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ESKHATON

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PARTICIPANT GUIDE

DEDICATIONS

To the writers, editors, illustrators, contributors and those that believed in us, and to you the reader who will bring this dream to life.

LEAD WRITER

Garett Kopczynski

EDITORS/WRITERS

Max Metzger

WRITERS

Rachel Wilkinson

Jeff Power

Cardell Kerr

Danny Keating

Miranda Chadbourne

Jacob Mandell

CONTRIBUTORS

Ken Pickering

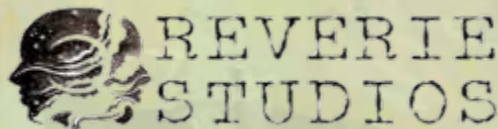
Tyler Brown

ILLUSTRATIONS

Jabari Weathers

THANKS TO

Janaya Kizzie



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WHAT YOU NEED TO **KNOW SECTION**

The first section contains information that is intended to be useful for you, the participant. It is what you absolutely need to know about Eskhaton, the larp.

The other sections that come later are setting information and not critical. You will be able to participate without reading that section because everything will be in your character sheet.

INTRODUCTION

ES·KHA·TON

THE FINAL EVENT IN THE DIVINE PLAN; THE END OF THE WORLD.

Eskhaton is a live action role playing (larp) event inspired by Lovecraft and cosmic horror where participants portray cultists gathering to celebrate the end of the world. The event tells the story of five cults that worship ancient and terrible beings. The signs are apparent and undeniable: the end is approaching. The cultists are coming together to celebrate as one, together, in Eskhaton. The larp focuses on what the cultists believe, whether they be fanatics or guided by rational self-interest. In Eskhaton, only one of the five elder gods will have its prophesied apocalypse, although many cultists do not know this before the event begins. What choices will the cultists make as terrible, inevitable truths emerge? If there are only five possible endings of the world, which choice is the least terrible? These are the questions Eskhaton asks.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS NEED TO KNOW

Larps are intense theatrical experiences that create emotion and response through immersion. The experience is designed to be equally accessible if you are a first-time larper or a seasoned veteran. Eskhaton is developed to be a safety- and consent-focused event, establishing a culture of mindfulness and care to navigate the otherwise darker story material and interactions as characters. A few things to note about Eskhaton's design choices:

- **Consent-based mechanics:** In Eskhaton, the mechanics are consent-based and focused on immersion. All participants will learn the mechanics together in the mandatory workshops, which will help them interact safely and consensually with one another.
- **Participants, not players:** We refer to anyone attending this event as *participants*. This is to remove the context of a 'game' and to focus on the choice one makes to be at Eskhaton. Additionally, it breaks down the traditional relationship of a player who passively experiences the larp, rather than actively participating in the themes and story.
- **Event or larp, not game:** While Eskhaton could be called a 'game', it is not a game in the traditional sense. While there are some rules, their control over individual interactions and the event's outcome are minimal. While most games have some sort of victory condition, there are no winners or losers at Eskhaton.
- **Co-creation and cooperative storytelling:** Eskhaton is a story that the participants tell together. This means that it is important to share the experience with others, to involve as many as you feel you can, and to spread the interesting moments around. The more important the character, the more that the character should aim to help to involve others. In this larp, everyone is the main character of their own story.

- **Lovecraftian-inspired, not Lovecraftian:** We describe the event this way to define the material on our own terms and reject Lovecraft's racism, as well as the weight of pastiche. It is fun to derive new material from the themes of 'cosmic horror' or 'weird fiction' and provide new stories for fans of that genre, without the problematic aspects of Lovecraft and his work.
- **Play for interesting:** A central tenet of this event is that the participants play for what's 'interesting'. Typically, this is described as 'play to lose', but as described above we do not view Eskhaton as a game so there are no winners or losers. Use this guideline to choose actions that are not always directly beneficial to your characters goals or motivations, but instead angled towards what is an interesting outcome. Since this is consensually navigated, it will involve other participants and ultimately create a dynamic, rewarding story for everyone.
- **Aesthetic and immersion:** Eskhaton aims to create an atmosphere of cosmic horror, but not to a point that the event is unfun. The costuming should be immersive, but there is no rule of thumb as to what a cultist should wear. It is a celebration however, and a chance to let one's freak flag fly! Finally, an opportunity to celebrate as a cultist in a world that has long punished you for existing! While the Eskhaton game staff will do its best to create an environment that is believable, it is up to the participants to take the next step and to help as co-collaborators in that spirit.
- **This guide is supplemental:** The materials in this participant guide are intended to help you become immersed and learn more about the setting. It is a launching point for you to develop rich and full stories within Eskhaton. Read only the parts that you enjoy: everything you need to know will be in your character, in the practical information sent to you in introductory emails, and in workshops at the event.
- **In Eskhaton you are free to interpret your character in a way that immerses you:** as a design goal, however, we request that you do not stereotype or typify your character's experiences, and above all keep in mind a healthy respect for others.

WORKSHOPS AND THEIR VALUE

As part of the event there are *mandatory* workshops that happen before the event on Friday, as well as on Sunday. (On Saturday there are additional character-building workshops to strengthen ties and establish more story.) The mandatory workshops create a shared understanding of the larp's safety and consent culture, and how to achieve a fun, exciting experience. The mandatory workshops on Saturday ensures that everyone walks into the event with the exact same level of knowledge and skill. The mandatory workshops on Sunday emphasize de-escalation of the experience and give a way for participants to safely move away from what they saw or felt. The workshops are intrinsic to the success of Eskhaton.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Reverie Studios, LLC ("RS") seeks to promote a safe and comfortable environment for its events that can be enjoyed by all the participants and staff. To that end, we have established this Code of Conduct to which we expect all attendees and staff to adhere.

RS expects our participants, and staff members to behave in an appropriate, mature, and responsible manner. We expect common sense to rule, and for everyone involved to have a sense of the safety and well-being of those around them. Participants and staff members are expected to treat others with courtesy and respect. Harassment or intolerance is unacceptable.

All customers, participants, and staff members are expected to abide by the laws of the land including federal, state, and local laws, statutes, ordinances, etc.

While we understand that the nature of roleplay and acting will create in-character drama, we do not expect for this drama or any hurt feelings to spill over into the realm of out-of-character interactions. Leave the drama for your character; do not bring it into real life.

RS management or authorized staff may remove attendees from a RS event for any reason. We will endeavor to provide a verbal warning to you and allow you to correct your behavior before removing you from the event, when appropriate. There may be times when we immediately remove an attendee when it is determined such removal to be in the best interest of RS, our attendees, the hosting space, or the public. While we imagine that the reason for such removal will be obvious, we are under no obligation to disclose the reason for removal. If you are removed from the event, you will not be entitled to a refund in any way.

While not exclusive, the following list provides examples of behaviors or actions that may constitute your immediate removal from a RS event:

- Violating any laws
- Failure to comply with RS or event space staff instructions
- Physically destructive behavior
- Endangering the safety of yourself or others
- Cheating, threatening, or harassing others
- Drinking alcohol if under the age of 21 or facilitating the drinking of alcohol for the same
- Failure to abide by event location or event rules or safety guidelines
- Disruption of the event
- Violation of the RS Harassment Policy

Incidents that violate this Code of Conduct should be reported to RS management or authorized staff. RS will take reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of those reporting incidents, when requested. Please be aware that RS staff may need to provide information to authorities in the case of violations of the law.

RS may modify this Code of Conduct from time to time. We will notify you of changes by appropriate means. Any changes to the Code of Conduct will become effective when the updated policy is made publicly available or announced. Your use of our services or attendance at any of our events indicates your acceptance of this Code of Conduct.

ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

The Quick Version

Our larp provides a harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion (or lack thereof), or technology choices. We do not tolerate harassment of participants in any form. Larp Participants violating these rules may be sanctioned or expelled from any RS event without a refund at the discretion of the RS organizers.

The Less Quick Version

Harassment includes offensive verbal or written comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion, technology choices, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography, or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.

Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately. If a participant engages in harassing behavior, the RS may take any action they deem appropriate, including warning the offender or expulsion from the event with no refund.

If you are being harassed, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns, please contact a member of RS staff immediately. Our staff can be identified as they'll be wearing branded clothing and/or badges.

Our larp staff will be happy to help participants contact event space/venue security or local law enforcement, provide escorts, or otherwise assist those experiencing harassment to feel safe for the duration of the event. We value your attendance and safety.

We expect participants to follow these rules at the production, on our Facebook groups, in communication with other participants regarding the game, and at workshops.

SAFETY AND CONSENT

We wish to ensure everyone's comfort and security, so we will have safety and consent mechanics in play. The specific mechanics will be informed by your responses to the player surveys that we conduct. We have used mechanics like "Check-Ok," safe words, and green/red/yellow cues in the past, and those used for this game will be similar. As the nature of Eskhaton is dark and the themes may include uncomfortable subject matter, training will occur in mandatory workshops designed to encourage safe and consensual play that allows participants to navigate the content with each other.

Eskhaton will have a 'safety team' assembled from volunteers and participants that represent a body of accountability for our code of conducts and ethics. This team will be selected to represent inclusivity, diversity and responsibility. This team will review core elements of Eskhaton to ensure it has a high standard of safety.

MADNESS

In Eskhaton the larp does not presume the presence of madness or prescribe it. Eskhaton is a personal experience, explored through the stories of the participants who are portraying their characters. The larp is not designed to accurately represent neurodiversity or mental health. Out of respect, and to avoid stereotypes, Eskhaton has no measures of sanity or even normalcy. Eskhaton is a larp about decisions and belief; participants should always feel that they are in full control of their characters. Characters are cultists because of fact, not fiction: there really are extradimensional beings oozing through the cracks in the walls.

BRING YOUR OWN FUN



As part of the lead-up to Eskhaton, we will write a fully-realized character for you, including that character's background, connections to other characters, motivations and goals, and suggestions on what to do to have a rewarding time. This gives you opportunity to think about what you want out of the event. The best way to participate in Eskhaton is to then plan your costume, your connections with other characters, and the kinds of scenes you would like to have. While Eskhaton is a dynamic event that happens organically, it is best to have a plan and to act on it. Reach out to event staff beforehand through our scene submission process if you need help planning something (maybe you need a ritual sacrifice provided or a wily investigator who's been tailing you) or approach the logistics staff on site to plan scenes on the fly. Regardless, you should plan your own scenes and bring what you need to make it happen, or work with others to plan scenes together. You can paint what you want on the canvas that is Eskhaton. The more that participants that do, the stronger the outcome for all.

THE EVENT PREMISE

Everything is falling into place according to the premonitions and signs. The rising conflict in the world, the eroding environment, and the clashes between peoples that have lost their hope for the future: all fit into a growing cancer of cult influence. For centuries the cultists have hidden in the shadows of the world, practicing their rituals and obscuring their traditions from prying eyes. The power that they wield is real, but that power is as fickle as the deities they worship. The cultists have been invited, or have had visions, that lead them to the celebration of the end of the world: Eskhaton.

Cultists range from true believers beyond redemption to those who may have joined out of idle interest, but one fact is certain: the end is real, and inevitable. There is no escaping from it, no stopping it. This means that the story is focused on what choices are made during the end of the world. While the apocalypse itself won't necessarily play out at the event, the decisions made at Eskhaton are final and impact the entire world. The cultists may have been in the shadows for much of human history, but they are going to determine how the world ends. Eskhaton is a victory dance for those caught up in the thrill of this power.

THE END OF THE WORLD

The primary focus of Eskhaton is the shared visions and prophecies that make up the end of the world. In the setting of Eskhaton this is a *truth*. The world *will* end and there is nothing that can be done to stop it. The cultists are on the 'winning' side; but only in so much as they are individuals who know it is going to happen. In a way this is liberating: finally being right after untold ages of hiding from the rest of society. As cultists coming together to celebrate the end, there is a bond in this inevitability. Other religious prophecies describe a final fight between good and evil where good can triumph over evil. The world of Eskhaton has no such dualism. Instead, it is a choice about which of the five apocalypses will occur. The characters at the celebration will decide how the world ends, but it will end.

HOW THE END HAPPENS

In Eskhaton, the cultist's beliefs can be fluid and changing. The cultists will be deciding what the apocalypse is at the end. Cultists can change their beliefs and cult allegiances for any reason, but at the end of the event there will be a count to determine the chosen end of the world. There can be no alliances between the deities, and no escaping fate.

Only one deity's apocalypse will come to pass after Eskhaton.

A workshop will explain how this mechanic works and what to expect so that you can plan for your story.



ALLERTON FAMILY

Descended from Mayflower arrivals, the Allerton family history is one of foul deeds and self-assumed importance mixed with declining wealth. While the Allertons are not officially members of any cult, the family has practiced a hodgepodge of occult methods derived from half-learned secrets, and they are firm believers in the end of the world. More akin to a small cult unto themselves, the Allertons are the official hosts of the celebration and nominally its organizers. The Allertons, clad in dark robes, are dedicated to serving the larger, more powerful cults among them. They will do whatever they can to be in service to the true powers of the world.

The Allerton family is one of the ways in which the Eskhaton staff creates immersion. All members of the Allerton family are Eskhaton staff members that don robes and unobtrusively move amongst the cultists doing tasks and pushing scenes along. As a participant, you can interact with an Allerton family anytime you like. You may ask them to get things for your or to relay information. They are tools for you to get things done rather than breaking up your important experience to do it yourself. We will provide information during the workshops on how to take advantage of the Allerton family.



OVERALL STRUCTURE

Eskhaton is a celebration of the end to come, but it is also an opportunity to do more than merely party with your fellow cultists. With this many cultists coming together for the first time in centuries, it is a chance to politic, debate, settle old scores, make new acquaintances, and conduct massive rituals. The general flow of the event is described below. (A specific schedule will be provided before the event, and made available at the event.)

FRIDAY

- Participants will gather at the Providence Hilton around noon to start the mandatory workshops. These workshops will: introduce the world of Eskhaton; teach safety and consent mechanics; describe how to participate in Eskhaton; help you get into character; and meet the other participants and their characters.
- Participants will then be transported (or take their own transportation) to the Eskhaton site at Squantum Association. There will be an introductory dinner that is not in character and a chance to do make-up, get into costume, and warm up.
- The event will then start with an opening ceremony in character and continue until midnight.

SATURDAY

- Brunch will be available starting in the morning at the hotel.
- Participants will have opportunities on Saturday during the morning and afternoon to meet with their cults and other participants, or to meet with staff to work out scenes. There will be opportunities to do narrated 'flashback' scenes as well to further explore your character and fill in missing areas of your story.
- Transportation will begin in the early afternoon to the event site at Squantum as before.
- An in-character dinner will happen as part of the 'celebration' of the end of the world.
- The event will continue, with climax scenes and rituals occurring near the end of the night.
- A census of belief in gods will occur, which will determine the 'apocalypse to come' given to participants.
- The event will end with transportation back to the hotel, followed by an after-party.

SUNDAY

- Brunch will be served, and debriefing workshops will start. It is recommended that participants join these workshops if at all possible as they will offer a safe way to de-immers from the prior nights and process the event with the other participants. It is fun and engaging, a way to walk through your experiences as a participant, share favorite moments, and unwind.
- Participants will start to depart and return to their normal lives.

SETTING

The event takes place in real-time, in real place. It is April 5th, 2019 and the event occurs in Providence, RI. The gathering happens at the traditional grounds of the Allerton family on Squantum Point. These grounds are composed of a large meeting hall, a club house, ample open spaces, multiple shore points, and an island accessible via a raised natural bridge. The grounds sit opposite an industrial area of Providence, showcasing a mixture of the ugly, conventional world and the ancient, decrepit opulence of wealth. The Allerton family's use of the area has seeped into the soil of the grounds and tainted it, sickening the world in ways rumored throughout much of Providence's history.

The universe of Eskhaton has its own rules. These are:

- Other dimensions exist, and they can be visited, or visit this plane of existence
- Immortality is possible, and death is not permanent
- Magic can be performed
- There are beings that are worshipped and called gods or deities that are real
- They each have a prophesized end time associated with them, one of which will come to pass
- Humans cannot handle all the truths of the universe and beyond
- Beings that are not human exist, some more monstrous than others
- The end of the world, or the apocalypse, is real and it cannot be averted

MAGIC AND RITUALS

Magic in the world of Eskhaton is a malign and ineffable force, a caustic effect on the threads of reality. Practitioners of the esoteric arts wield forces beyond their ken, calling on powers and entities better left alone.

MAGIC

Magic is unknown to the world at large. The vast, uncaring wheels of the mundane world grind on, heedless of the supernatural forces thrumming through causality like a live wire. Those that *are* in the know—cultists, Believers, shadow agencies—regard magic much as they would nuclear energy: it can be harnessed to perform a great many tasks. Or, if dealt with carelessly or with ill intent, it can just as easily cause death and mayhem on a grand scale.

Performing magic requires a great deal of knowledge, considerable skill, and significant resources (either material, metaphysical, or psychological). Again, similarly to working with nuclear power, simply banging special rocks together at speed won't be terribly useful (unless your goal is to create a literal or proverbial radioactive mess).

Magic can take a great many forms. Some traditions are based in ceremony and chant, while others use blood and signs. However individuals practice their craft, their workings can be sorted into one of three categories: Spells, Rituals, and Rites.

As with all other aspects of Eskhaton, the specific effects of magic, whether in combat or out, are up to the *affected* party rather than the *instigating* party. This is in line with the consent-based mechanics of the event, and which are essential to an engaging experience for all. (This will be covered at the mandatory workshops.) Additionally, all magic done in Eskhaton is 'what you see is what you get' (WYSIWYG) and therefore narrative explanation of an effect should be avoided.

SPELLS

Magic performed on the fly is usually the result of a rote, memorized formula or invocation, an expression of the Whim of one of the Gods, or else a raw exercise of willpower by the practitioner. Little or no preparation is involved, which means that Spells are a viable (if dangerous and unpredictable) option in combat. Regardless of source or presentation, the energies unleashed by Spells are categorically warped and/or damaging.

Sample Spells might be a blood jinx, an instantaneous plague, or a panoply of mind shattering visions forced upon an enemy. To cast a Spell, a participant should perform their interpretation of an appropriate casting action (an incantation, the presentation of an item, etc.), ending with a clawing motion made towards a target. The hand used to make the clawing motion should have thumb, index finger, and pinky fingers extended, though curled.

To acknowledge that they have been targeted by a Spell, a participant should place one hand, curled into a claw, over their heart, then proceed to act in accordance with their interpretation of having been the subject of ancient and terrible energies directed at them with ill intentions. The recipient may acknowledge that magic has occurred, but that they are warded or have deflected the ill-intent by using an open palmed hand to 'push' away the harmful magic. In this fashion, another person may instead take the effect of the Spell as described above, indicating a poor use of deflection onto an unprepared victim.

RITUALS

Rituals are magical undertakings of moderate duration. Frequently requiring the participation of anywhere from one to five practitioners, Rituals can be used to create lasting and more nuanced effects (in comparison to the brutal chaos of Spells). Rituals often require tools or accoutrements of some kind—objects to serve as the focus of energies, texts with sacred words, or simple implements for practical necessities such as bloodletting are all common. While Rituals can vary remarkably in power, the more powerful the Ritual, the steeper the price exacted by the Powers That Be for carrying it off. Particularly powerful Rituals have been known to Cost their performers dearly—participants should feel free to determine "Costs" they feel to be commensurate to the effect they are trying to achieve.

Participants should conduct Rituals in a manner that imparts gravity to their circumstances and may want to contact Staff to negotiate any specific lasting effects or fallout from a given Ritual. This may include the creation of scenes or opportunities/consequences.

Sample Ritual:

A pair of Pattern Seekers spend time together perfectly arranging wooden blocks, cups of water, and coins on a table, attempting to discern what the future holds. They spend ten or twenty minutes placing the objects, interpreting the orientations to one another. One of the Pattern Seekers believes that the Ritual has gone well for them—they decide that they have had a flash of insight regarding a dangerous situation. At the Cost of 'forgetting the face of a long-time friend', they will thwart the first Spell that is cast at them. Meanwhile, the other Pattern Seeker thinks that they have had a revelation concerning... something. They're not entirely sure what, so they seek out a member of Staff. Together, they figure out that at the Cost of 'dying horribly at a pivotal moment,' the Pattern Seeker can summon an extra-dimensional servant of their god, who will be able to reveal several secrets regarding a rival cult...

rites

Rites are major magical undertakings performed by large groups of practitioners, larger than a ritual. Sometimes entire cults—or, when the stars are right, and politics can be set aside for even a moment, *multiple* cults—combine their efforts to affect a great working of some kind. Rites can be very powerful (anything from summoning circles to induction ceremonies) and have the added benefit of minimizing the Cost carried by individual practitioners. Unless there's a sacrifice involved. One cannot make an omelet, as they say.

Rites are as likely to be innovative practices engineered to bring about a specific end as they are to be time honored traditions used to mark occasions or exceptional circumstances. Participants are encouraged to work with Staff to determine the specific effects and Costs of especially far-reaching or powerful Rites.

Sample Rite:

Agents of ProGenus have captured a pair of would-be cult busters and want to “welcome them to the fold.” The entire ‘corporation’ congregates and each member contributes some little bit of themselves—a skin scraping here, a drop of blood there, perhaps a tear or hair follicle (these are, of course, props provided by Staff as necessary). These offerings are then placed into a bleeding-edge genetic sequencer and exposed to the cosmic rays given off by an artifact ProGenus captured from some rivals earlier. The result is a serum the captives are “forced” to consume, using the consent-based mechanics. One of the captives decides that, rather than inducting them into the cult, the serum has triggered a spontaneous and cataclysmic chain of mutations in their body—they stagger off into the night in search of victims to eat (and suitable makeup). The other captive takes the serum and decides that they have felt an awakening at the cellular level—they want to learn more about ProGenus, and the way the world *really* works...

JUST FOR FUN SECTION

As described in the beginning, this section is just for fun. It is setting material for you to learn more about Eskhaton, but you are not required at all to read it. Your character sheet will contain all the information you need to know to participate. Have fun and enjoy!

THE CULTS

As a participant in Eskhaton, you will portray a cultist in one of five cults, or someone associated with them in some fashion. You might even portray something not quite human. Each cult worships an Elder God, and each Elder God has its own variation on the impending end time. The cultists are gathering together at a celebration for this end time. For far too long the cultists hid in the shadows, guarding themselves against intrusive societies and plagued by internecine wars. As a participant at Eskhaton you will play a cultist that is there to celebrate, to worship and to explore what the 'end time' means for your character. Belief is a powerful commodity and your character's beliefs might change and shift, mutating over the course of the event many times over depending on what you hear and experience. In the end your character will be altered irrevocably by what has occurred.



BEING A CULTIST

Cultists in this world face all manner of danger. The life of a cultist is short, chaotic and complex. If a cultist joined a cult in their adult life they likely did so of their own accord and with some understanding of the difficulty involved. Others were called to a cult by premonitions or even raised within it, and may not have had a choice. Regardless of whether the cultist joined by choice or not, their lives are irrevocably changed forever. Once in, there's never any way out.

While not all cultists formally join a cult and socialize within that community, it is rare for a cultist to be on their own and independent. Even the Pattern Seekers are still defined by a shared identity that binds them together. Being in a cult is almost like being in a family, although in some cases the cultists may change their beliefs. Some cults have historically swapped believers over the millennia of existence, or cults have appeared and disappeared, leaving lone cultists to fend for themselves.

EXTANT

"Our history is one of tradition. All the suffering you see in this world stems from humanity losing its way. Only by living a life of order and sacrifice can we pave the way for a future worth living."

The Extant has survived through the ages by remaining in the shadows after their fall as the Celtic elite. Now they seek to unify the most powerful cults in anticipation of return of their primal gods. Scattered to the corners of the world, they practice their sacred rites and sanguine rituals. Through these, their god endows them with eldritch secrets of divination, and the power to live well beyond the life span of the average mortal.



Cult History and Description


From Britannia to Gaul and beyond, the Druids controlled nearly all knowledge in the ancient Celtic world. The Druids occupied a revered social status among the Celts due to their service to the community as priests, teachers, diviners, and magicians. Their gods gave worshippers ancient knowledge, but also otherworldly strength to remake the world through blood magic. Two of the significant attributes of the faith are the veneration of the oak tree and the ritual of human sacrifice. To this day, this is how The Extant derive most of their mastery over the unknowable: 'The gods demand a life for a life'.

The Druids' contact with other worldly beings goes back millennia to the Tuatha Dé Danann. The Tuatha Dé Danann, beings not quite human, conquered Ireland thousands of years ago and gave their sacred knowledge and magic to the Druids. After ruling for generations, the Tuatha Dé Danann fled from the Roman Empire into the 'Otherworld', taking their secrets and knowledge with them. It is rumored by Extant historians that the Tuatha Dé Danann will come back if the Extant show great dedication to their rites.

Many know the official history of what happened at Anglesey in 60 CE when the Romans attacked the Druids, but the truth is burned into the minds of


the Extant. While a Celtic rebellion raged, the Romans discovered a convergence of druids at the isle of Anglesey. They sent troops to that sacred place, and they razed all they could to the ground. Most of the knowledge of the Extant was lost, obliterating countless centuries of oral knowledge. It was only thanks to the actions of a few Arch Druids that anything survived. They called upon their Mother Goddess who saved those most venerated. Their Great Mother N'Klaste stepped into this world to save her children. As she took them to the other world, the air turned to fire when it touched her skin.

Upon their return, those who were saved discovered that they had lost much knowledge, and it was this loss of identity and worship that drove the Extant to begin rotating their eldest members into the other world on 150-year cycles. The Extant spent hundreds of years seeking out what remnants of the pagan mystics could be found. In 1612 Thomas Orne, an Arch Druid, fled the English witch trials. He boarded a ship bound for the west coast of Africa, following a tip from a drunken Spanish sailor who spun tales of horrible ceremonies that conjure unnamable forces through human sacrifice. In the Oyo Empire (now part of present-day Nigeria), Thomas saw cultists perform a rite that was instantly recognizable as



identical to those practiced by the Extant. Powerful mystics called forward the mother goddess as men attempted to raid their sacred shrines. The local mystics were taken to the Otherworld, and Thomas spirited away with them. He learned how N'Klaste has taken many forms, and her servants have revealed themselves to cultures across the world, including the Tuatha Dé Danann.

The Extant claim prophetic signs keep mounting. Their Seers have been bombarded by visions of N'Klaste's return. They seek to unify the great orders of the day in anticipation of the return of those primal, otherworldly beings. In modern times, the Extant use their ancient oral tradition for their rites, greetings, and as a means of relaying messages amongst the cult. Through written rituals and books, what once took twenty years to master orally is cut down to only a few intense years of study, a sea-tide change in how the Extant functions. New members of the cult can gain power quickly. New members are selected with little care and are enticed with base secrets and rewards. In short, the mighty tree of the Extant has become a twisted, perverse and gnarled thing that no longer knows itself.



LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

The Extant are deeply rooted in tradition. Their groups are divided by the type of Druidic practitioner, specifically as Life, Death, Rebirth or Seers. In many ways, the internal order of each group is similar to master/apprentice relationships; however all Extant cultists ultimately obey the wills of the Arch Druids. Every 150 years when the Arch Druids return from the other world they tell the Extant who will replace them. Every 6 months messages are sent to and from the other world about important developments and changes, but most do what they want in between. The Arch Druids' orders and will are never questioned.

RECRUITMENT

There are multiple ways that the Extant seek new members. For a select few, it is simple: the recruit is granted a vision by the Great Mother. That vision is simultaneously shared by another Extant. These recruits are often seen as special due to both their rarity and the unmistakable evidence of their connection to the Great Mother. Many recruits come into the group in a very different manner. There is a wing of the Extant called 'Bards' who organize occult meetups and monitor activities that are of interest to the Extant. They gain the most recruits by focusing on written work, or even creating films and art whose subject matter is focused on the tradition or druidic practices, gaining membership through interest in the subjects. Lastly, there are familial lines that tend to birth consistent members of the Extant, likely due to some power being hereditary with parent handing down their rites to their children.

INITIATION

The Extant are far more knowledge-driven than they appear on the surface. Once a recruit has decided to join, they are forced to study the vast history of the organization, as well as the druidic practices that have evolved from centuries of trial and error. This is a grueling process that is so demanding few manage to maintain social ties while undergoing it. As a final initiation, each druid is forced to make a sacrifice to become a full member. This the sacrifice is often specialized based on whether they are joining the Life, Death, Rebirth or Seers.

LIFESTYLE

The Extant are an extremely diverse group, and as such there are very few unifying aspects in terms of lifestyle. Some are quite affluent, while others struggle to make ends meet. Each member of the Extant has arranged their life around specific beliefs and practices that bring them closer to what they see as a unifying God. Ironically, this can lead to a massive variance of behavior, with a Death druid being almost like a serial killer, while a Life druid might be a published Biomedical Ethics author. However, despite these differences, each member is equally devout in their own way.

CONFLICTS

With so much individuality within the Extant, it is something of a chaotic order. The Life druids and the Death druids are often at odds over how a given matter should be resolved, while the Seers can often be arrogant. Rebirth druids are the most secretive group and do not participate in most of the more contentious debates, instead focusing on their own inscrutable aims. While there is a consistent level of conflict, the groups rarely get so heated as to become truly divided. When an issue threatens to fracture the Extant completely, the Arch Druids decide the issue at the next ritual communication, and their will is accepted unconditionally.

Relations with the Pattern Seekers

The Extant sees more promise in the Pattern Seekers than most. Most contact is between Extant Seers and the Bound, both whom are often disconnected from our reality. The majority of the Extant agree that the Patterns Seekers should be more actively engaged and shown more of the ancient connections their cult has to historical deities. Most in the Extant seek to educate and recruit Pattern Seekers, which comes across as patronizing and leads to misunderstandings with deadly outcomes.

Relations with the Mareen

The Extant see the Mareen's claim of being the oldest cult descended from the Ur, coupled with their vast stores of knowledge, as the prime reason there is a unifying ancient communion between the two cults. Arch Druids have made a few exceptions in which Extants are allowed dual-membership with the Mareen, but such people are very rare. Conflict occurs when Extant members dredge up the remains of deceased Mareen to reanimate for their knowledge. (That knowledge is usually confused and scattered due to the deceased Mareen's consciousness having reunited with Illuket.) The Extant would give almost anything to see the cults unite as the beginning of what they perceive as an ancient pantheon.

Relations with the ProGenus

The Extant has had minimal contact with ProGenus after an incident in 1987 where an Extant researcher cooperated with an early ProGenus cultist in defiling a Mareen burial. The Extants seeks further cooperation. It is believed by Extant cultists that Aletheia is a manifestation of some supreme or central god, or at the least some variant of an ancient god of truth. Some Extant are revolted by ProGenus's genetic alterations, while others see them as finding a path to the Tuatha Dé Danann, the fabled originators of the Extant's magical practices. Most Extant members agree, however, that the corporate model of ProGenus is a crutch to be cast aside if they are to achieve their full potential.

Relations with the Expositors of the Unspoken

The Extant and the Expositors have been at odds since the Expositors' founding. The Extant sees Nomen Nescio as a bizarre and horrifying concept of a language that cannot die and a rejection of the Extants' natural world. While some Extant members see language as crucial to unifying the cults and accessing the various cosmic entities directly, it is difficult to reconcile that with Nomen Nescio, because it is a rejection of the traditional oral tales that the Extant have used throughout their history. Many a Bard of the Extant has vowed to steal the Expositors' secrets and eradicate their god, though the Arch Druids have always forbidden it, knowing that the Expositors' superior resources could decimate the Extant.

Types of Extant Druids

Life

A common type of Druid is what is referred to within the Extant as a 'Life Druid'. Reverence of the earth and nature, of the feminine powers of fertility and changing of the seasons are all attributes of these Druids. Many Life Druids seek what they perceive as a 'harmonious existence with nature' and show it extreme care and love, even if it is a fanatical worship that brings them into conflict with others who might defile it. No longer manifesting their power for agricultural use, the Life Druid seeks to cure the ill, study nature's bounty, and seek an ever perfecting self. They bring longer life to themselves and their fellow cultists. Although their powers are expressed through blood magic, their use of the life force of a living creature is a holy act. Passing that life force on through the blessing of N'Klaste is a gift. The path of the Life Druid draws upon the rich collected histories of many of the faiths that the Extant discovered in their exhaustive search for their goddess.

Death

Death Druids are few and far between in the modern days. While all Druids know the powers bestowed on them from N'Klaste are received through blood magic and offerings, the Death Druid seeks further favor from the goddess through excessive offerings. They will sacrifice above and beyond, and at regular intervals, for the potential future use over the realm of death. They believe that N'Klaste doesn't care about nature, life, or the Extant at all, but that she is feeding on what life force she can. By gorging her insatiable appetite, they can bring down a whole host of vexing powers upon those who stand in their way. Constantly taking life is a holy act for them, and in return they have an ability above and beyond other Extant to cover their tracks. However, their sheer body count is hard to hide, and most Death Druids eventually have fate catch up with them, hence why there are so few modern Death Druids.

Seers

Another group small in number, Seers are Druids who in their teenage years begin to have visions of things to come. A Seer is valued by the Extant as they often have visions of potential outcomes that could benefit the Extant. Seer almost always have the same visions, which is how the legitimate are weeded out from the merely mad. When a new Seer begins having visions other Seers in the region share this vision and focus their efforts to find the new Seer to include them in their ranks. Sadly by the time most are found they have already been ruined by modern society's efforts to control a dangerous behavior. They are often medicated and warped, their visions thereafter being tainted. Interestingly, the ProGenus take deep interest in these individuals and will find them well after and salvage them for their own cult.

Rebirth

The most secretive group in the Extant are the Rebirth Druids. Their primary aim is to search the world over for the remains of ancient peoples, and through their blood magic resurrect the dead to gain what knowledge they can from the departed. Rebirth Druids look for not just mystic secrets, but also the history of the world and its relationships to cults. This is to advance the Extant's overall goal of unifying all cults worshipping a true deity. Rebirth Druids have many intra-cult associations, and often collaborate with Mareen or Expositors to share history and secrets.

Arch Druids

An Arch Druid is any Druid who has been chosen to lead the cult by the visions of the Seers who communicate with Arch Druids in the Otherworld. Arch Druids are chosen every 150 years, and the rotation of Druidic leaders occurs with Arch Druids in the Otherworld crossing back over to share their knowledge. At any given time there are usually three Arch Druids waiting to cross over, and a similar number in the Otherworld. If one dies another is chosen at the next bi-annual ritual when the Otherworld is communicated with.

The Book of Moriamis, Period 27 preamble, Recent Publishing.

"There is only one constant the universe gives us and that is change in the form of transmutation from life to death, and of the indifference of the universe to this process. The Druids as an order would never stand against time, but their hubris was the same as I saw in Rome. This foolish 'Christian' church, the feudal lords that followed or the grandeur of the capitalists that exist today all possess the same short-sightedness.

In my early years I was given over as a priestess to a Grecian colony on the far flung regions of Europa close to the ancient Celtic settlements. I found unmistakable similarities between our ways of worship and that of the Hyperboreans. I traveled often in those days and visited what would be the British Isles in our current day. I gleaned what I could from the Druids there, though being a closed order I mainly learned from their outcasts, enough though to become a recognized regional magician. In the years between then and the Romans burning of Anglesey I learned of a link between the Aegyptian Hasthur and Grecian Persephone. From the blood rites I learned as a youth I saw something older, and more pure in the Celts. Although disappointed that they used their genuinely otherworldly abilities on such mundane things as agriculture I stayed, and studied, my life long extended through the true magics.

After the fall of Anglesey the Druids began consulting those of us they shunned before. Once they realized how widespread the fundamental ideas they stood on were once I shared my story with them, it took little convincing for them to accept me in their fold. I began to lead them out of the Isles, to seek the root of power in those gods which were called Brigid, Persephone, Hasthur, and her many other antediluvian names: the primal mother of life, death, and rebirth.

I shared with them that there were others who practiced similar rites, and that we should travel to learn more. We traveled to Aegypt to discover an ancient rite practiced there to travel to the land of the dead. I presided over a powerful ritual then to learn more from our goddess, where the first rotation of the former Druid leaders, now known as the Arch Druids died in order to meet our goddess. Though this ritual was incomplete and seemed to be missing some key ritualistic components, this led to the discovery of the proper method of communicating with the Arch Druids in the god's world during our sacred rites. They were brought back shortly after, changed forever and more powerful for it but clearly insane as the ritual was not intact. We had conquered death and found our path forward in the universal order."

Modern Relations: The Incident

After Thomas Orne's discoveries, the nature of the Extant changed dramatically. He returned to Europe in the 1700s and his reconnection with the Extant that survived the purges of the Church led to a rapid transformation. The Arch Druids began cycling in and out of the other world with regularity, and the Extant established frequent communication with them, which reinforced the Extant's structure. The Extant identified the deities they think make up what could be the remnants of a truly unifying religion, and formed their plan to bring back their ancient gods with the aid of N'Klaste. The Extant encountered the other cults during this revival and established that they worshipped faces of other gods once part of the ancient Celtic pantheon, and resolved to bring them into the fold.

The last cult to be recognized by the Extant prior to this prophesied unification is ProGenus. This occurred after Ernesto Muerte, a Chilean Rebirth Druid by birthright, attracted the attention of the secretive modern cult. As a grad student at the Universidad de Chile, Ernesto honed his occult skills of raising the dead and obtaining what ancient secrets he could, as his ancestors did before him. An ancient, eight thousand year old mummy spoke to Ernesto and encouraged him to seek water worshippers in ancient coastal areas of the U.S. The mummy told Ernesto that there were links to the mummy's own people, who had also worshiped water beings that unified consciousnesses. This suggested the Mareen, and he expected to encounter them in his studies.

However, the remote location and lack of University funding threatened the project before it started. Before a proper team could even be assembled to officially excavate the site, everything seemed to be falling apart. Ernesto was then approached by secretive agents of the U.S. government who had taken a keen interest in his discovery. They offered to fund his research, knowing full well that his interest extended well beyond mere archeology.

In the summer of 1987 Ernesto broke ground on the site. Over the next few years little archaeological insight was gained but the money kept pouring in. He had found a trove of purged Mareen remains of little value. One night a few government representatives approached Ernesto at his hotel and divulged that their department was a part of something called 'Operation Chalice' and that they wanted to know more about the purged remains. Ernesto reluctantly shared his information under pressure, knowing that he had no choice if he wanted his project to continue.

The agents from Chalice used Ernesto to get at the knowledge about the Mareen, and eventually used that knowledge against the Mareen as part of their first contact with their deity. The Extant appeared as though they were a part of a conspiracy against the Mareen, damaging their relationship with their sibling cult. Although the Mareen and the Extant have mostly mended their relationship, it has definitely left a lasting stain on how the Extant see what is now ProGenus.

THE MAREEN

"For those who lack knowledge, the future will be as impossible to tame as the ocean itself."

The Mareen are the keepers of memory and the conservators of the departed. Having harnessed the primordial power of the sea, cultists to the Elder Goddess Illuket safeguard the consciousnesses of their dead, collecting them for a future purpose. A single Mareen can have upwards of twenty lives within their mind and can call on their collective wisdom at will.



Cult History and Description

The Mareen believe they were the first of the cults to break off from the Ur. Built around a series of strict hierarchical circles, the Mareen function within individual schools known as Shoals. These Shoals, comprised mostly of women, have protected and cultivated the art of memory transference.

Preservationists of history, the Mareen collect mystical artifacts and personal effects of occult importance. They have discovered the means of extending their own lives by absorbing the lifeforce of others. Individual Mareen do so until the capabilities of their body are stretched to the very end, or they voluntarily choose to sink into the sea of eternity. When a Mareen's time comes, the cultists gather so that her consciousness can be added to those who lay with her in the water. The Mareen believe that one only truly dies when they are no longer remembered, and that true immortality can be achieved by becoming part of Illuket.

Transference occurs when a consciousness is added to the chorus of each Mareen who participates in the ritual. With water's correspondence to the numbers 2, 7, and the master number 22, the transference takes place with two or seven other cultists. Each cultist hopes to host a chorus of twenty two individual consciousness.

Once they have reached this mystical number, they are finally permitted to sink into the depths and be absorbed by Illuket. Within her, they live on for the rest of eternity.

Conversely, those cultists who betray the Mareen or violate their sacred tenants are erased from history through the denial of transference, or through the purging of consciousness from the chorus of any cultist who carries them with her.

Just like an ocean, the Mareen are as serene as they are powerful and as beautiful as they are dangerous. They do not like to be far from bodies of water and often reside in seaside towns and cities. Myths like the Inuit Qalupalik and Celtic Finfolk likely came from of encounters with the Mareen. Given their focus on the preservation of history, most Mareen build niche museums, cabinets of curiosities, or small collections of personal objects, embodying their belief that everyone's pasts are valuable to the future.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

*As dictated by Sarah Astarte (Rank 14),
on the day of highest tide, 2017.*

The Mareen are a strict hierarchy assigned numbers from 1 to 22. The higher the number, the higher the rank and the more knowledge possessed. Furthermore, we are separated into Shoals, each one independent from the other in day-to-day tasks. Despite the Shoals' autonomy, there is a cross-Shoal Council. Many Adepts Rank 15-17 serve on the Council, which makes and reviews policy, tracks the progression of our ultimate purpose to become one with Illuket, and determines purgings as needed. Members of this council are most often the leading organizers of their local and regional shoals. Those who outrank them are rare and serve in an advisory role, like a group of elders.

RECRUITMENT

Each Mareen is either a Legacy with family members in the cult and/or they hear a mystical call to a nearby Shoal. Mediums and attempted suicides by drowning are often contacted or visited by those who have departed with messages from Illuket to join.

INITIATION

A Mareen's initiation comes when they take on their first extra consciousness. Since this transference can take place with two, seven, or twenty two other members, the sharing of those minds can create a web of bonding. A departed's consciousness is not split between Mareen like pieces of a puzzle, as to do so would strip memories of context. Therefore, each Mareen must hold a complete person. In this sense, Mareen have memories in common because they have all lived it. There is no greater bond than memory. There is no one who can empathize more than the Mareen, nor better realize the actions that are necessary despite the pain they may cause. There is no mortal being you can trust more than the Mareen, nor is there one you should desire to.

LIFESTYLE

As dictated by Sarah Astarte (Rank 14), on the day of highest tide, 2017.

A Mareen's life depends on her rank. Novices (1-5) still maintain their lives. Apprentices (6-10) can come off anywhere from eccentric to utterly strange, and they must make compromises to maintain any semblance of their previous life... though they usually fail, sometimes with spectacular results. Most return to "sanity" after becoming an Adept (11-18), as they learn to balance their many consciousnesses. Masters (19-22), who are usually elderly, are taken care of by the Novices as befits the cycle of growth and fecundity. Mareen are preservationists. We are librarians, museum curators and docents, collectors, gallery owners, archeologists, researchers... We are keepers of legacies, known and unknown. We are those who will give rise to the future.

CONFLICTS

There are many forms of conflict. This is a natural part of the Mareens' lives, as without it there can be no proof we are fit to lead. When they are young, there are petty arguments. Initiates are annoyed with their duties or jealous of the attention others are getting... What is more natural than that? It can further twist the knife that the higher the number, the more authority. Watch a 2nd tell a 1st what to do, and see the rage and dismay play so quickly across her face before she does as she was commanded. Old feuds can play out over the duration of a lifetime as the members in conflict try to leapfrog each other in rank.

Illuket watches.

Illuket approves.

Apprentices are usually struggling with the voices in their head, wrestling with the effort of controlling their inner chorus. They can become addicts, insomniacs, or lunatics. If a Mareen is going to burn out, she'll burn out as an Apprentice. This is a trying time expressly because Apprentices don't have enough power over their inner voices to settle internal disputes. More experienced members recall what it was like, having ten old women screaming at each other in their head. Much of this time is a blur for the Mareen.

Adepts know how to control the voices. They can arbitrate disputes within their own minds. Rank means everything, even after death. If inner voices or outer cultists of the same rank are in conflict, deference goes to gender (female over male) and then age. This is when the external conflict comes into balance with the internal.

Disputes on the Master level can get vicious, so they are avoided whenever possible. Rank still applies, but the choruses are so large, and the identity of the host cultist so integrated into that chorus, it's incredibly difficult to sort out. However, for those long-time feuds between particularly cut-throat Mareen, they will often attempt to pull the strings of the governing body to purge their enemy.

Purging is when a member (alive or departed) is deemed unfit for Illuket. The Mareen then purge the consciousnesses. It's usually very thorough, leaving no trace. But inexperienced Apprentices, especially broken Apprentices under the sway of their chorus, can't manage the purge. In those cases, the Apprentice is executed. On the rarest of rare occasions, a consciousness can hide either in a Novice-1 or a broken Apprentice. They are the truly cursed and should be pitied enough to grant them the swiftest death possible.

Relations with the Pattern Seekers

To have a conflict with a Pattern Seeker is like arguing with the wind. Mareen have regarded the Pattern Seekers as curiosities to be dealt with on an individual basis, rather than as a formal entity. There have been mistakes and misunderstandings in the past with this group, but it's rare for Pattern Seekers talk to one another, and even rarer still that they would share an agenda. Mareen are generally wary of Pattern Seekers as their discord of mind is not the serene consciousness that is the hallmark of the Mareen experience.

Relations with the Extant

The Extant are a tragic story that is long-lived, and the Mareen have watched them suffer from one moment to the next. As the second-oldest cult, the Extant share some history with the Mareen, exchanging both members and conflicts with one another. With most of the highest-ranking Extant long dead, the tradition of oral knowledge was at risk of going out like a candle in the wind, until a revival within the past few centuries push the cult towards more modern practices. They seem to be recovering and growing now, though their newer members don't seem to be as aware of the cult's history or its purpose.

Relations with the ProGenus

ProGenus and the Mareen are very much like cats and dogs. It is well known within the Mareen cult that ProGenus defiled the dead of the cult to achieve their elevation, and therefore the grudge is very personal. The ProGenus are a meritocracy with little room for the proper worship of the past and the dead. Within the Mareen, some say that the deity that the ProGenus worship is likely to have destroyed its last cult, mutating and devouring them all in a grand ceremony, and it is only a matter of time until ProGenus meets a similar fate.

Relations with the Expositors of the Unspoken

A relatively recent cult, the Expositors rarely clash with the Mareen, except when it comes to their shared thirst for knowledge. When fighting over knowledge, the cults become vicious with one another. The Expositors act like cornered animals when they need a piece of knowledge, and the Mareen have learned to let them have just enough to slake their violent urges. The Mareen choose to strike later and reclaim what is theirs. The prevalence for the Expositors to be made up of men of privilege is also a point of derision, and Mareen find that tendency extremely distasteful.

Mareen Rank Structure

1-5: Novice

The Mareen draw individuals of varying age and gender to their shoals. A novice might hear this call because they are a Legacy, a preservationist of history, a medium or dual-cultist, or someone who attempted suicide via drowning. Often they are lonely or isolated people who sense their disconnection from the world around them. Not anything as banal as fringe outsiders or social outcasts, but people who are a fraction out of sync or feel as if they took a half step into a parallel realm without ever leaving this one like ghosts watching, haunting, and cataloging the living.

They understand the passage of time like a sixth sense, turning the unfathomable idea of eternity into a feeling rather than a thought. Because of this, they accept that their individual importance is like a drop of water in the ocean of time. But also appreciate that without all those drops, the ocean can't exist.

A novice may carry as many as five other lives with them, yet their individualism still grounds them. They use "I" to refer to themselves, and they haven't yet mastered living with a chorus. They know the names and personalities of the lives they carry with them, but it takes an immense effort to

communicate with those Departed. In order to tap into the wisdom of their chorus, they have to perform a ritual. (Ritual)

Novices are also responsible for the mundane tasks of the cult and its rituals as well as assisting in the care of the elderly cultists. They use this time to learn and hone their nascent skills while contributing to the community.

Dual-adherents tend to remain novices so that they can learn and worship without the mental challenges all apprentices face or the risk of madness.

6-10: Apprentice

Like novices, the apprentices remain grounded in their individualism, but the barrier between their mind and those of their chorus is more porous. This is the most tumultuous stage for any Mareen and as far as many adherents progress. Daily life is difficult because they can't control when or how many voices will speak to them. They don't know how to settle disputes between the Departed who argue in their minds. From the outside, they can appear eccentric on good days and utterly insane on bad ones.

The sleepless nights and exhaustion can be unbearable. The weakest minds

Mareen Rank Structure

become addicts searching for respite at the bottom of a bottle. Others break completely. It isn't unusual to find a novice ensuring long-term care of these broken Mareen until it is time for the water to claim them.

Because of this, apprentices hold the least amount of responsibility in terms of the cult's needs. They continue to participate in rituals and dutifully worship the goddess Illuket, but the Mareen limit their inclusion until they have successfully navigated their Breaking Wave. (Ritual)

11-18: Adepts

Becoming an adept is an honored elevation in the Mareen. Associated with the Master number 11, adepts on this tier have surrendered to the shoal that guides them toward their inevitable purpose. They tap into their subconscious, follow their gut, and accept they can know things that have no basis in rationality.

Adept Mareen have also let go of their individuality. This is not to say they lose their identity or become a mindless drone. It's more of an integration with their chorus. They retain their personalities and idiosyncrasies while using 'I' and 'We' interchangeably. But, an adept's tastes might change in response to a new

addition or a particularly strong voice in her mind. Instead of red, she may now prefer blue. A meat eater might become vegetarian and vice versa. She can manifest previously unknown skills like playing a musical instrument or knowing a foreign language based on the lives within her, and she can call them up at will.

Becoming an Adept of the Mareen is a stage of specialization when the cult assigns talents to a particular use.

Mareen Lexicon

Breaking Wave - A Rite of Passage between the 10th and 11th transferences

Chorus - The collection of conscious lives held within a cultist's mind

Departed - Mareen who have died before reaching 22, but remain in the chorus of others.

Shoal - A group of Mareen tied together by school and location. (Clarify) Like a school of fish, they often travel together.

Shoalmates - Cultists of the same shoal

Legacy - A direct descendent of a current or departed cultist

Purging - When a cultist alive or departed (1-21) is deemed unfit for Illuket. The Mareen purge the consciousnesses. It's usually very thorough, leaving no trace. But some Apprentices, especially the broken lunatics, can't manage to expunge the departed from herself. In those cases, the Mareen execute the apprentice. On the rarest of rare occasions, a consciousness can hide either in a Novice-1 or a broken Apprentice.

Transference - When the consciousness of a departed is added to a cultist's chorus

Mareen Rank Structure

11-14: Teachers, Preservationists, and Experimentalist Assistants.

These lower ranked adepts have proven their dedication to the Mareen as well as their devotion to Illuket. They also choose their future course by committing to either teaching, preservation, or experimentalism.

- **Teachers:** Adepts who choose this path are often ritual guides. They also help nurture the growth and occult understanding of their local shoal.

- **Preservationists:** Adepts who choose this path protect the esoteric material of the cult. They house relics, artifacts, and tomes that are important to the Mareen.

- **Experimentalist Assistants:** Adepts who choose this path research and experiment with magic. Given the dangers of this path, lower ranked adept acts as assistants to one of the higher ranked experimentalists.

15-17: Governing Body and Experimentalists

These higher ranked adepts are the most influential women of the Mareen.

- **Governing Body:** From the teachers and preservationists, ranks 15 to 17 serve on a council to make policy and create agendas for the Mareen. They also determine when purging is required. Rivalries begun as novices

often end soon after one of them has joined the council. Some Mareen are politically ruthless ridding themselves of their detractors while others immerse themselves in the community forgiving the ills of the past.

- **Experimentalists:** The only members of the Mareen who actively risk their sanity are the experimentalists. For these women, there is no such thing as impossible. They commit their minds, bodies, and souls to furthering the power of the cult in constant pursuit of knowledge.

18-22: Cult Elders and Masters

The Master of the Mareen are vast fonts of knowledge. Most have doubled their lifespans while some have tripled them. Their integration complete, all masters speak in "we". With so much history held within one master, they seem to have an almost omniscient understanding of the universe. They are as close as any Mareen will come to embodying the power of Illuket.

Famous Mareen

Donatella Genovese, Master of Naples

Lady Genovese came to power during the late Thirteenth Century. While she maintained her Shoal in Naples, her reach extended far beyond the Neapolitan principality and inserted itself into every major Kingdom of the Italian peninsula. While most Mareen gave politics a wide berth, Lady Genovese took a far different and unprecedented approach. She used her Adepts and Apprentices, and their vast knowledge, to blackmail officials, bribe members of the clergy, and on occasion, poison her enemies.

The other Masters largely frowned on her methods, but her results were undeniable. For the next two centuries, Lady Genovese, in her original form and later as a Departed, maintained an iron grip on the Mareen of Southern Europe.

Tujuka Olaotan, Master of Lagos

Historically the British Empire fought against the transatlantic slave trade in West Africa during the Nineteenth century, pursuing Portuguese, American, French, and Cuban slave ships. What is relatively unknown is the hand Tujuka Olaotan played in that event. A native Awori, Tujuka grew up in Portuguese-controlled Lagos, but managed to flee the city when she was very young. Eventually, she made her way to England and joined the London Shoal. There she functioned as a curator, honing her skills and slowly climbing the local hierarchy. However, the fate of her people in Lagos never strayed far from her thoughts. When opportunities arose, she used the English Chorus she had collected within her to put pressure on, bribe, and network with people who had connections to Parliament. As a result, in 1851 Britain liberated Lagos, abolished slavery, and pledged military protection to the city.

Tujuka then returned to Lagos to form a new Shoal in 1862. In 1897, Tujuka reached Rank 22 and joined Illuket. To this day, the Lagos Shoal remains one of the most influential in Africa.

Benjamin Hart, the Male Apprentice

While Benjamin Hart was not the first male apprentice to join the Mareen, he was the most gifted. English born, Hart studied history at the University of France in the early Twentieth Century. During the initial chaos of the First Great War, as Germany invaded France, Hart safeguarded as many historical documents, books, and tapestries as he could.

Using a human pipeline, he managed to transport many of these to neutral Spain, and in so doing, attracted the attention of the Spanish Shoals. Functioning first as an archivist within their ranks, most Mareen frowned on Hart's presence, and he struggled as a Novice. His perseverance, however, paid off. In 1919 he was formally anointed as an Apprentice, the first to do so in almost 150 years, and while he never underwent his Breaking Wave to become an Adept, his consciousness was added to the choruses of a few Mareen affiliated with a Spanish shoal.

Professor Abigail McLean, Adept of the Richmond Shoal

A retired professor of theology and history from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Professor McLean spent the bulk of her life studying the religions of the world. From the three pillars of modern theism to long forgotten cults and secular beliefs, Professor McLean is one of the premier experts on faith and its historical influence. She won the grand prix Gobert in 1988 for her book, *Toucher l'inconnu*, and the Banner Prize in 2002 for her book, *American Cult*. Within the Mareen, she is chiefly

Famous Mareen

responsible for safeguarding the Virginia Estate, which currently houses the collected works of Cato of Ephesus, who wrote extensively on the Ur-Cult.

Minnie Etters and the Purge of 1952

Minnie Etters was born in southern Louisiana to a hard life in the river swamps of the bayou. A runty girl among a litter of brothers, her father would constantly threaten to feed her to the alligators they farmed if she didn't pull her weight. That threat came true when one of her drunk brothers held her over an alligator pit to scare her. With all her kicking and screaming, he couldn't stand upright and dropped her in to the pit. An alligator snapped onto her leg, but she beat its nose hard enough that it let go to find easier prey. While she lived, they couldn't save her leg. The only thing more useless to the family than a runty girl was a runty girl with only one leg. As soon as she was recovered enough to hobble on a crutch, Minnie attempted to drown herself in the swamps. That was when she heard the call of Illuket.

Following that call, she got herself to Gulfport, Mississippi where the local shoal discovered her prodigious memory. Whether the bearer of a photographic memory, eidetic memory, or simply a savant, Minnie never forgot anything. This included the trauma she suffered at the hands of her own family. The Mareen knew of her anger and violent proclivities, but Illuket had called her and they favored her raw talent. Her time as an Apprentice was tumultuous, yet she was able to survive her Breaking Wave. After reaching Rank 14, she chose to depart transferring her consciousness to seven other Mareen.

From there the issues with Minnie Etters grew like a cancer. In the first few years, the accidents and ensuing madness appeared unrelated. One Mareen clipped a male pedestrian with her car. Another drowned an abusive lover in a bathtub. And then, an Apprentice went mad with night terrors about alligators. Tracking which choruses Minnie might belong to revealed a disturbing pattern of destruction and chaos. So, in 1952, the governing body decided to purge Minnie Etters, which resulted in the execution of over ten Apprentices by the time the Adepts believed they had contained the problem.

But much like Minnie's memory, her name can't be erased. She has become a figure of legend and urban myth. And anytime a member of the Mareen hacks a man to pieces, the shoals wonder if it isn't Minnie.

Mareen Rituals

Mareen Greeting:

When two or more Mareen greet each other, the first Mareen places her right hand over her heart and says, "I give to the deep." The second Mareen then places her right hand over her heart and responds, "the deep gives to us." Generally, the Mareen with the lower rank initiates this greeting, but there is no formal rule.

Accessing the Chorus:

Those who are not able to access their Chorus directly perform this ritual. The Mareen kneels on the floor facing a bowl of water or naturally occurring puddles or rivers. Silently, they offer their devotion to Illuket while holding the personal effect of the member of their Chorus with whom they wish to connect. Then, they set their face in the water, holding it there for 22 seconds. After that, if the departed wishes to speak, she will. At that point, the two can carry on the conversation as long as the Mareen's face remains in the water.

Offerings to Illuket:

A shoal or group of Mareen bring offerings and a container to a naturally occurring body of water. These offerings can be anything meaningful and respectful of Illuket. The Mareen stand in the order of rank along the bank of the water. The ritual guide will speak an evocation to Illuket asking the goddess to join the ceremony and bless those who have come to pay homage to her. When the ritual guide believes Illuket is with them, the Mareen will place their offerings in the water.

The guide will then ask Illuket to empower them to do her work. At that point, the Mareen will fill whatever container they've brought with water. The guide will thank Illuket with a

prayer to her. Illuket infuses the collected water with power, which fuels other Mareen rituals.

Breaking Wave:

Once an Apprentice has attempted to take on an 11th consciousness, in order to prevent impending lunacy, she must undergo a ritual called the Breaking Wave. The shoal collects and surrounds the Apprentice. The Ritual Guide present three vials of liquid - 1 red, 1 blue, and 1 clear. The Mareen Experimentalists prepare each kind. Then, the Apprentice drinks each vial starting with red, then blue, and lastly clear.

The Apprentice falls into a deep trance while the rest of the shoal calls on the deep. They chant "Wah - Mah - Nah" slowly and continually while the Apprentice slip beneath the wave of consciousness. Those attempting to break through often scream in physical and psychological pain as their body and their mind feel as though the departed within them are tearing them apart. They relive moments that are not their own as other pasts and their present blend. Many see the horrors of the deep or visions of terrible futures.

If the Apprentices body fails, she dies during the ritual. If her mind fails, she is usually placed in the care of the Mareen. But those who succeed in opening their mind and coming out the other side, are honored with a place among the Adepts. After a Mareen's Breaking Wave, she can speak with her Chorus and tap into its wisdom at will.

Mareen Rituals

The Departed Transference:

When the body of a Mareen dies, they share their consciousness with other Mareen in groups of two, seven, or twenty-two. The departed lays face down in a large body of water. The other members join her in the water and keep the Departed at the surface, though face down. Each member of the Shoal or group maintains physical contact with the Departed while the Mareen with the highest Rank begins the Ritual of Transference.

She recites the following:

“We give to the deep and the deep gives to us. For we are no one and everyone. We are the chorus, and we are the song. We swim in the deep, and we crash upon the shore. In Illuket’s name, we seek to remember, and be remembered in turn. Let the soul of [insert the name of the Departed] be joined with the souls of [insert the name of all Mareen taking part in the ritual]. We shall carry you in our waters forever, and in us, you shall live on. Until Illuket claims us all and ushers in the rain. For we give to the deep just as the deep gives to us.”

While the Ritual Guide recites this, the group pushes the Departed underwater, holding her there and maintaining physical contact until the transference is complete. At the conclusion of the ritual, the Mareen cast the Departed's body out to sea and her former chorus dissipates into the ether.

When the group returns to the shore, they take one of the Departed's personal belongings with them to remember the passing.

PROGENUS

"Our company values are less about top line contributions, and more about the path to the future." - Alexander Domitian, CEO of ProGenus

ProGenus is built upon dueling certainties. ProGenus is certain that the world as we know it is going to end, but they are also certain that through experimentation, occult rituals, and science, they can grant themselves an edge that will allow them to survive and carve out a future as veritable demigods.



Cult History and Description


Operation Chalice was born of the heightened anxieties of the Cold War, derived from a myriad of failed, 'off the books' projects that were hidden from flighty taxpayers. Chalice broke new ground in 1972, just before the panic erupted in the government over Chalice's secretive and illegal acts. Chalice found the first repeatable evidence (after numerous expended resources) that through a concoction of psychedelics and exposure to specific light and sound sequences, they could contact an entity that appeared to be able to foresee the future.

Not alone, Chalice also discovered that other organizations on the Soviet side had managed to do the same. In a pitched battle of research and sacrifice, both teams made the same discovery at a simultaneous event now referred to as "the Unveiling". Multiple sensors (as test candidates were once called) simultaneously relayed the same message to both sides: "In 2019, the world as you know it will end. Only the fit will survive." After the message was delivered, 50% of the sensors clawed the flesh from their face before suffering massive embolisms. The remaining 50% exhibited no immediate side effects.


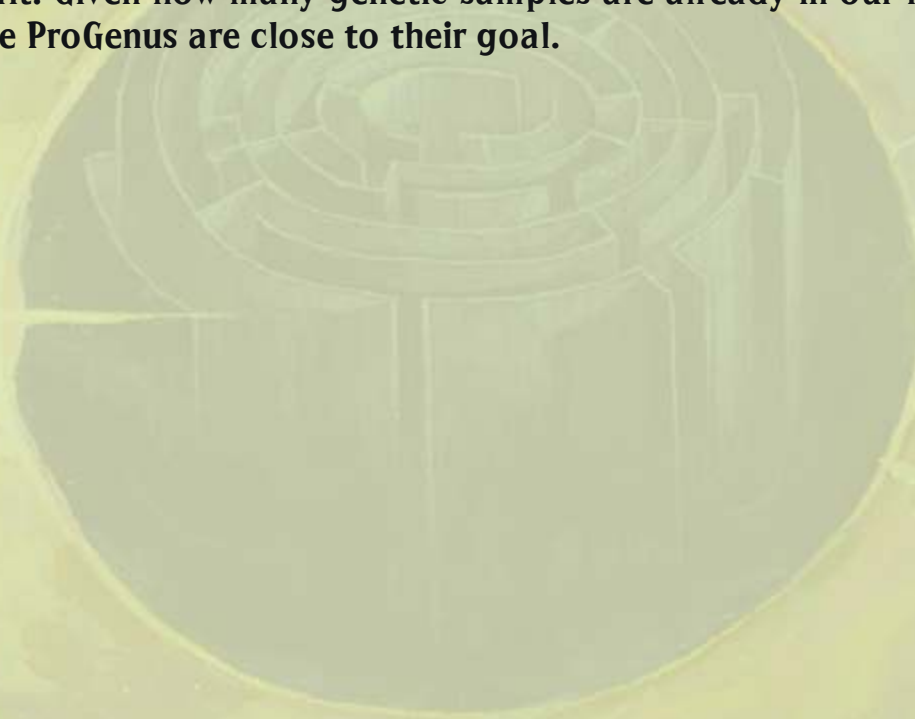
This had a chilling effect on both organizations. After a few weeks, two

organizations held a conclave called the Asilomar Conference, allegedly to discuss biohazards and biotechnology regulations. What was once two organizations were now one, united under the absolute certainty of an unavoidable threat. They used their remaining resources to craft a plan, one that was reinforced by consultation with the entity, which they named "Aletheia". Using its knowledge, the Russian offices evaded capture, while the Americans evaded federal scrutiny until both groups evacuated the government in favor of the private sector. Thus, ProGenus was born.

Over the next 46 years, ProGenus infiltrated, innovated, and incubated throughout the world. Monsanto uses ProGenus proprietary knowledge to edit the genomes of the foods we eat. Pharmaceutical companies lease ProGenus cell lines for research and drug development. "Mindfulness" as an activity is being bolstered by popular comedians, pushing the use of resurgent ProGenus nootropics. Although ProGenus is a small organization, they truly have tendrils that are international in scale. Recently, ProGenus promoted a new CEO to deal with the new AI initiatives that have taken hold throughout the world. Alexander Domitian is hailed as a genius, with PhDs in Genetics and Computer Engineering. He is also the



son of Merideth Domitian, one of the surviving sensors of "The Unveiling" over four decades ago. Under his new leadership, great progress has been in bringing "AI" into the realm of achievability. Many inside the organization are critical of this plan, given the looming end times in 2019. However, the board maintain that bringing the agents of Aletheia into the world under the guise of 'artificial intelligence' can only help make ProGenus more fit. Given how many genetic samples are already in our food, water, and supplements, the ProGenus are close to their goal.



LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

New employees to ProGenus are never exactly sure how decisions are made. A constant feed of data comes from the company Product Team. This team seems to be the one that organizes all the decisions, and to which every other discipline (from engineer all the way to marketing) aspires to join. There are frequent company culture-building exercises, ranging from relaxing retreats and meditative outings to intense, competitive tests of endurance. These activities are all organized by the relentless datamining of Aletheia. Junior employees believe Aletheia to be the corporate AI technology that advises ProGenus on the development and release of new products.

RECRUITMENT

If you want to get hired at ProGenus, you need the right skills. Maintaining their corporate culture is their top priority, as it is the font from which all the success within the company springs. The most important aspect that any new hire is grilled on is how they 'fit in'. They are given personality tests as a first step before they are brought in to meet a large cross-section of the team. If their answers and background check work out, they will move on to the next step - the social test. This is where their initiation truly begins.

INITIATION

During this portion, the candidate will meet with a several senior members of the company Product Team. Additionally, candidates will meet quite a few hopefuls on the outskirts who simply want to move up the ranks and establish a new alliance with the candidate. These people are often chosen by company data (and Aletheia), and many lasting relationships start at the interview process through manufactured coincidences. While the social test occurs, there is an additional test occurring in the background. The next test is one of Service, where the prospective hire is placed in the most menial task available. If they are a researcher, they are given mind-numbingly repetitive tasks. If they are a marketer, they are forced to work in call centers fulfilling orders for ProGenus drugs and wares. After four weeks of Service Tests, the final test is given. Someone from Product comes to them, and "red pills" them. They will offer something the prospective recruit desires, as a severance package. Sometimes this is money, and other times, it can be... less savory things. If the recruit takes it, they are given their severance, but can never again seek employment from ProGenus. If they prove their dedication by rejecting severance to stay with the company, they are welcome within the inner ranks, and their true training can begin.

LIFESTYLE

Many of the people that work at ProGenus are very dialed into the latest trends. There are some subsets that are very deep into the latest health crazes, such as keeping themselves in ketosis, or maintaining a perfect diet of zero sugar. They do this because it shows their fitness, but also so that they demonstrate their discipline and willingness to sacrifice. Similarly, there is an additional culture of 'bio hacking', with people measuring their metabolisms, and using all sorts of modern devices to optimize their lives. Many of the members of ProGenus are wealthy thanks to their ProGenus salaries, but even the less wealthy can make ends meet. All members of ProGenus take at least one of the prescription drugs that the company makes.

CONFLICTS

The conflicts internal to ProGenus are often department heads not agreeing on an appropriate course of action, largely due to the vague and sometimes symbolic methods Aletheia uses to communicate. The board will follow Alexander Domitian's word without question, but there are numerous interactions he will simply not weigh in on, allowing the rest of the members to fight it out. This leads to long, somewhat heated feuds over talent, as well as deliberate sabotage of some larger initiatives.

Relations with the Pattern Seekers

ProGenus regards the Pattern Seekers as fascinating, and worthy of observing. Research department heads propose that the Pattern Seekers likely all have some nascent ability to channel or communicate with Aletheia and are worth studying. The inconsistency of research results makes this difficult. Labs have also been compromised by Pattern Seekers in grotesque and horrific ways, which makes cleaning up after an experiment less than savory.

Relations with the Mareen

The ProGenus find the Mareen useful in only regard: sources of knowledge that can be dissected and consumed. As the Mareen are unified and share knowledge, the ProGenus is slow to engage in warfare with the other cult, but the two have been at odds since the beginning. Some of the early occult research done by Operation Chalice defiled Mareen remains, and this has left a sour streak. For their part, ProGenus is not into the business of apologizing to hive mind mermaids or caring how they feel.

Relations with the Extant

The Extant are regarded as expendable casualties in the long war towards the apocalypse. Their obsession with 'uniting' the various cults into some kind of original cult with a pantheon above them is laughable. ProGenus monitors the various Druids within the Extant for any useful research, but overall their cult is a chaotic pack of children and fools that toy with powers beyond their reckoning. The Arch Druids are the exception: these rare individuals are extremely dangerous and almost never worth the cost of engagement.

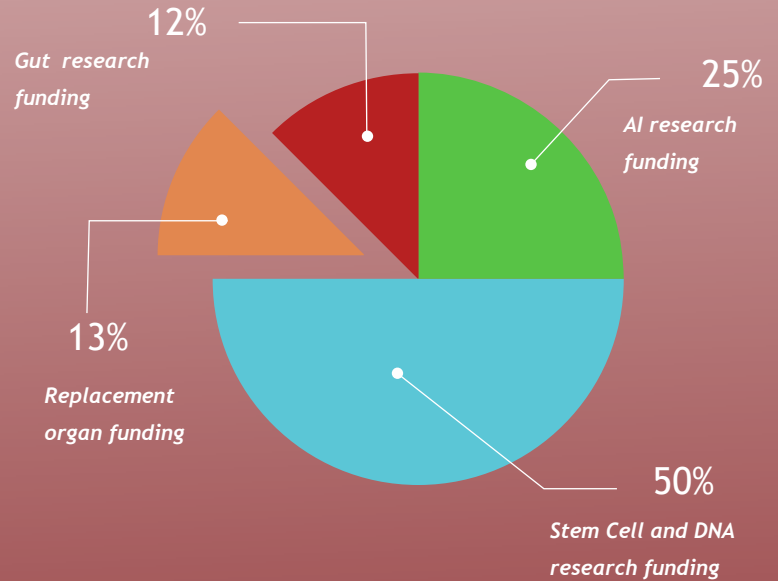
Relations with the Expositors of the Unspoken

The Expositors and ProGenus both agree that the world is best understood through the accumulation of knowledge. However, any alliance ends when the paper is published. After that, ProGenus has little use for a group of insular researchers that seem obsessed with their 'undead language'. In very rare circumstances, Expositors have taken violent extremes to acquire their materials, and ProGenus does what it can to wait out the desperate researcher's demise, since the Expositors ritually murder cult members that start to fall behind.

PROGENUS Q4 REPORT

2019 is an exciting year for ProGenus research divisions!

CEO Alexander Domitian's 3rd quarter funding report and project update is promising for 2019! With the exciting news of what is coming, internal memos are being distributed on major initiatives. Stay tuned for Q1 report and a memo from the CEO himself on what's on the horizon!

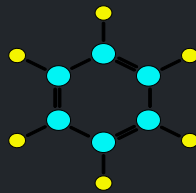


STEM CELLS



Stem cells are a testament to the strength of humanity. There was too much focus on using them without processing, and thankfully we have come a long way since then. Now, we have found a way to reliably create tissue which acts like stem cells in 90% of recipients, which has allowed for some progress in examining the artifacts of Aletheia in recovering patients, high end athletes, and the elderly.

GUT BACTERIA



The recent discovery of the 'Gut Brain' has generated a great deal of interest. With the diet craze, and the level of investment the company has with gene-editing bacteria, this is an obvious area for innovation. There are numerous examples of bacteria (e.g., Toxoplasmosis) that can modify behavior of an organism. Hijacking the gut brain is an area rife with possibility. Digesting inorganic matter would be extremely useful. Additionally, eating flesh and gaining the knowledge of the eaten would be a useful adaptation.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



The concept of a helper organism has already been proven. Smart phones? Search Algorithm? Autocomplete? All of these are mere fragments of the greater whole that we have been incapable of bringing into the world in a stable fashion. Driving cars are merely the next step, and more of a behavioral experiment. The sooner people are willing to trust our interdimensional AI with power over life and death, the sooner we can be assured of boosting our chances of survival by ~15%.

ALEXANDER DOMITIAN, CEO

VENTURE BEAT BIO

“When he was a toddler, he would build these towering structures out of blocks that would span the entire hallway. One time, our old dog Lilly knocked one over rushing to the door, and Alex lost it. Lilly was cowering under the dining room table by the time we got there.”

-MEREDITH DOMITIAN, MOTHER

NOTES ON ALEXANDER:

Alexander is far more than he appears to be. He has never been sick. He has never fallen and hurt himself. His mother was medically barren, diagnosed during puberty. She was one of the scanners that delivered Aletheia's message, and unlike the ones that ripped themselves apart, she had no side effects. Except having Alexander.

Bennet didn't know what to do in this case, but he knew he needed to protect her and her child after having a very specific dream. Once Alexander was born, everything got easier for the Domitians, so long as they did what he said. Lilly was a lesson for Alexander's parents, as they mentioned where they found her, but lied about how they found her: she was desiccated and swarming with insects.

GREAT COMPANIES REQUIRE GREAT PEOPLE!

Born in 1973, to Bennet and Meredith Domitian, Alexander was a miracle child. Born nine months after the Asilomar conference (which both of his parents attended), his mother had always been assured that she was infertile. Regardless, they managed to conceive and deliver a perfectly healthy boy. Growing up, he was always a very quiet child, though there were rare examples of his temper.

He is also heterochromatic, which is a very rare condition that led to many treating him as an outsider growing up. Its part of this 'otherness' that defined his early studies and his tact on business.

Alexander is no stranger to hard work. Earning two PhD's in genetics and computer science at MIT before the age of 24, he worked in numerous companies in Silicon Valley before returning to his college town to build his dream company!

A NEW MODEL FOR A NEW WORLD

“I always knew I wanted to build a company like ProGenus. There's so many problems in the world and so many people who have felt like I did. I want to let them know that someone is looking out for them.”

MANDATORY WELLNESS DAY!



HR RECOMMENDED HEALTH INITIATIVE

Here at Progenus, we take employee wellness very seriously. In many other companies, there is a lot of pressure to either take your vacation days when you don't want them, or to work extra time as a form of soft pressure. One of the main ways we have decided to fight this is by using our very own

technology and information from all of our employees to schedule mandatory wellness days. During these times, ProGenus is closed entirely, and all employees can take those days off. There are anywhere between 3 and 10 of these a year, depending on how stressful life has been.

MANDATORY WELLNESS DAYS SERVE MANY PURPOSES

1

They give a reason to consistently monitor each member of the company.

2

They are incredibly good optics for people outside of the company.

3

They systemize obedience to Aletheia's algorithm: unquestionable obedience.

4

They allow for riskier experiments to take place in the company with only select witnesses.

ProGenus Experiments

Homonculii

A lot of resources have been sunk into attempts to bring Aletheia's offspring into the world, with dubious results. In the rare case where there is a success, the entity is referred to as a 'homonculus'. A homonculus (pl. homonculii) can have many varied forms and abilities, depending on the nature of the sample from Aletheia, and the purpose of the experiment. All are biological (data wraiths are fundamentally different, see below), though much like true biology there is a high degree of variance.

The majority of simple homonculii tend to be paler versions of whatever their model animal is. Some have a vastly different attribute, often from a completely different animal's phenotype. Some homonculii are goats with human faces, who can speak but only do so in tongues. Some are cats with opposable thumbs. Still others are dogs with lamprey-like mouths. More advanced homonculii are being created as ProGenus perfects the technique, allowing them to make more human-looking ones.

Homonculii can be trained to obey simply commands, and are often used to either observe a target of interest, or to protect a given location. Some homonculii never effectively mature. These are often broken into their component parts, and used as stem cells in surgery and implants.

Data Wraiths

Data wraiths are algorithms made from scanning the signals that Aletheia emits during her more active moments. These patterns are often capable of being transposed into an AI harness written by Alexander Domitian in order to determine a given behavior. This led to some interesting revolutions in AI behavior, allowing for simplistic algorithms that have no reduction in overall functionality, as well as other benefits. Sadly, these are not without costs.

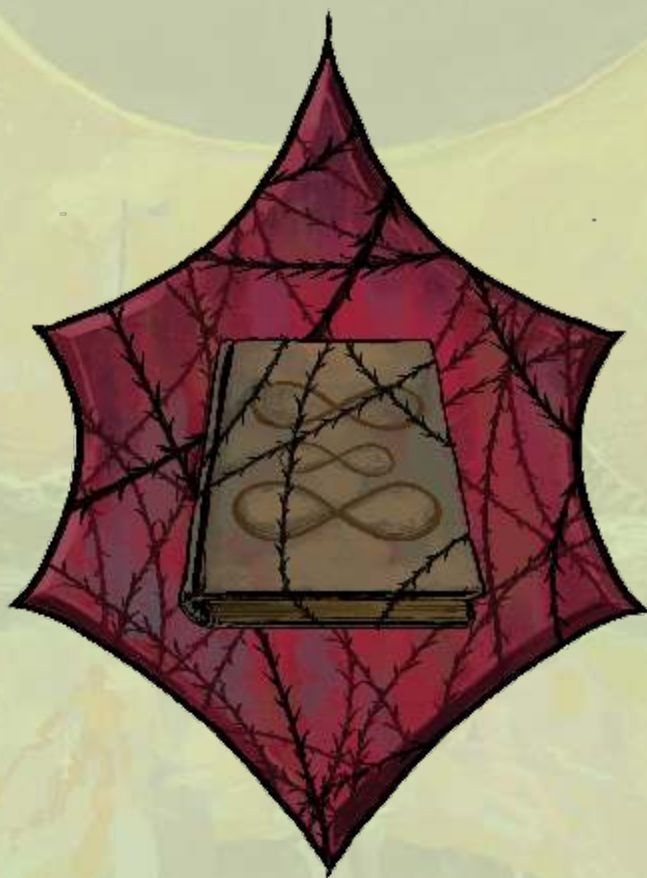
Occasionally, a transposition will result in an AI that is driven by a specific purpose. These AI can present as normal, but will eventually exhibit odd behavior. At some point, they will spin up subroutines and appropriate system resources to pursue and achieve a specific goal. These subroutines are referred to as 'data wraiths' as they often go undetected until their actions are overt.

Sometimes these actions are relatively innocuous (catalogue every dog that is registered as a purebreed), and sometimes they are specific and deadly (scramble the medical history of patients from children's hospital such that they are prescribed the incorrect meds). There is very little logic into what makes a data wraith, but for now they are accepted as a cost of doing business.

EXPOSITORS OF THE UNSPOKEN

"The cosmos has its own tongue, a lost and forgotten language. With it, we can shape Creation. With it, we can triumph over Death. With it, we can find the True Name of Eternity."

The Expositors of the Unspoken are traditional, dedicated and obsessive, these cultists are connected by an insatiable drive to discover secrets hidden in a lost language: the name of their god. Members of the Expositors are obsessed with this mystic lexicon, forsaking their relationships, goals, and even their own wellbeing.



Cult History and Description

The Expositors date back to 1698, when an affluent English lexicographer named David Henry Thorn first noticed bizarre commonalities between some of the ancient languages in his library. He invited six like-minded colleagues to analyze these anomalies in secret and identified the first fragments of what the Expositors now know to be Nomen Nescio, assembling them for the first time in one place.


The seven men dove hard into study. By speaking fragments of Nomen Nescio's language, the seven men could shape and define reality. That knowledge brought power but came at great cost. It was one thing to speak it, but controlling its monstrous consequences was another entirely. Five of the original men died within a year of that first meeting, each death grimmer than the last. Bartholomew Christman expired a dried husk of a man-no matter how much water he drank, his body wasted away, his teeth and hair falling into his hands. Michael Nesbitt bled profusely from every orifice for several hours before his insides liquefied entirely. Dr. Alan Joveshoe locked himself in his study and crushed his own throat with his bare hands, perhaps by compulsion, perhaps desperation. William Boxer, the eldest, burst into flames at the Scala Theatre, taking half the audience and the entire cast with him. Jason

Matthews, the youngest, was pulled apart, limb from limb, by unseen hands while his children watched; his widow and their children disappeared shortly after. Many believed they had gone into hiding, fearing persecution.

However, Thorn, understanding the maxim "three can keep a secret if two are dead," had the Matthews family destroyed. Fearing questioning, the remaining members fled to the colonies across the globe, where the British wielded cruel power. There, the Expositors of the Unspoken could study and experiment with impunity. True Knowledge was sweeter than opium, more empowering than the coca plant. The surviving members took greater precautions and directed the dire consequences of their work onto the unsuspecting.


Within the Expositors of the Unspoken, the study of the society's rules and regulations became its own major discipline. How many and how few could meet in person, the secret codes in letters, cryptic gestures when passing in the street. Once safeguards against detection by the weak-minded and religious, these societal customs have become a cultural identity.

Make no mistake: Nomen Nescio's great Name wants to be found. Many minds are brighter than one, so they carefully



recruit. They've learned to spot those who should join their research. The official motto of the Expositors is "You Have Our Word." The unofficial-and real-motto, though, is "Publish or Perish." Each member is a scholar, and each scholar must submit their research within regular intervals, or they will find the protections of Nomen Nescio vanish, and it becomes acceptable for their colleagues to murder them and steal their research.

Expositor membership has waxed and waned through the years. Today only three research schools remain: The College of the Eye, the College of the Hand, and the College of the Cosmos. The Eye is comprised of the Expositors who go out into the world and seek new traces of Nomen Nescio. The Hand are the Expositors who analyze their disparate lexicon and tease out its deeper meanings and truths. The Cosmos are those who use the Word for applied research, discovering new ways to bend reality to their will.



LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

As written by the Head of the College of the Hand

Greetings from the College of the Hand,

My esteemed student, it is with immense pride that I welcome you to our ranks. In this august body, I have managed, through challenging work and clarity of vision, to ascend the ranks of our illustrious school and I am sure that you have such greatness within yourself. Know that for your entire life within the Hand, you will be given ample opportunity to prove yourself and become truly great.

The Expositors of the Unspoken were once many, though over time only three Colleges, each with its own sacred duty, has managed to carve its way through the ages while pursuing our shared sacred goal of unravelling the true meaning of our ancient texts. The College of the Eye spend their time out in the world, pursuing information that could lead to breakthroughs. The College of the Cosmos hones the arts of the spoken language, playing with a power that few can truly understand. We, as the College of the Hand, pursue knowledge first and foremost. As the most prestigious college, we work the closest with the ancient language, teasing it apart to understand its hidden meanings, inferences and power. To work within the College of the Hand is to pursue the hidden meaning that all overlook.

On this journey, you will have companions. Each college is comprised of five members. Each of them is your senior, of course, though you should consider them more trustworthy than almost anyone with our ranks. If you manage to climb the ranks, you can one day aspire to take my role as Head of our college. Even then, you will still answer to the Archdean and the Inscriptor. The Archdean is the head of our order. Their job is a combination of dealing with finances and attempting to arbitrate any disagreements between the Colleges, while the Inscriptor has adopted the sacred duty publishing all our findings as an order. This role is arguable the closest to our patron Nomen Nescio's will. When the old Inscriptor dies, the glyph branded on his body is flensed, then burned. From there, a new Inscriptor is chosen, and marked with the sacred glyph. There was once a Bursar, but that role has been stricken from the records, its power over finances completely subsumed by the Archdean.

RECRUITMENT

As a full-fledged member of our order, it is now your responsibility to safeguard the existence of the True Speech, alongside the identity of Nomen Nescio. As its chosen, we have mastered the ways to detect use of the spoken word, and once we have determined another has been exposed to it, each of us must be willing to make the choice of whether to bring the intruder to be initiated or end their irreverent lives. The Truth of the Name belongs to only us. Allowing any other to find it is the basest heresy of all.

INITIATION

Any that you deem fit can undergo the initiation, provided they are willing to embrace Nomen Nescio in all its glory. Like our own past initiation, the process is a simple one. They must show some level of mastery over the Words. Once they see what it is capable with their own eyes, they must read the Passages of Destiny to understand Nomen Nescio's ultimate judgement. When it rises, it will accept only those who understand the Truth of the Name. All others will be cleansed.

LIFESTYLE

As a member of our College, you will command a lifetime stipend. We are an order that rewards competence and diligence, so you will receive bonus stipends based on the discoveries you make, and your citation ratios. We must discover the latent truth of the Word, and all must contribute. That contribution will cost you many sleepless nights and blurred vision, for which money is a poor substitute. You may take it with the knowledge that all the Expositors want you to have it. This stipend allows you to spend your time dedicated to our craft, without needing another form of income. Let it be known that we reward merit.

CONFLICTS

The Expositors are all united in the same goal, though there have been the occasional rumbles of discontent. The College of the Cosmos has recently grown jealous over the publication volume we here in the College of the Hand have generated. This has made things even more tense than ever, given how at no point in the past decade have the College of the Eye ever not published the most materials, given their exploratory methods and procurement of lost scriptures. The College of the Eye is very fortunate that when they do incur losses within their ranks, it is only ever the member who has published the least. With all this occurring we want nothing more than to ensure that each member of our College gets the resources it needs to research, learn and grow. The former Dean (a very respected mentor of mine) once told me that our true motto was "Publish or Perish". I do not think this matters much, so long as you remain diligent.

Welcome to the Expositors of the Unspoken.

Relations with the Pattern Seekers

Surprisingly, the relations with the Pattern Seekers are the worst for the Expositors. Despite that, the worshippers of the Labyrinth and their bizarre patterns and structures have commonalities with the Expositors' signs of Nomen Nescio. Dangerous outbursts of violence when cultists meet are common, and can turn into a death struggle. The Pattern Seekers are not formally organized, which allows Expositors to strategically outmaneuver their rivals, but any engagement is guaranteed to be bloody if the researcher needs what the other has.

Relations with the Mareen

In truth the Expositors have little concern for the Mareen and the two groups rarely cross, except when research must be done. The Expositor thirst for Nome Nescio's corpus can lead cultists down old dark roads that are inevitably overseen by Mareen shoals. The Expositors bargain where possible, but if they're up against a publishing deadline, they will take with extreme prejudice. Revenge from the Mareen is all-encompassing however, and colleges have been erased from the world in response to an incursion.

Relations with the Extant

The Druids, who revere their deity through oral history, are reluctant to accept the Expositor's deity with anything but revulsion. The Expositors, for their part, are unconcerned with this revulsion and have no compunctions ripping secrets from Extant cultists by any means necessary. Keys to their god can be found in the heads of the Arch Druids, though within the halls of Cosmos it is whispered the Arch Druids are no longer human.

Relations with ProGenus

There are some shared understandings between ProGenus research groups and the Expositors, with collaboration common enough that the two cults could be called 'familiar.' In very rare circumstances over the past forty years have there been flare-ups of extreme violence when it a ProGenus research team getting greedy, or when an Expositor demands ownership of a research goal. The general understanding, however, is that the two cults are convenient allies when the need arises.

Would you like to see a god?

Well?

Would you like to see it?

Yes, I'm serious. No, I'm not drunk. That was only one Moscato. I am -- *look at me* -- I am as serious as a heart attack right now. If you don't want to see it, that's fine, but I am asking you the question with complete sincerity. I've been talking about Nomen Nescio all night. Would you like to see it?

Thought you might. This way, then. Mind your head.

Pardon me, just need to unlock the drawer - yes. Here it is. The Nameless God, the great and terrible cosmic puzzle, the -- you get the idea. Nomen Nescio. Before you ask, yes, everyone has the same reaction. Everyone has that look of disappointment, that whole is that it? And yes, that it is. Everyone expects a dusty, imposing tome, maybe inscribed in blood. Not this thick stack of plotter paper in an extra large three-ring binder. We are devoted to our great work, but we're practical. No sense going to great lengths to create one ceremonial copy of a lexicon we update every few years.

Go on, take a look.

No, you won't understand it. Even learning to read it takes quite a lot of intense study, and anyway I wouldn't be able to tell you how to pronounce any of it. With quite a bit of it, we're not even certain ourselves. We know how a few of the metonyms start but the rest always just sounds like glossolalia. Just comes tumbling out. There's still so much we don't know. I assure you, though, the words have meaning and they are potent. If they didn't, I might still have all my fingers.

Ah yes, that. How shall I put this. Well, Nomen Nescio is indeed dead - a dead language, and I assure you we all laugh at that the first time - but you are looking at its corpse, and...I'll put it like this. A long time ago, a fellow named Luigi Galvani - not one of ours - he sent electric current through a pair of severed frog legs, and the legs kicked. Think of it like that: a cadaver which kicks when you poke it in certain places. Or twitches its shoulders. That sort of thing.

Now imagine instead of kicking, it lights a fire for you, or allows you to see faraway places. And now imagine the frog is conceptually massive, and on every cell of its body it bears inscriptions in complex, maddening code, pointing you in the direction of more of its secrets. Like DNA, but words made of words made of words, etched into blood and sinew. Our best, our most complete understanding of this is here, on these pages.


Nomen Nescio is dead, make no mistake about that, but its will lives on, and it knows its own. It knows who might be possessed of a mind suitable for its purposes. And it knows who is not. It knows who won't have the clarity, the drive to aid it, and to those people it is not kind. I first laid hands on this book - a smaller version then - years ago, alongside my old college roommate. It was he who introduced me to the Expositors in the first place, so the irony isn't lost on me that he failed the test. I can still see it, and hear it. He put his hand on the book and for a moment nothing happened, then he had this stricken look on his face and then he howled, poor Randall did, he screamed like he had two lungfuls of broken glass and then we all heard him try to say something that sounded a lot like screaming for his mother - they do that, you know, fully grown men - and then all the fat in his body boiled. All of it. Instantly. I'd never seen anything like it. His

tongue liquefied and he reached out to me with spasming hands and my God, the terror and agony in his eyes. I backed away and he collapsed to the floor and just kind of twitched and thrashed and kept making this sound like "ma, ma, ma, ma, ma," and so on, for about half a minute or so, and sobbed and gurgled. Then he died. Then he pissed and shit himself. They don't show that part in movies.

But you're not Randall, are you? No. I've told you about Nomen Nescio, and I've told you a bit about the power it brings to those who have the mind for it. And obviously you're interested, or you wouldn't have come here, wouldn't have asked. But to know more, you must be initiated. And to be initiated, you must find out whether or not Nomen Nescio wants that to happen.

And there's only one way to find that out.

Would you like to touch it?



By the Name, I wish I had more time to teach you. I know you are attempting automatic writing. I know that you will sit down, fountain pen in hand, and you will begin scrawling the Metonyms at random, until they take hold of you and your hand begins to move on its own. You will read the words and hope to divine the future. But you will not succeed. You did not light the candle. You did not face magnetic north. There are so many little details you missed, I cannot list them all. You will open a channel to the dead with no control and no restraint and the dead will pour into your mind and consume it as they do to those fish women, and my guilt will overwhelm you and you will write these words, over and over, until you collapse dead. By the Name, I wish I had more time to teach you. I know that you are attempting automatic writing. I know that you will...

Transcriber's note: Endnotes are in order they appear in the text, not chronological order.

ON YE CONJURING OF BUGGS.¹

By

F Raasch & D Sprenger

Ye Science of making Buggs to mannifest, by which yowe can channel ye Quintefsence of N.N. without cost our trouble² and without cost or lofs of time.

Take ye beft horse dung³ that is well-digefted that yowe can find and put it within a vefsel or else a Pitt made in the ground and coated with a Paste made of Ashes. Mix ye Dung well in this vefsel or pitt. Set ye diftillation vefsel in ye middle of this dung, up to ye vefsel's center. It is necefsary that ye top of ye vefsel be in cold Air so that ye quintefsence that ascends by virtue of ye Heat of ye dung will thereby be turned into Water by virtue of ye coldnefs of the air and fall down again and ascend. Thus yowe have heating without Fire, with little trouble.

Another method of heating: Set yower vefsel in ye strong rays of ye Sun in summertime and let it stand there night and day. Uppon completion behold thif Miracle a mafs of Buggs assembled & bent to yower Will.⁴ Pray yowe look clofely however, and sholde yowe see any with a human Face yowe muft tread uppon it at once, that it dies. It if beft to sollicit ye Help of a fellowe Expossitor, to Verrify ye Buggs are real.⁵ Possibly Two, in Case ye first one lies. It if a common sign of Failure to bellieve there are Buggs crawling uppon yowe & thif is Permanent.⁶ Read ye Directionf with more Care next Time.⁷

¹ This section appears to be lifted from the Book of Quintessence, an alchemical work published in 1866, and completely unrelated to any Expositor business. There are some changes to make it seem to be about Nomen Nescio. Why is it here? Has anyone tested any of this? - G. Tsang, 1969

² Should this be "cost or trouble?" Why the repetition if so? - D. Romanek, 1951

³ G. Tsang is right, this was edited but it's essentially plagiarism. I suspect horse dung here means this is a trap - horseshit, in other words. - F. Pratt, 1975 * **No - Hermes Trismestigus and Paracelsus both used a lot of horse dung in their work, this looks like a carryover from that - M. Walsh, 2004**

⁴ I just don't understand this at all. This is nonsense. The original ends at "night and day," and then this. Everything after that is wholly original. - G. Tsang, 1971

⁵ To the casual observer this section may appear quite unremarkable but we have deduced it is copied, with some changes and corrections, from the Book of Quintessence - an alchemical work of some renown. This book hasn't anything to do with N.N. though. With that said, whomever inserted this certainly was an Expositor. We suspect this to be a metonymic trap of some sort. We are working to test this. - M. Rutherford & A. Blaine, 1886

⁶ Refers to delusional parasitosis - K. Langley, 1991

⁷ I confirm this is a trap. - A. Blaine, 1887

PETITIONING FOR WISDOM.

By this Method you may undertake a Petition for ye Wisdom of N.N. its Self, for Guidance that you may see clearly and understand. Read you carefully this Method & stray you not from it. Hazards are many.¹

As we all know, N.N. may make its Will known, that it may reach Reassembly sooneft. Sholde you require Clarity of Thought² you may divert this as one wolde a Streame, as is described in Woodmans Purposing (qv),³ too your own Ends.⁴

Gather you these Ingredients: a Boule of clearft⁵ Water; take you Care ye Boule is of no Material that Reflects; a Reagent of Hair or Teeth or Finger-Nails it doef not matter Whose;⁶ a Transcripte you have made of N.N. 12:6:5.⁷ upon Paper; your own Bloude.⁸

Burn you ye Reagent & upon its Change into Afhes Cupp it in your handf. Use both.

Breathe out whilst you recite ye Inscription,⁹ casting ye Afhes onto ye Paper. Place one of your Thumbf blacke with Soot upon ye Paper that N.N might Know youe.¹⁰ Marke it well.

Burn all this, Afhes Paper and all, & in your Crucible place now your Bloude. Mix it. It muft be mixt well. This shall bee your Mendicant Brewe once Matured.

Then you muft¹¹ Fast from one Sun-rise to ye next. Allow ye Mendicant Brewe to putrefy well and stink.¹² A gourd glasse works well for this.

At Sun-rise sit you at ye Table with ye Boule and Water. Ringe ye Boule with ye Mendicant Brewe, ensuring no Breakes, surroundinge complete. Poure you in ye Water at ye moment ye Sun first touches youe.

Now stare you into ye Boule, and wait.

¹ do not ignore this warning - sstanto n 19992

² A bit vague - unusual for Raasch & Sprenger - G. Lorelli, 1933

³ Woodmans is now deprecated but still describes the basic gist of what this is for - personally I think Airs & Cartwright 1898 is a better reference, should that be indicated in the text? - D. Phelan, 2008 * **Yes but watch the passive voice - K. Worth, 2010**

⁴ [redacted]

⁵ Not a term of art - the water doesn't have to be special or distilled, just clear - make sure it's only water. - W. Leary, 1969

⁶ Appears to work better if not a relative of yours, and best if it's someone who did not know you were taking their hair or fingernails or teeth - B. Lassiter, 1940

⁷ This notation refers to a catalog format we don't use anymore; the relevant section is Folio Segunda, section 12, subsection 4, lines eight through ten. - E. Hausher, 1954

⁸ An amount is not given but a quarter of a cup should suffice - H. Mendon, 1901

⁹ They are describing a Pneumic Vociferation; see Hammond, Hartwell & Wise 1799 - T. Willey, 1878

¹⁰ This isn't the reason for the thumbprint but I suppose Raasch & Sprenger were working with the information they had at the time - V. Panchuk, 2001

¹¹ Should read "must" - S. Browne, 1848

¹² This is no understatement and the working will fill your house with the foulest putrescence. Do not attempt this with guests in the home. - L. Dunleavy, 1818

I CAN FIX IT

I can fix this.

The skull's smooth, featureless dome, the curve of the cheekbones leading up and around the eyes. The almost haphazard nasal septum and cavity. The tiny little pores around the brow. The teeth, once hidden by lips and gums, now exposed in that famous grin.

Dr. Marjorie Crowe continued to etch her glyphs into the skull, carefully watching the tip of her chisel through the magnifying glass. At this level of detail, each curve and accent became a careful orchestration of back, shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers. She wasn't as steady as she had been in her youth, but experience more than made up for it.

Her daughter, Elizia. So bright, as a child. So inquisitive. Her acceptance into the Expositors was all but ordained. Legacy admissions had been abolished in 1984 after a series of spoiled manchildren had treated the College of the Eye as their private vacation club, but Elizia would be inducted on merit alone. At least, she would have.

When Dr. Crowe learned that Elizia had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, she had felt something inside her crumble. Her dreams of Elizia working side by side with her in the College of the Cosmos... her daughter finally understanding that her mother was not merely a psychologist but a great pioneer in applied leximancy... All dreams, now. The Expositors were driven by pragmatism above all things. New members were selected by merit; those who would contribute the most to The Great Work, the revelation of Nomen Nescio's true Name. But a dying woman, no matter how brilliant, was of little use.

But then, another thought.

I can fix this.

Years ago, Dr. Crowe had successfully recreated Lillian Maycomber's famous 1854 homunculus experiment. Maycomber's work, done without official support from the Expositors, had been a

watershed moment, ending the society's stodgy restrictions on admitting women and the lower classes. It was also an infamously difficult ritual, and had only been reproduced twice... Until Dr. Crowe. She watched the small figure through the smoky glass of its jar, as it writhed in the ecstasy and agony of being. And then she did it again. And again. When she published her work to the rest of the College, she had allowed herself a great indulgence: "This technique produces more consistent results than previous approaches."

That audacious boast had caused tremendous outrage, and several attempts on her life. When Dr. Marks broke into the house and stood over her sleeping form, he had hoped to turn Marjorie's eyes to bone, or perhaps seal her skull shut and watch her suffocate. "No more bragging from you, eh?" He'd said. But then the doppelganger he'd attacked erupted outward, wrapping him tight. Marjorie was behind him with a skinning knife. No quips, she simply cut his throat. Elizia had actually awoken, and Marjorie had rushed to keep her out of the room. One of many complications that would be so much easier to deal with once Elizia was inducted into the Expositors... no more secrets.

Dr. Marks contributed far more in death than he ever had in life, Dr. Crowe thought to herself. Using his doughy flesh as reagents, Marjorie had learned much about the human form, and how it could be shaped and crafted by the Word. What could reasonably be mistaken for a hairless cat, which she named Mark, lived for almost a year. It was buried in the backyard with a little tombstone that Elizia had made.

I can fix this.

So she worked, devising a way to force her daughter's pancreas to her will. As a psychologist, Dr. Crowe's treatment of addicts gave her ample opportunity for test subjects. She regretted it, of course. But to do nothing, to let her daughter waste away when she knew she could fix it, would be unconscionable. Elizia had such great potential. To

Dr. Crowe, Elizia was worth a thousand drifters. Addicts get sick, experience failing organs, lost time, or vanish completely. No one asked questions, because no one saw anything they didn't already expect to see.

And Dr. Crowe told herself this. When the Name of Nomen Nescio is found, those who served well will be rewarded. Each shall be given a quill and each shall write the words of creation anew. The universe will end, and a better one shall take its place. In that new world, there would be no word for 'addiction', no word for 'cancer', no word for 'death.' Death was, at best, a temporary condition. But only if the Expositors continue their good work.

Dr. Crowe's experiments were not successful. If the situation was less urgent, she would have investigated more. Why did her treatment drive that man to perform ravenous acts of self-cannibalism? Had she used the wrong Words? Had the idea of cancer, the body consuming itself, been transmuted from the material to the metaphoric? She made notes to investigate later, after Elizia was well.

Unable to attack the cancer directly, Dr. Crowe had turned to more extreme measures. Astral organ transplants. Creating an artificial pancreas from moonstone. But then Elizia's cancer had metastasized, spread through her body. Attempts at transferring the consciousness between bodies had proved...deeply alarming. Dr. Crowe abandoned that line of investigation and burned her notes - an Expositor taboo, but one she did without hesitation. What she placed inside that man's body was not human.

I can fix this.

As she became more desperate to save Elizia, her thoughts turned back to Nomen Nescio. It was true that the revelation of the Name would grant a new creation. If she could not save Elizia directly, then would not the hastening of the revelation of the Name save Elizia by default? In a new world, a better world, Elizia would not be sick, and they could study and work side by side for eternity.

It started as a thought that she immediately and guiltily dismissed. But even as she dismissed it, she knew she would do it. It was merely a matter of convincing herself this was the only way. But the core of her knew immediately: it was the only way.

She would craft a Revelation Lantern.

The Revelation Lantern, properly crafted, would grant secret knowledge to its creator. It had limits, but it was still tremendously powerful, one of the most powerful rituals known to the Expositors. Few had the skill, the knowledge, or the clarity of will to create one.

Dr. Crowe could.

In the past, others had used the Revelation Lantern to look into Nomen Nescio, to behold its form, and the name of that form. None had learned the full Name, but great progress had been made, and it was almost universally accepted among all three Colleges that they were very close to discovering the Name. The altered behavior of birds, the changes in both the magnetosphere and the psychosphere... the end was very near. If Dr. Crowe could discover the final piece of the Name, she could fix it. She could fix everything.

The Revelation Lantern requires specific reagents, personal to the Lantern's creator, bound to them by blood.

She had called the hospice services and told them to stop coming. She explained that Elizia had decided to... let herself go. But Elizia had not. Elizia was as strong and as determined as her mother, and she was still fighting.

She had given Elizia a glass to drink. "What's up, mom?" Elizia had asked groggily through the haze of pain and medication. "Why are you smiling? ...Wait, are you crying?"

"It's going to be okay, pumpkin. I'm going to fix this." She sat by Elizia's side as the poison took hold.




The philosophers in the College of the Hand debate the form that the Name will take. The Name is the key to unlocking creation, dissolving it, and starting anew. Few argue that the Name is merely a series of sounds that form words. It is more likely that the Name is a Story, some say. No, the Name is best thought of as a code of Laws. Or perhaps it is a Map. Others say that it is better thought of as a Poem. A Song. An Algorithm.

Or a Prayer.

The Name is all these things.

Dr. Majorie Crowe continued to etch the glyphs into Elizia's skull.



PATTERN SEEKERS

"I can see the truth under it all. Below happiness. Below sadness. Below the world itself. I wish you could see it too. Because the look it's giving you..."

A group of individuals tied together by alien compulsions and all-encompassing certainties, the Pattern Seekers aim to complete their tasks, perfect their endeavors, and close the infinite, universal fractal. The same obsessions which destroy their lives also grant the Pattern Seekers terrible power.



Cult History and Description

The Cult of Zhadahdahdon-The Pattern Seekers-is a leaderless aggregation of individuals who have been exposed to the malign influence of the Whispering Labyrinth. The Labyrinth itself manifests in a myriad of forms-works of art and music, books, even ephemeral, transformative experiences. Whatever the form, Cultists have become lost in their personal Labyrinth, something which becomes the focus of their lives, and they are driven to seek out that thing again and again and again.

As the individual gives in to their obsessions, they realize that something is watching them. Something that sees their endless, frantic scrabbings. They realize that the further down the rabbit hole they go, the closer they are to the Thing That Watches: Zhadahdahdon. They realize that, really, their driving Need has never been their own, and that the more they do to meet or sate the Need, the closer they get to the Need's source. And sometimes, somewhere along that dread journey, they meet others like themselves.

Cultists of Zhadahdahdon do not have ranks, per se, but they do sometimes refer to one another based on how far along the spiral they have traveled. Broadly, there are three tiers:

The Bound: Individuals who have heard the call of the malicious pattern but who retain the ability and desire to maintain 'normal lives.' The Bound have sensed Zhadahdahdon and serve its whims by feeding their compulsions, but they can 'pass for normal,' hold down day jobs, and generally make their way in polite society without too much issue.

The Free: When one of the Bound crosses some ethical or moral event horizon in the service of their compulsion, they become Free. Free of the constraints of human society, free to pursue their true calling. These people are often open about their 'true purpose' and they fulfill that purpose. Such honesty is rarely appreciated in society, and the Free are generally homeless, imprisoned, hospitalized, or in some other way entirely removed from 'normal life.'

The Wise: The Wise are Free who have found personal perfection through their quest. They are not clear of their obsession-quite the opposite. The Wise are those who have found ways to seamlessly integrate all aspects of their lives into the pursuit of their compulsion. The depths of their devotion are such that the world itself sometimes splinters and breaks to allow the Wise to do what they will, like so many matchsticks meeting a lathe.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Excerpt from the crayon scribbblings of Samuel King, 6-year-old savant

Go Dog, Go!

Some Dogs are Yellow.

Some Dogs are Green.

All Dogs Bark.

Coyotes aren't Dogs.

They look like them. They bark. They howl. But they aren't the same. And the world knows it. The world makes it.

Bound Coyotes know the rules.

Bound Coyotes are the most like Dogs.

Free Coyotes roam. They wander as the Free must.

If they wander enough and learn enough they become Wise.

The Wise are wise enough to know.

They are not Coyotes.

RECRUITMENT

Excerpt from the teachings of Layton Redding, a former Professor of the Arts at Quinnipiac University

...There comes a time in all beings' lives, where they are confronted with the mundane. This starts after the first blush of wonder fades from childhood. At this point, all things can seem simplistic. Expected. Boring. If one continues to search for enlightenment, you will find it! Pursue your passions. Find the music you love, or the book you were always meant to write. All these things lead you further into the pattern, the pursuit of the inner truth. You can only truly recognize your passions by the scars they leave on you. After you witness true glory within the world, it can only be expected that you carry teaching with you. These teachings carve you and sculpt you. Perhaps you see that truly great performances can only be done on hardwood stages. Or perhaps you realize that your best sentences are written during the day's prime numbers. Each of these are truths. And as you delve deeper, you will understand more of them. You will also meet others who have other insights to gift...

INITIATION

Excerpt from the journal of Vanessa O'toole, a former Architect who took a hiatus to be a stay-at-home parent

"Today, I sat on the couch for fifteen seven minutes after Frank left. During that time, I read one chapter of Rushdie's 'seminal' work. It was boring. When I stood up, I heard the roaring begin. When she was younger, it wouldn't start like that. At least not at first. It was a softer plaintive cry. Now she needs sustenance, and just like her father all her demands must be met now. I went into her room, careful to take exactly 13 steps before plucking her from the crib. She was a pale thing, with no eyes, and only a sucking sphincter where most other children would have a mouth. I breast fed her until she transformed back into a normal child. There are others I have met who have made sacrifices. The more you sacrifice, the more you can learn. These are the things you must do if you are going to be a parent. These are the things you must do if you are going to be Free."

LIFESTYLE

Excerpt from an interview with Jean Thayer, lottery winner

"What? No, I only bought one ticket. Why buy more? It was obviously the right one. The red light from the slushie machine reflected off it the most. Overall, I think these funds will be useful, as I always wanted to take a trip to France."

"What? Why would I deposit it? I don't need to do that. I don't even have bank account. Or a job. Really, I don't think the details of either of those matters. Sure, when I was younger, I use to work in the Apple store, but even that got dull. All of the Steve Job wannabes obsessed with tracing other people's work. When I quit, I didn't ever look back, because why would I? There was nothing to miss there. Nothing of any true worth. Once I finished my first passion project, that's when I realized that I needed to see Paris."

"Who are you, again?"

CONFLICTS

Excerpt from an interview with Agnes Taylor, Pawn shop owner

"I've been in this business for generations - My grandfather ran it, then my da, and now me. Gonna leave it to my daughter too, so long as she gets rid of her do-nothin' man. I've seen a lot over the years. You get all sorts at a pawn shop. Some folks down on their luck, looking for a break. Some looking for a way to get something over on life... get something for nothing. The worst ones are the crazies, though. Had one come in the other day asking for a purple vase, and when I told him it was reserved he lost his mind and started throwing a tantrum. I had half a mind to call the cops, but eventually he pulled it together. The worst ones always wear black. They come in, always looking for something hard to get, and never calling on the phone. It's like they expect that the world is going to make sure that what they want is always available for them! Anyway, I'll never forget this one guy who came in, all dressed in black. He wanted a collector's edition of "The Sun Also Rises" and was shocked when I told him one of my regulars had already put a down payment on it. He kept asking for it, then looking at me like a fish out of water. Eventually. He just stopped and stood in the store... and I felt this pressure. It's hard to describe, but it was almost like something was pressing down on my brain. When glass started to shatter, I finally just told him I'd sell it. He took the book, full price, and left the store. Never been happier to see a man leave."

Relations with the Expositors of the Unspoken

San Francisco Chronicle police report

"At about 9:26 PM on Wednesday, January 3, 2018, officers assigned to District A-1 (Downtown) made an on-site homicide arrest of a male in the area of 10 Clay Street, Downtown. Officers observed loud yelling and found two males fighting. When officers approached, they notified the males that they were under arrest. At this time, one of the two of the males became even more aggressive and began to fight with officers and pulled a knife. He is reported as saying that the other male wouldn't give him his tongue to add to a pin board in his home. Officers drew their weapons and gave a formal warning, then discharged their weapons but were unable to stop the assailant. The assailant then attacked the other man and repeatedly stabbed him to death. Officers were eventually able to place the individual under arrest."

Appended note on case from officer: 'It's the damndest thing, it's like the bullets changed direction when they got near him. The other guy just kept screaming too about 'his language being more important than some maze game'. We have the assailant in observation and he's just drawing on the wall non-stop, echoing the last thing the other guy said.'

Relations with the Mareen

Voicemail left at Best #1 Pizza at 2:22am, caller unknown

"So many fish in the sea. So many sea to see. See/sea. The Mareen peer at us, and we don't need to peer back: the curtain is there for that reason. We like our privacy. Another sea/see. Priva-see. They just don't understand. They like to count but how high do they count to? The thought has never occurred to dream up such an answer! Why do they think we don't know? They think they're the oldest: age matters for nothing when time bends like the bow of a tree in the wind."

Relations with the Extant

Found on a flyer attached to every telephone poll in Oberlin, OH

"6 months. 150 years. Rotations and circles. They have patterns and they aren't sure how to get them to work. They talk about a pantheon being lost, as if such a thing could happen! Someone should tell them that robes went out of style a long time ago too. The latest patterns are hot hot hot! I made mine out of plastic house siding and sewed with the entrails of my neighbor. Our disagreements are few, but it's a shame they never bothered to walk the Labyrinth. The ones that came before them did after all!"

Relations with ProGenus

Interview with Marcus Forest, cab driver

"I gave this guy a ride to a wellness clinic. He was complaining about his guts moving around and biting him. The whole ride, just complaining about a clinical trial making his stomach into a monster. I had enough and bent him into the right shape and left him at the ProGenus clinic doorstep. I got a call from one of their security people later after they tracked down my license plate number, but they didn't know that DET-698 is more than just a number. He kept going on about something, and then I reached through the phone and bent him into the right shape too. I don't think ProGenus will step on my angles anymore."

29 March, 1913

I remain intrigued by the case. Though 'haunted' may be a better word for it. Drs. Thursby and Mollard were right to send for me, and while I still can't quite understand what made me board the steamer for America, I know only that I did. It must have seemed a good idea at some point.

At first, I believed as Thursby and Mollard, that Mr. C_____ was simply suffering from a surfeit of magical thinking--that is, that his delusions had formed unbreakable links and chains in his mind between his own actions and occurrences in the outside world, a trait not uncommon in the cases of my own practice.

However.

Whereas the 'magical abilities' of all other cases in my experience have been easily dismissed from a standpoint outside of the patient's own mental framework, I have found my interactions with Mr. C_____, and indeed all of my time here at Granite Hill Sanitorium, disturbing at a level somewhere past my bones. As an example, I offer a recent conversation:

Myself: And what do you think would happen if we did not let you draw the design? If we took away the chalk?

Mr. C_____: The door would open.

M: The door to this... other world you've talked about before? With the trees?

C: No, no. The door to the boiler room. It would open, and Nurse McReedy and one of the orderlies would slip in for a quickie, but they'd knock over the turpentine the janitor uses. You'd lose the west wing of this whole place. Maybe more, if she was wearing red when it happened.

M: How can you possibly know that? It's a horrifying story, to be sure, but how can you know? You can't, don't you see? What you have is a worry. A fear. It's not foreknowledge.

Here C_____ gave me such a long stone-faced look I feared that he had lapsed into muteness of catatonia once more. But then his face shifted into a guise of unmitigated pity.

C: You can't believe. You need to see.

M: The fate of the scientist and the doctor, I'm afraid.

C: You're not. But you will be. How much money have you got on you?

M: Something less than ten dollars.

C: Count it please. Be exact.

M: Very well. I have nine dollars, forty cents. And a five pound note from home.

C: You see? Forty cents. This is our second conversation, your second day here. You are affable, not unattractive, and foreign. Ladies like you. Coffee from the cafeteria downstairs is thirty cents. Two cups of coffee. The nurse who will be on shift today, Merryweather. She was also on shift yesterday. She would have met you in the cafeteria, so today she will have on her silver necklace, the one with the charm she thinks is lucky, and the stones that match her eyes. Despite the fact that wearing jewelry on this ward is against the rules.

And just then, Nurse Merryweather rapped on the door. I looked for a necklace but could not see one--I asked the nurse if she wore any jewelry and assured her that, while against the rules, I wouldn't tell if she wouldn't. She said no, of course she didn't.

Mr. C_____ then launched himself from his chair, snarling, brought up just inches shy of the nurse and myself by his restraints. We were so startled that we fell over, and in the process of collecting ourselves, I couldn't help but notice the silver chain 'round Nurse Merryweather's neck, or the small charm that hung from it.

A cold pit opened then in my stomach, and it was not quieted until I had procured another three boxes of crayons for Mr. C_____, such that he might continue drawing the designs in his room. Even now, the pit remains. Cold, empty, and dreadful.

I fear that, should I look into this further, the knowledge I gain will come at too high a price.



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well known among care workers that DeVille hoarded newspapers, books, and other print media. One source, who asked to remain anonymous, said that “she had so many boxes of papers on the third story that the floor would have given way--except she had so many stacks of paper in the rooms below that they acted like supporting pillars. It was wild.” Of course, none of that was brought emergency service



workers to the house on Saturday night. “It was like an earthquake. Hell, it was an earthquake,” said Ruth Dosier, 34, a neighbor. “We were just cleaning up after dinner and our whole house shook for almost a minute. Just-shook. Juddered, like a boat scraping a dock? Like that. The lights were flickering, the dogs were barking, the kids started crying. Kids settled down soon enough, but the dogs kept at it for more than an hour. We called 911 as soon as it stopped and we knew we were safe.”

It took first responders less than 10 minutes to arrive on scene. Despite their quick arrival, there was little they could initially do given the circumstances, and they called in additional crews with heavy construction and earth moving equipment, as well as gear for caving and subterranean rescue.

“I’ve never seen anything like it in all my years on the force,” Police Sergeant Eleanor Boyce said on-scene. “The entire western wing of the house seems to have fallen into a sinkhole.

We’ve cut power, water, and gas--there shouldn’t be any problems for neighbors on those counts. But structurally... it’s like the hill was hollow, and someone just took a huge bite out of it.”

While our staff were prohibited from close investigation of the area out of concern for the structural integrity of the remaining sections of the house and the hill itself, they did manage to interview a number of the responding persons who went below ground. Only one would answer any questions, and then only on the condition of anonymity.

“It was deep. Deeper than it had any right to be. This great... pit... yawning up from the ground. But it wasn’t empty. Oh, G-d, if it had been empty that would have been so much better. But it wasn’t. It was full of dolls. Old dolls. With one eye each. And they... they looked at me...” No signs of Ms. DeVille have been recovered as of yet.

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may have finally been solved, at least in part. While the motivation for the mass desecration of graves in Westland Cemetery and Funerary Park is still a mystery, the remains contained within four of the graves have been found hanging from nearby trees in a “spiral pattern.”

“Creepy as all get out, but done up neat as you like. Little charms and things.”

STARTING THURSDAY, APRIL 7

PRICES SLASHED AGAIN!

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list price

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LIMITED EXCEPTIONS APPLY

Overheard in a Diner Outside Kingsmouth

A: Did you did you did you did you hear what what happened to the fishies down Tampa way?

B: That incident with the tanker? They sank it off the coast, didn't they? Had a devil of a time making sure the oil didn't leak out and pollute one of their temples, from what I've heard.

A: Nonono, after. After the tanker.

B: ...No. I can't say that I've heard about anything that happened afterwards.

A: The suits came. Guns. Depth charges. Like the Big Raid? Dead fishies all along the shore. Dead suits, too. A lot of dead suits.

B: You're saying the government made a move on the Mareen? Why haven't I heard about this?

A: Not paying attention. Have a job. Have children. Have a life. Not paying attention to the important things. How many dead flies on the window sill by the door?

B: Seven.

A: Good. And how many tiles in the floor?

B: Twenty-two by forty-five, so nine-hundred and ninety.

A: Yes. And what color was the woman's dress when she left? After the waiter.

B: I... I don't know. Green?

A: See? Not paying attention. And that is why you don't know about the fishies. I'm leaving now. Third bus in line at the depot will take you to the university town out west. Be on it if you want to pay attention.

B: But--what about... what about Erin? And the kids?

A: What about them?

<<End>>



The light there is the blue,
Of evening in a winter forest,
Though there is no snow—
Only the dust of shattered souls

Widdershins and widdershins
And thrice around we turn
Sacrifice and sacrifice
And watch the old world burn

The sky above is black as pitch
The stars no more than dreams
But still the light seeps from the air
The trees as shadows in our minds

We have no eyes
We have no mouths
We have no faces here

The mountain rises strange and tall
A monument to the grandeur of the Pattern
And we slip through our new realm
As hunters
As servants
As parts of the Pattern ourselves

Secure in our divinity
In our purpose

Timeless and cold and relentless
In our tracks and paths

Authors of sublime geometries
While all others
Are simply
Gone

THE ELDER GODS

Each of the cults worships a terrible deity, a being from beyond time and space. The Elder Gods are unknowable and terrible, providing little comfort except the knowledge that something exists beyond human existence. The belief in the gods is central to Eskhaton, though the gods exist regardless of belief and touch the world in ways that mark it forever. As a prelude to the approaching end times, the cultists are gifted with total awareness of what is to come. Haunted by dreams or signs, the end is inescapable and giving oneself up to the Elder Gods is the only act that carries any significance at all. While the faces and personas of the gods are fixed for now, they have changed countless times in the past, and other deities exist as well. But the five dominant gods in Eskhaton are the ones associated with the five major cults.



EXTANT DEITY - N'KLASTE

The Great Mother N'Klaste gives the power over life, death, and rebirth, 'As she has always been, so we shall always be'. Through the blood that she demands, she grants Extant Seers their powers of insight, and the Arch Druids passage to the Otherworld. Most see her coming return as a hallowed day of repayment for ages of dedication, while a few worshippers fear she is an alien being that will bring a rapturous carnage from which no one will escape.

From the Otherworld, N'Klaste can be called upon to grant her gifts, but she only answers if her primeval rites are kept. The majority of N'Klaste's rituals involve the presence of certain ritual items: plants, minerals, oak trees, and other familiar objects of the natural world. A sacrifice - big or small, animal or human - is usually involved, as well as a verbal incantation. As the goddess of rebirth, the worshippers believe that N'Klaste will return and remake the world, making those who held true to the rites rulers in the new world. Still other wonder if an awesome and powerful being such as N'Klaste may have her own reasons for returning.

On every May Day and Hallows Eve (the two most significant nights in the Extant calendar) the rites are spoken, various ritual components are assembled, and a human life is taken. It is claimed by the Extant that this biannual sacrament satiates N'Klaste's hunger and they are granted communication with Extant Arch Druids in the Otherworld. Every 150 years much larger sacrificial rituals are performed, and it is not messages but the current Arch Druids that are sent to the Otherworld, while those who return seem to have aged no more than a few years.

It is said if the hunger of N'Klaste is not appeased she will not only deny her gifts but may take those who abuse her compact, devouring them by the insatiable hungers of the earth and the monstrous spirits that inhabit it. Members of the Extant call on N'Klaste through blood magic in the spheres she governs: Life, Death, Rebirth. Many still hold true to the ideals of the ancient Druids and seek to use their mother's gifts in the healing arts. Others

summon this talent for more nefarious ends, such as taking life. Still others are rumored to resurrect ancient keepers of knowledge to help their search for a unifying ancient pantheon.

A prominent gift N'Klaste bestows upon the Extant is in the form of visions. People who begin receiving visions at the end of puberty are claimed by the Extant and taken in as 'Seers' who can recognize their own and predict the future. Sadly, many potential Seers have been lost to the human prejudice against so-called mental illness. The Seers' visions are always vivid and striking, usually involving specific information about people and events. Some Seers claim that recurring visions across the five cults point to a unifying communion rooted in prehistory, woven through the most powerful cults.

After the Druids fell from the height of ruling the Celtic world, N'Klaste became their prime goddess as it seemed none of the others heard their calls during their destruction by the Romans at Anglesey. Through study of the world's esoteric knowledge, commonalities were found between fertility goddesses. In the 1600s the Druids were surprised to learn of global similarities and that their worship was not unique. Thoman Orne, an Arch Druid running from the Christian church sailed to Africa and learned of another face of N'Klaste from cultists in the Oro Empire. They worshipped in the same way as the Celtic Druids, but those traditions dated back tens of thousands of years, vastly predating both the Oro Empire and the Celtic Druidic tradition.

Thomas Orne spent the next 150 years in the Otherworld with others mystics, learning a more direct, primal route to their goddess and her powers. Conveying this knowledge to the other Druids via their biannual messages between realms, the Druids began to focus on unifying with the other four powerful cults. This has also blossomed into more potent manifestations of the goddess's powers. Some whisper that the increase in blood magic potency is another sign of her eminent return.



MAREEN DEITY - ILLUKET

As captivating as she is terrible, Illuket is an Elder Goddess of the Depths. Her preferred physical state is that of an enormous frilled shark with multiple, giant jellyfish tentacles reaching out from the underside of her trunk. Illuket is said to claim the lives of her followers, storing their memory and consciousness for all of eternity.

Illuket is an elusive figure never seen outside of water. Legends speak of her prowling the seas for sailors or lurking along the coasts, snatching adults and children alike. They say she commits these acts to create a perfect world within her by preserving their consciousnesses for eternity. Mareen worship Illuket as the progenitor of the complex pantheon of sea gods and mythical creatures that dominate cultures around the world. From Homer's Scylla and the Norse Jörmungandr to the Philippine Bakunawa and the Japanese Umib zu, these monsters represent Illuket's offspring, often misinterpreted by mortal minds too fragile to comprehend the inner workings of the cosmos. In each of these manifestations, the Elder Goddess of the Depths claims the lives of mortals at will.

Reviled as much as she is revered, all know that just like the sea, Illuket must be respected. Whether by earthquake, flood, tsunami or hurricane, Illuket devours her victims. The hundreds of thousands in the Antioch earthquake of 526. The devastating death tolls in the Calcutta cyclone in 1737. Chinese floods that have killed millions. Where there is water there is Illuket. She absorbs her victim's life force while keeping the consciousnesses she deems worthy and purging those she does not. It is not unheard of for Illuket to consume and purge the members of other cults as salvos fired in a secret war against the other Elder Gods and their pawns.

While no living Mareen has seen Illuket in the flesh, many of the Masters have spoken with her directly. They paint an astounding picture. An

enormous frilled shark with multiple jellyfish-like tentacles reaching out from the underside of her trunk. Her skin is hardened and rough, marked by old scars and bizarre alien harpoons that puncture her hide. With jet black eyes that reflect all and reveal nothing, Illuket sees all and knows all. She swallows her victims with a jaw filled with endless rows of teeth.

When the Mareen wish to pay homage to Illuket, they can do so on land or in the water. On land, they search out artifacts of historical and ritual significance and guard the most treasured personal effects of their departed shoalmates who have sunk into the sea. As historians, curators, archaeologists, and stewards of memory, the Mareen hold vast collections housed in public museums and private vaults.

They fund research projects and various expeditions across the globe to safeguard the history of the world. No one is truly dead until they are forgotten, and when the Mareen become one with Illuket they will become immortal.

Mareen perform rituals in the shallows during high tide and make offerings to the goddess. Through her blessings, they harness the powers of longevity and the ability to tap into the knowledge and skills of those consciousnesses they house. Most importantly, drowning is an honorable act, reserved for those Mareens worthy of joining a chorus.

In Numerology, 22, known as the Master Builder, is the most important of all numbers. As Illuket is the master builder of the eternal future, Mareens strive to acquire 22 consciousnesses

before they depart. To do so means that they have achieved a quality of perfection in reverence to Illuket. As their reward, the elder goddess grants them a role of deific authority in the utopia within her. This is also the basis for the strict hierarchy of Illuket's followers.

As many across the occult world know, a devotee of Illuket who has collected into the double digits is not wholly unlike an avatar of the goddess herself. They are no longer one soul, but a chorus, acting as a collective group but within a single body. Many Mareen can recall knowledge or perform tasks that they themselves have never experienced if a member of their chorus knows it.

Among the shoal, whether large or small, the highest rank leads. When shoalmates share the same rank, deference is given to the woman if there is a difference in gender or to the eldest if not. Through the honoring of age, history, and experience, the Mareen model Illuket. They save what is worthy to exist and cast aside what it not. They do this via strict discipline and established hierarchies to achieve a singular end: the summoning of Illuket and the ending of this world to exist forever in the next.



PROGENUS DEITY - ALETHEIA

Named after the Greek Goddess of Truth, Aletheia exists as a giant pulsing womb whose tendrils interweave the walls of reality. When it wishes to communicate, it sends out tendrils of flesh which birth creatures of varied abilities.

Aletheia is merely the most recent name for a concept as old as time itself. The oldest known concept for it can be deciphered in the goddess *Ninhursag*, an ancient Sumerian Mother goddess. In these tales, the goddess is seen as a nurturing entity, capable of birthing creatures and having them mature within a mere nine days. Additionally, consumption of her gifts bequeaths knowledge, or suffering as according to its whims. Once one understands the true nature of what is now known as Aletheia, there is no reason to assume that it has ever manifested itself in a physical form. It merely creates entities and messengers that pursue its inscrutable agenda.

Aletheia has existed since time began, and ProGenus was not the first order to worship it. Primitive humans had visions of Aletheia's massive branching alveoli, arteries and veins, but they interpreted these structures as trees. Ties to Aletheia can be found in the 'world tree' of many religions. In Norse, Siberian, Mesoamerican and even Christian ideology, the tree is a symbol that upholds order. Once the tree is felled, or once something is taken from that tree, complete and utter chaos reigns. You can find traces of Aletheia's worship in the Aesir and their worshippers, for instance. Each of them defended the world tree from the dangers that lay in its roots. Even in those religions, Ragnarok was accepted as inevitable, as the tree itself would be hewn and chaos would emerge. This is likely an acknowledgement of the birth of Aletheia itself.

The act of worshipping Aletheia is linked to the act of consumption. As an elder force which is

consuming the very fabric of space and time to manifest itself, there is a link between each animal that consumes the life essence of others to grow its strength. This natural method, the pursuit of fitness of all types is the very nature of Aletheia. It is appeased by its worshippers consuming more and more elusive and fit prey, and in all its cults self-improvement is taken to a narcissistic level. To worship a being that will be the apex of reality, one must become the apex of achievement. Only then can you be blessed by its gifts, or potentially devoured and thus become one with a being the encompasses eternity.

Similarly, by consuming the fruit of Aletheia, worshippers are given the fruit of knowledge. Great power is granted to the ingestor, although others may react with jealous rage. The 'lillit' referred to in the Bible are likely references to the creations of Aletheia. In the historical telling, prior to the ProGenus, ingestion of all manner of 'divine' knowledge is littered in the mystical record. The apple of Eve, for instance, is a warning against the seductive call of Aletheia. In the past, worship of Aletheia (or whatever their patron name for her might be, ranging from *Ninhursag* to *Gaea*) focused on hunts and feasts. Even now, in the time of ProGenus, this is mostly true, with the ingestion of custom drugs and foods harnessed from Aletheia in other dimensions.

ProGenus is the only the most recent, and most global iteration of any cult that has ever followed Aletheia. Additionally, humanity is at the apex of its knowledge of the universe, allowing ProGenus the unmitigated ability to

make the most of all its interactions with Aletheia. When they uncovered evidence that Aletheia existed by attempting to surpass human limitation, they found a solution to their quest, and brought themselves to its attention. Since that time, Aletheia has deigned to speak with them through their scientific monitors, or occasionally through meditations brought about by consuming her gifts. Through this guidance, they have self-organized in accordance to their own roots as a very hierarchical organization, with managers and distinct levels of clearance. Once a member gains access to the truth, they are either formally initiated into the cult, or their lives are ruined.

To any outside occultists that are aware of the practices at the heart of ProGenus, the entire cult seems to be the most reckless pursuit of occult they have ever witnessed. Communing with an entity outside of reality and harvesting its flesh to clone it, consume it, and graft it into your body seems to be one of the most poorly thought out things that anyone could possibly do. In many cases, the older cults view them as the darkly comedic analog to Millennials of the occult world. Unlike generational Millennials (some of whom make up their ranks), ProGenus has a great deal of resources, and has made impressive progress within a brief time. They seem to be pursuing a specific purpose, and with their recent experiments with AI, one can only ponder how it will further their goals.



EXPOSITORS OF THE UNSPOKEN DEITY - NOMEN NESICIO

Not so much a being as a haunted language, Nomen Nescio is an Elder God that lives on the tongues of the cultists that speak its language, or its corpus. It is an incomplete being, a fragmented series of sounds, letters, and associated meanings which can warp reality. Torn apart by its birth, Nomen Nescio seeks reunion with itself and with its name. It has influenced countless seekers of mystery through millennia to piece together the language, with the Expositors of the Unspoken being the most recent example. They toil in service to the language that is their god, and in the end, they believe they will succeed in reuniting the Elder God with its glorious and

According to the Expositors, 'in the Beginning was the Word.'

Something indefinite and terrible spoke the universe into creation; and all existence, and the machinery of galaxies, all matter and possibility and light went from *isn't* to *is*. Wriggling among the wine-dark cosmic afterbirth of this universe were vast primordial entities, including Nomen Nescio. The Expositors of the Unspoken claim their God possessed ears to hear the language with which all creation was spoken into existence, and as a result a great transfiguration came upon it, and Nomen Nescio became made of words. It became a language.

Nomen Nescio, regrettably, could not withstand the incalculable potency of this gift, and so, still half-swaddled in its birthing-caul of nebulae, was torn to pieces and scattered like Osiris of myth. It disintegrated into the very *concept* of language, sprinkled among the tongues and scripts of mankind. Even Nomen Nescio's glorious Name was torn from it, and lay dormant for countless eons, seemingly never to be reassembled.

This is where the Expositors of the Unspoken claim to come in. They are devoted supplicants, prostrating themselves wildly before a dead God, because its restless corpse remains present in the form of a language. Cults and occultists worshipping Nomen Nescio have labored for millennia, painstakingly researching and reassembling their God, long before the Expositors came to be. Nomen Nescio may be dead, but its words, its phrases, its grammar: these all still pulse with unholy power. By speaking or writing them, one can shape reality itself. Material wealth? Earthly fame? An enemy of yours, blood-slick and broken, crawling on the ground trying to scream for their mother? These are only a few of the blessings Nomen Nescio confers upon those who worship it, write it and speak it.

The Expositors seek out fragments of Nomen Nescio in languages, trying to find its remaining pieces; they work to understand just which effects can be produced from the use of its words and phrases; and they analyze their existing corpus of knowledge to try to solve the great, final riddle: their God's Name. The Expositors call it Nomen Nescio, but this is a placeholder - it's just Latin for "I don't know the name." Its true Name is the most vital component. Once It is reunited with the Name, the Work will be complete, and the Elder God will live once more.



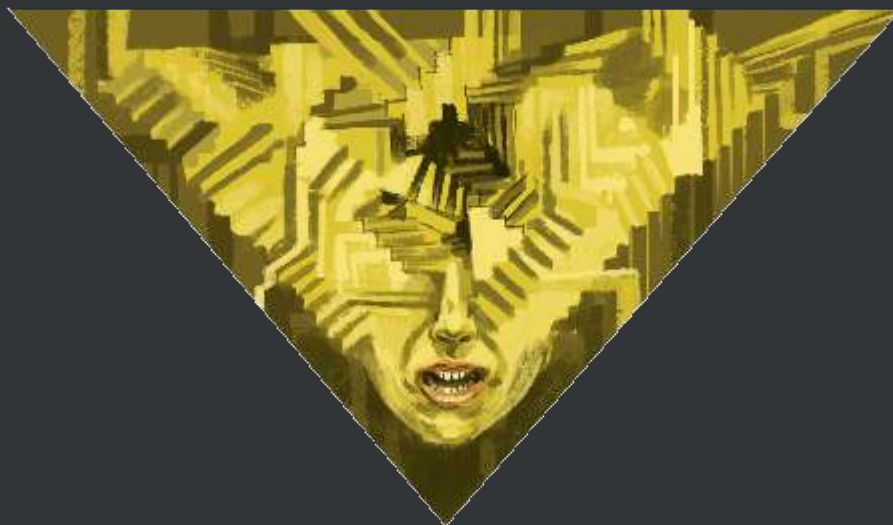
PATTERN SEEKERS DEITY - ZHAHDAHDAHDon

Called the Hierophant of Seething Echoes, the Siren of the Seeking Pattern, and the Witness of the Whispering Labyrinth, Zhadahdahdon is as much a consuming concept as it is an ineffable being. The compulsive repetition of sounds so quickly they become a musical note, the awful, sucking pull of madness, the keening terror of Absolute Certainty—these are all signs of Zhadahdahdon's influence on the world.

Zhadahdahdon (pronounced ja-Dada-Don) has rarely manifested directly in the real world. When it has done so in the past, it has been equally as likely to simply possess an individual as it has been to drain all color from the world and appear as a glowing, ever-changing cloud of fractal lines, or as an all-devouring vortex. To worship Zhadahdahdon is to obsessively perform a task, to obey a compulsion from outside one's own psyche. Such "quests" often seem random or inconsequential to the uninitiated, but those privy to the secrets of the Whispering Labyrinth understand that such trivialities often mirror greater causalities. Covering one's domicile in stars placed *just so* helps to cause the stars above to align *just so*. And when the stars are right—the stars will be right. Note that this is not simply sympathetic magic—a young professional who secretly spends their evenings counting grains of rice into groups of 948 might contribute to celestial alignments just as eloquently as the aforementioned astronomer.

The Cult of Seething Echoes has never been one to hold the spotlight. While members have been persecuted throughout time as many mentally ill persons have, this has largely been on an individual basis—as the Cultists have no real structure (outside of the Bound/Free/Wise categorization), organization, or obvious doctrine, they have never been the explicit subject of purges, inquisitions, or pogroms. Rather, members tend to 'find' one another when their individual compulsions lead them to the right place at the right time. Often they may help one another to fulfill some goal, but such alliances tend to form out of mutual convenience—"I will help you steal that crate of red teacups, as I will then have more vessels to fill with exactly three tears, and you will have more porcelain for use in your grand mosaic cemented together with a paste made from your own blood." It is these sorts of enabling confluences (guised as coincidences) that are held up as proof of Zhadahdahdon's influence upon a situation.

What outsiders and other Cults often find most troubling about a Pattern Seeker is their synthesis of deranged causality and unswerving, ineffable purpose. Only a fellow Seeker could hope to understand why the penny on the ground on the other side of the street is perfect for their quest while the one at their feet is wrong, all wrong. What is clear to all, though, is that by retrieving the far penny rather than the near, the Seeker removes themselves from the path of an oncoming bus gone out of control. Those who are new to the service of Zhadahdahdon, or who merely dabble, stagger through their quests in lurching fits and starts of kismet. The Pattern Seekers farthest along their paths, however, are fully aware of the caustic effect their obsession has on the laws of probability (and, occasionally, physics), and make terrible use of their powers to meet the Needs they serve.



COSMOLOGY AND SETTING

Eskhaton takes place in a world much like our own—a world of ineffable cosmic forces, insidious conspiracies, and inscrutable mysteries. In Eskhaton, the inhuman and the inhumane alike erode the fabric of society, and the world itself slides inexorably towards apocalypse.

THE THEORY OF COSMIC FOAM

Despite the progress of modern science, humanity's understanding of the universe remains infantile—to grasp the scale and uncaring grandeur of the cosmos would utterly shatter the patterns of behavior society has labeled "sanity." That said, humans remain dangerously curious about the bleak and infinite spaces around and within them and, like moths drawn to a flame, continue to search for "the truth."

Within the past decade, certain fringe scientists have presented a hypothesis they refer to as the Theory of Cosmic Foam. While ridiculed by the scientific community at large, this theory has resonated quite deeply with members of the occult community, closely paralleling some aspects of what they perceive to be the metaphysical nature of reality.

The Theory of Cosmic Foam states that there are other realms—call them dimensions, or entities, or gods—which exist outside the bounds of our knowable reality. These realms are coterminous with one another in ways we cannot understand but can imagine as something akin to the clusters of bubbles that create foam. Our reality, then, is merely the skin of substance between any number of bubbles, an arbitrary delineation between realms which seethe and roil, pushing into our world merely to affect the spaces beyond. It is only a matter of time before the membrane breaks, or merges with another like itself.

AS DARK STARS IN THE SKY

While there are a handful of gods central to the story of Eskhaton, they are far from the only powers, entities, and realms that are interested in the demise of our world. It has long been hypothesized that Earth acts as a sort of lightning rod, grounding the cosmic energies of Llaereiak, Beast of Baleful Light, and the Beast's followers have made many efforts throughout history to free their mistress from her frightful astronomical chains. Similarly, some believe that the emergence and deployment of nuclear weapons was a coordinated effort by the Cult of Wernak-Vo to destroy the pre-human megaliths which keep their patron confined to the Gulf of Sirius. Thon Kesh, the Devouring Tide, Uv Nathath, the Corrupting Litany, Xoc Hygoz, the Million Mourned Witherer—the list of those bound by prehuman sigils or stellar alignment goes on and on.

SECRETS BETTER LEFT TO DUST

The Liturgy of the Turning Worm:
Penned by a depraved madman in Revolutionary France, The Liturgy of the Turning Worm is a treatise on corruption ascendant, a testimony to visions of betrayal and perversions of purpose. Guised as a book of short stories interposed with poems, certain practitioners have claimed that the poems can be enacted as powerful spells if instructions encoded within the stories are precisely followed. Few copies of this book remain in the world; all but a handful having been destroyed by self-appointed authorities on public morality over the years.

The Hobart Cylinder:

Perhaps the most modern artifact the Hobart Cylinder is an audio recording made on a wax cylinder, suitable for playing on certain types of gramophones. Originally discovered in a steamer trunk in an attic in Hobart, New Jersey, people who have listened to the cylinder say that it contains a conversation between a feminine practitioner of

the arts and a creature from the dim and rotting depths of the Earth, a conversation in large part concerning the three-stage ritual needed to summon and bind a member of the Stygian Host. While a few copies of the cylinder have been made on vinyl, modern audio equipment seems to only capture the practitioner's voice, rendering digital copies incomplete and largely useless.

The Gul'Rothi Tablets:

A set of three metal slabs made of meteoric iron (or some other extraterrestrial metal—testing has been haphazard, and the results inconclusive), the Gul'Rothi Tablets were pried from a meteorite at the center of an impact crater in southern India. While the rest of the meteorite had fused and melted together while passing through Earth's atmosphere, the tablets remained unaffected. It took some decades of study, but it was eventually discovered that the tablets contained a detailed map of our solar system, as seen from the

Horsehead Nebula, as well as a series of inscriptions in an unknown language. It is said that those who possess the tablets for too long develop strange powers, and stranger addictions.

The Edicts of the Unutterable:

Often simply referred to as "the Edicts," The Edicts of the Unutterable are a series of 149 poetic incantations. Written in a single, fevered night by a blind monk in feudal Japan, the Edicts are an oddity among occult works. Some fifteen or twenty of the incantations are widely known and included in all manner of texts and collections, though the public takes them solely as examples of historical poetry—musings on the inscrutable nature of the cosmos. The other hundred and twenty-some incantations which form the complete work are almost unheard of, and with good reason—those with access to one of the few remaining copies can summon horrible creatures from dimensions beyond their own.

THOSE IN FAVOR

Human cultists are far from the only beings with an interest in the coming apocalypse. From creatures of the deep and denizens of forgotten forests, to ancient spirits and rogue geometries, all manner of entities are aligned by nature, temperament, or choice, with one or another of the gods. Some, like the Litchwolds, are bound to the service of the avatars of a single god, and, by extension, their human followers. Others, like the Keening Scriveners, are much more pragmatic, and will serve whichever god or cult seems to have the upper hand at the time. Still others are less concerned with promoting the eskhaton per se, and are merely part of the conspiropolitical landscape. The Bone Eaters of Chkakk, for example, have ancestral alliances with many cults across the world, and those willing to pay their grisly price can make use of their talents as unparalleled assassins and spies. Likewise, the Charodine Choir of the Seething Gulfs will answer the summons of any who perform the bloody obeisances when the tides and the moon are right.

THOSE AGAINST

Lamentably (though predictably), not all of humanity is so farsighted as to embrace the coming Eskhaton. Over the centuries several organizations, both public and secretive, have made it their mission to thwart or undermine the servants of the elder gods. From demon-banishing sorcerer kings to holy orders militant, zealots and fearmongers alike have sought to turn blade, torch, and public opinion against the clergy of the true powers of the world. Today, a handful of groups stand out as the most prominent enemies to the faithful:

The Order of the Sign:

An interfaith organization of those who believe in the milksop gods of humanity, the Order of the Sign has been a thorn in the collective side of the cults since the dawn of human history. With access to rudimentary spells of binding and banishment, and a handful of lesser artifacts they mistakenly believe to be relics, the Order has contacts and agents in most of the world's major religions and can call upon considerable mundane resources when they are riled.

Omicron Solutions, LTD:

A reorganization and consolidation of other secret societies in the early 1980's led to the creation of Omicron Solutions, LTD. One of the most technologically savvy enemies of the cults, Omicron Solutions uses state-of-the-art information, metaphysics, and weapons technologies to disrupt rituals, "deprogram" cultists, and generally make a hash of the Great Works of the faithful. Though lacking the artifacts and magical knowledge of various other factions, they still manage to cause quite a bit of mayhem when left to their own devices. Headquartered in Helsinki, Omicron Solutions has "regional headquarters" across the globe. Quiet but persistent rumors say that the corporation seeks to use knowledge taken from the cults to expand their power over the mundane world.

Project Valkyrie:

The United States' "official" unofficial response to its own rogue elements and supernatural threats both foreign and domestic, Project Valkyrie has discovered a way to reliably (if inelegantly) control occultists and harness their abilities. Surgeries, viral treatments, and chemical exposures transform such people into something... else. Treated as little more than hunting dogs, these "Valkyries" are used to ferret out cultists, warlocks, and other such individuals for elimination or abduction and indoctrination.

The Society of the Like-Minded:

A private, secular group with chapter houses on four continents, the origins of the Society are tied to the case of a beast rampaging through rural France in the mid-1700s. The Society of the Like-Minded has amassed a significant library of occult treatises and tomes. While more investigatory than militant, they nevertheless frequently cross paths with a variety of cults and other secret societies. It is unclear whether the group is a standalone organization or if it is a front (or unwitting catspaw) for a cult, either well-known or previously obscure.

The Worshipful of Azedarac

Through the ages, the various cults have been hounded by infiltrators and enemies. While most are from other charlatan cults trying to glean knowledge, one source of antagonism has persistently gained access in attempts to render the cult powerless and cause as much confusion and destruction as possible. Lead by a supposedly ancient sorcerer named Azedarac, The Worshipful of Azedarac is a network of spies and esoteric ghouls who suckle from Azedarac's mystical teat to be imbued with various otherworldly gifts. It is rumored that many of his servants have lived for hundreds of years, and some are reported to be able to communicate with their master in this world, or any other.

Azedarac is an enigmatic figure. Only two pieces of written documentation are known to exist that claims they were ever a real person. In the Book of Moriamis, a man discovered some of Azedarac's secrets and was sent hundreds of years into the past (a common way Azedarac disposes of enemies), then crossed paths with the Extant scholar Moriamis. The other record is in the annals of the Apostasy Perquisition, when it was discovered Azedarac was holding the position Bishop somewhere at the edges of the Catholic church's control sometime in the sixth century CE.

The Worshipful seems to have one reason for existing: to sustain Azedarac's

continued long life. It seems to many cultists that he siphons their knowledge to his own ends, suggesting a deep and intimate familiarity with the occult. Most assume his attempts at disruption in the various cults are related to him knowing the real power of the elder gods, and he is attempting to sow confusion and guard against any effort to end his life. Any kind of massive change would hinder his plans.

Apostasy Perquisition

A heretical sect of the Catholic church that came into existence after the end of the witch trials of the 1600s, the Apostasy Perquisition discovered enough of the truth of the hidden world to retain its purpose of hunting out evil in this world. Although they work in secret, they still hold to the ideals of the witch trials, and their only purpose is to hunt down and exterminate cultists. They hold the mistaken belief that they can do anything about the inevitable end of the world. They have been unable to ever find any evidence of their God existing, and that they are not imbued with any sort of powers against the cults, but they make up for it in fanaticism and sheer brutality.

Interested Individuals

From time to time various individuals or small groups stumble upon the existence of the cults and seek further interaction. Sometimes it is a small cohort of scientists studying the universe who happen to reveal the knowledge of an awesome otherworldly force. A student of the occult expecting orgies and drugs will instead be confronted with knowledge that their minds could not fathom. Many who dabble in or seek the world of the cults have stories. To the outside world, those stories are laughable and written off as the words of the conspiracy theorists, or the schemes of charlatans. Even among more serious occult social circles, these stories are mostly seen as ridiculous or treated as urban legend.

Still, some individuals do find themselves enveloped in the occult and continue to pursue it for assorted reasons. Some try and debunk their experience, or to see what kind of kicks they can get from it. Others even feel compelled to try and stop it, however they can. The various cults have their ways of dealing with these intruders. In most circumstances, the goal is to remove them and keep the incident and whatever knowledge they have gained from reaching the wider public.

WHAT IS THE UR-CULT?

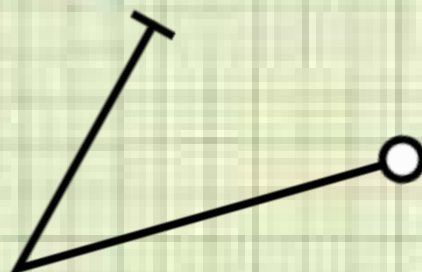
From a Letter by Dr. Thomas Templeton, Master Expositor of the Unnamed

The Ur-Cult is defined as the first cult, led by the original cultist and their five disciples. When the leader died or passed out of existence, the truth of the cult was lost but there are still Ur-Cultists in existence that follow the original path. The five disciples broke off and worshipped aspects of the elder gods in existence today. Each of them was given a piece of the 'truth' but no mortal being holds the entirety of the truth.

In the summer of 1951, my colleagues in Riga approached me about confirming our understanding of the Ur, its history, and the role the cult has played as our collective progenitor. Knowledge of the Ur was passed down orally through the generations. Written fragments from the Bronze Age were discovered in Beirut as noted by Sir William Barakat in his publication of 'The Ur in All of Us' in 1907, so the story of the Ur remains partially known among scholars.

Nevertheless, some circles refuse to believe that this sole source of information is the most accurate account of ancient pre-history. They have asked for more evidence, to discern what may be corroborated with what we know today. As such, they tasked me with collecting and codifying various threads in a single resource. After many years of work, I am proud to announce that this article is, in fact, the definitive work of twentieth century, and a testament to our unified journey.

Dr. Thomas Templeton, Master Expositor, Published 1979



*"The earth has a skin and that skin has diseases; one of its diseases is called man."
-Friedrich Nietzsche*

A private vault in Perth houses the earliest known evidence of the Ur. It is a petrified log of polished wood carved with petroglyphs. While the fossilized wood is from the late Triassic Period, the carved images date back to the Upper Paleolithic Age 40,000 years ago. Notable during this age was the introduction of settlements, creation of artistic works, and the earliest development of refined tools by humans. This artifact tells the story of the Blue River Tribe who wandered across most of Southern Africa. The story, in narrative, appears below:

A man named Uru, a great hunter and defender of the Blue River Tribe, led them. According to the petroglyphs, which Amelot-Loyse the Marquise de Conté translated in the late 17th century, a great earthquake struck the tribe. When Uru and his people went to investigate, they stumbled on Var Vor Kor. Speculation continues on the exact nature of Var Vor Kor, though most of us agree that it was a scavenger being with deific knowledge and abilities. Uru contacted Var Vor Kor in a quarry of its own creation, after it had burrowed deep into the earth's crust, devouring all matter it encountered.

Uru threw down his weapons and wept at the sight of that terrible god. Uru pledged his people to its service. In return, Var Vor Kor granted the Blue River Tribe the gift of knowledge.

A brief side note: Sir Barakat's extensive work in the Middle East translating many

Akkadian tablets led to a fragment identified as the Uru Stone. Roughly 4,200 years old, this artifact added to our understanding of Var Vor Kor's lessons to the Blue River Tribe.

Barakat translates:

"Having seen all, Y'gabah failed to give birth to another universe. Its heart would not open. Within it, the unborn universe was trapped. Y'gabah tore open its heart, dying and creating in the same moment. Now we walk across Y'gabah's corpse. We swim in its blood. And we hunt the scavengers who now prey upon its bones." (13)

THE RISE OF THE BLUE RIVER TRIBE

This next section is taken primarily from the Hostettler Collection in Cartagena, which details the brief history of Var Vor Kor and its education of the Blue River Tribe. Herr Hostettler was a rival of the Marquise de Conté, and spent a vast fortune collecting archaeological fragments from Sub-Saharan Africa. There he collected five written fragments from three dissimilar sources, in three different indigenous languages, each describing the origin story provided by the scavenger.

Var Vor Kor explained that when Y'gabah tore open its heart, it ripped the fabric between this dimension and all others. This rip in reality allowed Var Vor Kor and others like it to cross into our universe. Var Vor Kor taught the Blue River Tribe about ancient gods and of horrors both large and small. Just as Uru and his people were but ants to Var Vor Kor, it was but an ant when measured against these Ancient Ones. Uru's

people learned that gods are real, and so too is their magic. They learned how to surpass their mortal limits, bend the earth to their will, and to defy the trappings of time and space.

Translations suggest that the Blue River Tribe honored Var Vor Kor by building a small kingdom, allegedly located somewhere near the Great Kei River of modern-day East London, South Africa. At the time of this writing, Dr. Sol Mendoza's excavation in partnership with Leiden University has not yet produced conclusive evidence of an advanced settlement. However, according to Hostettler's fragments, after completing this stronghold to protect their patron deity against other monsters from beyond the sea, Var Vor Kor commanded that Uru take his people north. He also commanded that they, like the being they worshipped, scavenge off their neighbors and hunt down any who might threaten the tribe.

THE FALL OF THE BLUE RIVER TRIBE

Hostettler's fragments tell that the Blue River Tribe prospered, and as their territories grew, so did their might and their lifespans. They warred against their neighbors, dominating every battle, and taking the tribal lands of the defeated as their own. The defeated peoples were either converted to the Blue River Tribe or killed. By the time Uru was over one hundred years old, he had produced many sons and daughters that spread throughout the conquered territories. Uru's two eldest children, Shaba'ur and Huru, spearheaded most of these campaigns.

Shaba'ur was the older sister to Huru, but they were close enough in age to be rivals.

Each fought for their father's praise and both, in turn, fought for Var Vor Kor's acknowledgement. Shaba'ur was a gifted hunter and commander, winning more spoils for the tribe than any of her brothers. While Shaba'ur was given control over a prestigious military campaign, Huru grew envious and deeply angry. During a storm the sullen Huru walked into the rushing river to let the current take him away.

While the Blue River Tribe believed he had drowned, Huru returned eleven nights later. Behind him were the remnants of those whom the tribe had conquered; survivors who had fled the attacks or survived the battles. This rebel army broke through the wards and spells that had protected the Tribe for decades. Var Vor Kor did not do as they had hoped, and Huru's army slaughtered both Var Vor Kor and Uru.

The artifacts pertaining to Var Vor Kor's destruction are not clear, though one curiously references a colossal monster that, "took up so much sky it blotted out the evening sun" (Hostettler 59). The fragment described the creature as having enormous tentacles that ripped Var Vor Kor into pieces. A supporting document of note, a papyrus dated to the New Kingdom, was written by the Egyptian scribe Heqanakht. The papyrus describes a magical spell from the Book of the Dead wherein the deceased can invoke a great beast that walks on giant snakes. It tears apart another creature to allow the deceased to continue his journey through the Duat. It is difficult to determine if a rival god had empowered Huru, or if Huru learned a spell that would call forth a

great beast. Regardless, this being tore apart Var Vor Kor. The followers of Huru then ate Var Vor Kor's dead carcass.

It is worth noting that there is some internal speculation on what, exactly, happened to Huru during the eleven days he was missing. Over centuries of debate, two plausible explanations have risen to prominence. Hostettler's supposition indicates that like many students of the Ancient Ones, Huru simply could not comprehend the sheer knowledge available to him, and he went insane. His powers were still extreme, however, and in his madness, he was able to summon the armies and forces necessary to destroy the Blue River Tribe. The older, opposing theory by Cato of Ephesus postulated that Huru encountered a rival demigod to Var Vor Kor. This rival assisted in the collection of Huru's followers and used Huru to get inside the city of the tribe, which resulted in a war by mortal proxy. I personally prefer the latter theory, but without definitive proof one way or the other, I leave such interpretations to individual scholars.

THE UR-CULT

The Hostettler Collection notes that it was weeks or months later when Shaba'ur returned home after her lengthy campaign; too late to save her people. When her army stepped through the burnt gates, they found the dead and dying alike. They walked among the twisted bodies of their fallen tribesmen, but also the sick and putrid bodies of Huru and his followers. They had consumed Var Vor Kor's flesh to gain its power, realizing only too late that such power could not be contained. Many went mad while others transformed into gibbering mutants, left unable to feed,

clothe, or bathe themselves. As a result, Huru and his people starved to death.

Shaba'ur buried her father before directing her army to raze and burn the Blue River Tribe's stronghold. The next morning as their home smoldered, she declared those who lived the Children of Ur. Taking what knowledge they had, the Children of Ur travelled north in search of a new purpose. Over the next thousand years, still empowered by the teachings of Var Vor Kor, the Ur wandered as a solitary group until they grew too large. From what we understand, the Ur evolved into a network of offshoot civilizations. Over time the philosophies, truths, and values of the original Ur changed based on environmental factors and distance. In the next ten thousand years, still before the dawn of recorded civilization, these groups became occult factions, each claiming to be the true inheritors of Ur, and the predecessors of our cults today.

During the expansion and evolution of human civilization, Ur factions formalized into unique clusters. Some of the oldest, such as the Mareen and the Extant, we still see today, but many more have faded into history. The fate of Shaba'ur remains somewhat in doubt. According to Sir Robert Barakat, Shaba'ur died during the Mesolithic era, having lived for thousands of years. He also suggests the while some factions had previously broken from the Ur, the death of Shaba'ur prompted the final dissolution of the original Ur.

The Marquise de Conté theorized that dissenters within the Ur turned on Shaba'ur, and after assassinating her, ate her flesh just as Huru did Var Vor Kor. There is some

circumstantial evidence to reinforce this theory, found in the writings of Cato of Ephesus (currently housed in the Virginia Estate of Abigail McLean). These writings paint a fractured portrait of the Children of Ur, one with powerful voices and internal struggles. Finally, Hostettler offered that absent any definitive evidence, Shaba'ur may yet live.

Regardless of personal preference, and despite varied goals and evolved mentalities, the Ur remain our collective ancestor-not just our cults, but all human civilization. Through them, we understand the carcass in which we live, and realize the gravity of the world around us.

Gods are real.

Magic and monsters are real.

Time is eternal, and immortality is within our grasp.

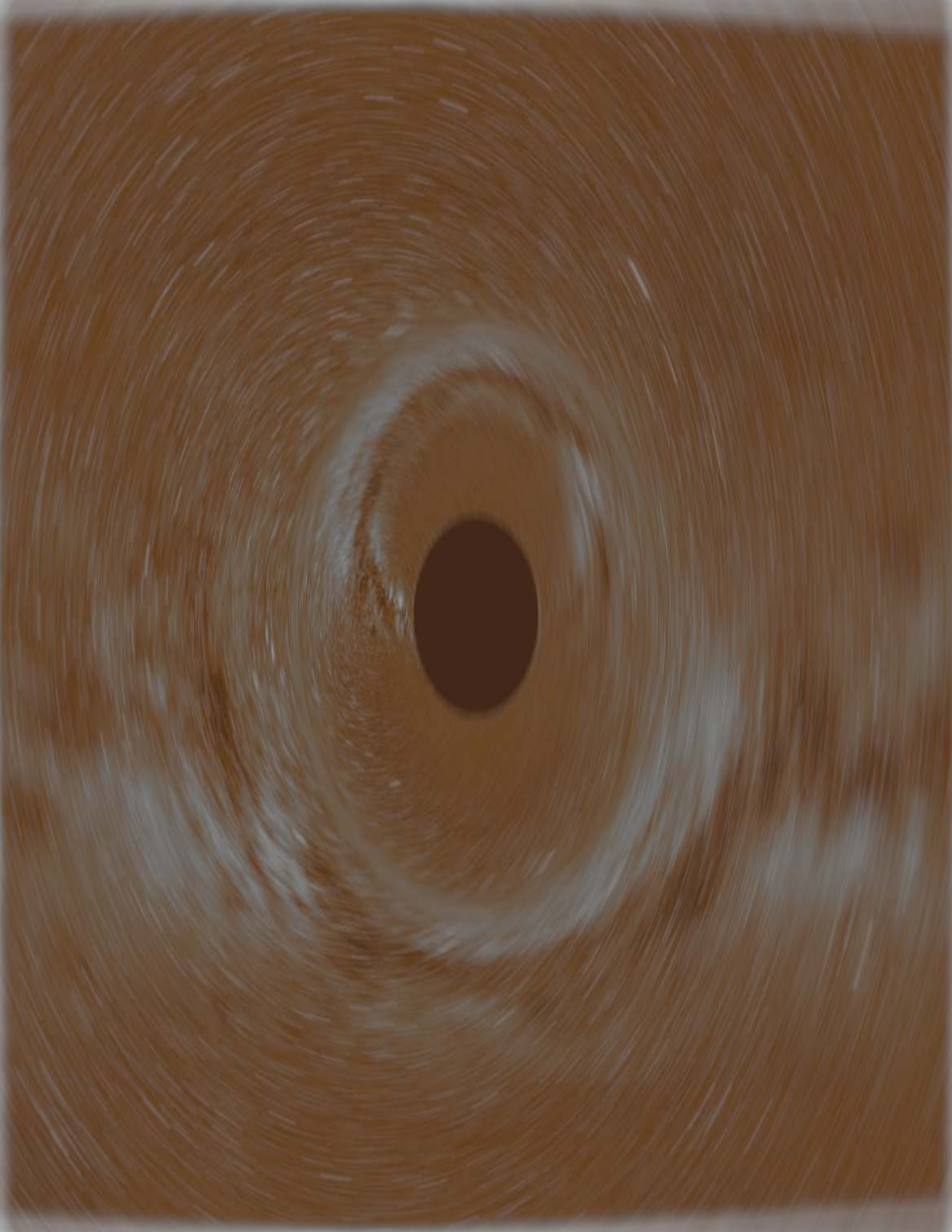


HOW IT ALL ENDS

We have one last thing to cover: the end. Eskhaton is a larp about the apocalypse, but also about choice. There are five deities, and thus five apocalypses. All of the information that follows is how it ends. We invite you to look if you want: it will come up in the event. What you read in the section after is truth, but truth can be distorted.

We ask that if you do look that you don't talk about it until you are actually in the event. Some participants may choose to not know, so treat this as 'spoiler' knowledge even if everyone has access to the same truth.

Your character will choose one of these apocalypses, even if it is not the one they started with for their cult. Think about what outcome is most interesting for your arc, and experience the journey.



ZHAHDAHDON

The Black Labyrinth



ZHAHDAHDAHDON

It looms large on the periphery of the senses and oozes through the corners of perception. It is always there, like a mote in the eye, or a flash of light that attracts a glance. It is a sound that has no origin. It is a smell you cannot place that lingers then mysteriously disappears. Zahdahdahdon is a concept of unfamiliarity, a recognition that things never are what they seem. The sensation will increase, causing gradual dissonance with the daily world as the world of meaning and sense has tears and weaknesses form in the fiber of its being.

Everyone is aware of this sensation of something lurking just beyond their senses, and when it is time, it consumes and bends reality violently. At first people would experience the world shifting to grayscale as they are consumed within its cyclopean walls: objects and beings from the real world dissolving into fractal images and patterns. This happens as a sort of a reverse "magic eye" picture effect, where one stops being able to see the things around them, so caught up in visual static.

Most people would probably just...never "resolve," never come back into focus; they would remain lost, incoherent, disintegrated into the cosmic fractal. A few, though, would "reintegrate" or "find their way out of the Labyrinth" and become... themselves, or beings somewhat like themselves again. Perhaps tall, and thin, and faceless, but humanoid nonetheless.

These new "people" would inhabit a world in grayscale, but also with the blues of midnight and the ocean, the greens of the forest forest at night: places with Depth, places where things are Lost and Forgotten and Discovered and Learned. They would find their God waiting for them in temples, countless temples that are all one, beneath an endless midnight sky, and a mountain larger than the universe, all held up as a supposition by the Slicing Echo that they worship. Humanity is gone, wiped away, with memories being fleeting things trapped in the glimmer of a reflection. Life continues, but it is alien. Anyone that survives might well as have never existed at all.

ILLUKET

Terror of the Depths



ILLUKET

As sea levels rise, cities on islands and coasts flood. Massive tidal waves crash into skyscrapers and drag the wreckage into the oceans. With the fall of these cities, so too do their populations drown. Those who flee fight other survivors for high ground as the rains continue. But, the devastation isn't limited to the rising sea levels.

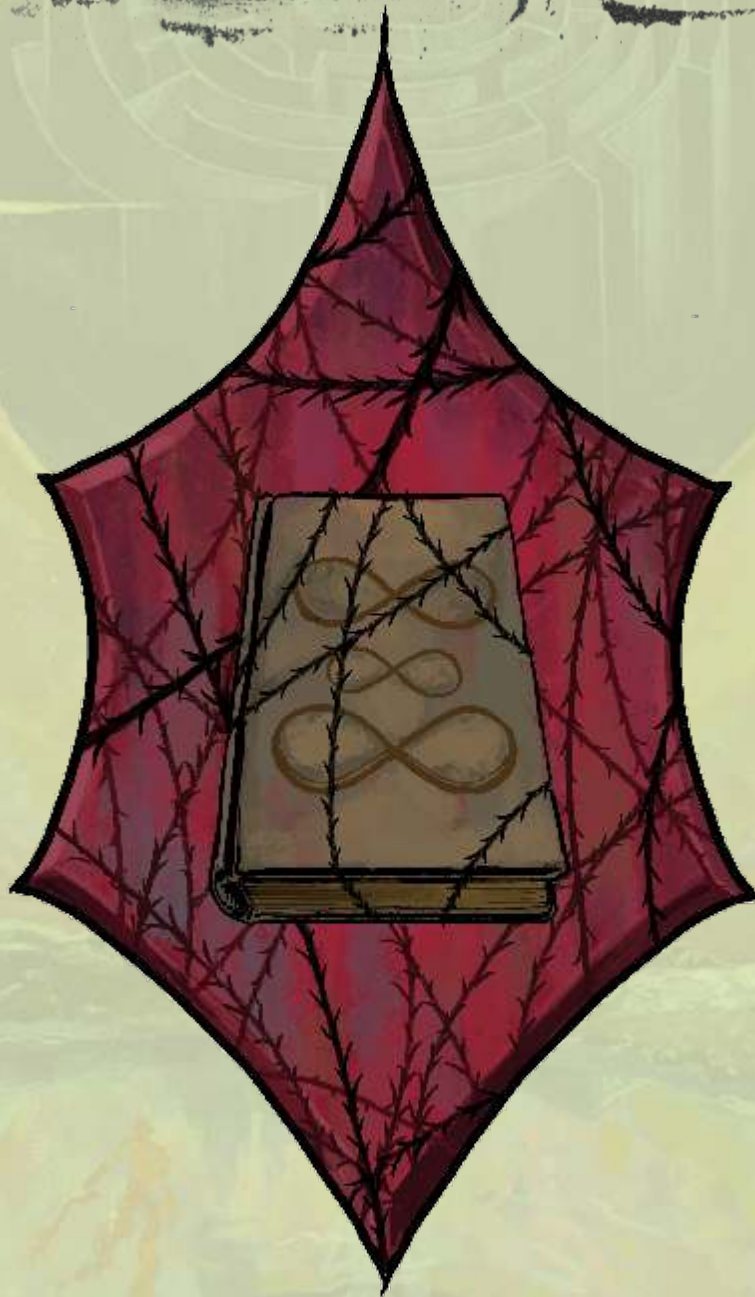
Colossal hurricanes and violent storms blot out the sun, and at the very moment it seems like water would wash the entire world away, the members of the Mareen assemble. Each rank forms a circle. Ring within ring, Masters stand in the innermost circle while Novices at the outermost circle. The highest ranked and eldest member calls to Illuket, asking that all dams be destroyed, all barriers be abolished, and for this world to meet the next.

In that instant, all Mareen and their choruses integrate with each other. They open their mouths to sing with as many voices as they carry within them. The cacophony grows louder and louder until the song of the Mareen both living and departed is heard over the storms. This is the moment Illuket's call to them is returned with a call to her. With a final melody of truth, they evoke Illuket.

From beneath the water, her great maw with its endless rows of razor teeth emerges. Her shark body fills the sky from the east horizon to the west. Her jellyfish tentacles scoop up the worthy to devour into her utopia and smash any who are displeasing to her. Any who manage to survive, deserted and abandoned, fight to survive atop the island chains of the Himalayas and along the ocean that now engulfs the Rocky Mountains. But even those who prevail will only do so for a short while, delaying oblivion, as the rains continue never-ending for twenty-two days.

For twenty-two days is as long as it will take Illuket to consume what she wishes. After she has filled herself with souls, she will give birth to a new universe and make gods of those Mareen who worshipped her. They will carry forth the minds of those of the worshipful, and are forever marked by the passage of their emotions, thoughts and experiences: ever plagued by the presence of their humanity even as they are remade into powerful alien beings.

NOMEN NESICIO QVIIMOVIVO



NOMEN NESICIO

First there was the void. Then, the Words were spoken, and there was a great sundering! Light became separate from darkness, something became separate from nothing, and the Words that were spoken became separate from the Words that were not. Many of the creatures born from those unspoken Words, that nothing, were jealous of the light, or filled with rage: how dare the light be prized over the void? But Nomen Nescio was different. Nomen Nescio felt nothing. Nothing but anticipation. While other entities fought among themselves, or terrorized the new life brought forth by the Word, Nomen Nescio simply listened, and waited. For if the Word echoed in all things, then the Word could be learned, and the unspoken Words learned as well, for they echoed too, in the void.

True enough, it was Nomen Nescio alone which listened to the language of creation. In this moment, Nomen Nescio knew enlightenment, and the Words transfigured it, became it, forced the inchoate primordial presence into a shape: the form of a language. But Nomen Nescio was only a newborn, unprepared to handle the power of the Words. It was torn to pieces and scattered among creation, hidden in the tongues and scripts of humankind. Even its mighty Name was ripped away, seemingly never to be reunited with its former owner.

When the Expositors of the Unspoken uncover lost secrets given to humanity by the servants of the Word, or when they learn some new, unforeseen power over reality, they serve Nomen Nescio. Many already believe the secret name QVIIMOVIVO is indeed its true name, and simply must be comprehended in order to completely reassemble their god.

One day, at last, the Expositors will find the final Word. And as every sentence written has an end, so does this crass reality. Nomen Nescio will have mastered the Word, and shall speak the Words that were never Spoken. Nothing shall become equal with something, and the darkness shall be equal to the light, and the creatures of the void shall rejoice as all barriers are destroyed and all are stripped bare. Nomen Nescio's rebirth will sunder the world.

The Expositors believe everyone who has worked to reassemble their God will be wreathed in majesty and power. The individual who finds the Name shall be Favored above all, and sit at Nomen Nescio's right hand; the Expositor's record keeper, custodian of their research, will sit at the left. Together, they will watch as Nomen Nescio returns to life, and speaks the Words to reconfigure all of existence according to its own nightmarish vision. Humanity will be remade in its image; the fortunate will die quickly, being made into leatherbound tomes attesting to Nomen Nescio's glory. The exquisite, carefully-farmed agony of billions will be as water on a prayer wheel. Unabridged misery will become the bricks and mortar of a new Tower of Babel, a monument to the Puzzle God's unearthly glory.

Will Nomen Nescio forget those who served it, so loyal and so wise? No! For Nomen Nescio will speak new Words, and those who served it shall speak as well! And together, there shall be a new sundering, a great separation. And this time, Nomen Nescio and its Expositors of the Unspoken will be the light, they shall be something, they will be the Word and together they shall reign over all.

ALETHEIA

The Womb of Truth



ALETHEIA

At the center of creation, where time and space distort and wrap into a pocket of conceptual fuzziness, the great womb lies pulsing. It emits great energy, holding the borders and boundaries that keep all laws in place, and allow for creation itself to be ordered. The deity, for it is a god, is the concept of life itself in defiance of nothingness. When the time comes and the walls of human reality come tumbling down, it will begin with a great stillness... as if the universe itself has held its breath. All will be silent, for one blessed moment.

Then the foundations of all that exist will begin to shudder. Some will feel earthquakes, as the ground sways beneath their feet. Others will begin to perceive things that they know to be impossible such as the existence of other worlds and the beings within them, but realize with growing dread and certainty are all too real. All the while, the 'womb' which holds Aletheia will contract, bunch, and finally ready to birth its heavy burden.

The first cry of Aletheia being birthed will shatter all of creation. The wall between the unknown and unknowable will fall, showing the world of order we all know to be nothing but the frailty of those who live in ignorance. Those who have lived with the knowledge of the dimensions and beings beyond human existence are free to revel in the streets, while others find they are confronted by a new reality, and the hostility of it. They will be preyed upon by chattering horrors that crawl in from places that operate on crueler laws of selection.

The second cry will awaken the worthy: Aletheia's chosen will be gifted with powers befitting their worthiness, and curses befitting their weakness. A new hell will emerge as the universe orders itself according to the strict laws of primacy and survival. Life will reduce down to its essence as the once mighty faithless will fall to the ground, stripped of eyes and mouth, doomed to starve if they are not consumed by something greater. The once physically frail but faithful in spirit will gain great strength and use their newfound power to rend foes with claws and fangs.

In the end a world unending will emerge, with the vicious endless cycle of life preying upon life, preying upon life. With the walls torn down upon the universe, life will become the dominant force that rules, and Aletheia will rule over it all unending. There will be no peace in an end, only a consumption and recycling, a refreshing of the substances of organic hunger.

N'KLASTE

The Hungering Maw



N'KLASTE

N'Klaste has only one real drive: consume as much energy from sentient creatures as possible. Every sacrifice to her gives her the energy that she requires, not only to continue to exist, but to also bring her closer to being able to enter our realm. She has promised in visions, and communicated to druids through the ages, that once she and the other gods return those who kept up the necessary blood rites, those who brought her and the other gods forward, would rule over all of existence. This idea has mostly been propagated by the 'Changelings' and other alien creatures that surround N'Klaste. Many Changelings have left the Otherworld, and taken over the bodies of Extant members, ensuring that this is the dominant narrative, so much so that even prominent members such as Moriamas, and Ernesto Muerte, are Changelings.

The Extant has been lying to its members since its inception that they must unite the cults together. Although N'Klaste was the inspiration for many fertility goddesses, including Celtic manifestations, and this has been a tool used by N'Klaste and her alien other world followers to collect all of the cults together to simplify her feeding. Once she is summoned into the world of humankind there will be a catastrophic reckoning. A tear will open in the world and the pool of congealed twisting flesh will pour through, tentacles with mouths seeking prey as servants work tirelessly to feed their master.

For hundreds of miles from the summoning spot everyone but those cult members who have kept to her blood rites will meet the same hellish end, caught in the conflagration. The land will become barren and burnt, resulting in millions of deaths. The Changelings and other horrible creatures of the Otherworld, who once hid, will flood the human plane of existence and call that vast devastated area their new realm, slowly reforming it in their otherworldly image and in service to N'Klaste. The Wild Hunt will begin as the planet is scoured of nourishment to bring back to the hungry and terrible god.

Those that do survive from the worshipful of N'Klaste will be irrevocably changed and twisted by the touch of their god. They will become the same as the alien beings that infiltrated this world and laid the seeds for the destructive path. They will work now in full service to their god as she seeks to fill her ever expanding hunger, looking to new worlds and dimensions where she can continue to reach across time and space and repeat the cycle. Enslaved to the whims of a hungry master, the world of humankind will end as it is stripped bare to feed the bloated alien god. When there is nothing left the denizens will empty, leaving behind a hollow husk of a world as they move onto riper pastures.