

The cover art is a composite illustration. In the foreground, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing silver plate armor, is shown in profile, looking towards the left. In the background, a dark, shadowy creature with large, branching antlers and glowing red eyes stands in a desolate, orange-hued landscape. Several birds are flying in the sky above. The overall tone is dark and atmospheric.

IN NOMINE™

ETHEREAL PLAYER'S GUIDE™

BY R. SEAN BORGSTROM
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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

ETHEREAL PLAYER'S GUIDE

INTRODUCTION	4
<i>ABOUT THE AUTHORS</i>	4
ORIGIN MYTHS	4
BEGINNINGS.....	4
THE ETHEREAL CHARACTER . 9	
<i>ETHEREAL PLAYER CHARACTERS</i>	10
CHARACTER CREATION	10
FORCES AND CHARACTERISTICS.....	10
ELEMENTS AND AFFINITIES.....	10
<i>ETHEREAL INTELLIGENCE</i>	11
RESOURCES.....	11
Attunements.....	11
Skills.....	11
Songs.....	11
Roles.....	11
<i>ETHEREAL CHARACTER CREATION CHECKLIST</i>	12
Servants.....	12
Artifacts.....	12
Discord and Dread.....	13
<i>POINT COST TABLE</i>	13
Vessels.....	14
ESSENCE	14
DAILY REGENERATION.....	14
RITES.....	14
WORSHIP AND BELIEF.....	14
<i>PLAYER CHARACTER IMPOSTORS</i>	15
Ambient Belief.....	15
TETHERS.....	16
<i>ETHEREAL TRIBES</i>	17
<i>THE ESSENCE CACHE</i>	17
DREAM-EATING.....	17
<i>ETHEREAL ANCHORS</i>	18
ETHEREAL DEATH AND DESTRUCTION	18
LOSING FORCES.....	18
<i>ETHEREAL REMNANTS</i>	19
FADING.....	19
ETHEREALS IN THE CORPOREAL REALM	20
CORPOREAL MANIFESTATIONS.....	20
DISTURBANCES.....	20
INTERVENTIONS.....	20
ELEMENTS AND INITIATION	21
ELEMENT DESCRIPTIONS	22
<i>ANATOMY OF AN ETHEREAL</i>	23
Strands.....	23
Image.....	23
Affinities.....	23
The Mind.....	23
ASTRONOMICAL CONCEPTS:	
THE SUN	24
"LOST" SONGS.....	24
<i>THE MIGRATION OF STARS</i>	25
CLASSICAL ELEMENTS: WATER	25
<i>WORDS AND ELEMENTS</i>	26
ZANG WANXIAO'S SALAMANDER RANCH.....	27
EMOTIONS: FEAR	28

<i>THE BEASTS OF PASSION</i>	28
INFORMATION: NEWS	29
<i>THE INVERSE DATA STORE</i>	31
LIFE: BEASTS	31
<i>THE FOREST BEYOND HOPE'S END</i>	32
SENSES: LIGHT	33
<i>THE SUNDERED CASTLE</i>	34
SOCIETY: THE FAMILY	34
<i>MNEMONIC CRETINS</i>	35
STRUCTURES: HOMES	36
<i>FINAL SANCTUARY</i>	36
STRUGGLE: THE HUNT	37
<i>A THOUSAND BODIES DEEP</i>	38
TECH: VEHICLES	39
<i>THE SPIDERSILK FORGE</i>	40
TERRAIN: MOUNTAINS	40
<i>STRAIGHT ROADS</i>	42
WEALTH: JEWELS	42
<i>THE WEALTH OF STAMATIS STAVROS</i>	43
WEATHER: SNOW	44
<i>STRANGE RAINS</i>	44
HOW TO USE THE ELEMENT GROUPS	45
CREATING YOUR OWN	46
EXAMPLES.....	46
<i>A WORKED EXAMPLE</i>	46
INITIATION: AWAKENING THE ELEMENTS	46
INITIATION EFFECTS.....	47
INITIATING BEFORE AND DURING PLAY.....	48
DREAMS.....	48
RESOURCES	49
AFFINITIES	50
<i>AFFINITY LEVELS</i>	50
<i>COMBINING AFFINITIES</i>	51
AFFINITY ROLLS.....	51
SONG AFFILIATIONS.....	51
<i>NEW AND IMPROVED AFFINITIES</i>	51
<i>CREATING YOUR OWN AFFINITIES</i>	52
AFFINITIES LIST.....	52
Air.....	52
Animals.....	52
Artifice.....	53
Books.....	53
Cold.....	54
Deception.....	54
Destruction.....	55
Divination.....	55
Drowning/Suffocation.....	55
Emotions.....	55
Entrancement.....	56
Fertility.....	56
Filth.....	56
Fire.....	57
Glamour.....	57
Hunger.....	57
Light.....	58
Lightning.....	58
Luck.....	58
Minerals.....	59
Motherhood.....	59

Obsurement.....	59
Plants.....	60
Puissance.....	60
Speed.....	60
Terrain.....	61
Water.....	61
Wealth.....	61
Weather.....	61
<i>WEATHER SEVERITY</i>	62
<i>OPTIONAL SKILL BONUSES</i>	62
<i>ELEMENTS AND THEIR AFFINITIES</i>	63
ATTUNEMENTS	63
Ethereal Connection.....	63
Soul Link.....	64
SKILLS	64
AREA KNOWLEDGE (THE MARCHES).....	64
DREAMING.....	65
KNOWLEDGES.....	65
LANGUAGES.....	65
<i>OPTIONAL FREE SKILLS</i>	65
MOVE SILENTLY.....	65
SURVIVAL (THE MARCHES).....	65
TRACKING.....	66
SONGS	66
DRAINING.....	66
EXCHANGE.....	66
SPIRIT SPEECH.....	67
VESSELS	68
<i>STARTING VESSELS</i>	69
ETHEREAL BEINGS	70
<i>ETHEREALS, CELESTIALS, AND HUMANS</i>	71
ELEMENTALS	72
CREATING AN ELEMENTAL.....	72
SAMPLE ELEMENTAL:	
McCORMICK THE GUNSLINGER.....	72
PRIMAL SPIRITS	73
CREATING A PRIMAL SPIRIT.....	73
SAMPLE PRIMAL SPIRIT: AUREM.....	73
SAMPLE PRIMAL SPIRIT:	
THE FINAL EXAM.....	73
<i>GOD-CREATION MADE SIMPLE</i>	74
DREAM SPIRITS	74
FIGMENTS.....	74
AUTONOMOUS DREAM SPIRITS.....	75
GESTALT DREAM SPIRITS.....	75
<i>GENII LOCORUM</i>	75
CREATING A DREAM SPIRIT.....	76
SAMPLE FIGMENT: MANNY.....	76
SAMPLE DREAM SPIRIT: MARYGOLD.....	76
SAMPLE DREAM SPIRIT: SANTA CLAUS.....	77
<i>ETHEREAL TAXONOMY AND INCONSISTENCY</i>	77
<i>IMPOSSIBLE IMAGES - THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE</i>	78
Dragons.....	78
CREATURES OF FAITH AND LEGEND	78
CREATING CREATURES OF MYTH.....	79
CLASSICAL MYTHS AND LEGENDS.....	79
SAMPLE SPIRIT: THE KRACKEN.....	79
"INANIMATE" IMAGES.....	80
MODERN POP ICONS.....	80
SAMPLE SPIRIT: ELVIS.....	80
PAGAN GODS	81
BECOMING A GOD.....	81
<i>IMAGE AND DREAM-SHADES</i>	82
LESSER GODS.....	82
GREATER GODS.....	82
ETHEREAL TETHERS.....	82
CREATING A GOD.....	82
SAMPLE LESSER GODDESS: CERIDWYN.....	83
SAMPLE GREATER GOD: ODIN.....	84
<i>WYRD</i>	84
PANTHEONS.....	85

RULES OF THE ETHEREAL ... 86

ENTERING AND LEAVING

THE MARCHES	88
ENTERING DREAMSCAPES	88
TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM	88
THROUGH A DREAMER	88
ASCENDING AND DESCENDING	89
ETHEREAL TRAVEL	89
NAVIGATION	90
ETHEREAL NAVIGATION MODIFIERS	90
MAPPING THE MARCHES	91
LUCID DREAMWALKING	91
DREAMING AND REM SLEEP	91
ETHEREAL PHYSICS	92
APPEARANCE	92
DREAM-SHAPING	93
DREAM-SHAPING PENALTIES	94
ETHEREAL DISTURBANCES	96
COMBAT	97
OPTIONAL RULES	97
ETHEREAL COMBAT	97
ETHEREAL WEAPONS	98
CELESTIAL COMBAT	98
Losing Celestial Combat in the Marches	99

DOMAINS

THE VALE OF DREAMS	101
BLANDINE'S MARCHES	101
GABRIEL'S FORTRESS	102
BELETH'S MARCHES	102
THE BORDER MARCHES	102
THE FAR MARCHES	102
DOMAINS	103
FIGMENTS IN DOMAINS	103
RAW RESOURCES	104
DOMAIN-ONLY ARTIFACTS	104
DREAMSCAPES	105
MICRO-DOMAINS	105
EXAMPLE OF DOMAIN CREATION	106
DOMAIN FEATURES	106
POSITIVE FEATURES	106
NEGATIVE FEATURES	108
MIXED FEATURES	109
LAB 26	111

RESTLESS DREAMS

DESTINY	113
ETHEREAL RELATIONS	113
ALLIANCES	113
ETHEREAL SOCIETY	113
Gangs	113
THE OLD GODS	114
Tribes	115
Pantheons	115
Domain Affiliations	115
RIVALRY	115
PREDATION	115
PANTHEONIC RELATIONS	116
CELESTIALS IN THE MARCHES	117
CELESTIAL RELATIONS	117
THE ISLAMIC DJINN	118
WHEN TO RUN, WHEN TO DEAL	119
ENCOUNTERING THE HOST	120
DIABOLICAL ENCOUNTERS	121
ETHEREALS AND THE WAR	121
HUMANS IN THE MARCHES	122
ETHEREAL HALFBREEDS	122
LUCID DREAMERS	122
SOLDIERS AND SORCERERS	122
SAINTS	122
UNDEAD	122

ABOUT IN NOMINE

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *In Nomine* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for *In Nomine*. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *GURPS*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *In Nomine* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9"×12" SASE – please use two stamps! – or just visit www.warehouse23.com.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *In Nomine* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more.

Mailing List. Much of the online discussion of *In Nomine* happens on our e-mail list. To join, e-send mail to majordomo@io.com with “subscribe in_nomine-l” in the body.

In Nomine IRC. We also support online roleplaying channels for *In Nomine*. If you'd like to start a MOO or similar Internet environment for gaming *In Nomine*, please check out our policy information at www.sjgames.com/in-nomine/angelmush.html.

The *Ethereal Player's Guide* web page can be found at www.sjgames.com/in-nomine/ethereal/.

DREAM-SHADES	122	ASSUMPTION	133
CORPOREAL RELATIONS	123	HISTORICAL EXAMPLES	133
COLLABORATORS, VICTIMS, AND DUPES	123	CHALLENGING THE GODS	134
PAGANS	123	THE TRIAL	134
BELIEVERS	123	TRANSFIGURATION	135
SORCERERS	123	HOW DO ETHEREALS SPEND THEIR TIME?	135
ETHEREAL LIFE	124	ETHEREAL CAMPAIGNS	136
ETHEREAL MOTIVATIONS	125	CAMPAIGN GROUPS	136
IMAGE	125	REALISTIC CAMPAIGNS	136
THE MEANING OF THE MASK	126	DARK CAMPAIGNS	137
IMAGE FULFILLMENT	128	OPTIONS FOR PANTHEON-LEVEL GAMES	137
IMAGE FULFILLMENT BONUSES	128	CAMPAIGN CONCEPTS	138
IMAGE CONCEPTS	129	HUMOROUS CAMPAIGNS	138
CHANGING YOUR IMAGE	129	MYTHIC CAMPAIGNS	139
HOW FAR CAN YOU GO?	130	INCORPORATING ETHEREALS INTO CELESTIAL CAMPAIGNS (AND VICE VERSA)	139
POWER	130	THE TSAYADIM	140
IMAGE ENHANCEMENT	130	NEAR THE END	142
IMAGE CONSUMPTION	131	INDEX	143
LITTLE ETHEREALS, BIG MINDS	131		
REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS	132		
ASSERTION	132		
SELLING OUT	132		
INITIATION	133		

INTRODUCTION

In the world of *In Nomine*, angels and demons dominate the struggle, casting their shadows upon the Earth – or so they see it. Mundane humans, unaware of the battles around them, go on with their lives . . . and have more influence on the Symphony as a whole. Indeed, mortal dreams and imagination create shadowy beings who owe their lives to the humanity that spawned them. Of course, these dwellers within the ethereal realm of the Marches do not necessarily acknowledge this debt. Some are predators, some are parasites, some are enslaved by sorcerers, some attempt to be symbionts, while others roam the Far Marches and ignore humanity as much as they can.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rebecca Sean Borgstrom (also the author of Hogshead Publishing's *Nobilis*, contributor to White Wolf's *Games of Divinity*, and featured in *Superiors 1: War and Honor*, *Liber Castellorum*, and *Liber Servitorum*) is either 5, 7, 12, 15, 21, or 30 years old; has blonde or red hair, blue or green eyes, and a rapidly changing phenotype; lives in Virginia, California, or Washington; and enjoys activities. She has a computer science doctorate in its original mailing tube in a box somewhere around her home.

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Though less powerful – especially now – than angels and demons, these ethereal spirits are still plentiful. They have their own societies, their own feuds, their own intrigues. Despite the ravages of the Crusade of Purity, despite the sporadic depredations of bored demons, ethereals are still the most plentiful creatures in the Far Marches, and an

ethereal is far more likely to suffer at the hands of a fellow ethereal than he is to encounter a celestial.

Still, those creatures of dream who seek to gain power on Earth *do* run into celestials – for better or worse. They may be pawns of sorcerers, they may be masterminds in their own right. They may even be on the run from their fellows in the Marches!

Whether as player characters amidst celestials, NPC antagonists and sidekicks, or the stars of a Far Marches campaign that never touches Earth, Heaven, or Hell . . . ethereal spirits are here.

The Dream is alive.

ORIGIN MYTHS

(based heavily on a Nigerian folktale)

I dreamed I met a frog named Mainu, as large as a bear, and he opened his mouth wide. I thought he would swallow me, and I panicked, and I said, "Mister Frog, you can't eat me yet."

His mouth closed. "Why not?"

"You haven't introduced yourself properly."

Mainu thought on this, and then he nodded. "My name is Mainu," he said.

*"I know **that**," I said, "but I don't know what you are."*

Mainu's throat sac inflated and deflated. "Then I'll tell you," he said.

BEGINNINGS

At the beginning of time, the Marches held only mists and chaos. The mist was raw potential, the substance of dreams yet to come. Some patches of mist could fit in a teardrop. Others could swallow a thousand worlds. Seas of chaos raged beyond the borders of the mist. They had no boundaries. They reached to infinity. Chaos has retreated, but remains unchartable even to this day.

Then a number of spirits descended into the Marches from somewhere else and began sweeping it into shape. They pushed some of the mist patches together to make a space for future spirits to grow. They surrounded that



So Imagination began making masks. He made the mask of “the mad sheep who kills God,” and the mask of “the cave painter with tentacles instead of legs,” and many more. He gave each spirit a mask.

The Origin of Affinities and Domains

In the early days, Doshā would sneak out of the Chaos at the edges of the world to prey upon the primal spirits. So would other creatures of his kind, built from the original impurities in the world. The primal spirits could not defend themselves from such terrible monsters. They began to wail and cry to Woyengi about the horrors devouring them.

Woyengi, being very busy, sent Hypothesis to answer their plaints. “We have no power to defend ourselves!” the spirits told him. “Nor do we have homes in which to hide.”

“What kind of homes would you like?” asked Hypothesis reasonably.

The spirits conferred. “Impregnable fortresses,” they answered, “with every conceivable amenity.”

“I shall see what I can do,” Hypothesis said, and went out into Chaos. He found the creature known as Kshetrashuddhi and battled it to its death. Then he dragged it into the Marches and scattered its scales. Where a scale landed, it created a world. These worlds resembled dreamscapes without dreamers. Their natures varied. “These Domains are not impregnable,” Hypothesis said, “nor do they have every conceivable amenity. However, they are a rather fine creation. By studying them, you may learn how to build your own.”

The spirits spoke among themselves, and chose not to complain.

“Now,” Hypothesis said, “what kind of power would you like?”

The spirits conferred. “We would like absolute power over everything in the Marches.”

Hypothesis laughed. “Even Woyengi does not have that! But I shall see what I can do.” He reached into Kshetrashuddhi’s corpse and pulled out its heart. Crushing it in his hand, he let its blood flow over the spirits. “This blood shall activate the power that naturally lies within you. The spirits with stormy dispositions shall gain power over Storms. The fickle and oceanic will acquire power over the Sea. In like manner, every spirit shall receive some measure of power.”

The spirits spoke among themselves, and chose not to complain. Hypothesis returned to Woyengi. The monsters of Chaos invaded the Marches less frequently, fearing the defenses of the Domains and the spirits’ new powers. Still, they did not cease their wickedness for some time to come.

Then Mainu told me, “And that’s what I am. I am a spirit. I am the elements of dream. I am the power of hunger. I am the mask of a frog.”

He opened his mouth wide.

“Wait!” I said. “You cannot eat me yet.”

Mainu closed his mouth. “Honestly,” he said, disapprovingly, and then shrugged his great frog shoulders. “Why not?”

“A person should know why he’s going to die.”

The pads on Mainu’s great frog foot pressed against the ground. “Then I’ll tell you,” he said.

SERENA

One day, Woyengi blew a spirit out of Atavus' stomach who chose to be made out of the elements of Anger and the Sun. Myth put a thread of each of those elements in her soul, filling her up with rage and glory. Imagination looked through all the human dreams to find a dream with those elements in it. He found one in a human dreaming about the "glorious Lady Serena, savior of France." So he made a mask of Lady Serena for the spirit, and she stepped into the world.

Lady Serena found a place as the hero of the Domain named Shunyata. The anger in her soul pushed her to perform great deeds, and soon she became famous for miles around. However, as the years went by, she felt a growing discontent. Even the greatest accomplishment did not cause her inner rage to subside, and she was quickly running out of great deeds to do.

"I will go back to Woyengi," she said, "and get myself new elements for my soul." So she shouldered her pack and set out for Woyengi's Table, deep in the mist.

Serena Challenges a God

Serena trudged through the Marches until she came to a large forest. In the forest lived Isembi, its god and king. In the distance, she could hear the rage of chaos against the Utgard stones. Unafraid, she picked her way through the trees, until Isembi himself came out to confront her.

"You must be the famous Lady Serena of Shunyata. Is that not so?" he asked.

Serena was startled that he knew her name, but she answered with aplomb. "In all the Marches, there is only one Lady Serena, and I am she."

"Then your manners are lacking!" Isembi snapped. "My whole Domain is abuzz with your exploits. Courtesy demands that you pay me a visit and join me for a meal, if you pass through my Domain."

Serena could hardly refuse the invitation! So she joined Isembi for dinner, and regaled him with stories from her life. After enjoying his hospitality, however, she insisted that she had to return to the road.

"Where are you going?" Isembi asked.

"I go to Woyengi," Serena answered, "for I wish to change my nature."

"Out of the question!" roared Isembi. "Do you not know that no one sees Woyengi after their birth? The notion is madness; I insist that you turn back."

Serena basked in his anger, as an Anger spirit ought. Yet his attempt to tell her what to do awakened her own temper. "You do not have the power to turn me from my journey; and if you think you do, I demand you test your powers against mine!"

"Has no one told you of my might?" Isembi cried. "I am Isembi the invincible, king, god, and lord of the forest! How dare you challenge me like this?"

"It does not matter how I dare," Serena answered. "You have been challenged, and cannot refuse."

So Isembi and Serena went out into the forest and made a circle for their duel. (The customs for challenging gods were more primitive than they are now.) Isembi graciously yielded the first attack to Serena, but she would have none of it. "You are older and wiser, Isembi. It is only fitting that you should go first."

So Isembi gathered his might and struck! The trees bent down all around Serena, and each grabbed one of her limbs. Yank! One pulled off her right arm! One pulled off her left arm! One pulled off each leg, and one pulled off her head! One even ripped her heart right out of her chest. But Serena wasn't finished yet. Her head opened its mouth and began to sing, and straightaway, all her body parts pulled back together, snapping off the branches that tried to resist.

"Try again, great King! Only this time," Serena said, "do not hold back any of your power."

"That was the extent of my powers," Isembi answered grumpily. "You may employ your own, if you have any abilities worth the mentioning."

So Serena sang again, and danced about Isembi, and in an instant all of Isembi's magic left his body and flew into hers. Isembi straightaway fell dead, and Serena walked on.

Serena Drives Back Chaos

At the edge of the forest, Serena encountered the Utgard stones, and beyond them, Chaos. This puzzled her, for she knew that Woyengi lived in the Marches – but then she saw a great bridge that arched over the Chaos sea. It was so long that it went right past the end of infinity and back into the Marches that Serena knew! "Woyengi must be on the other side," Serena said, and set off across the bridge.

When she had just gone halfway across the bridge, Akosmia, who rules over Chaos, roared up from the sea to confront her. "You must be the famous Lady Serena of Shunyata," he cried. "Is this not so?"

Serena did not let her trepidation show, but rather answered bluffly. "In all the Marches, there is but one Lady Serena, and I am she."

"How dare you walk above my home and never pay me a visit?" Akosmia asked. "All of Chaos is abuzz with talk about you, except for those parts which are not. Courtesy demands that you join me for dinner."

Serena, as a spirit of the Sun, believed very much in courtesy. So she joined Akosmia for dinner. It was not long, however, before she felt the urge to return to the road.

“Where are you going?” Akosmia asked.

“I go to Woyengi,” Serena answered, “for I wish to change my nature.”

“Out of the question!” roared Akosmia. “Do you not know that no one sees Woyengi after their birth? The notion is madness; I insist that you turn back.”

Serena basked in his anger, as an Anger spirit ought. Yet his attempt to tell her what to do awakened her own temper. “You do not have the power to turn me from my journey; and if you think you do, I demand you test your powers against mine!”

Akosmia, once challenged, could not refuse, and soon the two of them stood in a dueling circle on the chaotic sea. “You are older and wiser,” Serena said courteously, “so it is only right that you go first.”

Akosmia spread his arms wide. The sea of chaos that he ruled rose up and swallowed Serena. Time around her stuttered and shifted. Geography twisted. The world, strange as it was in the Farthest Marches (and Beyond), became stranger. Now, Akosmia thought that before Serena could so much as blink, she would lose her connection to time and space forever. But instead, Serena called up her clay mask and cried out to all Chaos, “I am not just any spirit, but the Lady Serena from Aicelina’s dream.” So great was her identification with her mask that the sea could not shake Serena from her proper time or place. Slowly, the chaos receded.

“Try again, great King! Only this time,” Serena said, “do not hold back any of your power.”

“That was the extent of my powers,” Akosmia answered glumly. “You may employ your own, if you have any abilities worth the mentioning.”

So Serena took out her sword and systematically drew a pattern around Akosmia; and each time she added a line, the entropy around Akosmia decreased, until he dropped dead from the sheer order of it all. All of Akosmia’s magic left his body and flew into Serena’s, and Serena walked on.

Sahajaklesha and Dosha

Serena had almost reached the end of the bridge when Dosha lifted his head from the chaos. “You must be the famous Lady Serena of Shunyata,” he murmured, voice low. “Is that not so?”

“In all the Marches,” Serena answered, “there is but one Serena, and I am she.”

“Then I insist that you join me for dinner,” Dosha answered. “For courtesy’s sake, if nothing else.”

Serena looked down at Dosha’s great green shape and pointed out, “I have already eaten twice upon this journey, when spirits do not need to eat at all. Perhaps I could dine with you on the way back.”

Dosha’s head rose higher. “Where are you going in such a hurry, then?”

“I go to see Woyengi,” Serena answered, “for I wish to change my nature.”

Dosha sighed. “I feared as much. In all honesty, I cannot permit anyone to cross this bridge in search of Woyengi, for they might see me from the bridge, as they pass, and inform her of my location. Make your peace with the universe and prepare to be eaten.”

“I did not see you from the bridge until you raised your head!” Serena protested.

“The matter has since become academic.”

“You cannot eat me without facing me in challenge!” Serena offered.

“You could walk for a year and not draw a dueling circle around me,” Dosha answered. “The notion is impractical.”

Serena gave this a moment’s thought, and then ran as fast as she could down the length of the bridge. Dosha roared along after her, casting up great waves of Chaos higher than the mortal stars. But before he could eat her, the bridge ended – Serena had run so fast that they reached Woyengi before Dosha could get his neck out of the sea!


Woyengi raised a hand to pluck Dosha from the Chaos. Dosha swam quickly back out into the sea. Her hand followed him. Dosha roared into the Marches. Woyengi’s hand followed him. Dosha looked for a hiding place, but could only find one. Knowing that Woyengi would not harm her children, he dove right into a spirit’s eyes!

Now, in Dosha’s hurry to escape Woyengi, he scraped off many of his scales on the Utgard stones. Then in the Marches he scraped off much of his flesh. So by the time he reached his hiding place, there was nothing left of him but *Sahajaklesha* – the essence of caution and fear. That essence still haunts the spirits of the Marches. You can see it in their eyes! So Woyengi wisely refused Serena a second chance as a spirit. Instead, she stripped away Serena’s mask and made her *Raga* – the essence of desire and ambition. She shouts in every spirit’s heart, demanding power and greatness. But though the lady Raga tries her best, the monster Sahajaklesha holds most spirits back from dangerous excesses of glory. For that reason, few heroes since have ever lived up to the boldness of Serena of Shunyata.

Then Mainu told me, “And that’s why I will eat you. The Raga in me demands the power in your flesh, and the Sahajaklesha in me fears to be weak.”

“But is the story true?” I said, mourning brave Serena.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” Mainu said. He took two bites and I woke up screaming.



space with the Utgard stones, to keep the chaos at bay. They swept the tiny impurities in the mists into neat little piles. These were both the first life and the first terrain of the Marches. The chiefs of these spirits were Dream, Imagination, Myth, and Hypothesis. Each had a dozen lieutenants. When they finished their task, all of them left as suddenly as they came.

The Origins of Spirits

The mists drew back to reveal a large table and an equally large chair. A knife as sharp as an arctic wind lay on the table. Thunder boomed. Lightning cut through the mist. Woyengi, the mother of dreams, appeared. She sat in the chair and took the knife from the table. With one hand, she fished Dosha out of the sea of Chaos.

Woyengi's servant, Imagination, had created Dosha by sweeping together the various impurities found in his region of the Marches. Dosha was a serpentine creature, with whiskers as long as his body, and he was bad to the bone. He could fit a mountain in his mouth, but Woyengi held him as you or I might hold a worm, and she lifted the knife to his flesh.

"Please," Dosha said, dangling from her hand, "that knife looks very dangerous, and I want very much to live."

"I need your stomach for my work," Woyengi answered. "Do not think of your sacrifice as an ending. Rather, consider it a great honor that comes only once in a lifetime."

"I humbly decline the honor," said Dosha, and bit Woyengi on the finger. This startled her so much that she dropped him, and like a worm he wriggled away.

Woyengi resigned herself to this turn of events. She cut the wound off her finger with her knife. She looked in the sea of Chaos for another victim. Finding a creature named Atavus, she plucked him forth and neatly cut away his stomach. She sealed Atavus' stomach at one end, inflated it with her own divine breath, and then squeezed it gently. Spirits flew out of the open end of Atavus' stomach. At first, since all of them came from the same breath, all of them were exactly alike.

The Origin of Elemental Strands and Dreamscapes

Woyengi did not want all of the spirits to be exactly alike. She called her four chiefs to her side. "Dream," she said, "the first animals walk the Earth. When they sleep, I want you to create small worlds for them in the Marches, based upon the patterns of their minds."

Dream went and did this thing. He created the first dreamscapes.

"Myth," Woyengi said, "The worlds of Dream are colorful, while my spirits are bland. Distill out the color of the dreams so that I can flavor the spirits with them."

Myth went to work. He took all the dreams of water and he fished out a long string of waterness from each – just like pulling out one of a tapestry's threads! Then he braided all these threads together, so that he had a long rope of Water-dream. He did the same thing with Anger, and Thunder, and the Mountains, and the Moon. Soon he had linked all the animal dreams together with strands of dream, and he brought the free end of each rope to Woyengi.

One by one, Woyengi asked each spirit, "Choose for yourself what kind of spirit you want to be." Each spirit chose one of the strands of dream. Myth untangled a thread from that strand and ran it right through the spirit's heart! If the spirit chose Water, its whole body filled up with waterness. If it chose the Mountains, it became full of mountainness. Even the littlest spirit could be frightening if Myth spliced it with a bit of Fear. That's how primal spirits came to be.

The Origin of Masks

Much, much later, humans started to dream. Now, animal dreams are simple, but human dreams are complex. Woyengi's chief, Myth, came to her early on and said, "If I have to make a rope out of every different image in a human dream, I'll get gray hairs on my head before I'm even a billion years old. That's how complicated it would be."

Woyengi finished her work for the day and then answered him. "Look at this dream over here," she said. "It's about a mad sheep who kills the greatest god. It thereby dooms the world. How many dreams feature sheep who kill gods?"

"Just the one," Myth admitted.

Woyengi said, "Then do not make a rope for 'god-killing sheep.' Pull out the thread of Beasts in the sheep, and the thread of Anger, and the thread of Greatness. And if a spirit wants to be made of the God-Killing Sheep idea, put bits of all three ropes inside its soul."

"If we make spirits out of more than one strand," Myth asked, "won't they be terribly confused?"

Woyengi thought on that, and then turned to her chief, Imagination. "Whenever a spirit chooses to be made from human dreams or stories, I want you to create a clay mask for him. The clay mask will show his role in the dream – like the sheep. Then, if the spirit becomes confused about what he is, because he has so many elemental strands in his soul, he can put on the mask and pretend that *that's* what he really is."

INDEX

Acidic domain feature, 108.
Aesir, 114, 116.
Affinities, 10, 23, 50, 95; *and elements*, 63; *divine*, 82; *new*, 52.
Air affinity, 52.
Alliances, 113.
Anchors, 17.
Andrealphus, 119.
Angels in the Marches, 120.
Animals affinity, 52.
Area Knowledge (Marches) skill, 64.
Armor, 104.
Artifacts, 12, 104.
Artifice affinity, 53.
Asmodeus, 119.
Aspected Domain domain feature, 106.
Assertion, 132.
Assumption, 17, 81, 133.
Astronomical Concept elements, 24.
Attunements, 11, 63, 82.
August Prosperity Collective, 114, 116.
Aurem, 73.
Aztecs, 114, 116.
Baal, 119.
Beasts element, 31.
Beasts of Passion, 28.
Beleth, 12, 102, 119.
Belial, 119.
Believers, 123.
Bilocational domain feature, 109.
Blandine, 101, 117.
Bonded Mastery domain feature, 109.
Books affinity, 53.
Border Marches, 102.
Campaigns, 136-141.
Celestials, 117-121, 139.
Ceridwen, 83.
Challenging a god, 134.
Characters, *creation*, 10; *creation checklist*, 12; *player*, 10; *point cost table*, 13.
Cherubim, 141.
Classical Element elements, 25.
Cold affinity, 54.
Combat, 97-99, *celestial*, 17; *see also Death*.
Common Tongue domain feature, 106.
Computers element, 40.
Corporeal realm, 20, 123.



David, 117.
Death elements, 46.
Death, 18.
Deceitful domain feature, 107.
Deception affinity, 54.
Defiance, 134.
Demons in the Marches, 121.
Destiny, 113.
Destruction affinity, 55.
Discord, 13; *vessel*, 69.
Disturbances, 20, 96.
Divination affinity, 55.
Djinn, 118.
Domain Artifact domain feature, 107.
Domains, 93, 103-111, *creating*, 82, 106; *features*, 106-111.
Dominance, 134.
Dominic, 46, 117.
Doomed domain feature, 108.
Dragons, 78.
Draining, Song of, 66.
Dreads, 13, 48; *see also individual Affinity listings*.
Dream Magnet domain feature, 107.
Dream spirits, 74.
Dream-Caul domain feature, 108.
Dream-Shades, 122.
Dream-Shaping, 91, 93-95.
Dream-eating, 17.
Dreaming, 91; *skill*, 65.
Dreamscapes, 88, 105.
Dreamtime spirits, 114, 116.
Dreamwalking, 91.
Drowning/suffocation affinity, 55.
Elementals, 72.
Elements, 10, 22, 23; *and affinities*, 63.
Eli, 117.
Elvis, 15, 16, 17, 80.
Emotion elements, 28.
Emotions affinity, 55.
Entering and leaving the Marches, 88.
Entrancement affinity, 56.
Essence, 13, 14; *cache*, 17.
Ethereal Connection attunement, 63.
Ethereal form, 92.
Exchange, Song of, 66.
Fading, 19.
Faerie, 114, 116.
Family element, 34.

Far Marches, 102.
Fear element, 28.
Fertility affinity, 56.
Fierce Figments domain feature, 107.
Figments, 10, 103.
Filth affinity, 56.
Final Exam, The, 73.
Final Sanctuary, 36.
Fire affinity, 57.
Fire element, 25.
Forces, 10; *losing*, 18.
Forest Beyond Hope's End, 32.



Gabriel, 102, 118.
Gangs, 113.
Genii locorum, 75.
Ghost element, 46.
Glamour affinity, 57.
Gods, 11, 19, 81; *creating*, 74.
Greek gods, *see Olympians*.
Greys, 16.
Haagenti, 119.
Halfbreeds, 122.
Healall domain feature, 107.
Heliopolitans, 114, 116.
Hidden domain feature, 111.
Hindu gods, 114, 116.
Hitchhikers, 88.
Homes element, 36.
Hostile domain feature, 109.
Humans in the Marches, 122.
Humor, 138.
Hunger affinity, 57.
Hunt element, 37.
Ill Words attunement, 85.
Images, 23; *changing*, 129; *consumption*, 131; *enhancement*, 130, 135; *fulfillment*, 128; *inanimate*, 80, 125-129, 130.
Impostors, 15.
Incomplete Mastery domain feature, 109.
Infinite domain feature, 108.
Information elements, 29.



Initiation, 46-48.
 Intelligence, 11.
 Interventions, 20.
 Intrusive Domain domain feature, 108.
 Intrusive Domain: Discord domain feature, 109.
 Inverse Data Store, 31.
 Janus, 118.
 Jean, 118.
 Jewels element, 42.
 Jordi, 118.
 Kami, *see August Prosperity Collective*.
 Khalid, 118.
 Knowledge skills, 65.
 Kobal, 119.
 Kraken, 79.
 Kronos, 119.
 Lab 26, 111.
 Language skills, 65.
 Laurence, 118.
 Life elements, 31.
 Light affinity, 58.
 Light element, 33.
 Lightning affinity, 58.
 Lilith, 120.
 Limbo, 17.
 Living Domain domain feature, 109.
 Loas, 114, 116.
 Lucid dreamers, 122.
 Luck affinity, 58.



Malakim, 141.
 Malleable domain feature, 108.
 Malphas, 120.
 Manifestations, *corporeal*, 20.
 Manny, 76.
 Marc, 118.
 Marygold, 76.
 Mask, *see Images*.

McCormick the Gunslinger, 72.
 Michael, 118.
 Micro-domains, 12, 71, 101, 105.
 Minerals affinity, 59.
 Mnemonic cretins, 35.
 Mobile domain feature, 108.
 Motherhood affinity, 59.
 Mountain element, 40.
 Move Silently skill, 65.
 Multiple Mastery domain feature, 110.
 Myths, 79.
 Native American spirits, 114, 116.
 Navigation, 90.
 News element, 29.
 Novalis, 118.
 Nybbas, 120.
 Oasis domain feature, 109.
 Obscurement affinity, 59.
 Odin, 84.
 Olympians, 114, 116, 133.
 One-Eye attunement, 85.
 Ordeal, 134.
 Origin myths, 3.
 Outcasts, 12.
 Pagans, 123.
 Pantheons, 85, 115, 137.
 Places, 95; *see also Domains*.
 Plants affinity, 60.
 Plants element, 32.
 Player characters, 10.
 Pop icons, 80.
 Power, 130.
 Predation, 115.
 Primal Force domain feature, 110.
 Primal spirits, 73.
 Puissance affinity, 60.
 Quirky domain feature, 111.
 REM sleep, 91.
 Ravens, 87.
 Reenactment, 134.
 Regenerates domain feature, 111.
 Remnants, 19.
 Renegades, 12.
 Resources, 11, 104.
 Ripples attunement, 141.
 Rites, 14, 82.
 Rivalry, 115.
 Roles, 11.
 Roman gods, 133.
 Saints, 122.
 Salamanders, 25.
 Saminga, 120.
 Santa Claus, 15, 71, 77.
 Sense elements, 33.
 Seraphim, 140.
 Serendipitous domain feature, 111.
 Servants, 12.



Skills, 11, 64; *bonuses for affinities*, 62.
 Snow element, 44.
 Society elements, 34.
 Society, 113.
 Songs, 11, 51, 66-67, 95; *lost*, 24.
 Sorcerers, 122, 123.
 Soul Link attunement, 64.
 Speed affinity, 60.
 Spidersilk Forge, 40.
 Spirit Speech, Song of, 67.
 Stamatias Stavros, 43.
 Sticky domain feature, 111.
 Straight Roads, 42.
 Strands, 22; *see also Elements*.
 Strange rains, 44.
 Structure elements, 36.
 Struggle elements, 37.
 Sun element, 24.
 Sundered Castle, 34.
 Superiors, 11, 117-120.
 Survival (Marches) skill, 65.
 Taxonomy, 77.
 Tech elements, 39.
 Terrain affinity, 61.
 Terrain elements, 40.
 Tethers, 16, 82, 89, 101-102.
 Time Effects domain feature, 111.
 Tracking skill, 65.
 Transcendental domain feature, 111.
 Transfiguration, 81, 134.
 Trauma, 17.
 Travel, 89.
 Trial, 134.
 Tribes, 16, 115.
 Tsayadim, 140, 142.
 Unbound domain feature, 109.
 Undead, 122.
 Vale of Dreams, 89, 101.
 Valefor, 120.
 Vapula, 120.
 Vehicles element, 39.
 Vessels, 14, 68; *discord*, 69; *from Superiors*, 69.
 Visible Anchors domain feature, 108.
 War, the, 121.
 Water affinity, 61.
 Water element, 25.
 Wealth affinity, 61.
 Wealth elements, 42.
 Weather affinity, 61.
 Weather elements, 44.
 Words, 71.
 Worship, 14-15.
 Wyrld, 84.
 Young domain feature, 111.
 Yves, 71, 119.