

## *Beginning Play - Chapter I*

Below is a synopsis of the basic steps of the Etherium game. Each of these steps is examined again in its own chapter, however the overview is intended to give a basic guide for the first session of the game. The first three steps are utilized during the first game, and though the information gained through those processes continue to impact the game, they need not be repeated unless there is a change in the above-game player membership or in-game group membership.

### *Overview Step 1-Taboo*

Players of Etherium create characters that interact with a changing environment that can be blissfully dreamlike or horrifically nightmarish. In this consideration, the first step to playing is to address the Taboo Sheet for each player. The Taboo Sheet is an above-game sheet that addresses player concerns. A copy of the sheet is included in the reproducible forms section near the end of this document. Each player in the group may select one topic that is forbidden material for the subject of creative play. If no subject is off-limits for a particular player they need not add a taboo to the list. All players make use of their Taboo Sheet, however, to list each individual's forbidden subject of play. There is a closer look at this subject in the *Forbidden Dreams* Chapter

### *Overview Step 2-The Etherium Clock*

Next the players use the Etherium Clock sheet to determine the tolling of the hours for their Etherium character. This is essential for determining which character has the greatest advantage at any moment in the game and also determines which player is directing play. In order of the calendar date of birthdays during the course of a year, each player takes turn selecting an hour for their character on the Etherium Clock. Details of the game effects of this are in the *Tolling the Hours* chapter.

### *Overview Step 3-Character Folios*

Gather supplies to be added to the Character Folio. The Character Folios will serve to hold notes, sketches, images, print outs, etc. capturing the experiences the players' Personas have in Etherium. It will also hold the record sheets for the Taboos and The Etherium Clock. Then comes the time to administer the Persona Survey sheets. These sheets have five questions which impact persona and auxiliary character interactions and identities in Etherium. First in this process, each player answers the second question, "Who am I?", on as many sheets as needed to provide to the other players with the name of the Persona, the character that player will primarily use. Then utilizing the guidelines in the chapter *Forms and Shadows*, the other players fill out the remaining four questions and return the surveys to the player who answered "Who am I?" on the sheet. Later, the Character Folio will hold information on any Auxiliary Characters and previous or future Constructs in the Etherium.

### *Overview Step 4-The Construct*

Once the previous steps are completed it is time to address the Construct. In an above-game sense the Construct is the description of the setting, events, auxiliary characters, and tone elements of the story. Within an in-game sense, the Construct is everything manifested within the Etherium at a given moment. The chapter, *Weaving the Mists of Perception*, explains the development of the Construct and how the character Personas influence its manifestations.

### *Overview Step 5-Motivation and Resolution*

A player's in-game persona will have key long term motivations. Some of these (Phobia, Accismus, and Thelema) will be addressed with the Character Folio portion of developing the Persona and its perceptions. Others will develop based on the results of play in the Etherium game. Exploring the Persona, attaining in-game goals, and resolving circumstances will contribute to a Persona's mastery of their environment and circumstances.

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Of crossing the line;  
Ponder the consequence;  
Sing a requiem.

## *Forbidden Dreams- Chapter 2*

The creativity and tone of a game of Etherium is intimately connected to the players involved. Often players will have a subject that they will want to be off-limits for play. Such a subject will become a Taboo.

### *Establishing Taboos*

Each player has the option to choose one Taboo. This subject is now forbidden. The other players are not to question why someone chose a particular Taboo and as a forbidden topic it is not up for discussion. It is important that this rule is held sacrosanct, because Etherium is a shared creative effort, therefore mutual respect and trust are important. Using a copy of the Taboo Sheet, each player records all the forbidden subjects. This sheet will be placed in the first part of the Character Folio and should be the only above-game piece of information in the folio.

For example, Kenneth, Rosa, and Lisa are beginning a game of Etherium and each one is considering a possible Taboo for play. Rosa is uncomfortable with the subject of Child Abuse and wishes it to be a forbidden topic for the game. Lisa feels that there isn't a subject she isn't prepared to handle, and chooses not to select a Taboo. By not selecting now, she has relinquished her right to add a Taboo at a future date. Kenneth is torn, but finally decides to embrace his decision and make Clowns a forbidden subject. There may be curiosity and perhaps assumptions regarding the choices made, but the topics of Child Abuse and Clowns are now forbidden subjects among the group.

### *Breaching Conduct*

Breaking the above-game rule of the Taboos is a breach of mutual trust and respect among the players. Each play group will have to decide among themselves appropriate penalties for breaching conduct in regards to the Taboos. Such behavior can be cause for group censure which could result in dismissal from play or the dissolution of the game. Penalties could be relatively mild such as an in-game temporary suspension of Auxiliary Character actions, or as overt as an above-game issuing of a strike to the offending player in a "three-strikes and you are out policy" that was agreed upon by the group after the setting of the Taboos. However, this should be resolved before moving on to Tolling the Hours.

### *Changes in Play Group*

Occasionally a player may be added to an established group or a player may leave the game for an extended period of time. Anytime there is a substantial change like this, the Taboos should be reevaluated. Any changes should be made to the Taboo sheet at the time of transition.

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Far from being linear, Time is familiar.

## *Tolling the Hours- Chapter 3*

The Etherium Clock has marked 12 hours as does a normal clock, however time is fluid and symbiotic within the Etherium. Certain hours on the Etherium Clock will be connected with the Personae and also have Aspects connected with it. As control of the story shifts from player to player with the above-game mechanics, the in-game perspective of time can shift radically for Personae and Auxiliary Characters.

### *Correspondences of the Hours to Personae*

Before a Persona is fully formed, its connection to and influence in the Etherium are established. This takes place in process of Tolling the Hours. Using copies of the Etherium Clock record sheet, the players take turns naming one hour that their individual characters, their Persona, are connected to for play. The player whose birthday occurs first in a calendar year goes first in this process and selects one hour for his/her Persona. The process continues in order of birthdays until each player has selected one hour. Then the process is repeated until all the hours have been selected and each hour labeled with the Persona it corresponds with for the game. Additionally, there are dual Aspects to a given hour that corresponds to its a.m. or p.m. subjective associations.

### *Correspondences of the Hours to Aspects*

Aspects are thematic elements to situations in the Etherium. The hours are divided into three categories: Deception/Illusion; Reason/Logic; and Animal Instinct/Emotion. These Aspects influence the nature of the Construct within the Etherium. Eight of the hours on the Etherium Clock are intertwined with the Aspect of

Deception/Illusion. During these hours, it will be easy for self-deception, misdirection, treachery, disguise, and lying. Another eight hours are predisposed to Reason/Logic. These hours are ideal for sorting through issues and solving puzzles. The final eight hours are given to Animal Instinct/Emotion. These hours are governed by primal and visceral urges. The chart below depicts these divisions.

Deception/Illusion 1 am - 8 am  
 Reason/Logic 9 am - 4 pm  
 Animal Instinct/Emotion 5 pm - 12 am

So, a player who chose 9 on the Etherium Clock for a Persona, would then control both sides of 9, the Reason/Logic Aspect of 9 am and the Animal Instinct/Emotion Aspect of 9 pm. This chart shows all the correspondences of Aspects.

Hour Struck	am	pm
1	Deception/Illusion	Reason/Logic
2	Deception/Illusion	Reason/Logic
3	Deception/Illusion	Reason/Logic
4	Deception/Illusion	Reason/Logic
5	Deception/Illusion	Animal Instinct/Emotion
6	Deception/Illusion	Animal Instinct/Emotion
7	Deception/Illusion	Animal Instinct/Emotion
8	Deception/Illusion	Animal Instinct/Emotion
9	Reason/Logic	Animal Instinct/Emotion
10	Reason/Logic	Animal Instinct/Emotion
11	Reason/Logic	Animal Instinct/Emotion
12	Animal Instinct/Emotion	Reason/Logic

### *Leading The Processional*

Who initiates the Construct? Deciding who takes the lead can either be through mutual consent, or through rolling the d12 (twelve sided die) and determining whose hour is struck. The resulting d12 number is compared to the hours belonging to the various Personas. The player who controls the Persona associated with that hour now has the lead in the story. In the chapter, *Weaving the Mists of Perception (ch. 5)*, details pertaining to the Construct are discussed. A player with the lead may advance or regress the hour to any other hour associated with his/her in-game Persona.

When a player decides they no longer wish to direct the game in a session they may abdicate. Abdication means they select another player to take the lead and direct events in the story.

Each game session, all the players may use one call for impeachment. Impeachment is resolved by rolling the d12. Whichever player's Persona is indicated by the roll on the die, that player now has the lead in directing play.

### *Dilemma Resolution*

Another important factor in the importance of the hours is whether an opposed action is resolved. This is also explained further in *Weaving the Mists of Perception (ch. 5)*. Using the most basic of terms, in the case of an opposed or contested action, the d12 is rolled and whoever has dominion over the hour struck by the die decides

the outcome.

### *Changes in Play Group*

If gaining or losing members in the play group, then the Etherium Clock must be adjusted to accommodate the new situation in-game. Adding a player, as long the total group is within the parameters supported by the Etherium Clock (2,3,4,or 6) means that each previous player must select one of their hours to surrender to the new group member. Doing such balances the Etherium Clock again.

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Chaffing at the mnemonic chains;  
Shadows of forms cast in vulgar imperfection;  
Driving infinite beauty into recession;  
Ideas glimpsed but never viewed;  
Driving infinite beauty into mutation;  
Shadows of perfection cast in vulgar forms;  
Chaffing at the psychic chains.

### *Forms and Shadows- Chapter 4*

In this section the Personas, the characters created as the primary characters of the players, are further defined. The Persona is not limited to superficial physical restrictions. Depending on the Construct there may be such limitations from time to time, but the Persona is more about the mind and spirit within the Construct, than any constraints put upon them.

### *Writing Unwritten Truths*

A player should designate a portion of the Character Folio to contain secret truths about his/her chosen Persona. These may be revealed in the course of stories generated by play, but should not be shared at the beginning of the game. First among these is the Phobia. This represents a fear the character has and could deeply impact the story being told in the game. Next is the Accismus, this is something deeply desired by the Persona, but given feign denial too. Sometimes the Persona is trying to convince itself with its rejection of the desire. Finally, there is Thelema. With Thelema, there is no doubt that the Persona desires a thing or event. The Persona will repeatedly try to will the event or thing into existence. Within the Etherium this goal may seem achievable, but due to the transient nature of Construct, the Persona will often be chasing after this goal. These three elements help develop a Persona's motivations and reactions in the stories created during play.

### *Symbolic Signature*

The Symbolic Signature is an optional addition to a player's Persona. This symbol appears or event happens somewhere in the Construct when ever that Persona enters a scene. A Symbolic Signature could be something such as an association with the raven. When the Persona associated with ravens makes an appearance, there may be a raven perched in a window, the sound of a raucous cawing in the distance, a single black feather braided in the Persona's hair, or a multitude of other possibilities. The cultural and personal significance of these symbols will vary from Persona to Persona. The following resources from other publishers are a good place to obtain ideas for possible Symbolic Signature elements.

*The Dreamer's Dictionary; The Complete Guide to Interpreting Your Dreams:*  
by Stearn Robinson, Tom Corbett

*The Dictionary of Symbolism, Cultural Icons and the Meanings Behind Them:*  
by Hans Biedermann

*The Dictionary of Omens and Superstitions:*  
compiled by Philippa Waring

*The Secret Language of Signs:*  
by Denise Linn

*Lives of the Saints: Concise Edition Revised and Updated:*  
edited by Michael Walsh

*Animal Speak, The Spiritual and Magical Powers of Creatures Great and Small:*  
by Ted Andrews

*Numerology Has Your Number:*  
by Ellin Dodge

*Dictionary of Spiritualism:*  
by Harry E. Wedeck, Wade Baskin

There are many websites dealing with symbology and dream interpretation as well, if you do not have access to any of these books. When using this option, information around the chosen Symbolic Signature should be noted in a specific section of the Character Folio. Also noted should be ideas of how the Symbolic Signature could be integrated into the story as part of a scene.

### *Persona Survey- Who am I? (Answering the second question for yourself)*

A player, using enough Persona Survey sheets for all the other players involved in the game, fills in the name of his/her Persona in this section. The sheets are then passed out to the other players as a survey about their Personas for the game. After each sheet is completed it is returned to the player that issued the survey, so it can be integrated into the Character Folio.

### *Persona Survey- Who are you? (Answering the other Players' Surveys)*

When answering this question for another player, consider the intended response for question 5 on the Persona Survey. The decision regarding Dead or Sleeping will determine how this Persona could be perceived by another.

### *The Sleeping*

The Sleeping have entered the Etherium while still living. Personae who are among the Sleeping will appear in certain Archetypal forms to the other Personae they interact with in the Etherium. This need not be the same Archetype to all the other Personae. How a Persona is perceived by another Persona is set by the player of the Persona being perceived. As an example, Kenneth wants his in-game Persona, Fernando, perceived as The Father archetype by Rosa's Persona, Bella. So, above-game Kenneth answers Rosa's survey with "The Father" for the first question. Kenneth wants Lisa's in-game Persona, Gretchen, to perceive him as The Shadow. To accomplish this he will answer the question differently on the survey provided by Lisa. In-game Gretchen and Bella have very different impressions of Fernando and his intentions. Of course a Persona could be perceived in exactly the same way by the other Personae, but it is not required. From an above-game point of view, the Archetypes below are an extension of the psychological studies of Karl Jung and his school of thought, however, these have been modified for the purposes of a game and do not represent a scholarly explanation of these concepts.

*Anima, The:* The Anima is the embodiment of the vital female soul among the archetypes. Femininity realized.

*Animal, The:* The Animal is an archetype that manifests as a companion animal of humanity.

*Animus, The:* The Animus is the embodiment of the vital male soul among the archetypes. Masculinity realized.

*Child, The:* The Child archetype manifests in ways of youth, innocence, impetuosity, curiosity, and playfulness. The Child also is often unprepared for many things, and thus is also uninitiated.

*Family, The:* Manifesting as an archetype of The Family, a Persona will appear as a blood relation to the one perceiving them as such. This archetype, while not as powerful an emotive connection as The Mother, or The Father, will appear to have a familial relation with another Persona in Etherium.

*Father, The:* The Father serves as an authority figure, a protector, and a provider. The Father need not be perceived as the literal father of a Persona within the Etherium for the basic concept to hold.

*First/Last Human, The:* The First/Last Human archetype can be associated with figures such as Pandora, Adam Kadmon, Neil Armstrong, Noah, the anonymous discoverer/creator of fire, and Utnapishtim. The concepts tied to this are about the advancement of, or the survival of the human species.

*Hermaphrodite, The:* The archetype of Hermaphrodite serves as a fusion of opposites. The inherent polarity of the Syzygy is muted in a gestalt. This Persona may appear androgynous at times, but will always be perceived as being both male and female and yet neither.

*Hero, The:* The Hero archetype is an embodiment of nobility, courage, and bravery. Someone representing The Hero to another Persona will appear to face The Shadow without hesitation.

*Maiden, The:* The archetype of the Maiden may appear innocent and virginal and yet, often the object of desire. At other times she may be the captive or a possession of The Shadow. The proverbial Singing Harp in the Giant's castle is one example of this.

*Mother, The:* The Mother serves as an authority figure, a nurturer, and a provider. The Mother need not be perceived as the literal mother of a Persona within the Etherium for the basic concept to hold.

*Self, The:* Appearing as the archetype of The Self to another Persona, engenders recognition and identification from that Persona.

*Shadow, The:* The Shadow archetype embodies negativity and evil. The very presence of The Shadow stirs fears, uneasiness, and can convey ideas of monsters lurking.

*Syzygy, The:* The Syzygy, also known as The King and The Queen is seen as a balance of the polar opposites of male and female while maintaining the polarity that produces an energetic personality. Unlike the fusion of opposites found in The Hermaphrodite, The Syzygy can appear wholly male or female for periods of time, but will balance this time as the other gender to maintain harmony.

*Trickster, The:* The archetype of The Trickster is seen as clever, manipulative, and deceitful. However, it is also perceived as one who is often undone by its own machinations.

*Wise One, The:* The Wise One archetype is that of an elder who possesses knowledge and wisdom. The Persona could appear as a Magus or a Crone. It is not uncommon for The Wise One to be associated with a grandparent in the mind of the one experiencing the Persona.

### ***The Dead***

The Dead in Etherium are indeed dead. For whatever reason, the afterlife wasn't quite what these souls anticipated. They find themselves predominantly alone, though occasionally a few souls gather together. The Etherium responds to their presence and some are able to will into existence their visions of an idyllic paradise or let their fears plunge them into unspeakable hells. The presence of other Personas can disrupt these worlds within the Etherium. This can be a welcome respite or an unwanted intrusion. Sometimes the dead obsess about something or someone they left behind or some sort of unfinished business. These Dead will often seek the living Personas of the Sleeping out to act as conduits or receptacles for their obsession. Personas who are among the Dead are identified by a different set of Archetypes than those for the living. Once again, the question, "Who are you?", need not have the same answer on the Persona Surveys. As an example of this type of situation, Marti's Persona, Peng Yanjun, is among the dead. Yanjun is perceived by the Persona called Hannibal, played by Desmond, as a manifestation of Lust. However, Carolyn's Persona, Deirdre, has the perception that Yanjun represents Meekness. Also, Ben's Persona, who is referred to as Joshua, has the impression that Yanjun is Wrath incarnate. It is not necessary to vary the answers on the surveys, but it is an option.

*Charity:* The archetype of Charity is one of apparent benign humanitarianism. It corresponds to a universal Platonic love for all others.

*Chastity:* Chastity seems to embody celibacy or abstinence from sexual relations for the Persona portraying this Archetype to another.

*Envy:* The embodiment of jealousy and covetousness is found in the archetype of Envy.

*Generosity:* A Persona using the archetype of Generosity, will seem a noble spirit willing to forgive injuries and lay aside resentment.

*Gluttony:* Gluttony is an archetype that gives an impression of overindulgence, especially in regards to food and drink.

*Greed:* The archetype associated with Greed is to all appearances possessive, miserly, and avaricious.

*Humility:* Humility as an archetype will be perceived as humble and unassuming.

*Lust:* A Persona appearing as Lust will embody that archetypes carnal, wanton, and venereal natures.

*Meekness:* Meekness appears forgiving, gentle, patient, and not prone to anger as an archetype.

*Moderation:* To the viewer, Moderation will seem to be self-controlled, and the epitome of temperance.

*Sloth:* The archetype of Sloth comes across as apathetic. It is Sloth, not in as in a physical sluggard, but as in one not filled with fervor. Sometimes indicative of an agnostic or atheistic character.

*Vanity:* Vanity's archetype will be seen as superficial, narcissistic, and conceited. This Persona would seem to be self-absorbed and perhaps arrogant.

*Wrath:* The archetype of Wrath appears as vengeful, unforgiving, and angry.

*Zeal:* Zeal conveys a sense of an archetype filled with righteous fervor.

### ***Persona Survey- What do you taste like?***

The sense of taste and smell are intertwined in both the human psyche and human perceptions. Many paranormal phenomena have a particular aroma associated with their manifestation. Within the dreamlike Etherium, sometimes these conjoined senses are the most reliable to recognize another Persona or the source of an event or item. How a Persona interprets an event could depend on a trace scent from its source and how the Persona views that source.

On the Persona Survey an individual player answers this question the same for all the sheets answered. The taste and associated aroma will be part of a Persona's identity in-game. It is equivalent to a Persona's fingerprint in the Etherium.

### ***Persona Survey- What times does the clock tick?***

This part of the Persona Survey identifies the portions of the Etherium Clock that a Persona has dominion over.

These answers will be the same on each survey filled out by a particular player. Refer to *Tolling the Hours* (ch. 3) and the process for determining the Persona's hours.

### ***Persona Survey- Are you Dead or are you Sleeping?***

This part of the Persona Survey will match for every survey filled out for a specific Persona. It is the simplest truth about the Persona, and one impossible to hide for long. During the hours pertaining the the Aspects of Deception/Illusion are the few occasions when this can be masked temporarily.

### ***Other Persona Abilities***

The Etherium is a creative and responsive environment. All characters, both Personas and Auxiliary Characters, can understand each other regardless of waking language barriers, as long as they are willing to be understood. All characters have the skills and abilities that they are believed to have based on the current nature of the Construct. If the assumption is that a given character can pilot an airplane that appears in the Construct, that character may do so, until something influences that assumption.

### ***Characteristics***

Characteristics are primarily quantified by words in this game. A Persona, or an Auxiliary Character is as strong, fast, young, old, beautiful, terrifying, or any other number of physical adjectives as the Construct allows at the time. These factors will change within different Constructs or sometimes within a single Construct. The Characteristics that don't change are the Persona's Phobia, Accismus, and Thelema. A characteristic that will change only with changes to the play group are the Hours associated with a Persona. Another characteristic that may change is if in the course of the game a player decides to have their Persona die and move from being one of the Sleeping to being one of the Dead. This event would require redefining the perceptions of the other Personas of this character. The converse to this being accepted is up to group consensus. Whether or not the Dead could be reincarnated and become one of the Sleeping is completely in the hands of the group playing.

## *Immortality ?*

Personas are immortal. As discussed above in Characteristics, death may redefine them, but it does not eliminate them. Personas represent the spirit and mind of individuals in a dimension where each Construct radically alters the perception of reality. If a Persona seems to die in a Construct, the balance of the Construct will fade and shift, reorienting until the Persona reasserts itself. One of the Sleeping might awaken if the threat of death comes to him/her in the Etherium. The Construct is then torn asunder, until the the Sleeping returns.

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Your fears are more dangerous than your truths.

## *Weaving the Mists of Perception- Chapter 5*

This chapter deals with establishing a setting, or Construct, in which the stories will be created for the game. The types of stories created will depend greatly on the interests of the group playing the game. This section asks the questions and provides suggestions so that players can create stories they will enjoy together.

### *What is the Etherium?*

The answer to this depends on whose opinion is considered. There is the view that the Etherium is the Collective Unconscious Mind of humanity. Another view posits that it is Purgatory for the Dead to find absolution and serve as a warning to the Sleeping. Is it a perfect world where ideas are pure and undiluted by the vulgar matte of imperfection? Is the Etherium the Worldspirit, the vital force that preserves waking reality? Are our spirits like the Ka of the Ancient Egyptians, functioning independent of life and death in a spiritual world? Whether seen as mere echoes of the Akhashic Record or some form of Limbo for the Dead, no one has an actual answer as to how it fits in with Science or Religion. The Dead don't have the answers, just opinions, and the Sleeping experience it as a dream. All that is known for sure is whatever the source of it, the Etherium responds to the will of the Personas that gather within it, whether they are Sleeping, or they are Dead.

### *Forming The Construct*

Who has the lead? The lead is established using the guidelines in *Tolling the Hours (ch. 3)*. The lead player at the beginning of a game session sets the proverbial stage in the Etherium for events to occur. The dreamlike nature of the Etherium allows the lead player to make any type of setting imaginable. This player communicates through description, sometimes combined with other media, such as illustrations or props what the world appears to be in the Etherium. This is referred to as the Construct. Everything, save for the players' Personas, is a function of the Construct. The player may introduce Auxiliary Characters that are highly interactive extensions of the Construct. These characters have no true influence over the Etherium and are often a creation of the lead character's in-game Persona. These are manifested either through conscious effort, or in response to some unconscious motive. An Auxiliary Character could possibly be used once, or might be a recurring thematic element in the stories created. Sometimes these characters are named and have fully developed personalities of their own. At other times they may be window dressing for the Construct.

Once the nature of the Construct is established, the other players begin to add their influence to the unfolding of the story. The lead player establishes a situation that generates tension or a need for a response from the in-game Personas. It might be as simple and confounding as all the locks in the world have locked and will not open and describing where the Personas find themselves in this situation. The responses of the Personas to the situation are determined by things such as the Accismus, Phobia, or Thelema and the way each Persona perceives the others. The old axiom of "consider the source" is a good measure of a Persona's or Auxiliary Character's reaction to an event when it is contextualized by another's presence. Regardless any impeachment or abdication that triggers changes in the lead, the general premise as understood by that player, of the Construct should be respected for a given game session.

Recurring themes or stories may occur because of the nature of the Etherium. Such recurrences may be viewed as a sense Déjà Vu or treated as recurring dreams/nightmares, premonitions. The significance of these happenings may be explored, or Personas may try to break free of the cycle by radically changing their responses to the events or presences. Sometimes play groups will set up an entire campaign world based on the precepts of recurring themes.

### *Resolving In-game Conflict*

As a story creation game, when there is a moment of in-game conflict, an action from a Persona or Auxiliary

Character that is resisted or opposed by another, then there is a roll of the d12 to determine the tolling of an hour struck. A player does not have to have the lead to call opposition on an action his/her Persona can perceive. A player with the lead, can call opposition on anything, even the results of an auxiliary character they control. The player who controls the Persona connected to that hour determines the outcome of the contested action. So, the player designated by the roll of the die decides what would be best for the story regarding the action and describes the outcome. In *Through the Looking Glass* (ch. 6) examples of play are given to illustrate how this works in context of the game. Sometimes the resistance is as simple as disbelief, sometimes it represents a physical or psychological struggle. Remember, succeeding in an action, or taking the lead of the story in cases of impeachment, does not mean that a player's Persona has won the game. Truly winning at *Etherium* is a group effort, and means creating an enjoyable and exciting story together.

### *Time Share*

Occasionally, a player will have an idea for a story where the dramatic tension should come from a Persona other than the one they usually play. This Persona may represent an uncharacteristic point of view, that the player could normally not enjoy playing, but serves to generate tension for the story. In this case the player should generate another Persona, and temporarily transfer his/her regular in-game Persona's hours to the new Persona. This way the game has more flexibility to tell certain stories without involving a regular Persona, if doing so would be a negative thing for that player. It is important to note that Taboos are unaffected by this change and that the alternate Persona should have Persona Surveys completed as well.

### *Possible Launching Scenarios*

*Strangers in Eden:* Setting up this possible scenario involves a lone member of the Dead having established a paradise within the *Etherium*. Now this sanctum is being visited by members of the Sleeping from different social and cultural backgrounds, who are twisting and polluting the paradise with their own concepts and limitations. Will the Dead Persona turn paradise into hell to drive off the invaders? Will the Dead Persona try to uplift or convert the Sleeping to his/her way of thinking? How will the Sleeping act toward any of this?

*Friends Forever:* A group of childhood friends separated over the years by triumphs and tragedies find themselves sharing a connection with each other in the *Etherium*. What things will be revealed between the friends?

*Hell is for Children:* A spirit of the Dead haunts a juvenile detention center. Now this spirit torments the minds of the Sleeping at the facility. Is it reaching out for help? Is it trying to warn them away from the path they are on? Does it just have a vindictive hatred of the living?

*Soulmates:* A woman, who is comatose, is being visited by her Dead husband's spirit. But, the Doctor who has been trying to bring her out of the coma, has entered into their part of the *Etherium*. How does this effect her husband? Will the Doctor's presence possibly stir her from her coma? Does the Doctor end up being a squeaky third wheel in an idyllic world? How far will the Doctor go to save a patient?

### *Stepping Beyond the Etherium*

Sometimes players will want to explore the waking world that their Personas originated from in the game. This sort of play is very different from the game represented in the *Etherium*. It is suggested to use another game system for these types of adventures. If the players still wish to use the *Etherium* Clock mechanic to resolve Persona actions in the waking world, then before such a game begins they should clearly describe their Personas' abilities in the waking world and record it in a special section of their Character Folios. One argument for taking the system beyond the *Etherium* into the in-game waking world is that Jung proposed that reality was "psychoid". A psychoid reality is one in which the Collective Unconscious shapes the material world. So dramatic effects in the *Etherium*, may have an underlying effect in the waking world and create noticeable changes there. How much of the waking world is just another Construct? And, how strong are the Personas' influences over it?

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Human perception is a fun-house mirror, showing us not what is real, but a skewed view tempered by experience.

## *Through The Looking Glass- Chapter 6*

In this chapter there are examples of above-game and in-game play. It will go through the character creation process. Then, the chapter will give an example of play. It may help to read through this and the rest of the document twice before starting a game, in order to obtain familiarity with the processes of Etherium.

### *Setting Up a Game*

We will now look at a group of players consisting of Rosa, Kenneth, and Lisa. Below the above-game and in-game identities are listed. This is to illustrate the process of Persona creation and setting up the initial game.

Kenneth (above-game)	Fernando Reymundo Reyes (in-game) (sleeping)
Lisa (above-game)	Gretchen Schmidt (in-game) (dead)
Rosa (above-game)	Isabelle "Bella" Petrucci (in-game) (sleeping)

### *Selecting Taboos*

First the group looks to their Taboo sheets. Rosa feels strongly that Child Abuse should be a Taboo. Lisa sees no needs for Taboos, personally, and chooses not to add one. Kenneth finally settles on Clowns. So the Taboos for their game sessions will be Child Abuse and Clowns.

### *Selecting from the Clock*

Next, the group begins work on the Etherium Clock. Kenneth has a birthday on January 11th. Rosa's birthday is on July 4th. And Lisa has a birthday on November 17th. Kenneth will choose an hour first. Kenneth selects 12 because he wants the association of Midnight for his character. Then Rosa chooses 5 and subsequently Lisa chooses 10. The process begins again and the results are shown below.

#### Above-game Player

Kenneth chooses 12, 3, 4, and 6.

Rosa chooses 5, 7, 8, and 9

Lisa chooses 10, 1, 2, and 11

#### In-game Persona

Fernando will take precedence on 3, 4, 6 and 12.

Bella will take precedence on 5, 7, 8, and 9.

Gretchen will take precedence on 1, 2, 10 and 11.

### *Writing the Unwritten Truths*

Now is the point when the players do some Persona specific work that is not openly shared with each other. Lisa thinks about her Persona's Phobia, Accismus, and Thelema. She decides on a Phobia relating to her Persona's death, since she intends on playing one of the Dead. This brings her to explore how Gretchen died, and she decides a fear of bridges will serve as her Phobia. Her Accismus, the thing her Persona will deny wanting, but desires deeply, will be rest. The Thelema for Gretchen will be knowledge.

Rosa is unsure about her Persona's Accismus. She addresses the other two before making her decision. For a Phobia she chooses a fear of bugs. For Bella's Thelema, she chooses freedom. Rosa now comes back to the Accismus, she decides that Bella's Accismus is to be a mother.

Kenneth knows Fernando's unwritten truths. The Phobia is captivity. Fernando's Accismus is love. And finally, his Thelema is control.

### *The Optional Signature*

The Symbolic Signature is an optional characteristic for Persona creation. Lisa decides not to have a Symbolic Signature for Gretchen, but Kenneth and Rosa both decide to use this option. The Persona called Bella will be associated with dew. The will be some sort of occurrence of this whenever Bella is in a scene, it will be up to Rosa to integrate this appropriately in the story. Rosa chose dew, because it represents renewal and rejuvenation. Kenneth wants Fernando to have a Symbolic Signature of a black cat. He feels this goes well with the Midnight association Fernando has in his conception.

### *The Steps of the Persona Surveys*

Each of the three players takes two Surveys. They each fill in the answer to the second question, "Who am I", with the name of the Persona they are creating for the story. Kenneth writes Fernando Reymundo Reyes on two sheets. Lisa writes Gretchen Schmidt on two sheets. And Rosa writes Isabelle "Bella" Petrucci on two sheets. The players now hand one sheet to each of the other players and begin filling the rest of the survey.

Each player approaches the remaining questions in a different order. Rosa feels starting at the bottom and working her way up makes the most sense, Lisa starts at the top and works her way down. Kenneth skips around on each sheet. In the end it any way works. Looking at the results for each of them will be in order from top to bottom for the remaining 4 questions.

Lisa's approach to the question "Who are you?" on the surveys for the other players has her contemplate the reactions she wants for Gretchen from the other Personas. Gretchen is one of the Dead, and thus is drawing on a different series of archetypes than the other Personas in the group. In-game the Persona of Gretchen will appear to Bella as Envy, so that is the answer placed on the survey with Bella's name on it. On the sheet with Fernando's name on it, Lisa writes that Gretchen is perceived as Vanity.

Kenneth wants his in-game Persona, Fernando, perceived as The Father archetype by Rosa's Persona, Bella. So, above-game Kenneth answers Rosa's survey with "The Father" for the first question. Kenneth wants Lisa's in-game Persona, Gretchen, to perceive him as The Shadow. To accomplish this he will answer the question differently on the survey provided by Lisa. In-game Gretchen and Bella have very different impressions of Fernando and his intentions.

Rosa, when dealing with this question for the others, decides she will try to anticipate what her friends will answer on her Persona Surveys. She decides that Bella will appear as The Self to Gretchen and decides that she will be The Hermaphrodite to Fernando. She feels this best suits the Persona of Bella and will work well with her friends.

As a result of this phase of the Persona Survey:

Gretchen interprets Bella to be a reflection of herself, and sees Fernando as a menacing and evil being.  
Bella perceives Gretchen as a jealous and capricious person, and Fernando is a strong father figure.  
Fernando sees Bella as an androgynous being, and interprets Gretchen as a conceited and vain person.

The next question, "What do you taste like?", each player answers the Persona Survey the same for the others.

Fernando tastes and smells like vanilla.  
Gretchen has the taste and aroma of brine.  
Bella tastes and smells of saffron.

"What times does the clock tick?" is the next part of the Persona Surveys. Each player fills in the hours that their Persona has dominion over. Bella has dominion over 5, 7, 8, and 9. Gretchen has control over 1, 2, 10 and 11. And Fernando takes precedence on 3, 4, 6 and 12. This organizes the information from the Etherium Clock and correlates it with the other information for easy reference.

The last question on the Persona Survey gives the most basic truth about the Persona. "Are you Dead or are you Sleeping?", identifies the basic set of precepts that Persona is working from. It helps shed light on the nature of the archetype the Persona appears as. Gretchen is one of the Dead. The other two Personas, Bella and Fernando, are both Sleeping. The Persona Surveys are now returned to the player who issued them and place within the Character Folios. This group is now ready to play their first game of Etherium.

### *A Game of Etherium*

Now to another group of players and one of their evening game sessions. Marti begins in the lead. Her idea for the Construct is draws upon a mid-1990s US for key references with a twist, all locks are locked and will not open. From simple sliding bolt latches to complex electronic locks, they are irrevocably sealed. A door will shatter long before the lock will give. Below is a brief overview at their play group. The players have not shared all the details of their Personas with