. Clever characters can use this trait to lure zombies into fire and other hazards.





CHAPTER NINE: MISSION GENERATOR

Zuberi has a mission for your heroes' cabal, and this generator will help you create it. The generator provides basic building blocks of an adventure which you can combine, change, or ignore as you see fit. Its true purpose is to inspire your own creativity.

To use the generator, remove the Jokers from a deck to create a Mission Deck, then draw a card for each element of the mission: Location, Goal, Object, Obstacle, and Twist. Both the suits and values of the cards matter.

After drawing all the cards, think about how the elements work together. They might not always seem to make sense at first, but you can use your imagination to figure out a way to make them fit together. If any one element just doesn't work, draw or choose another one. The generator is a tool, not a tyrant.

LOCATION

The mission's Location is where much of its investigation or action takes place. The card's suit determines that Location's optional special qualities.

♣ **Clubs (Abandoned):** Why was it abandoned? How recently? Who or what is there now?

♦ **Diamonds (Secured):** Security is tighter than expected here. Why the alarms, locks, and guards?

♥ **Hearts (Hidden):** It's hard to find, disguised, or doesn't appear on maps. How does it stay hidden?

♠ **Spades (Dangerous):** Maybe it's falling apart, on a toxic site, haunted, or infested with demons.

Two: Wilderness / Forest / Swamp

Three: Residence / Hotel

Four: Transportation Hub

Five: Water / Shoreline / Island

Six: School / College

Seven: Retail / Office Space

Eight: Cemetery / Sacred Space

Nine: Hospital / Nursing Home

Ten: Factory / Laboratory

Jack: Museum / Library

Queen: Amusement Park

King: Entertainment Venue

Ace: Back Alley / Back Road / Farm



GOAL

While every mission likely involves some investigation, exploration, and confrontation, its Goal card's value provides the adventure's overall objective, and its suit any special (optional) requirements.

- ♣ **Clubs (Quickly):** The clock's ticking. Time's limited, or the longer it takes, the harder it becomes.
- ♦ **Diamonds (Quietly):** Stealth is essential. This may be a deniable mission.
- ♥ **Hearts (Destructively):** Carry out the mission with extreme prejudice. Scorch the earth.
- ♠ **Spades (Diplomatically):** It's a complex, delicate situation. Make no waves, make no enemies.

Two: Destroy
Three: Control
Four: Rescue
Five: Defend
Six: Negotiate With
Seven: Deliver
Eight: Preserve
Nine: Capture
Ten: Strengthen
Jack: Retrieve
Queen: Find
King: Escort
Ace: Ally With

OBJECT

The Object of the mission is at the center of the heroes' Goal. If the Goal and Object don't seem to match well at first, try thinking about one or both of them abstractly or metaphorically.

♣ Clubs (Secret Worlder)
Two: Data Broker
Three: Dealer
Four: Fixer
Five: Hacker

Six: Bounty Hunter
Seven: Spy
Eight: Hitman
Nine: Inquisitor
Ten: Puppet Master
Jack: Magician
Queen: Occultist
King: Mystic
Ace: Monster Slayer

♦ Diamonds (Civilian)
Two: Brawler
Three: Con Artist
Four: Explorer
Five: Artist
Six: Guardian
Seven: Investigator
Eight: Scientist
Nine: Clergy
Ten: Cop
Jack: Scholar
Queen: Thief
King: Doctor
Ace: Activist

♥ Hearts (Item)
Two: Prophecy
Three: Plant
Four: Cult
Five: Weapon
Six: Invention
Seven: Monster
Eight: Portal
Nine: Computer
Ten: Artwork
Jack: Vehicle
Queen: Book

King: Animal

Ace: Artifact

♠ Spades (Miscellaneous)

Two: Newborn Bee

Three: Disease

Four: Sacrifice

Five: Unveiling

Six: Escape

Seven: Activism

Eight: Alliance

Nine: Political Maneuver

Ten: Ritual

Jack: Feast

Queen: Contest

King: Music

Ace: Rogue Bee

OBSTACLE

The Obstacle indicates the cabal's opposition. If it's working for (or part of) a Secret World organization, the card's suit tells you which one.

♣ **Clubs (Orochi Group):** Choose one of its many subsidiaries.

♦ **Diamonds (Filth Cult):** Is it Morninglight, Atenists, or something more local?

♥ **Hearts (Phoenicians):** What power do they gain from this endeavor?

♠ **Spades (Big Three):** Choose Dragon, Illuminati, or Templars, and their secret goal.

Two: Zombies

Three: Ak'ab

Four: Rival Agents

Five: Organized Crime

Six: Government Agents

Seven: Scarecrows

Eight: Oni

Nine: Locusts

Ten: Filth

Jack: Vampires

Queen: Ghouls

King: Jinn

Ace: Spectres

TWIST

Nothing is as it seems. Nothing goes as planned. Complications arise at the worst possible times. The card's value suggests a wrench to throw into the works, and its suit offers a new element to go with it.

♣ **Clubs (Location):** Draw an additional Location. The cabal needs to visit here as well.

♦ **Diamonds (Goal):** Draw an additional Goal. This might replace the original when the Twist comes up.

♥ **Hearts (Object):** Draw an additional Object. The heroes need to deal with this one too.

♠ **Spades (Obstacle):** Draw an additional Obstacle. Maybe the Obstacles will oppose each other?

Two: Missing. The Object has vanished!

Three: Betrayal. The cabal is betrayed by an ally.

Four: Reversal. Enemies are actually allies.

Five: Breakdown. Key equipment stops working.

Six: Attached. Draw an Object; it's attached to your Object.

Seven: Hunted. Others are after the Object.

Eight: Damaged. The Object is hurt or broken.

Nine: Bad Intel. Vital data is wrong or missing.

Ten: Multiple. How to manage multiples of the Object?

Jack: Dragon Objective. Dragon heroes get own Goal, Object.

Queen: Illuminati Objective. Illuminati heroes get own Goal, Object.

King: Templar Objective. Templar heroes get own Goal, Object.

Ace: Trap! The whole mission is a trap. Set by whom?

BACKERS



TEMPLAR SUPPORTERS, TOTAL: 295

Kaisa Boese, Der Tommissar, Jon Sturgill, Kevin Hanson, Ivan Upton, Anthony Howe, Benjamin Nester, Barbara Wellington, Adam Perkins, Anthony Ngo, Justin "Witness01" McNeely, Chris "Scopique" Smith, Thomas "Demonoid74" Richardson, Joshua Taylor Smith, Dallas Bolyard, Donovan Baldwin, Dale Mazzola, Liam Lucas, Steven 'Seanchaí' Phillips, Dillon Howard, Teranz, Ash Roberson, Matt Probst, Leonard Matoush, Todd Hennessey, Tsasha Morena, Jason Hammond, John Steve, Andrew George, Gunther Lee Galle, Nicholas 'GM' Green, Derek Stoelting, Christopher Pruett, Michael Lawson, Dan Stufflebeam, Jon Butler, Benjamin Jones, Yuriksha, Dagda-Rix, Andrew Denehey, Paul L.C. Charran, Wayne Roberts, Mike Crenshaw, Zeokroe, COE, Lidradata, Micheal Wade, 3 Dogs Gaming, The Cosmic Storm, Joey Wayne Williams, Jim "The Nerdy Quail" Kolesar, Charles (Chip) Teague, Tony Sanson, Sebastian Van Uytange, Keith Fannin, Azoulin, Alex Lake, Breandán Ó Ciarraí, James "jimthegray" Tillman, Ardzinul, Joseph Evenson, Renato A Dominis, Nicholas A Tan, Sean Ulczyk, Brendan Reeves, Steven Thum, Jonathan Eskritt, David Horth (Lokinor), Joe Stevens, Rowland "Azagthor" Gwynne, Yes, Patrick Jamison, Steve the Optimist, Isaac J Grant, Robert J Perez, Daniel Fidelman, Best Bridesmaid Hoagie, Alan Mort, Scott Walker, Jonathan "mcjomar" marlow, Craig Bishell, Rob Jameson, David Orna-Ornstein, Aristide Lagoupille, Rich 'Kalték' Evans, Jimmy Smiley, Tineke Bolleman, Gavin Clough, Mateusz Lisiak, Daniel Gutiérrez, Jarno Yliuoma, Simon 'Flatliner' Jones, Chris Michael Jahn, Stefaan Baumont, Alice Avoy, Paul Sheppard, Mattias Johansson, yes, Raphael Vergara, Lance Rewerts, Rick White, Vinicius Alvim, Chong Jin, Adam Bigden, Karsten Scheibye-Alsing, Frank Janik, Jan Havel, Keithan "Otus" Sheedy, Michelle Ashman, Joseph Simmons, Adriano The Neverchosen, Christian T.R. (Phuma), Chris Venus, David J, Flession, Michael (Mr. P) Pineda, Cléo d'Askera, Brendan Emberson, The Demiurge (Jamie), Vitas Varnas, Todd Stephens, Brian "Mistervimes" Eason, Brian Hendricks, Boolos, Jesse Goble, Reelman, Scott Paeth, Motsognir, Steven T. Myers, Michael "Jayhawkjedi" Owens, Daniel Price, Greg Leatherman, Sean Masters, William Plummer, Nathan Snyder, Omar Bednarczyk, Ian Elliott, Jeremy "Blackwingedheaven" Puckett, Saggath666, David Aretz, Gaz McKavish, Alistair Knight, Robert Ramos, Lohengrin "Svalnir" Perez, Leininger Rudolf, Matthew Minnear, Sven Winter, James C Miller, The CDM, Simon Brodie, Lars Viertel, Martin 'Oramion' Koch, Tim W Brown, Erick Woodell, Ray Irvin, A Kerr, Timothy Griffin, Ragi Gonçalves, Church, Wilfred Helling, Elric de Joncourt, Julian C./ Joe W./ Mike M., Jonathan Price, Álvaro Real, James Wilson, Yes, Assja, Demonetrigan, Geoffrey Ford, The Initiative Inn, Keith Johnson, Myra V, Michael Taylor Kent, Philip G Rigby III, John L. Bogan, Kevin Neroza, Troy Bowman, Cole "Goldsaber" Davis, EzBeans Estrada, Isaac S., Volker Bialk, Ray Arrastia, krinsky, Hendrik Siefert, Olaf "Rabenschwarz" Fahrenholz, Omowale Anthony, KillerWabbit, Claudius M. Braun, William (Bill) Reger, Randall Wright, Michael Messerly, Everett Downing, John Canales, Andrew Jensen, Jacob Hendricks, Kiran Mangal, Rovena / Stefan, Blake Aaron Coleman, J. Beard, Anders A. Olsen, Scratch Fandango, The Savage Goose, Christian Rothe, Jared Pilcher, Kimuriel, John Pyrich, Fynn Main, The Big Galoot, Artiomarty, Robert Tafoya, C. McCall, Adam Jung, Ron James, J. Andy Wise, Ron Bianco, Pit the Lost, TKM Bell, Jonathan Lowe, Robert "Ayslyn" Van Natter, John Doyle, Michael Roberts, Jean-Philippe Lamontagne Turgeon, Damien Porter, Saku "Zacky" Tiuhonen, Dan Russell, Lance Grace, Andy M W, Mike Moneymaker, G.A. Sylvester-Johnson, Nick Zakhar, Stefan "OGRE" Tremblay, Shawn M., Ed Zappulla, Troy Anderson-Wells, Jonathan Kaufman, Kevin Lawrence, Andi, vesh, Nerdfallsanität, SHAQER85, Alan J Carlson, Andy-Roony C., Winston G., Luke Brewer, Bryon Autry, Chris Lovallo, Guido958, Luke DuChaine, J Edmund Moore, Rob Bauman, Mizore "Poisoness" Yuki, Reg Stuart, Lucas Lomnicki, Gremory, Brightburn, Ryan Chamberlain, Threeye, David Thomas, Jason "Flynn" Kemp, Vosynifa, LordNightwinter, Arnaud "Arnok" Coudroy, Sighmon, James Shade, Michael J. Merrell, Shyla L Schofield, Geoffrey Skutt, Dave Kindig, Paul Thompson, Dave Fonville, Thomas Jersett, Lalia Fugalos, RageShroom, Bob Sexton, Delrin, Sascha Demmer, Realis Meri'Al, Takeira, John Graham, Roger Haxton, Lysberg, Ben "GM in the Keep" Kalisky, Scott Pippio, Eric Blair, Catslug, Max Steimer, Melissande, Minor Inconvenience, Hector Wombat Templar, Jim Burzelic, Curse of Yig, Christopher Moore, Robert "Rob" Towell, Will Gunderson, Aleksandr 'Zarirel' Dmitranitsa



ILLUMINATI SUPPORTERS, TOTAL: 267

John Kusters, Emmet West, Nate & Thea, Everynne "Illuminaughty" Winters, Em 'Garek', Aleanthym, Chad Frankforter and Jillian Patterson, Ben 'Red Rook' Nettleship, immortalfool, Iced Uhren, Russell Zimmerman, Steve Ramirez, Zack "Intergalactic" Hain, C.J, Matt Penn, LuckyTheReviewer, Kira Wolfe, Jason Caton, Mark Kidd, Locknestra, Seraphina Arclight, Humphery Boggart, Daniel "Danadas" Jacinto, John-Patrick Pink, Paul Weston, Wolfen, Dean Windemuller, Brian P. Kurtz, 조현식, Grant Parsons, Brian Sennett, Corey "Kenhito" Salter-Davidson, NJ McCann, Rob Herrera, Jesse Merriett, Tony Ogden, Rick Jones, Eric Miller, Grifficus, Marcus "Xponent" Glaubus, Rémi "RemZiaMenace" Hurtrez, Jerry "LordJerith" Prochazka, Zipster, Michael Pietrelli, Teri Newman, CupcakeTroll, Blood Draugr, Richard G. Skibba, Nico Paoli, Anthony Hansen, Moe Lane, Ken Gould, Joshua McGinnis, Joseph Spoonman, Jacob Navarro, Andrew Keyes, Arcanefall, Michael Wilkerson, Marko Apokalypse, John "CursedTechnocrat" B., Kaarin Spier, Michael Buchheim, Bill Rutherford, Dead_Steve, Carlos NeGi, Lord Crossbow, Brian "Detharin" Mosich, Felicity Pickens & Griff Locke, Nolan Rogers, Snafu | Fiasco,

Kevin Heath, Robert Zasso, Jason Carter , Merlin Anselmi, Willie Tucksen, Martin Wessman Liljefors, Mikael "Krank" Bergström, Jae Walker, Austin Barth, Nelson Guimarães, Ed Matuskey, Christopher Thomas Lezer and Biro the dog, Ben Oliver, Absalom Jones, Drew Taylor, Kerenor, Charley Ammerman, Erica "Vulpinfox" Schmitt, Biancotto "Gilgamesh" Denis, Jordan Fuller , Frederic Turiot, Gonzalo Carpintero Díez, QuestionableBee, Cypher Dorran, Alex Baldwin, Jakub Raczynski, Antoni "Lisiasty" Mazur, Alexandre COLOMBO, Callum Turner, Christopher.B, Paul Penfold, Ondrej Tomek, Ewald Große-Wilde, Puros, Eric Lespagne, Mitchell "Macro" Krauss, Tal Meta, Alphonso P. Spain, Richard R Martin, Thomas Nuckolls, Will Samolyk, James T., Sgt. Gomez, Alyssa Lorelai Smith, Matt Attesi, Joel Fox, SteveBC, Cobalt 𐄂 Azurean, Arthur "SokK" Duthoo, Christopher L. Byrom, Sage Whitney, Ashley Sherrin-Jones, Thomas Henry McDaniel III, Michal "Shade" Grecner, Ken and Ellen Gustafson, Nathaniel Husted, Chris Sturgess, Soni, Chance J, Xantheavia, Reno Marino, Carl Miller III, Jade Michael Scott, E Robert Wilson, Nicholas "Aquarion" Avenell, Bob Johnston, Mark O'Mealey, Kyle Garlow, Graham Darby, Merkweree, Nathanael, Alex Beckers, Tomasz 'Enlyrek' Gałazka, Serena "Intendant S" Nelson, A. Starfall, Heironymous Bible , Matt Skau, Jay Peters, Amy Rose, Andrew James, Father Morpheus, Goustave Malkovski, Randy Mosiondz, Bobby Wellington, Vinicius Dunck Dalosto, Left Coast Rowlands, Ikeda Hakubi, GTM Kidder, Benjamin F. Bullock, William Asico, The Witch-King of Tsámra, Richard, Euthanator Drax, Alexandre Côté, Philippe Sellent, Micah Brandt, Neil Kelly, Jonas Karlsson, John V. Adams, Laura Carruba, Juraj H., Kitty Fox, Jay "Feleth" Rutley, Arabella Cross, David Perez, JaszmiJe, Romaric Puget, Veronica L. Hamilton, J. Scott Wisniewski, pixelancer, BA Flowers, Gwendal Diné, Paul Herrick, Brian Karper, Will Crumb, Erik Anderson , A-Pich, Xerxeon, Alpharius Omegon, Dylan Brooks, Eskild Hustvedt, Jeremy Seeley, Marlon "Nolram" S., Jarod R. Atchley, Mackenzie Belmont, Kilal, The Immortal Arbiter, Duncan Disorderly, Gazoo the Most Humble, John Riggs, Yodo, Arron Willoughby, Daniel "Herunamo" Gerike, Jemma Roberts, Kyle Reid, alex erinoff, Ira "KnightA4" Taraday, Keith Zalinger, Dillon Russell, RagingSystem, Chris Tavares, Otter Kohl, William John Earlie, Philip W Rogers Jr., R. L. King, broxen, C. Kartheiser, Manny Yumul, Lars "LabRat" Blumenstein, Jiminimonka, Terje Handeland, Joshua Gomez, Simon J Canham, Sam Crosby (Sindeva), Jason Corley, Valdemar Lykke Andersen, David Reyes, Timothy Toulouse, James Meredith, Paul Davis, Mike Birosak, Erich Cazzoli, Michael Sprague, Basil Q, Tom Frank, Andy K, Beasty Gimmick, Glenn Davis, Nick Burtner, Richard Gruschka, Ian B, Richard R Martin, Michael McNeal, Jason Taylor, Rich Hiner, Tim "Kraakatoa" Dolgos, Chris Dunn, Michael A. Brum, Vítězslav "Tad Cooper" Zeman, Misiaki Nela Toshiko, Seana McGuinness, Nicola Went, Daniel Tapanes, Tyrron, John V. Adams, Steve "Platinu" Smith, Grouchy Lenny, Arytenoid, Zin SunFire, Red Flammhar, Jonathan "AngelusDaeva" Ambriz, Vomher, William Kovacevich III, J Burns, David "Savage S", Frederic SO, Liothos, Kevin Gill



DRAGON SUPPORTERS, TOTAL: 192

Roy Yao, Mr. Mean, Brian Farley, Ethan "PixieBomb" MacKuin, Robert A, Gary Halstead, Squirrel, Scarlett C, Karl "Jethric" Maurer, Victor P. Haerincq Jr, Querenos Sevilla, Casey Matteson, Rachel McCurley, Mike "Shack" Shackelford, David F, Jared C. (Kuraruku), Mario Cordova , Jack Brabson, Jeff Tyler, T. L. Hixenbaugh, Alexandre L, PHX, James Buckingham, Chris S, Dena Heck, Jeffrey Gordob, Feii , Ronnie "The Civil Savage" Walton, John Rogers, Helldozen, Joshua-James Dixie, Joseph Santagata, Brian Foster, Patrick Beaudette, Chris McKinney, Andrew W Grover, Edgard Aedo, Benoit Duboscq, Eric Alexander, T. Chandra Harness, Jeff Brewster, Sean Hudgin, John W. Bruce, Chapow, pkaa, Daniel "He Who Hunts the Moon" Weber, Alicia "Lamed" Moreau, David Stephenson, Luca Beltrami, Menelaus 'Gobbie' Kassiopeia, MrXenomorph, Richard "Mawdrigen" Crookes, Jonas Schiött, Feo, Richard Gillingham, Adam A. Israel, Kay Yeong, Malikai Daraani, Yoann LE TOUCHE, Stefan Mossfeldt, Fernando Autran, Frankie Crews, Aeryl, James 'The Great Old One' Burke, Tiffany Korta, Cassandra "Cassiopeia" Elaine, Kyoden, Michal Kosakowski, Lord Bryan & Lady Kim Kash-Gregory, Matthew Start, James Dawsey, Alexander Gay, Kourven, Niels E. Wisth, James Harkin, Bert "Jekaro" Garcia, Zen River, Ricky Dean, Dirltilus, Dr. Eric Johnson, Ph.D., James "BrashFink" Brandt, JimmyTheRabbit, Scott Crosson , Gil'Dashard Luin'Strad, Jesse Reed, NoName, Bai Yaojun, Anna Serfass, Gene L., Chris Huning, Danny Ryba, Gene F Walthes Jr , Scudpuppy, Gareth Pugh, Jimmie Bragdon, Yatashi, Brooks Banks, Tomás Barry, Michael J. DeLang, Jr., Lee Donovan, Mike Greszler, James M. Rivera, R.S. Tilton, Lynn M., J. Murphree, Losty, Darrell Bowman, Manuel "ManuFS" Sambs, Ryan McDuffee, André "Azzitay" Deffland, Johan westberg, Kevin O'Malley , Joseph Little, Veldime, Lane "Fenix" Carter, John Baltisberger, Jason Leisemann, Doc Palindrome, Jon "T3kk3y" Neddo, Christopher A Barney, Matsu Mataterin, Yves Malinowski, Zevon45, Mie Rickens, M. Kelly, Tito Martin-Nemtin, Jason Skavlebo, Jon Terry, Ben Wright, Trevor Wirgau, Mike Moline, C. Joseph Vigil, Joe Davis, Cutis Hawk, Nick Beach, NailCapGames, Steve Harper, Mildra The Monk, Phillip McGregor, Aric Wieder, Stephen, Jason Bunkoske, Kaerith, The Hinojosa Family, Cha Holland, Rachel Carpenter, R. Kal Ringenbach, Simon N Page, Georgios Tymoris Fotopoulos, Teresa "Fyreii" H, Rick Wilson, Michael Olsen, Dan , Eric Hawley, Julian H., Innâ Noisette, StabOfHappiness, Serial Roleplayer, Omega "Megs" Direx, Jennifer "OnyxPanthyr" Menite, Carl L Gilchrist, The Liggett-Wenzel-Huang Family, Keithfta, A. Levi, Robert Leeds, Camilo Alberto Diaz Rakvaag, Aaron Ping, Seb Tudor, Phil Adler, Robert Morris, Niall Sheehan, Adam J. Thaxton, Philipp Beloiu, Keith E. Hartman, Dustin "Naz" Keenan, Lenurd the Joke Gnome, YD Wes, Dalia Campbell, Gryffyth Aurum, Doug Molineu, James Boyd, Paul Vincent Rudolph, Stephen "Xandon" Caico, David Jerabek, Corey Dalton, Daniel Klinkner, Michael Gomez, Devin Skelton, Kate Mandell, Gary Phillips, Gabriel "Moss" Darke, Jennifer Jones

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

AN AGE IS ENDING...

...AND THE DARKEST DAYS ARE ALREADY HERE. AS MAGIC BEGINS TO FAIL, ANCIENT ENEMIES CAST THEIR AVARICIOUS GAZE UPON OUR WORLD. THREATS BOTH MORTAL AND COSMIC—ONCE THOUGHT MERELY MYTH, BUT HORRIFICALLY ALL TOO REAL—BEGIN TO REVEAL THEMSELVES AS THE CLOCK COUNTS DOWN TOWARDS APOCALYPSE. IN THE MIDST OF THESE GROWING SHADOWS, SOME HOPE YET REMAINS... AND YOU ARE THAT HOPE.

YOU ARE THE CHOSEN OF GAIA, IMBUED WITH FANTASTIC POWERS THAT OTHERWISE WOULD TAKE SEVERAL LIFETIMES TO LEARN. FORGED IN THIS TIME OF NEED TO DEFEND OUR WORLD, YOUR SKILLS, TENACITY, AND PROWESS MAY BE ENOUGH TO STAVE OFF THE IMMINENT DARKNESS... OR YOU MAY HASTEN ITS APPROACH. THIS DIRE CHOICE IS YOURS TO BEAR.

YOU ARE ALSO AN AGENT OF A SECRET SOCIETY: THE STOIC TEMPLARS, THE ENIGMATIC DRAGON, OR THE GUILEFUL ILLUMINATI. YOUR FACTION SUPPORTS YOU AS ONE OF THEIR CHAMPIONS, IN EXCHANGE FOR CERTAIN “SMALL FAVORS” YOU PERFORM ON THEIR BEHALF. THE ASSISTANCE THEY OFFER COULD AID IN YOUR FIGHT OR INFLUENCE YOUR DECISIONS THAT MAY LEAD US TOWARDS DESTRUCTION.

THE SECRET WORLD ROLE-PLAYING GAME IS AN ADAPTATION AND CONTINUATION OF FUNCOM'S ICONIC MMORPG. WITHIN THESE PAGES YOU WILL FIND RULES FOR CREATING YOUR OWN CHOSEN HERO, OR “BEE”, GAIN INFORMATION ON FACTIONS TO JOIN, AND ARM YOURSELF WITH FANTASTIC ABILITIES THAT GIVE YOU A FIGHTING CHANCE TO STOP THE WORLD AROUND YOU FROM CRUMBLING INTO OBLIVION.

PLACE YOURSELF ON THE FRONT LINE OF THIS FATEFUL CONFLICT BY CREATING YOUR OWN HERO, CHOOSING YOUR UNIQUE BACKGROUND, AND FLESHING OUT YOUR CHARACTER'S AFFILIATION WITH THE THREE FACTIONS. THE SECRET WORLD AWAITS... DO YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO FACE ITS DANGERS?

