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INTRODUCTION

Following World War II, hundreds of Nazis fled Allied persecution, slipping into South America through clandestine railroads or brokering their services to serve out life sentences as specialists for the superpowers. But a segment of the Nazi threat escaped all notice, using Germany's most secret wartime weapons to conceal their flight. The Demagogue's mission to create a new Aryan empire a proven failure, these refugees abandoned their Nazi ideals in favor of their true goal all along – to serve the insidiously powerful Eva Kraus, one of *Shadowforce Archer's* most hated villains.

Eva renamed the remnants of the Third Reich the Hand of Glory and directed them toward a new vision, the erection of a modern occult empire, built on the ashes of the mysterious Ancients' civilization. In over fifty years since, the Hand of Glory has spread worldwide, gathering a stockpile of mystic knowledge and artifacts to rival that of the ageless Guardians of the Whispering Knife, and developing new and unexpected weapons to field against all enemies.

One such enemy is the Archer Conspiracy, which has underestimated the Hand in the past. Now aware that the world-spanning organization is close to its ultimate goal of global rebirth, thousands of operatives are being fielded from every Chamber to bring it down. But is it already too late?

The *Hand of Glory Threat Book* presents a complete villain organization, meticulously developed as a living, breathing entity with a unique flavor and countless game play options. Carefully integrated into the official *Shadowforce Archer* setting with dozens of plot hooks, game options, and character design instructions, this book also features many new villain archetypes, pre-built NPCs, and supporting material for the first climax episode of the SFA Interactive campaign (see page 7).

WHAT THIS BOOK CONTAINS

This Threat Book is divided into four chapters, containing the following information.

Chapter One: Campaign updates the *Shadowforce Archer* setting, advancing the story and developing plots introduced in the first episode (the core release), along with brand new hooks built to interlock with the climax episode of the SFA Interactive campaign but useful on their own.

Chapter Two: Villain describes the Hand of Glory as it exists today, outlining the organization's international scope, history, allies in the world's villain communities, and the resources it can bring to bear against the agents. Also included are outlines of three new enemies

squaring off with the Hand (and with whom Archer operatives can join forces in the field), as well as in-depth discussions of the Hand's methods and motives, and new Hand of Glory NPCs.

Chapter Three: New Rules offers two new departments, one new base class (the adventuresome explorer), and four new prestige classes – including the seemingly immortal valkyrie, spirit-communing spiritualist, and the mystic powerhouse known as the channeler – as well as many new feats, gadgets, and vehicles geared specifically for Hand of Glory villains (but available to any character in the game).

This chapter also expands upon the mystic powers introduced in the *Shadowforce Archer Worldbook*, presenting new rites, rituals, feats, higher levels of Thirst as powerful mystics spiral into ever greater madness, and even global effects during eight seasons each year!

Finally, 10 new villainous NPC classes add tremendous variety to the foes the GC can pit against the agents and allow him to populate his world with an ever more diverse collection of characters.

Chapter Four: Challenge presents a number of tools the GC can use to build a Hand of Glory campaign, including two new feature NPCs (the organization's inner circle), two new threats (as usual, complete with interactive plot hooks), and two locations – Monolith (the Hand's secret volcanic research center) and Buenos Aires (a hot spot of recent Hand activity). One new hook sheet rounds out the book, allowing GCs to immerse teams in the action quickly and cleanly.

HAND OF GLORY AGENTS

Though this is a threat book – and therefore about the villains of the setting – it's not exclusively for the Game Control. Players can benefit from many of the agent creation options in Chapter 3, as well as the resources presented by the two enemies of the Hand located in Chapter 2 (see page 36).

Beyond all this, the Hand's history and current command structure have been built to allow for recent defectors and rogue operatives from the organization. As usual with *Shadowforce Archer* sourcebooks, everything required to play any character option presented in the story text is included. All you need is the GC's approval and you, too, can play one of the bad guys (whether you're working for the good guys or not).

For more information about this option, see pages 27 and 40.

WORLD TODAY

VOLCANOES ERUPT AROUND WORLD ENVIRONMENTALISTS WARN OF DIRE CONSEQUENCES

Jordan Mitchell
Staff Writer

An unprecedented number of volcanic eruptions around the world in the past twenty-four hours has placed thousands of lives in danger and left leading volcanologists scrambling for an explanation. "Our top minds are reviewing all of the data we've collected," said Dr. Emilia Bell, head of the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Bristol, England. "Conclusions will be released as soon as they're available."

Officials with the Volcano Research Center – Earthquake Research Institute at the University of Tokyo are searching for answers as well. "It almost seems like a domino effect, with a new eruption in each time zone, exactly one hour apart," said Dr. Setsuya Watanabe, Professor of Geophysics. "It's unheard of, but clearly not impossible. We had no prior warning for today's events, so we must carefully study what has happened and learn from it to make sure we're prepared in the future. Meticulous scrutiny of this event could yield new insights into our world's ever-changing interior."

Regarding the eruption chain's consistent one-hour interval and bizarre eastward progression, Bell said, "We have no information as yet to indicate a clear cause or pattern. The circumstances of this momentous geological event are staggering and uncanny, but in time they will be explained. The cause of an event of this magnitude can't evade us forever." When asked to confirm that the chain included several volcanoes previously believed to be extinct, Bell declined to comment.

Bell's careful statement was the topic of much debate during last evening's edition of *Common Ground*, the latest prime time commentary show dominating the Nielsen ratings. Among the guests were noted volcanologist Stephen Peters of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, who vehemently discounted non-traditional theories about the eruptions. "Leaping to conclusions at this point would not only be rash but destructive, hindering the scientific thinking needed to determine the truth behind this remarkable event."



Aerial view of a village outside Baitoushan, following the volcano's blast.

Counter-panelist George Wabashaw, known as "Profundo" among his fledgling religious sect, "The Armchair Apocalypse," was predictably reactionary. "This has nothing to do with science!" he declared. "Revelations speaks of the Sixth Seal unleashing earthquakes and turning the sun as black as sackcloth. These are the End Times, friends, and they are beyond our understanding or control! We must take stock and brace for the liberating fury of Judgment! The Armchair Apocalypse is ready to help you through this precarious time – you can reach us to volunteer your time and money at..."

Even the single-minded Informer network news program paused in its unending coverage of Villain X for a few minutes to talk about the eruptions. "Our reliable yet unnamed sources claim that the eruptions can only be the result of connected magma chambers," Informer anchorman Dylan David claimed. "We'll keep you updated about this remarkable opportunity for geographic discovery as news develops."

The first volcanic eruption was recorded at 6 A.M. Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) within the Eldgja Fissure System in Iceland, an explosive force that blasted through part of the Myrdalsjokull ice cap. It was the first eruption there since 935 AD. Exactly one hour later, a second eruption occurred at Montanas del Fuego on Isla de Lanzarote in the Canary Islands. Another eruption followed in the next hour at the Isola Vulcano in the Aeolian archipelago off the coast of Italy. Nine more eruptions occurred over the next

nine hours: Nisyros in Alexandros, Harrat ad Dakhana in Saudi Arabia's Harrat Hutaymah volcanic field, Barren Island in the Indian Ocean, Baitoushan on the border between China and Korea, Me-Akan in Japan, Zhelotovsky in Kamchatka, Russia, Raoul Island in Kermadec, Mageik in Alaska, and Volcan de las Tres Virgenes in Baja California.

"It's like one of those disaster movies," said Della Edell, a missionary for the Church of the Divine Word and witness to the eruption at Raoul Island. "We saw a group of tourists making camp in the area last night and now, this morning, the whole area is gone. Only God knows what happened to them."

Of the twelve eruptions, the largest by far was Baitoushan, with a Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI) of 6 and an estimated plume height of more than 25 kilometers. Only four other volcanoes have erupted with more violence in the last 10,000 years, one of which was Baitoushan itself in 1050 AD. The last eruption to register a 6 on the VEI occurred in 1883, destroying the island of Krakatau. The second most powerful eruption occurred in Iceland with a VEI of 5 – the same force of the 1981 Mt. St. Helens eruption in Washington state.

Yesterday's remaining eruptions each registered a VEI of 4, the same force of the Galunggung eruption in 1982 in West Java, Indonesia.

(See *VOLCANOES*, page 11, for more)

In Other News Today...

- Nuclear blast in Africa; terrorists blamed
– See world, page 93
- German military cemetery vandalized, robbed.
– See world, page 11
- Reports of guerrilla activity throughout South America
– See world, page 37
- Controversial rock group prepares for final show of tour.
– See culture, page 12

HAND OF GLORY

ZAK
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has taken precautions to insure it won't be disturbed before the ritual is complete. The agents must not only deal with power-mad Hand cultists, but whatever ploys and defenses the villains have concocted.

POSSIBLE HAND DEFENSES:

1. The ritual leader has wired himself with a "dead-man trigger" that initiates the final countdown of a dirty nuke (with increased fallout) if he is killed. The nuke is buried within the volcano, and the agents must somehow either defuse it or manage to capture the ritual leader alive.
2. Local villagers are dominated and used as a primitive "fire cult" led by Hand operatives. They attempt to sacrifice any interfering outsiders to the "fire goddess" who is about to be reborn in the impending volcanic eruption. The agents may be the only potential victims, or (if they're having an easy time of it) have to save one or more innocent bystanders swept up in the ritual.
3. Hand of Glory assault troops have dug secure positions and prepared dozens of traps to hold off invaders. They're armed with everything from landmines to anti-aircraft weapons. Only a small force has any hope of slipping past them and strategically eliminating the ritual leaders before the final eruption.

PLOT HOOK: RELIEF EFFORT

The current crisis requires more than just combat. Thousands of innocent lives are in direct danger from the eruptions, and the Archer Foundation deploys the agents to perform one or more rescue missions. Of course, when simultaneously trying to keep the Conspiracy under wraps, this is easier said than done.

POSSIBLE RESCUE MISSION EVENTS:

1. An international news team latches onto the agents and follows them around, documenting their heroic efforts. The agents must invent and successfully depict a false cover or otherwise distract the reporters.
2. The natives don't trust outsiders and are determined to face the eruption and its aftermath on their own terms. The agents must find a way to convince them to flee, preferably without resorting to force. Perhaps they can appeal to the rational few among them or prove that the eruptions are the warnings of a disgruntled god. Either way, the team must win over and escort the natives to safety before their land is destroyed by the next eruption.
3. A fleet of rescue crews is stranded by lava flows and other fallout. Not only must the agents mount a successful rescue, but they must strive to contain the volcano's now-unopposed onslaught.

PLOT HOOK: MILITARY STANDOFF

The reports of China and North Korea amassing military forces along their borders are, unfortunately, accurate.

Each nation is worried the other will use the eruption of Baitoushan as an opportunity to seize land and natural resources. Aircraft patrol the smoky skies under the pretense of looking for victims

submarine modified through the organization's gadget-like developments (see page 65).

1983: Eva orders the Hand's augmented navy to sink several U.S. and Soviet fast-attack submarines in an effort to draw out elements of the world's Chambers. The situation is narrowly defused by several Conspiracy teams working in concert (aided by the fact that no strategic assets were sunk), but 14 Archer operatives are killed in the process.

1985: Team CHECKMATE investigates the disappearance of Australian archaeologist Sandra Keely, who vanished while studying legends about the lost civilization of Thule. Following a trail of clues, CHECKMATE tracks its quarry to the Arctic Circle, where it finds a camouflaged Hand of Glory dig site. After a week's covert surveillance, during which time it's determined the Hand of Glory has discovered an Ancients anchor node, CHECKMATE is ordered to storm and capture the site. The operation very nearly fails, thanks largely to a level-headed, steely-eyed Hand of Glory commander with a distinctive scar across his face. During their debriefing, CHECKMATE agents recall a man dressed in the uniform of an SS Colonel, matching the description of the late Otto Skorzeny – not the Skorzeny of a decade ago, but Skorzeny at the height of his prowess, a man no older than 35!

The Foundation renews its search for Skorzeny, this time upgrading the mission code to black. Though the target is sighted a dozen times over the following ten years, no Conspiracy teams even come close to capturing him. As far as the Foundation is aware, Otto Skorzeny remains at large today.

1989: Eva travels to Easter Island, where she uncovers and overpowers another of the Ancients' guardian spirits. Unlike previous encounters (see 1929 and 1931), Eva is now powerful enough to subdue the creature and takes the information she requires by force – including the approximate location of Thule (north-east of the Faroe Islands, in the Norwegian Sea).

LAW OF THE JUNGLE: THE HAND OF GLORY IN THE 1990S

With the collapse of Communism, the world changed, but not always for the better. The Conspiracy was largely occupied with the the rapidly changing political landscape of the post-Cold War world (and the discovery of P.E.R.I.L.), and found it more and more difficult to pursue the Hand of Glory's many tendrils throughout the world. Eva took this chance to establish much of the groundwork for her post-millennial power grab, though the Hand's fractious power structure prevented her from taking full advantage of the Conspiracy's weaknesses.

1993: South American drug lords loyal to Eva report the shipment of a large, singed box through the continent's lowlands, "using the back roads where people go not to be seen." Assuming at first a mid-power mystic relic, Eva assigns a small cadre of shocktroopers to recover the shipment. Soon, however, the last remaining shocktrooper returns from the field with word of the casket's true contents – the missing Demagogue clone! A desperate race to track the casket commences, though all the Hand troops are able to glean is that the prey was carried into North America and hasn't left. As days become weeks and months, the Hand's hunters prepare for a prolonged stakeout of the region, knowing that the god-king companion's subconscious ruminations will eventually give away its position. (*Shameless plug: Download and play the first episode of the SFA Interactive campaign to not only learn the clone's current whereabouts and condition but also determine the ultimate outcome of this long chase through history!*)

1994: The Hand of Glory launches the first of several operations to retrieve Mjolnir from its reported position at the bottom of the North Sea (see the *Shadowforce Archer Worldbook*, page 234). The expedition is lost, but not before Mjolnir's location is confirmed.

1998: Led by several Guardians, a Conspiracy strike team infiltrates and destroys a secret Hand of Glory staging facility in Egypt. During the raid, the team seizes several relics, including the Shroud of Turin. These relics are turned over the Guardians for safekeeping, and returned to a Guardian safe house in Jerusalem.

1999: A Hand of Glory team discovers Thule in the Norwegian Sea. By the end of the year, Eva assigns a large archaeological team to explore the site, which lies approximately 1,000 feet below sea level.

COLLISION: THE HAND OF GLORY TODAY

Eva Kraus is incredibly close to success on a number of vital fronts. The Hand of Glory is more powerful than ever before, and she no longer seems afraid of open conflict with the Conspiracy (as evidenced by the organization's sudden and explosive return earlier this year – see the *Shadowforce Archer Worldbook*, *Archer Foundation Chamber Book*, and *Episode 1 of the SFA Interactive campaign*). She's closer than ever to locating Thule and resurrecting her god-king in the body of one of her many lieutenants. If successful, there may be no force on Earth capable of preventing her ultimate rise to supreme power over a revitalized occult empire.

The Conspiracy's only saving grace seems to be Eva's impetuous nature. Just four months ago, in a bold move rivaling the most daring of Josef Stalin's maneuvers, the goddess sparked what can only be described as a full-scale war between her ruling body of 20

lieutenants, intentionally reducing their number to a mere two. The details of this bloodbath are still being sorted out by the Conspiracy's few spies close to Eva's inner circle, but it is known that the action prompted untold dozens (and perhaps hundreds) of her low-level henchmen and minions to scatter to the four winds. Many of these villainous refugees remember the last time that Eva purged the ranks (see pages 24–25) and are fed up with her erratic behavior. The rest are merely afraid for their lives. Chambers around the world have so far collected as many as 25 of these Hand operatives, a few of whom have even offered to reform and work for the Conspiracy.

Special Note: This event allows GCs to incorporate Hand of Glory operatives as assisting specialists or even allied operatives in any campaign. With GC permission, players can even build former Hand of Glory henchmen, shocktroopers, mystics, and other character archetypes using the rules in Chapter 3 and run them as part of a standard *Shadowforce Archer* team!

GOALS

Ultimately, the Hand of Glory's goals are those of Eva Kraus. Her quest to recover and renew the companion entity to her own possessor is foremost on her mind at all times, and therefore most operations she personally leads are driven by or support this outcome. (For more about Eva's continuing efforts in this direction, see the *Shadowforce Archer Worldbook* and the first and upcoming third episodes of the *SFA Interactive* campaign.)

Secondary to this is rebuilding the occult empire that the twin entities nearly established in the time of the Ancients, a sweeping mystic dictatorship in which the inhuman king and queen would be elevated to the level of godhood they believe is their birthright. This long-range goal is akin to the schemes of many villain organizations which seek global control, though Eva is less interested in dominating the world than transforming it. Also, fewer of Eva's personal missions are linked to this goal, which requires a broader approach than she is personally able to offer. Instead, the Hand of Glory's plans for a new world order are managed through her lieutenants (*Myrmidon* and *Dozer* – see the *Feature NPCs* section beginning on page 82) who enforce her will throughout the lower ranks.

Tertiary Hand of Glory goals are myriad and take a back seat to (or support) the organization's two primary aims.

MOTIVATIONS

The glue that holds the organization together – the reasons that Eva's myriad followers agree to work toward her goals – are as varied as the organization itself. Some work solely for money, power, political gain, or (in the case of the perverse and the deranged) personal fulfillment. Others – including most within the Hand's lowest ranks – seek the kind of shared sociopolitical or philosophical belief that drove the Nazi regime during World War II. While they may not share this sentiment, Eva and her inner circle are well aware of the vulnerabilities of the human psyche and offer their masses the precise crutches they crave in the form of twisted ideals and strict rituals and regimens, as described in the following sections.

Generally speaking, the Hand of Glory's rank and file does not know about this manipulation (nor that the Hand's highest positions of power don't always share the organization's proclaimed motivations). Neither does the world at large, including most operatives of the Archer Conspiracy. Two, who shares personal history with Eva Kraus (see the *Archer Foundation Chamber Book*, page 105), and those who have infiltrated the ice queen's inner circle, know otherwise.

THE DEMAGOGUE'S LEGACY

Hand of Glory doctrine can be traced back to the Demagogue's personal creed, which was shared by (and sometimes forced upon) the bulk of his Nazi supporters. Pivotal within this creed were the fledgling naturalist movements that influenced Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, such as *Liebensreform* ("life reform"), which claimed to renew ancient methods of living and cited health and lifestyle as the keys to tapping into the mystical forces of the world. It was through these movements that the Third Reich – and eventually the Hand of Glory – gained momentum.

Madam Helena Blevatski's Theosophy – a blend of Hindu mysticism, Jewish cabala, and European hermeticism – lies at the core of the Hand of Glory vision. Blevatski wrote of her journeys to the Himalayas, where ancient mystics shared with her the secrets of the universe. Among these teachings was a prophecy of the rise of an Aryan hope and the rebuilding of the mystical empire of Atlantis. Baron von List, founder of the secret brotherhood known as the Thulian Society, referred to this Atlantean empire as 'Thule', which Eva knows to be the center of the civilization known to mystics as the Ancients. Eva has reinforced the tenets of *Liebensreform* and the search for Thule as fundamental to the Hand of Glory vision for a transformed world, which in turn feeds the heart of every officer, mystic, and shocktrooper heeding the call to Glory.

OLD BLOOD

All around the world, small pocket-cultures preserve ancient traditions and lore long forgotten by outsiders. The Hand of Glory and other organizations sometimes seek out and recruit these individuals for the knowledge (and power) they possess. While not all agents from old blood go on to become mystics, their knowledge of the old ways can provide key insights when researching or combating such foes.

SPECIAL TALENTS

- +2 Wisdom, -2 Strength.
- +1 department bonus to any save prompted by a mystical or fringe ability, feat, or invocation. Old blood agents receive an additional +1 department bonus to these saves at 4th level and every four levels thereafter.
- +1 department bonus to Knowledge (Occult) and Languages checks. Old Blood agents receive an additional +1 department bonus to these checks at 4th level and every four levels thereafter.
- Bonus Feat: Scholarly. This feat is considered a mystical feat for the purpose of meeting other feats' prerequisites. The agent must still meet the prerequisites for this feat (including skill ranks with Concentration and Knowledge) before receiving any benefit from it.

EXPLORER

This is a base class.

Whether in the steaming rainforests of Borneo or the concrete jungle of downtown New York, some agents cannot resist the call of discovery. Many organizations field agents who circle the globe in search of places and phenomena beneath the notice of their technological colleagues. These individuals bring a wealth of experience with exotic locations to any team, as well as a steady hand in the face of bizarre circumstances.

Abilities: Most explorers fancy a bit of rough and tumble, so decent Strength and Dexterity can be very helpful. The most pressing ability for any explorer, however, is unquestionably Intelligence, the source of wits he stakes his life upon during every mission.

Vitality: 1d12 plus Con modifier per level.

CLASS SKILLS

The explorer's class skills and key abilities are:

Class Skill	Key Ability
Climb	Str
Cultures	Wis
Drive	Dex
First Aid	Wis

Handle Animals	Cha
Jump	Str
Knowledge	Int
Languages	Int
Listen	Wis
Mechanics	Int
Open Locks	Dex
Search	Int
Spot	Wis
Survival	Wis
Swim	Str

Skill Points at 1st level: (4 + Int modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the explorer.

Starting Feats: The explorer begins play with the following feats.

- Armor Group Proficiency (Light)
- Weapon Group Proficiency (Melee)
- Weapon Group Proficiency (Pistol)

Connected: An explorer comes to know a wide variety of people through his travels. Once per session, he may spend an action die to seek out an individual with whom he has dealt positively in the past. Seeking this acquaintance out requires 1d6 hours. The acquaintance has one skill of the agent's choice with a number of ranks equal to one-half the sum of the agent's level + his Charisma modifier.

Unlike allies gained through the faceman's backup ability (see *the Spycraft Espionage Handbook, page 23*), the explorer's acquaintance is only considered friendly (rather than helpful) and must be compensated for any services rendered.

The explorer may use this ability even in remote locations, so long as there are at least 40 people within a 25-mile radius around the explorer when he declares the ability use (e.g. an Antarctic research base near the South Pole or a nomad camp in the midst of a desert).

This is the explorer's core ability.

All Over the World: The explorer never ceases to wander the globe, honing his skills and nosing around in new places. At 1st level, he gains the World Traveler feat. At 6th level, he gains the Advanced Skill Mastery feat for the World Traveler feat. At 12th level, he gains the Grand Skill Mastery feat for the World Traveler feat. At 18th level, he gains the Perfect Skill Mastery feat for the World Traveler feat. All prerequisites for these feats – including minimum skill ranks and agent level – are waived.

Direction Sense: At 1st level, the explorer receives a +2 bonus to any roll to navigate from place to place, regardless of the skill being used. This bonus also applies when performing the "Shortcut" maneuver as a

during the lighted hours and perform quick invocations (usually rites) of minor impact. Long and complex rituals are frequently doomed to failure.

Mechanics: Mystics gain a bonus equal to their agent level to the first skill check made as part of any complex skill check during this period. The second and all subsequent skill checks in any complex skill check, however, suffer a penalty equal to the mystic's agent level divided by 5 (rounded down).

THE CYCLE OF EARTH

Dates: February 2nd (Imbolc) to March 20th.

The period between Candlemas and the Vernal Equinox is a time of healing, when the earth withdraws from the spiritual cycle – for a time – and renews. Paths to the spirit realm are unclear during these weeks, and lost souls flood into the Fringe seeking shelter from the empowered mystics of the physical world.

Mechanics: During this period, the threat ranges of attacks against all spectral beings are increased by 2 (e.g. a threat range of 19–20 becomes 17–20).

THE CYCLE OF WATER

Dates: March 21st (Ostara, the Spring Equinox) to April 30th.

Following the Spring, or Vernal, Equinox, when day and night are equal and the sun's full strength returns to the world, the rivers and oceans flow freely, circulating the mystic energies coursing under the world's skin. Many of these energies are the bonds between mystic and follower, which are cleansed and strongest during this bright, hopeful period.

Mechanics: During this period, all mystics may bond followers, whether they have learned the Bond Follower rite or not. All bonding attempts follow the standard rules described on page 223 of the *Shadowforce Archer Worldbook*. Even if the mystic without the Bond Follower rite successfully bonds one or more followers during this period, he does not gain the rite when this period ends.

THE CYCLE OF DAWN

Dates: May 1st (Beltane) to June 20th.

The arrival of summer is the beginning of the mystic calendar, when paths become clear and the bond

between mystic and mundane is strengthened. During this period, the spirit bridges across the Fringe are strongest and few recently dead find themselves lost on their way to final rest. Mystics spend this precious, quiet time taking stock and preparing for more turbulent events to come.

Mechanics: None.

THE CYCLE OF SUN

Dates: June 21st (Litha, the Summer Solstice) to July 31st.

This time of imbalance features the longest, brightest days and shortest, most underestimated nights of the mystic calendar. Inexperienced mystics assume this seemingly cheerful time to be a wellspring of possibilities, while their veteran counterparts watch for the inevitable collapse of paradise. Caution, it's been proven, is the by-law of the day.

Mechanics: The error and threat ranges of Knowledge (Occult) skill checks made during this period are both increased by 1 (e.g. an error range of 1 and threat range of 19–20 becomes an error range of 1–2 and a threat range of 18–20).

THE CYCLE OF AIR

Dates: August 1st (Lughnasadh) to September 20th.

During summer's decline, mystics take the opportunity to travel, experience the many wonders of the current cycle, and test new theories. Myth speaks of this being the time of Lugh, the 'god of all skills' – an apt description, given what the Hand of Glory have discovered about the period.

Mechanics: The minimum Knowledge (Occult) skill required for any invocation is reduced by 4 during this period.

THE CYCLE OF FIRE

Dates: September 21st (Mabon, the Autumn Equinox) to October 30th.

Mystics call this dark, lonely period 'the spirit-crucible,' as it is the final test before the dangers of the fall (see page 60). Historically, mystics return to the relative safety of their fellowships and share the secrets they've learned in their travels through the year.

Mechanics: The Learning DCs of all invocations are reduced by 4 during this period.

