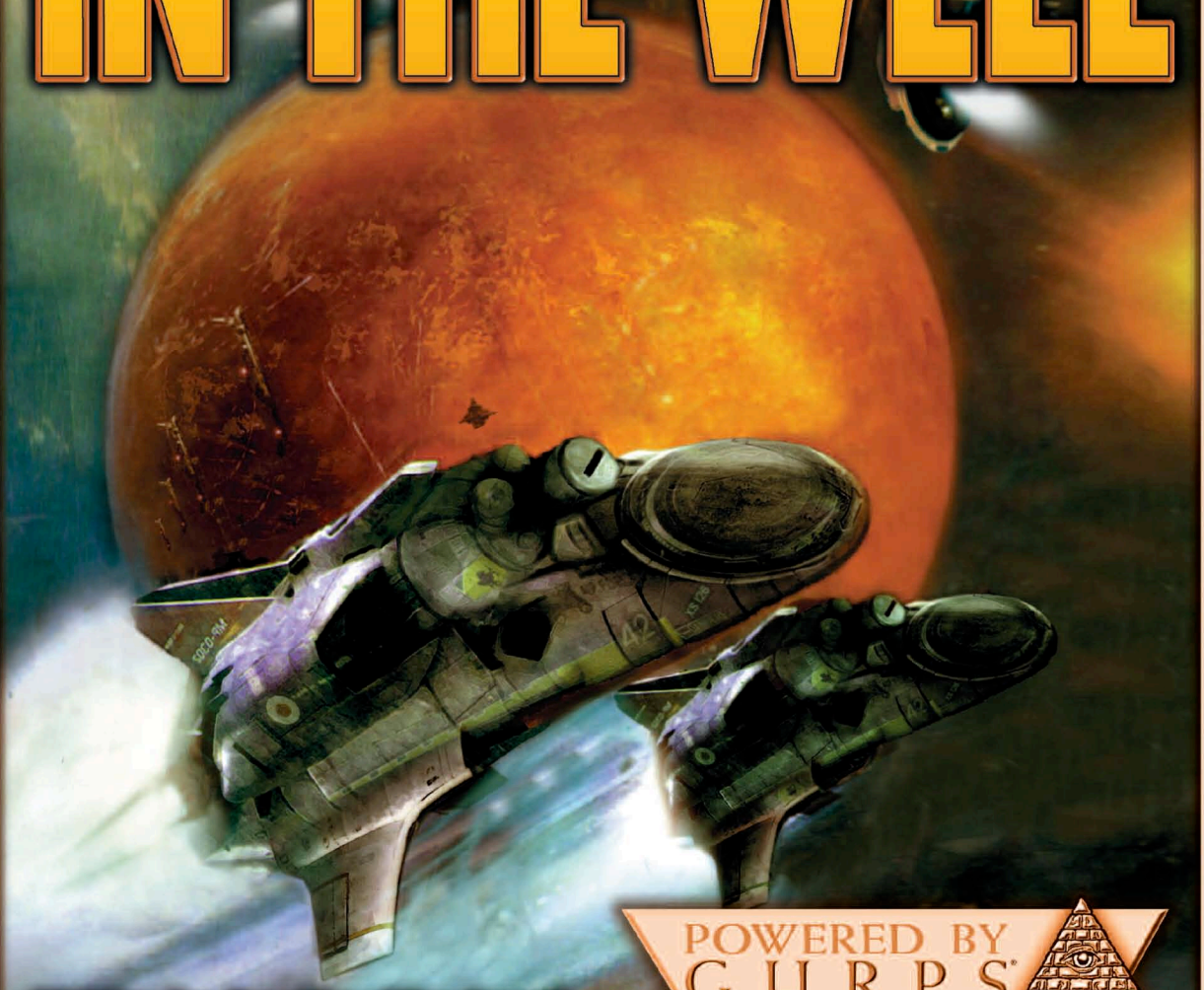


# TRANSHUMAN SPACE

# IN THE WELL™



Written by Jonathan Woodward

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*Transhuman Space* designed by David Pulver



STEVE JACKSON GAMES  
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# TRANSHUMAN<sup>TM</sup> SPACE

## IN THE WELL<sup>TM</sup>

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# INTRODUCTION



*“I’m cycling the door. There, it’s open. It’s a beautiful day – the sky is a marvelous burnt pink. I’m stepping onto the ‘porch’ now. Everything looks in order. I’m turning around to check the lander – yes, it looks fine.*

*“I’m stepping off the porch now . . .”*

**CRUNCH.**

*“My, that was loud! Oh . . . that wasn’t what I planned on saying. Ha! I suppose it works: ‘One loud step for mankind.’ Ha!*

*“As a representative of my family, the People’s Republic of China, and the United Nations, I claim this planet for humanity. May we all work together for peace and understanding on Mars.”*

The inner solar system. Four planets huddle around the Sun. Each is radically different from the others. One is humanity’s home, rich in life. One is an airless

rock, dense and seared. One is covered in choking clouds. One is a cold, dry desert.

***Transhuman Space: In The Well*** covers the inner solar system, excluding Earth and Luna. This is the part of the System where travel times are short and solar energy is abundant. Nations, corporations, and individuals thrive here, trading, digging, discovering, and fighting.

The main focus is on Mars, the most heavily populated planet besides Earth itself. Mars is dominated by the Chinese, who were the first to land, and the first to colonize in force. Second place is held – barely – by the United States, who lost the Mars race thanks to computer error, and never fully recovered. A hundred other nations and organizations have footholds on the Red Planet, and it’s considered by many to be the most exciting place in the System.

Venus and Mercury are also discussed here. Both are lightly populated, but more explorers and opportunists arrive every day. Mercury is rich in metal and energy, and is home to heavy industry at the cutting edge. Venus is good for nothing but hiding and research – but that’s changing, as solar shades move into orbit and terraforming begins. Finally, a thousand asteroids and habitats circle the sun inside the orbit of Mars.

In addition to being a gazetteer of the inner solar system, *In The Well* includes a dozen new racial packages for transhumans, hardware from rock pitons to armored personnel carriers to cargo zeppelins, strange gengineered beasts, and adventure seeds. This is the heart of the solar system. Enjoy.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Woodward is a part-time freelance writer, and full-time computer professional. He is the author of *GURPS Ogre* and co-author of several books for White Wolf Publishing’s *Trinity* science-fiction roleplaying game. In addition to roleplaying, he is a ruthless comic-book annotator and noted Legophile. He is not currently a transhuman, but plans are afoot. He lives in Massachusetts.

## ABOUT TRANSHUMAN SPACE

The *Transhuman Space* series presents a unique hard-science and high-biotech universe to roleplay in. Set in the solar system in the year 2100, it is a setting rich in adventure, mystery, and the exploration of the possibilities of existence. The core book is *Transhuman Space*, written by the line’s creator, David Pulver. It presents an overview of the solar system of 2100. *Transhuman Space: In The Well* is the sixth book in the series. Steve Jackson Games is committed to extensive support of the *Transhuman Space* setting; future titles will detail the Deep Beyond outside Mars orbit, the varied societies of the homeworld itself, and much more.

## ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* 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/](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/)). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. 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 *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

*New supplements and adventures.* *GURPS* 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”x12” SASE – please use two stamps! – or just visit [www.warehouse23.com](http://www.warehouse23.com).

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*GURPSnet.* This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, e-mail [major-domo@io.com](mailto:major-domo@io.com) with “subscribe GURPSnet-L” in the body, or point your web browser to [gurpsnet.sjgames.com](http://gurpsnet.sjgames.com).

The *Transhuman Space: In The Well* web page is [www.sjgames.com/transhuman/inthewell/](http://www.sjgames.com/transhuman/inthewell/).

### Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references beginning with BIO indicate *GURPS Bio-Tech*, those beginning with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*, those beginning with S refer to *GURPS Space, Third Edition*, those beginning with TS refer to *Transhuman Space*, and those beginning with VXi refer to *GURPS Vehicles Expansion I*. The abbreviation for *this* book is ITW. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list: [www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html).

# THE ELEVATOR

The elevator is an open framework whose supporting cables are woven threads of graphite and diamond over 10,000 miles long. It masses millions of tons, constructed from material mined from Deimos. It is held in place by a trick of orbital dynamics; its center of mass is in areo-synchronous orbit over Pavonis Mons, and it is kept vertical by tidal forces. The bottom “anchor” is a combination of magnetic and physical clamps designed to prevent minor oscillations (if there were a *major* oscillation, nothing humans are capable of building would hold it in place). The anchor is deep underground, so that the huge elevator cars can stop above it and still be near ground level. Tours of the anchor are available, though security is reasonably tight. Even though the cables are very difficult to damage, an interruption in the flow of commerce up and down the elevator would be staggeringly costly.

The Elevator itself is encrusted with power lines, emergency gear, station-keeping thrusters, defensive weaponry, and the “up” and “down” tracks that the cars actually run on. The elevator cars are buildings in their own right, running on magnetic tracks on the inside of the framework. They range from five-man maintenance cars, to bulky cargo containers, to 10-story luxury hotels. The trip up or down takes two days, and is mostly in microgravity. When a car arrives at the anchor, it is separated from the vertical track, and moved away on conventional horizontal tracks to be unloaded. It is then reloaded and moved to the “up” track for departure. Typical prices are \$1,000 per person or \$2,000 per ton of cargo, though these values can be as much as triple depending on quality of accommodations or special handling requirements for cargo (e.g., “Do Not Expose to Vacuum”).

## DEIMOS

Deimos is the upper elevator anchor, constituting the “high port” for New Shanghai. It is almost entirely dedicated to the transfer of people and cargo from spacecraft to elevator cars, and amenities are few. Deimos is much more massive than the elevator cable, so it is nearly in areosynchronous orbit.



## CUTTING THE CABLES

Many violent organizations want to sever the Elevator. This would dramatically increase the cost of importing to or exporting from Mars, and that’s a step towards a lot of different ends (see *Free Mars*, p. 55). The actual cut would probably require a nuke or an esoteric ultra-tech solution (e.g., a bacterium that can survive in vacuum and eat diamond). *Where* one severs the cables makes a big difference.

At ground level, the Elevator is held in place mostly by orbital dynamics. Vaporizing the anchor would not cause the Elevator to fly up into the sky, though it would probably drift away from the anchor-point. It would be a simple engineering matter to temporarily snag the Elevator and rebuild the anchor. To achieve anything lasting, the Elevator would have to be moved away while the anchor was gone. This would involve sabotaging the station-keeping thrusters, or somehow moving Deimos itself.

At the other end, severing the cables at Deimos would cause the Elevator to fall. Due to its open structure, most of it would burn up in the atmosphere. The few miles closest to the ground would not, and parts of New Shanghai and its suburbs to the east would be badly damaged. Deimos would assume an elliptical orbit, intersecting its pre-separation orbit once per day. Cutting it at points in between Deimos and the surface would produce a compromise – the lower section would fall; the upper section would hang there and go slightly out of orbit.



### *Han Chinese Alpha Upgrade Variant* 25 or 27 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** HT +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Attractive [5]; Disease Resistant [5]; Longevity [5]. *Women only:* Easy Childbirth [1]; Light Menses [1].

**Features:** Taboo Traits (Genetic Defects, Mental Instability).

**Date:** 2055. **Cost:** \$40,000.

The Han Chinese are the most common ethnic group in China, and among the upgraded on Mars, this is the most common genotype. It's also used as a baseline for many types of bioroid and parahuman. Licensed from Biotech Euphrates by Xiao Chu, this specific variant has a few additions for women, but lacks the heightened dexterity of the original Alpha upgrade (p. TS115).

Han Alphas generally do not regard themselves as a separate society. They're common enough on Mars that they think of themselves as "Martian" first, "Chinese" second, and "Alpha-Series" third or lower.

### *Mars Adapt ("Red Bear")* 77 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** HT +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Andraste biomod (p. 97) [14]; Decreased Life Support (Requires less water) [10]; Extra Fatigue +3 [9]; Nictating Membrane 1 [10]; Temperature Tolerance 4 [4]; Toughness (DR 2) [25].

**Disadvantages:** Overweight [-5].

**Features:** Taboo Traits (Genetic Defects). Home gravity of 0.38 G.

**Date:** 2082. **Cost:** \$156,000.

These parahuman gene sequences are available from Colonial Genetics and Xiao Chu. An "adapt" is suited to walking around Mars as if it were temperate Earth; they can breathe the air, enjoy the cold, survive for long periods without water, and aren't seriously inconvenienced by most sandstorms. They have tougher skin, thicker body hair, and are noticeably padded with fat. They are occasionally known by the nickname "red bears."

Adapts are common, making up some 10% of the population. They have a definite cultural identity, seeing Mars as *their* home. Most other inhabitants, in their eyes, are guests (though usually welcome ones). Many are, or claim to be, preservationists. Almost all have a genuine love for Mars, and are happiest out enjoying its beauty.

The Temperature Tolerance advantage here is biased toward cold. The upper limit is 70°; the lower limit is 15 - (HT×4)° (-29° for someone with HT 11).

### *Zhiminde* 21 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST-1 [-10]; HT +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Andraste biomod (p. 97) [14]; Disease-Resistant [5]; Extra Fatigue +1 [2].

**Features:** Altered Sex Ratio (2:1 female-male births); Taboo Traits (Genetic Defects, Mental Instability, Unattractive). Home gravity of 0.38 G.

**Date:** 2058. **Cost:** \$50,000.

This was the first Mars-optimized parahuman design, replaced in later years by the Yousheng (p. TS117) and similar models. At the time it was created, even the modifications included in the Andraste biomod were insufficient to survive the low-pressure, low-oxygen atmosphere of Mars, but the forward-thinking designers knew that it would not be too many more years before the Zhiminde parahumans could breathe Martian air. Just as for the Yousheng, the reproductive modifications ensure rapid population growth.

### *High Arcadian Centaur Cybershell* 173 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** Upper body, ST +3 (Limitation: No jumping bonus, -5%); lower body ST +16 (Limitation: No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [71]; HT +2 [20].

**Advantages:** Attractive [5]; DR 5 [15]; Enhanced Move (Running) 1 [10]; Four Legs [5]; Machine Body [37]; Radio Speech [25]; Sanitized Metabolism [5].

**Disadvantages:** Inconvenient Size [-10]; Social Stigma (Valuable property) [-10].

**Features:** May have up to a Complexity 8 compact main-frame computer.

**Date:** 2085. **Cost:** \$100,000 + computer.

This is a cybershell designed to look like a "natural" centaur, in the tradition of Greek mythology. High Arcadia (p. 28) obviously needed centaurs to give their park its proper feel, and the company's geneticists have not yet managed to produce an organic centaur (though they're working on it very hard). Several hundred exist in High Arcadia. About a third of them are "extras," with NAIs. They do not interact with guests, but are used for crowd scenes and the like. Another third are subsapient, and interact with guests in limited contexts. The last third are fully sapient, and may serve as "native" guides for groups of guests. Like cyberdolls (p. TS122), many cannot tan, bruise, etc. Some models intended for the combat city of Sparta *can* sweat and bleed (although loss of blood is not lethal, merely messy).

High Arcadia does not want any emergent intelligences or ghosts in their centaurs, and their security measures to prevent direct access to the centaur brains are tight. They also have the patent on the design, and are very unlikely to sell one . . . though anything is possible, if the price is high enough.

Upper body ST is used for grappling, swinging weapons, or throwing things. Lower body ST is used for kicking, using the table on p. B140.

Humanity has brought large portions of Earth's ecosystem to Mars. Thousands of species of plants and animals live there. Some are thriving, some are dying out, and almost all have felt the hand of engineers on their DNA. This chapter covers the more interesting flora and fauna of Mars. (Note: The weights listed are Earth weight. Be sure to make adjustments when necessary.)

## PETS

Conventional wisdom says that, in controlled habitats, pets are nothing but consumers of resources and producers of waste. Despite this, animal companions are common on Mars. Some are kept for the company. Others serve roles that *could* be handled by technology . . . but the overall societal bias for wetware over hardware means that people prefer to have these niches filled by something organic. If it's soft and furry, so much the better.

### SMARTCAT

**ST:** 3    **Move/Dodge:** 10/7    **Size:** <1  
**DX:** 14    **PD/DR:** 0/0    **Weight:** 5-15 lbs.  
**IQ:** 7    **Damage:** 1d-4 cut    **Origin:** SF  
**HT:** 14/3    **Reach:** C    **Habitat:** Dom.

The first experiments into felines with enhanced intelligence were not complete successes. The prototype smartcats were too calculating and manipulative – and were forever wheedling treats and food out of people, terrorizing anything smaller than a Doberman, and driving their owners to distraction. The current breed of smartcats have been engineered for increased sociability and slightly lower intelligence. They are ideal companions, furry, friendly, somewhat trainable (as for an animal with IQ 6), and with a vocabulary of several dozen words. They differ from normal cats chiefly in their intelligence, voicebox, and doubled lifespan. They are Presentient (p. CI103). (Note that *GURPS Bio-Tech* allows Presentient engineered animals to have language skills, as an exception to the description of the disadvantage in *GURPS Compendium I*.)

Smartcats are available in most breeds (including fanciful ones) and with a wide array of pelts. On Mars, shorthaired breeds are preferred, and tiger stripes are fashionable. A standard smartcat costs \$1,000; a 'cat with the feline equivalent of the Andraste biomod (p. 97) would be \$1,500.

A very small number of smartcats – particularly second generation 'cats produced by breeding outside the gene factory – have an IQ of 8 and lack the Presentient disadvantage. They *usually* behave the same as their siblings, just smarter. Some are as cunning as the prototype smartcats, and may have *plans* . . .



# GLOSSARY

**aquifer:** An area of porous rock saturated with liquid water.

**biosharking:** Fronting the money for a biomod in exchange for extended service.

**CFC:** Chlorofluorocarbons. While notorious on early-21st-century Earth for their negative effect on the ozone layer, the types used for terraforming Mars are not harmful to ozone.

**chasma:** Latin, “canyon.”

**claim-jacker:** Someone who tries to steal land from another; a “claim jumper.”

**combatrix:** Generic term for a female combat bioroid, usually exotic in some way.

**datum:** The arbitrary Martian “sea level” set in the 20th century by sky areographers (c.f.). Bears no relation to actual sea levels.

**Deep Beyond:** The solar system from the Main Belt outward.

**fossae:** Latin, “trenches.”

**finest:** Extremely fine dust, with particles measuring about a micron across (i.e., approximately 1/100,000 of an inch).

**guanxi:** Chinese, “a relationship.” The connection between two people whereby they exchange favors. **Guanxixue** is the art or science of cultivating and using these relationships. Pronounced *guan-shee* and *guan-shee-shwe*, respectively.

**habitat:** An individual human habitat, whether it is a space station, a domed city, or a one-family settlement.

**iceteroid:** An asteroid made largely of ice.

**insolation:** *Incoming solar radiation.* The amount of sunlight received at a planet’s surface.

**k-kill:** “Kinetic kill,” used of a projectile that damages the target through velocity, not explosives.

**KBO:** Kuiper Belt object, a protocomet found in the outer solar system.

**Martian:** A sapient being (typically transhuman) who calls Mars home.

**mons:** Latin, “mountain.” Plural, “montes.”

**nat-born:** Naturally born, as contrasted with vat-born such as bioroids.

**panropy:** “Grow anywhere.” Coined by author James Blish, this term describes the process of adapting people to their environments, instead of the other way around.

**planum:** Latin, “plains.”

**postmaterial:** A state of being beyond physical matter – or, indeed, any form comprehensible to material life. One of the possible end goals of transhumanism.

**recurving:** Changing occupations (often with a decrease in income) in pursuit of new skills and experiences. Very common in a society of plenty. Coined by author Douglas Coupland.

**regio:** Latin, “region.”

**regolith:** Organically inert dirt. The proper term for the original “soil” on the surface of Mars.

**sky areography:** The study of Martian geography through telescopes, rather than by physically being there. The only kind of areography that existed prior to the late 20th century.

**tessera:** Latin, “mosaics.” Refers to crust fractured into blocks from several to a dozen miles across.

**tholus:** Latin, “dome.”

**top-line:** “Top of the line,” used to describe hard tech and biotech. Not necessarily “cutting edge,” but the best currently available to the general public.

**transevolution:** The evolution of humanity through biotech means, rather than “natural” genetic happenstance.

**valles:** Latin, “valley.”

**vat-born:** Someone who was not born of woman; typically but not necessarily a bioroid. The counterpart to nat-born.

**Well, the:** The solar system from Mars orbit inward.

**xieh:** A type of mercenary, typically Chinese.

## Pronouncing CHINESE

Chinese is a tonal language, and very difficult to pronounce correctly without more guidance than this book can provide. Chinese words in this book are written using Pinyin romanization. Most letters can be pronounced as they would be in English, but four simple rules will help with the exceptions: “x” = “sh,” “q” = “ch,” “z” = “dz,” and “c” = “ts.”

## NAMES AND NEOLOGISMS

Mercury, Venus, and Mars are all names of Roman gods. Their Greek equivalents are Hermes, Aphrodite, and Ares, respectively. Both sets of names are used for naming things after the planets; e.g., “The Ares Conspiracy.”

Two words that tend to get abused a lot off-Earth are “geology” and “geography.” The “geo-” prefix in both means “of Earth,” and some philologists say they should *only* be used for talking about Earth. The equivalent terms for Mars are “areology” and “areography,” and many sources (including this book) actually use them. Just as many people say that the old words work fine. The quirk “Has strong opinion about areo-/geo- debate” is available for vocal nitpickers. The Mercury and Venus equivalents, (“hermeography,” “aphrodisiology,” etc.) have not caught on.

On Mercury, most features are named for artists and writers – the Plains of Shakespeare, Renoir Crater. On Venus, women’s names are used, mostly mythical – Guinevere Planitia, Aphrodite Terra. Mars has no theme. The land features on all these worlds were largely named in Latin – e.g., “Valles Marineris.” Modern usage mixes Latin, English, and other languages freely, to the despair of many pedants.

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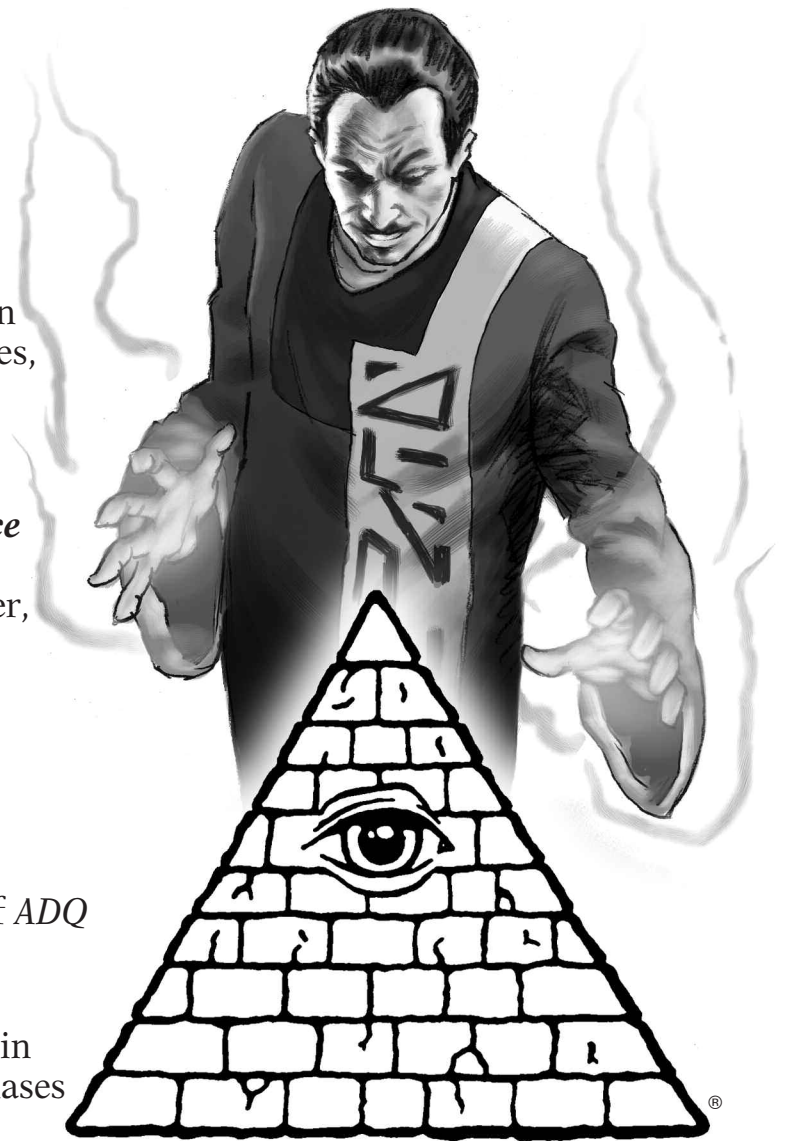
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