

Autumn Moon

As torturers go, Malcolm is not original. He swears by fire. He finds it a terribly effective tool. He will not *hear* of using anything else.

To be honest, I cannot say that he is wrong. Malcolm, you see, is a recreational torturer. He has no urgency to his cases, no time limits. From that perspective, I agree that he should use whatever form of pain pleases him best.

Once I asked him why he hurt me -- why he kept hurting me. He paused for a moment with the torch, and considered. Then he shrugged, and said, "It gives me something to do."

-- from the Thought-Record of Eustace Axelrod

This is a generic campaign, usable for any group of PCs. You might want to revise this to better exploit the themes associated with your particular PC group's Estates. This campaign will be updated slightly after the new edition's release.

Table of Contents

- Premise
- Local Area
 - Former Lives and Anchors
- **Yolet**, Empress in Sapphire
 - **Jerrold Marker**, Baron of Architecture
 - **Panya di Cecilio**, Viscount of Colors
 - **Leslie Donahue**, Baroness of Protection
 - **Grace Kirkley**, Duchess of Life's Power to Transform
 - Locus Yolet
 - Yolet's Character Sheet
- **Arnaud**, the Clockmaker Dragon
 - **Hayley Daniels**, Baroness of Hours
 - **Mitra Vali**, Viscountess of Mechanisms
 - **Laurence Kimaiyo**, Duke of Circular Motion
 - Locus Arnaud
 - Arnaud's Character Sheet
- Miscellaneous Characters
 - **Glutton**/Erix, an Abhorrent Weapon
 - **Sheila Sevens**, Baroness of Messages
 - **Iaziz**, Strategist of the Excrucians (*and artifacts*)
 - The Coat of Eyes
 - Keystone Six-Shooter
 - Susurrius of the Bell
 - Sash of Eight Directions
 - Iaziz-Shards
 - **Coriander Hasp**, Excrucian Deceiver
 - **Ritho**/Illicit Desire, an Abhorrent Weapon
 - Coriander-Shards
 - **Sivananda**'s Character Sheet*
 - **Meon**'s Character Sheet*

* skins Coriander often wears.
- Starting Off The Plot
 - Character Generation (et al.)
 - Handling the Nettle Rite
 - Story One: Pride
 - The Deluge
 - Legal Matters
 - Alliance
 - Powers on Holiday
 - Story Two: Gluttony
 - Imperial Carnival
 - Underground Railroad
 - Seat of Judgment
- Where Do You Go From Here?

Premise

Three Imperators build Chancels in the general vicinity of the Autumnal Metamorphosis. This is the place on Earth where the events that trigger the Fourth Age of reality will take place or be mirrored. Whatever these unknown events will be, the Imperators know they will be at least as important as the Fall of Eden, and possibly as important as the War in Heaven or the arrival of the Excrucians.

One Chancel belongs to the characters. If you're running for a large group of PCs, you could split them into two allied or opposed Chancels. The other two Chancels belong, respectively, to the Divine Imperator Yolet and the Aaron's Serpent Arnaud. The close proximity sets the stage for Imperial rivalry and general oddity. The Excrucians, naturally, have an interest in the area -- many Excrucians and Imperators feel that the Autumnal Metamorphosis will be cotemporaneous with the Valde Bellum's end.

Local Area

By default, this campaign takes place in the general vicinity of the San Francisco Bay Area. If you want to move the campaign elsewhere, you should choose a coastal area -- Yolet's Chancel requires the ocean and is designed to "fit into" the region. Making a seacoast-equipped Chancel in Kansas is trivial, but it would detract from Locus Yolet's deliberate normalcy.

Sometimes, a city or region becomes a Chancel while retaining most of its original flavor. Encourage your players, when they design their Chancel, to use an interesting city in the Bay Area as the basis and then modify it to suit. For example, a pristinely clean San Francisco where "psi" is common might make a fun Chancel. A version of Santa Cruz refined into an intellectual meritocracy could also be interesting, particularly if one throws in zeppelin-based public transportation. The characters will start as normal humans living in a realistic version of this city. When it becomes a Chancel, and they become Nobilis, the changes the players specified from "base reality" take effect. Of course, if your players want to be outre and build a Chancel with no conceptual connection to the Bay Area or any Earth landmark, they can do so.

The players, OOC, and the Imperator, IC, choose whether the outside world notices that the stolen region is missing. It might, instead, forget that the area is important ("San Francisco? I think I've heard of it. It's out north somewhere, innit?") or forget that it ever existed at all.

Former Lives and Anchors

The characters are probably Bay Area natives, although they could include one or two visitors with really bad (or good) timing. Naturally, the Bay Area includes every kind of person and every kind of potential Power or Anchor. Some interesting possibilities for the characters' former lives (and the former lives of the loved or hated ones they choose as Anchors) include:

- An accomplished entomologist observing the monarch butterflies that pass through Santa Cruz on their annual migrations.
- Similarly, a marine biologist or fisherman from anywhere on the coast.

- A computer professional of any stripe. This includes:
 - Programmers;
 - Technical support;
 - Technical writers;
 - Headhunters for software/hardware companies;
 - Entrepreneurs;
 - Management types;
 - IT specialist lawyers;
 - System administrators;
 - Webpage designers;
 - Tech company CEOs.
- A member of the coast guard, a lifeguard, or a lighthouse operator.
- A store owner in a San Francisco town.
- A (sexual or social) subculture member, e.g.:
 - A member of the SanFran homosexual community;
 - A devout member of a religious cult or Christian sect;
 - A transgendered person working in Santa Cruz;
 - An "old money" type, with a fortune dating back to SanFran's founding;
 - An anarchist or political activist;
 - A punk, goth, skinhead, or other social movement member;
 - An occultist, neopagan, or Satanist.

(Sure, you can find members of these groups anywhere -- but in the Bay Area, they're part of the conceptual atmosphere.)

- A successful retired business(wo)man.
- And, of course, the "usual suspects" regardless of region:
 - Cops and crooks;
 - Politicians;
 - Military types from a local base (e.g. Onizuka Air Station);
 - Improverished street people;
 - Truckers;
 - Professorial types (e.g. from UCSC);
 - Stockbrokers; and
 - Government bureaucrats.

You'll want to start all the characters in roughly the same place, as humans, in the region that will become the Chancel. They could know each other, but that's not your only option. Maybe they're all at San Francisco's Japantown on a Saturday afternoon.

Yolet

Yolet styles itself the Empress in Sapphire, and governs the Estates of Architecture, Colors, Protection, and Life's Power to Transform. It came into being with the first coral reefs. It claimed a Chancel in this area because it has its own dream for Earth's Autumnal Metamorphosis: it wants to return the destiny of the world to the sea, merging humanity -- in all its world-dominating, concept-pioneering glory -- with aquatic life. Humans are not, in Yolet's opinion, all that special -- but they are cutting-edge, and the ocean can't afford to be behind the ontological curve any longer.

Yolet pursues this agenda in the Spirit World, working to influence those Imperators whose support it requires before it can change the world directly. Should this fail, however, Yolet has a second approach. Its Powers have been charged with the task of using mundane and Noble methods to build and field-test composite forms of life that might be suitable. Simultaneously, they prepare the way for later attempts to raise the water level, fight off Nobles opposed to the scheme, and convince humanity to genetically modify itself to the most suitable composite forms.

Information on Yolet's Powers, Chancel, and Imperator Properties:

- **Jerrold Marker**, Baron of Architecture, the Dominus Construo, former priest, minister of human affairs.
 - **Aspect 1**
 - Immutable
 - Durant
 - Invisibility (only in/next to buildings, penetration 2)
 - **Domain 1**
 - **Realm 0**
 - **Spirit 5**
 - **Handicaps:** Cannot Touch Unholy Water or Ground, Habitual Prayer, Must Wear Cassock when Dressed.
 - **Affiliation:** Code of the Light
 - **Design:** The flowers of Compassion and Architecture twine around a caduceus on a background of gray with a white "raindrop" pattern.
 - **Bonds:**
 - 7 Points - four beloved Anchors;
 - 2 Points - the seminary where he studied;
 - 1 Point - his current development projects;
 - 1 Point - the sanctity of the Church;
 - 1 Point - Hiero, a dog w/ some octopus DNA.

Roleplaying Tips: You're polite, calm, and gentle, for all your imposed dedication to Yolet's inhuman cause. When you can, you help improve the urban environment, consulting inside and outside your Chancel to improve building techniques and guide low-cost housing projects.

Quotes:

"In my experience, Jordan is the kind of man who tries to build a house from the roof down."

"Sir, there is no excuse for such behavior."

- **Panya di Cecilio**, Viscount of Colors, municipal artist, aesthetic designer for new "humans," Mayor, and commander of the Chancel guard.
 - **Aspect 1**
 - Glorious
 - **Domain 2**
 - **Realm 3**
 - **Spirit 0**
 - Unblemished Guise (penetration 5)
 - **Handicaps:** Lacks the Blessing of Tongues (speaks English, French, Italian, Sanskrit, Hebrew, the True Tongue, and Latin), Focus for Aspect (Panya's Aspect level is "kept" in a living painter's cap, which strives to return to Panya if stolen -- but it can be clamped on someone else's head or knocked unconscious.)
 - **Affiliation:** Code of the Wild
 - **Design:** The translucent flower of Colors and the flower of Scholars rest on the Design's lower border, in the light of a crescent moon.
 - **Bonds:**
 - 3 Points - his paintings;
 - 3 Points - Locus Yolet;
 - 2 Points - his reputation;
 - 1 Point - miscellaneous paintings by other artists;
 - 1 Point - his favorite Colt sidearm;
 - 1 Point - his family home in Italy;
 - 1 Point - his Chancel's "sister city," Locus Ithamar.

Roleplaying Tips: You're obsessively vain regarding your artistic and scholarly accomplishments, even though they're not all that impressive. You present yourself commandingly, from your experience as the principal ruler of the Chancel and from your Realm score's "stench of nobility."

Quotes:

"After reviewing the facts of the case, I conclude that the media and not my officers are to blame for this scandal. Journalists are kindly requested not to pursue the matter further."

"Not many people can properly appreciate chartreuse."

- **Leslie Donahue**, Baroness of Protection, military general, spymaster, and operative.
 - **Aspect 4**
 - Durant
 - **Domain 1**
 - **Realm 2**

- **Spirit 1**
- **Handicaps:** Cannot Kill, Immune to Dust and Grime (which can give her identity away when Guised.)
- **Affiliation:** Code of Sacrifice (personal)
 - *The world is broken, and must be healed.*
 - *One must not give in to anger, hate, or pride.*
 - *The sea must be guarded from those who would ruin her.*
- **Design:** Ashflower (Guardianship) and Chamomile (Energy in Adversity) limned in gold on an azure plain.
- **Bonds:**
 - 3 Points - her sister (possibly an Anchor);
 - 2 Points - her personal appearance and hygiene;
 - 2 Points - the Locus Yolet military;
 - 2 Points - Lake Tahoe, CA (childhood vacation spot);
 - 1 Point - her signed copy of "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court;"
 - 1 Point - her manual of military strategy;
 - 1 Point - Pellin Chocolates (the Bay Area manufacturer of her favorite sweets).

Roleplaying Tips: You are forceful, blunt, and to the point. You understand deception, and can lie like a master, but you do not tolerate dishonesty from subordinates or allies. Your nature is to protect, and therefore your military strategy is often defensive -- but destroying fortifications is just within the reach of your Domain.

Quotes:

"If you cannot kill your child on command, lieutenant, you are no good to me."

"I envision a shield wall encircling our city -- linking up here to the cliffs [...]"

- **Grace Kirkley**, Duchess of Life's Power to Transform, genetic alteration project head, environmental manager, and chief justice.
 - **Aspect 2**
 - **Domain 4**
 - **Realm 2**
 - **Spirit 0**
 - **Handicaps:** Loved Too Well By Animals, Constantly Surrounded by the Smell and Sound of the Surf.
 - **Affiliation:** Code of the Dark
(Grace classifies transforming humanity to fish-people as destroying it. Some members of the Light and Dark would agree; others would not.)
 - **Design:** Pimpernel and the flower of Unstoppable Force lie on a background of incarnadine and black.
 - **Bonds:**
 - 4 Points - the genetic alteration project;
 - 3 Points - a locket with a picture of her father, whom she drove to suicide;
 - 2 Points - her schedule book;
 - 1 Point - the Berlin Wall (both before and after);
 - 1 Point - the ocean, and night swimming;

- 1 Point - her favorite news program.

Roleplaying Tips: Fiercely creative, you have mastered the art of twisting the ambient life into weapons. Your miracles of creation can twist the shapes of the living or use organic life to transform other things. Your manner is cold; you dress in government black; you consider it your role in life to wear down obstacles and change the world to your liking. You have "cosmetically" enhanced yourself with shark's teeth and skin texture. Naturally, you don a Guise in public.

Quotes:

"Experiment 8185 has escaped? What fun."

"I still do not have any hammerheads, Clark. You will fetch one or you will become one. It is all the same to me."

- **Locus Yolet**, the Keep on the Shore. In structure and prevalent physical law, this Chancel varies only slightly from a typical large Californian city. The will of the Emperor keeps any of the residents from noticing that they never actually vote for their Mayor and his or her staff; similarly, they do not realize that only two roads lead in or out of their metropolis. The city is, however, alive with rumors and confusion regarding the "government base" where Grace Kirkley conducts her experiments and the "fish people" who struggle to establish a civilization immediately offshore. Some journalists have tried to publish articles on the "Chancel guard" unit of the police, without luck. There's a small military installation located near the city, where Yolet's army trains.
 - Advanced Genetic Alteration Technology (1 Point)
 - Defender's Blessing Level 3 (6 Points)
- **Yolet**, Empress in Sapphire, Divine Emperor of Architecture, Colors, Protection, and Life's Power to Transform, fish rights activist.
 - **Aspect 2**
 - Immortal
 - Shapeshifting (Human, Aquatic, Plant Life)
 - Perfect Mental Map of the Ocean
 - **Domain 5**
 - **Realm 5**
 - **Spirit 0**
 - **Handicaps:** Politically Unpopular, Devotion to the Sea
 - **Affiliation:** Yolet's Code
 - *The Old Gods' laws should be restored.*
 - *The sea must be guarded from those who would ruin her.*
 - *Never shirk from using the living as tools.*
 - **Imperator Properties**
 - Soul-Twisted (1 Point)
 - Clear-Sighted (1 Point)
 - Unshining (-1 Point)
 - Cold (-1 Point)

Roleplaying Tips: Show no signals. You're impossible to read. You listen, because information is important, and then give orders, threats, or answers as you choose. If you must act, take action quickly and ruthlessly. You were never human. You were never even like a human. You have as much loyalty to humanity as you have to that big boulder over there -- less.

Quote:

"Your opposition has been noted. You may go."

Arnaud

Arnaud, the Clockmaker Dragon, commands the Estates of Hours, Rotation, and Mechanical Devices. He hopes, by enChancellor near the site of the Autumnal Metamorphosis, to mark the Fourth Age with his Ascension. A very old Serpent, Arnaud aspires to become a new Ash -- to root its body in the Earth and grow into a new Creation. Earth holds no special value to Arnaud. However, its soil once gave birth to the trees of Eden, and he expects to find it rich.

The main reason others might object to Arnaud's plan -- besides the arrogance of the notion -- is that housing a World Ash's root system would completely change the nature of the world. It's not certain that the Earth would become another Hell, but the change would be of that order. No true god, Light Magister, or Dark Magister trusts the notion. Imperators of other types might or might not object. It depends on the level of their paranoia -- some believe that Arnaud's actions would transform or destroy everything, everywhere.

Information on Arnaud's Powers, Chancel, and Imperator Properties:

- **Hayley Daniels**, Baroness of Hours, high priestess of the Clockmaker Dragon, champion of the Wood of What Will Be, one-time Internet entrepreneur.
 - **Aspect 3**
 - Immortal
 - Flight
 - **Domain 1**
 - **Realm 1**
 - **Spirit 1**
 - **Handicaps:** Perpetually Late, Fierce Temper
 - **Affiliation:** Serpentine Code (Personal)
 - *Make yourself the enemy of Fire.*
 - *Take only what you have earned.*
 - *Take all that you have earned.*
 - **Design:** The flowers of Time and Ambition, crossed.
 - **Bonds:**
 - 3 Points - her influence in the mortal world;
 - 3 Points - the high temple of the Clockmaker Dragon;

- 2 Points - her favorite anime, piped in from Japan;
- 2 Points - her personal martial skill;
- 1 Point - Locus Arnaud;
- 1 Point - her magic-based motorbike

Roleplaying Tips: Easily flustered and easily enraged, you lack the iron emotional control normally associated with your Aspect level. What you do have is effectiveness; you deal with obstacles vigorously or gently, as the situation demands.

Quotes:

"I do not care about your opinion, which is insignificant, malicious, perfidious, slanderous, and vain."

"I swear it by the Ash's very name."

- **Mitra Vali**, Viscountess of Mechanisms*, Tempest and Queen of the Wood of What Will Be, chief engineer for the Dragon Prince Arnaud.
 - **Aspect 1**
 - **Domain 0**
 - Elemental
 - Improved Sovereign's Gift (0 DMP cost, 5 point Gift)
 - **Realm 5**
 - **Spirit 0**
 - **Handicaps:** Perfectionist, Disliked by Spirits
 - **Affiliation:** Code of Heaven
 - **Design:** The flowers of Utility and Alliance, crossed.
 - **Bonds:**
 - 3 Points - her historical library, used for reconstructing events in the Second Age;
 - 3 Points - the safety of the Wood of What Will Be;
 - 2 Points - the prosperity of the Wood of What Will Be;
 - 2 Points - her regalia;
 - 1 Point - Michelle Vail, alias/identity used in engineering publications;
 - 1 Point - her collection of experimental (mechanical) toys.

Roleplaying Tips: You're a born politician -- not merely regal but charming, genuinely sympathetic, and politely devious. You are an intellectual but, unlike Panya di Cecilio, you know your own limits and can display humility at need. You don't like leaving things unfinished or in an unstable state. You have occasionally jeopardized assignments trying to get things 'just right' -- no matter how long it takes.

Quotes:

"Ignore the guards; they have not been fed. Be welcome to the Wood!"

"Cousin, we cannot let this opportunity pass. We cannot afford to."

*Mitra can hold the title of Viscountess, despite her minimal Domain, because her Gifts allow her an impressive array of miracles related to her Estate.

- **Laurence Kimaiyo**, Duke of Circular Motion, scout, spy, and emissary for the Clockmaker Dragon
 - **Aspect 1**
 - Immutable
 - Durant
 - Flight
 - Shapeshifting (anything with 1/4 to 4x his mass)
 - **Domain 4**
 - Gatemaker
 - **Realm 0**
 - **Spirit 0**
 - Unblemished Guise (penetration 2)
 - **Handicaps:** Avoids Simple Plans, Not Durant vs. Wood or Water
 - **Affiliation:** Code of the Wild
 - **Design:** An Escherlike tangle showing the flower of Adventure woven around a lattice that is (ultimately) formed from the flower's own stalk. Scattered across the design are black pearls, the gemstones of Rotation, and the occasional glittering half-moon.
 - **Bonds:**
 - 5 Points - his image;
 - 2 Points - personal accomplishment;
 - 2 Points - carnal experience;
 - 2 Points - wardrobe;
 - 1 Point - and subordinates.

Roleplaying Tips: You're dashing and handsome, a Kenyan-American James Bond (at least, when you haven't chosen to become something else). You've no moral objection to murder or seduction, but you'd never dream of being rude. To you, a good plan is a complicated plan; straight-line thinking makes you just the tiniest bit nauseated.

Quotes:

"An intruder? Don't be ridiculous. I'm welcome everywhere."

"Terribly sorry."

- **Locus Arnaud**, the Wood of What Will Be. In this forest, a profusion of strange plants grow. The inhabitants, once human, have become either vegetable life, rooted most of the day, or dryad-like spirits that dwell inside living wood. Trees bent together form gateways usable for quick transportation across the Chancel. The Wood operates on a small-scale feudal system. "Peasants" breed and tend the earthworms that keep the soil tasty and magical. Weather wizards hold more specialized positions. The great knights of the realm oversee the peasantry and participate in the Court of Arnaud's Nobles. Recently, an Excrucian-shard infiltrated the Chancel. The Powers believe that they destroyed her before her work was finished. In truth, she successfully twisted one of the tree-gates so that -- after an appropriate ritual -- it will open into an Excrucian stronghold.
 - Common Earthly Magics (2 Points)

- "Fae Magic" works on Earth (2 Points)
 - "Normal Magic" works on Earth (3 Points)
 - Hostile Forces have a 2-Way Gate into Chancel (-4 Points)
 - Weird Science: Advanced Botany/Zoology (2 Points)
 - Weird Science: Weather Manipulation (1 Point)
- **Arnaud**, the Clockmaker Dragon, Serpentine Imperator of Hours, Rotation, and Mechanical Devices, prospective World Ash-to-be.
 - **Aspect 7**
 - Immortal
 - **Domain 2**
 - **Realm 6**
 - **Spirit 4**
 - **Handicaps:** Rooted (regardless of Guise, a visible cord always connects Arnaud to his Chancel), Vulnerable to Fire and the Other Banes of Wood
 - **Affiliation:** Arnaud's Code
 - *An oath sworn by the stars is binding.*
 - *Respect plant life.*
 - *Strive always to maximize your potential.*
 - **Imperator Properties**
 1. Degenerate* (-1 Point)
 2. Dim Warding (1 Point)

Roleplaying Tips: You are arrogant and selfish, willing to risk the universe's existence to achieve your goals. You feel no guilt or remorse, however. In your mind, becoming an Ash is your ultimate destiny, the reason Aaron's Serpents exist. Besides, you're fairly sure only one insignificant world will actually get destroyed.

Quotes:

"Consider it done. Coffee?"

"Mitra, whip this insolent Power for me. I shall be in the study when you are done."

Miscellaneous NPCs

Glutton

Glutton, also known as Erix, is a notable Abhorrent Weapon but not a major one. Forged in 2050 A.P. by the Strategist Iaziz, it took the form of a spear. Fanged mouths opened and closed in every place upon the haft and head. In approximately 4867 A.P., it claimed its first Imperial life -- the head breaking off inside an angel's flesh and draining her until

*Arnaud is perfectly pleasant in person, but his goals are ultimately corrupt and destructive from this universe's point of view.

nothing but coarse matter remained. (The corpse would later calcify into Alcatraz Island.) After the angel died, Erix tunneled free of her flesh and into the living earth, hunting for other prey. When Iaziz went to reclaim his spearhead, he found nothing. Eventually, starving slowly on a diet of purely mortal souls, the spearhead went into hibernation.

Iaziz spent most of the past century and a half in conference with the Excrucian leaders. Now, returning to the forefront of the war, he wants his weapon back. He intends to search the Earth until he can reclaim Glutton as his own. Glutton, insofar as it has sentience at all, has other ideas.

Three celestial years ago, the Power of Messages found the Abhorrent Weapon while visiting the Bay Area. She took the risk of keeping the artifact. This idea has so far proven itself almost as much of a blessing as a curse. Its power has defended her against enemies high and low. It also made her most of those enemies. It brought her into conflict with the Code Fidelitatis and thereby made her a fugitive. It drained away her connection to her Emperor, so that her own Familia swore to help hunt her down. It keeps her edgy and snappish, so that has trouble finding new allies. So far, she maintains control of the artifact, but it's growing stronger -- it drains energy from her, very slowly, and also from a steady diet of others (see below). Its greed for her life, after their long association, is so great that it can no longer be taken from her. It has fused itself and her hand to the spearhaft she made for it. Both change form with her when she guises or shapeshifts. It has, in effect, become part of her.

Glutton contains the following abilities:

- The Negative Gift, 6-point Gifts
- Drain Imperial Spirit, penetration 3
- Unmastered Pain, penetration 3
- Constant Domain, Lesser Destruction of Obstacles, penetration 1

Sheila Sevens, Power of Messages

Sheila Sevens, then the Viscountess of Messages, found Glutton on a routine visit to the Bay Area. Because she choose to keep it, she lost her old position. Later, she found a new role in life. Cut off from Emperor, Chancel, Familia, and even (to some extent) from her Estate, she rejects Noble society. She participates instead in the skeletal Noble "underground" -- the resistance to Lord Entropy and Imperial will. It's almost impossible for Powers to successfully resist or even elude their masters. Sheila is a special case in that her connection to her Emperor is weak. The other members of the underground have different stories, but each is similarly a special case.

Sheila's role in the underground is simple. When the underground encounters a willing convert or a fugitive in mortal peril, and after she convinces herself that this Power is neither bait nor a trick, she comes to them and offers them their freedom. A measured exposure to Erix both drains and corrupts their divine spirit. The corruption frees them from their Emperor, although an excessive exposure can kill or disempower them. It requires great strength of will for the subject to betray Creation and break Imperial bonds of loyalty in this manner. For this reason, she rarely tells even the desperate how she plans to free them.

Sheila's technique does not work well on Powers with Spirit 4+. A very long exposure to Erix, such as her own, can work around a level four Auctoritas. Her usual "indoctrination" procedure, lasting at most a few hours, will not.

The plot writeup below assumes that Lord Entropy does not know that the criminal Sheila Sevens and the criminal who can cut the Noble-Emperor bond are one and the same. You can decide, however, that Lord Entropy knows but does

not make the information public. This prolongs the thrill of the chase, for his servants, or protects the source he used to acquire this information.

Sheila's story also assumes that Imperators must be able to "target" a Power to use significant Imperial miracles on them. They must know the victim's physical or spiritual location. The normal method for locating a Power "spiritually" depends on the Emperor-Noble bond -- which Glutton, effectively, cuts. Therefore, Lord Entropy cannot just remotely destroy or punish Powers under Glutton's influence. First someone must report the Power's location in a timely manner. Even if this is inaccurate, this is how Sheila believes her technique works.

In a slightly darker game, Imperators don't need to know a Power's location to use Imperial miracles on them. Rather, the energy expense becomes prohibitive when they do not. In a very dark game, in which you assume Lord Entropy's omnipotence, he deliberately allows the underground to exist. Perhaps he finds it less trouble to keep track of one established resistance than to stamp out every independent spark of rebellion that comes along.

Sheila's character sheet:

- **Aspect 1**
 - Shapeshift (into anything)
 - Moves at Aspect 6 speed
- **Domain 1**
 - Worldwalker
- **Realm 0**
- **Spirit 4**
 - Unblemished Guise, penetration 1
- **Handicaps:** Can Only Retain Non-Human Shape While Moving Fast, Hunted by Lord Entropy, Cut Off from Emperor, Bonded to Glutton, Irritable, Hot Temper, Hunted by Familia, Repulsed by the Creator's Name, Frequently Blamed By NPCs For Things Not Her Fault
- **Affiliation:** Cant of the Strategists
- **Design:** The flowers of Freedom and Rumor, on a field of black.
- **Bonds:**
 - 7 Points - Glutton and its effects on her;
 - 2 Points - freedom, hers and others;
 - 1 Point - the graves of her five beloved Anchors;
 - 1 Point - the resistance to Lord Entropy;
 - 1 Point - her cover role of the moment.

Roleplaying Tips: A dark and dangerous power fills you, constantly bubbling under the surface of your consciousness. You're sure, in the bones of your soul, that this is the only thing that keeps your Imperator from "recapturing you" -- a prelude to centuries of torture. That darkness is buying you your freedom even as we speak! ... And, oh, you love your freedom. Your mission in life is to save others from the chains that bind them. If you hadn't fallen unknowingly into the Strategists' Cant, you'd serve the Wild. It's scary to you that so many Nobles don't want your kind of freedom You can, however, easily understand not wanting to pay the price you did.

Quotes:

"You're blind if you think you're a master of your destiny. You don't wield great power. You let your Imperator wield great power"

through you."

"Let me help you."

Iaziz, Strategist of the Excrucians

Iaziz' life as a loyal member of the Excrucian army has had its ups and downs. He's been rewarded for glorious deeds, reprimanded for cowardice, consulted on high issues of strategy, and denied (for over a century) the chance to pursue his own aims. Fundamentally uncomfortable while an artifact of his creation roams the Earth in Sheila Sevens' hands, he now seeks to reclaim it.

- **Aspect 3**
 - Perfect Planning
- **Domain [None]**
 - The World Breaker's Hand
- **Realm [None]**
- **Spirit 4**
- *Imbue 1:* Give Pseudo-Life to the Unliving (Hard Miracle, Major or Minor Creation of Life [depending], 2 points.)
- *Imbue 2:* Make the Metaphorical Real (Hard Miracle, Major or Minor Creation of Existence [depending], 3 points.)
- *Imbue 3:* Infect the Living with Corruption and Malice (Simple Miracle, 1 point, does not affect Nobilis.)
- **Focus:** Coat of Eyes (see below)
- **Focus:** Keystone Six-Shooter (see below)
- **Focus:** Susurrius of the Bell (see below)
- **Focus:** Sash of Eight Directions (see below)
- **Handicaps:** Unnecessarily Cautious, Determined to find Glutton
- **Affiliation:** Cant of the Strategists

Roleplaying Tips: At the core of your being, you're a coward, and you'll do anything to keep yourself alive. You arrange your plans to minimize risk to yourself. You like to have a very big stick on hand for any fights that come your way. You are not, note, a cringing whiner. You present a calm and assured demeanor. Underneath it all, however, there is fear.

Quotes:

"Anything in the world can be a weapon."

"You'd do well not to threaten me, little Noble."

The Coat of Eyes

"It was a repulsive thing, knitted from the optical nerves of a hundred thousand soldiers, but it had one property worth praise. Should a mortal warrior, anywhere in the world, chance to see something that might interest the wearer, the wearer would know in that instant all that that warrior knew."
-- from "The Middlesex Grimoire"

This contains the Constant Domain: Major Divinations Gift, with the "Estate" being Soldiers. It also holds 3 DMPs.

Keystone Six-Shooter

"An unusual weapon: it fired not bullets but gems, and where the gems landed the earth and air grew foul."
-- also from "*The Middlesex Grimoire*"

This contains the Excrucian Gift Blight (Penetration 2, not 4) and 2 AMPs.

Susurrius of the Bell

"The horse was pale white of color, like a larva or a naked eye; an unpleasant and unsettling shade. Its form, however, was every horse breeder's dream: magnificent! A stallion like one of legend! And with each footstep on the cobbled road, I heard, not a click, but a faint ringing, as of a bell."
-- from the diary of Benjamin Whiting

Riding his horse Susurrius gives Iaziz 3 more levels of Aspect and 3 AMPs.

Sash of Eight Directions

"While he wore the sash -- and it was difficult to steal -- no blow, no chill, no fire could harm him. If a thing could wound or discomfit him, the power of the sash transferred that wound or discomfort to an orphaned child, somewhere in the world."

-- from "*The Journal of Medieval Superstitions*," edited by Ianthe Duncan

The sash contains the Gift Immortal and 2 AMPs.

Iaziz-Shards

- **Aspect** 2
- **Domain** [None]
- **Realm** [None]
- **Spirit** 2
- **Gifts:** select four from:
 - Imbue 1, 2, or 3
 - Glorious
 - Unblemished Guise [penetration 2]
 - Perfect Planning
 - Cascade of Fires and an Acid Rain
 - The World Breaker's Hand
- **Foci:** one 2-3 point focus or one of Iaziz' foci.
- **Handicaps:** As Iaziz
- **Affiliation:** The Cant of the Strategists

Coriander Hasp

Coriander Hasp, the example Deceiver from Nobilis, has an interest in acquiring Glutton himself. He'd also like to make life horrible for any Nobles he might encounter. This year, he has two favored "second skins": the glorious if somewhat obscure Wild Emperor Sivananda of Breath, Warmth, and Emotion, and Desecration's-Regal Meon.

Ritho, Coriander's signature weapon, misfired during an encounter with the Power of Gamblers fifteen months back. It suffered severe internal damage. Several skilled Spinners are working on repairs. The task requires great delicacy and a

correspondingly great length of time. In his early encounters with the characters, he should not be wielding it -- but if they humiliate him, he will remember them when it is repaired. (He might also reclaim it before repairs are finished, causing it to break again in short order.)

Coriander's default sheet, as seen in Nobilis, is:

- **Aspect 3** (7 AMPs)
 - Durant
 - Eternal
 - Glorious
- **Domain** [None]
- **Realm** [None]
- **Spirit 2**
 - The Blind Lie
- **Focus:** Abhorrent Rifle, "Ritho" or "Illicit Desire"

Ritho

*"Unique in all the worlds -- an unmatched rifle, both in quality and in puissance."
-- from "Seven Bullets From a Six-Shooter: How To Upgrade Your Mundane Gun Into a Magical Weapon," by Cynthia Chase*

Coriander's rifle contains the Negative Gift, level 8, and the Unquenchable Flame Gift -- that is, the bullets burn once fired and remain burning until quenched by an appropriate miracle of level 7+ or a level 5+ Auctoritas.

Coriander-Shards

Coriander's Shards have Aspect 1 and access to second skins; otherwise, they are human. In the PCs' first encounter with a Coriander-shard, it will wear the skin of Laurence Kimaiyo.

Sivananda's Character Sheet

- **Aspect 5**
 - Immortal
- **Domain 3**
- **Realm 5**
- **Spirit 5**
 - Choice-Sense (see Nobilis, section 4.1.6)
- **Handicaps:** Susceptible to Illusion, Shares Life's Needs, Cannot Kill
- **Affiliation:** Code of the Wild

Character Notes: Sivananda is tightly associated with life's surface manifestations. When Coriander wears this skin, he often desires food, sleep, water, and so forth. He is also vulnerable to illusions -- his perceptions align with the physical world. In this skin, Coriander is boisterous and tends toward blatant abuse of his power.

Meon's Non-Canonical Character Sheet

- **Aspect 2**
 - Gloriously Intimidating
 - Immortal
 - Silent Entrances/Exits
- **Domain 5**
- **Realm 4**
- **Spirit 2**
- **Handicaps:** Cruel, Overworked, Corrupt, Repulsed by the Creator's Name
- **Affiliation:** The Code Fidelitatis

Character Notes: Coriander's favorite use of Meon's abilities is the (free) Lesser Divination that lets him determine with a glance what degenerate ideas a human is most likely to agree to.

Starting Off The Plot

Character Generation, Chancel Generation, Emperor Generation

Experienced gamers should read *Nobilis* and figure out what they're getting into. Players new to gaming may not be able to swallow both *Nobilis* and roleplaying in one gulp, however. The HG and more experienced players should make sure that newbies get enough help building characters and that they participate fully in the Chancel and Emperor generation stages.

Encourage players to develop a strong vision of the Chancel and Emperor, even if it means that you spend the first session kicking around ideas instead of actually playing. If they're not enjoying the Chancel-making process, however, be prepared to suggest a few modifications to one of the major Bay Area cities, discuss it a bit, and move on. If they're not interested in making an Emperor, you can use India (from section 4.1.5 of *Nobilis*) as a template. Make him a Magister of the Light or an angel instead of a Lord of the Dark if the players want to be good guys. Obviously, the PCs' Emperor will have the PCs' Estates and not the ones listed in 4.1.5.

Once you have PCs, Chancel, and Emperor, you might not have time to run a whole session. Consider starting things off with a cliffhanger. In the plot below, the PCs start as mortals in a suddenly dangerous city. Five minutes of play will let them react to the disaster. You can end things when they get to a window (or outdoors, or to a radio) and realize just how bad it really is.

Handling the Nettle Rite in Play

You'll notice that the NPCs only have 12 points worth of Bonds. This is deliberate. The remaining 8 points should be filled in based on the characters' IC perceptions of these NPCs' Bonds, if the characters choose to Nettle them. Assume the PCs to be correct about what NPCs care about unless you specifically decide that they're wrong. That is, your NPCs don't have to care just because the players think they do, but give the players the benefit of the doubt.

Don't make this entirely asymmetric, either. NPCs can figure out the PCs' Bonds, too, unless the PCs mislead them deliberately or the NPCs don't know the PCs very well. You might want to warn players in character generation that their Bonds are only safe if they both play out the attachment convincingly and conceal it carefully from their enemies -- simply pretending that the Bonds don't exist won't protect them from Nettling. (Some kinds of players need this spelled out. Others just need you to mention it in passing while explaining what Bonds are about.)

Story One: Pride

The Deluge:

Start the characters as humans with a natural resistance to dementia animus. A hideous string of murders has haunted their home state, California, of late -- 78 people have died, and that's just the ones the police know about. The characters' future Emperor is working on the hundred ritual murders the Chancel-making rite requires. (If a player wonders, "Why am I still in California? I'm a paranoid." you can try something like, "You're out on bail after being arrested for something you [did|didn't] do, and can't leave town" or "You have to close a [real estate|advertising|drug] deal first.")

Arnaud picks up on the signs that another Emperor is attempting the Chancel-making ritual, and determines the center of the effect. He doesn't like this, because each new Emperor in the area reduces his chances of being the one to take advantage of the Autumnal Metamorphosis. Arnaud's decided to wipe out the human life in the area and then throw up a spiritual wall, making it more difficult for the PC's Emperor-to-be to get living subjects for the ritual. There are, however, 21 deaths that neither Arnaud nor the police know about -- in other words, Arnaud is one human life away from being too late.

Arnaud orders his Powers to take care of the matter. This puts them in an awkward legal position relative to Noble law. Their best hope is plausible deniability. Rather than killing people directly, Mitra marshals a squad of Locus Arnaud's weather magicians and leads them out into the world to brew up a horrific storm. (As an alternative, Laurence Kimaiyo inserts himself into the local seismology office to warn the city of an impending earthquake and then dumps a bit of twist & spin into a local faultline.)

Of course, a storm or earthquake, however vicious, is not going to kill everybody -- not without being so fierce as to attract immediate Noble attention. However, a nasty storm provides great cover for the next step and makes it difficult to sort out whom the storm killed and whom the Powers slew.

For that next step, Laurence stretches his powers a little and imposes an inward spiral on the movements of the people of the city. As they react, panicked or efficient, to the disaster, they migrate inevitably inward toward a point of his choice. There, at the very heart of the storm, shielded from outside view by the lesser fury of the main cloudmass, the storm is lethal enough to kill just about everyone who comes into contact with it. Hayley waits nearby, sheltered by personal magic, to shoot down anyone who seems likely to survive. (This is the blatantly illegal part of the scheme.)

This scenario is an opportunity to test the characters' coping ability before they actually develop power. Obviously, since the characters have Aspect 0 at this point, you need to run things pretty much freeform. They can receive a little bit of help from fortune and happenstance, however. Their future Emperor has already chosen them.

Make the characters deal with several life-or-death situations here. Give the virtuous opportunities to virtuously help those around them, and the nasty a chance or two to vilely ignore their fellow humans' plights. Afterward, the PCs make their way to the very heart of the storm -- probably not far from where they started. They encounter Hayley, who might even shoot one of the more vigorous characters down. After Hayley dismisses the group, wounded or feeble, as a threat, the Chancel Rite

completes and the PCs become Nobilis.

If the player group is experienced, on the whole, you can let the characters understand instantly what they are and what that means. This allows them to go after Hayley and her allies. If your players are new, have the characters drift on the flooding streets to their Emperor's feet, where you can answer any major questions they have In Character. Then, if the characters like, they can attempt reprisals. The storm will fade away slowly after the Emperor claims the Chancel, as the Emperor's alterations to the pocket world (slash city) take hold.

The Emperor might instruct the characters to take on Anchors now. This means visiting loved ones and explaining the situation ("Ma, I want to make you my supernatural servant. Is that okay?") or visiting hated enemies and forcing blood or tears down their throats ("I've been looking forward to this, Mr. Smith.") Some potential Anchors are probably already dead by the time the game begins. Good players are probably happy to pick an extra Anchor-possibility or two. The storm might well have killed one or two of their first choices -- but, if you like their first choices best, it didn't. The Emperor could also offer to drag one or two possibilities back from the afterlife. ("You can't get away from me that easily, Mr. Smith!")

The characters probably have a great deal of work to do at this point organizing Chancel affairs. A lot of people will still remember the way things were. Putting down protests, choosing subordinates, and getting public transportation running smoothly could take up some of the characters' time. If you still have time left in the session, you can also run the opening bits of one of the next two plot segments.

The characters and players might want to cut loose a little bit at the front end, indulging in the characters' powers. It's probably better, however, to keep the pacing fast and events moving too fast for relaxation early on. They'll enjoy self-indulgence more if they feel they've really earned it.

Legal Matters:

The PCs' Emperor (let's call it the PCI) sends the characters to Lord Entropy to press a complaint against Arnaud's Nobles. This is not a matter of vengeance. Rather, the PCI wants other Emperors to know that acting against it brings unpleasant consequences.

The PCs can go to Lord Entropy or to Medan, who owns the Chancel where Lord Entropy's Powers make legal judgments. Neither Emperor will hear the petition within the next several days. Characters can leave the message with a functionary or a Noble, wait as long as necessary to deliver it personally, or break in to see an Emperor that is not holding audience. In the last case, the Emperor inflicts some casual punishment, takes the message, states a trial date, and bids the PCs farewell. (Casual punishments involve Imperial miracles bound in tangible form: a cultured disease that can survive in a high-Aspect body, e.g., or a bracelet that locks about the wrist and shrinks, over four days, to a quarter of its size.)

It comes to the PCs' attention, not long after they return, that Locus Arnaud has shipped a present of rare spices to Lord Entropy. It also promised a more interesting gift to come. Characters making inquiries can find out quickly that Lord Entropy is not a prime example of moral integrity. He's also a very costly creature to buy. At this point, characters may be inclined to try and disrupt or hijack the planned gift, prepare one of their own (which Arnaud's Powers may try and interfere with), or let their case stand on its own.

How does this come to the PCs' attention? If the characters have allies -- if, for example, you do the next section before this one -- then an ally can mention it. Otherwise, Lord Entropy sends an envoy to formally acknowledge the case, and the envoy drops a hint. (If you like Hugh Rosewood as much as the writer does, he makes a fine envoy.)

What gift is Locus Arnaud preparing? Divinations indicate that Desecration's-Regal Meon will preside at the trial.

Arnaud's Powers intend to unearth Eve's body, which is still in good condition due to her semi-divine state, and have it discovered in a house of ill repute. A fire will attract the police and, so that the staff cannot deny knowing Eve, kill off the tenants. The extravagant desecration of having the mother of all humanity filed away in the morgue as Jane Doe, presumed geriatric prostitute, should incline Meon toward their case. Arnaud's Powers are already engaged in negotiation with the Power of Internment to find a still-occupied grave of the right age.

Whether or not Arnaud's Powers win the gift-giving contest, they offer the following defense at trial. The bulk of the damage and loss of human life came from the storm. The storm was created by practitioners of Earthly magic, not Arnaud's Nobles. It does not matter that the wizards obeyed the Nobles' orders -- they did not have to obey, after all. Contrariwise, Arnaud's Nobles did have to obey their Emperor, taking a few lives directly, according to Lord Entropy's law.

Decide the outcome as appropriate. If Arnaud's Powers suffer some minor punishment (minor, that is, by Lord Entropy's standards), they become bitterly opposed to the characters, and later seek to Nettle them. If they do not, then the PCI will tell the PCs to strike at those Powers again if another opportunity arises.

If the decision could go either way, Meon decides in favor of the PCs. He intends to call this favor in later, and may make that intention known.

Alliance:

The PCI opts to make an alliance with Yolet, feeling that the Autumnal Metamorphosis is big enough for two. (Alternately, it knows that Yolet is desperate for allies and plans to betray the Empress in Sapphire later.) A short discussion in the Spirit World is enough to seal the Imperial alliance. The PCs are sent to make a "treaty" between the two Chancels and hammer out the terms of their cooperation with Yolet's Powers.

Yolet's Powers don't want to give anything up. They will fete the PCs as special guests of the city to make pushing them on "sticking points" ruder. The PCs get to plant a tree, cut ribbons, attend dedications, and hold a press conference on the glories of their Chancel. (Leslie Donahue will edit the video real-time to keep the PCs' comments from confusing Locus Yolet's citizens.) Yolet's Powers try to slip in their demands in off-hand comments while wheeling the PCs from one event to another. They scurry off to attend to "pressing municipal matters" when the day's events end.

Both sides must commit to defending the other side's Estates. That much is a given. Yolet's Powers, however, want more. They want to place an Anchor inside the characters' Chancel to monitor events. They want the use of any influential mortal contacts the characters develop, at need. They want a commitment to nonaggression. They wish the inhabitants of the PCs' Chancel to honor both Yolet and the sea, and they demand rank within the PCs' Chancel. They want access to any interesting products of the PCs' Keep. They want a tribute of miraculous energy. If the PCs' Chancel or their Estates suggests something else Yolet's Nobles might want, they want it. They don't expect to get everything, but they think that the characters need help more than Yolet's brood does -- the PCs have hardly been Powers a week, and they're already at odds with Locus Arnaud!

If the PCs incline more toward the Dark than the Light, Yolet's Nobles give them a proud tour of the genetic alteration facility. If, instead, the PCs would find that facility horrifying, Coriander Hasp makes sure that they see it. (Coriander knows that Glutton is in the area. Sowing the seeds of dissention among his local enemies cannot possibly hurt.) One of Coriander's Anchors juggles paperwork in the Mayor's office while the PCs are stationed in a hotel at night. In consequence, one of the Mayor's mortal assistants drops by to take the PCs on a "special tour" of the facility. The guards at the genetic alteration base will hesitate. Pick one of the following options. The Mayor's assistant might overrule them. Grace

Kirkley might allow them in personally because the damage has been done. The guards might hurry the PCs away and make them suspicious.

While staying at the Chancel but not actively negotiating, the PCs may want to go out and [spy|clubhop] rather than resting. Allow them a half hour or so of raw fun -- just enough for the characters to get "into it" -- before dropping the seed of plot on them. In this case, that seed is the first direct hint of Excrucian activity.

Near Locus Yolat, an Iaziz-shard completes a special variant on the flower rite. First, a local woman kissed a coworker, despite her engagement to another man. Guilt consumed her. Iaziz convinced her fiance that the two had had intercourse. He closed the man's mind to anything else. After the man shouted abuse at her and stormed off out of sight, Iaziz turned the man to ash. From the woman's broken heart, in the Mythic World, an endless torrent of spiritual blood now begins to flow. Iaziz hopes that this blood will "draw out" Glutton, awakening its hunger and causing it to swim to the source of this bounty. The blood is of such quantity -- to feed a Glutton's appetite -- that it is pouring into the nearest Chancel, Yolet's, through the two roads that lead inside. When an invisible presence tickles the characters' feet, they should activate the Sight or shift to the Mythic World. Either shows them the truth.

Yolet's Powers will find the characters, to determine whether they caused this effect. Unless the PCs act very guilty, Yolet's Powers will identify the Excrucians as the logical cause and hopefully drag the PCs along when they go to the blood's source. (After all, we wouldn't want all the local spirits to drown.)

The group will find the Iaziz-shard, in the shape of the woman's best friend, "comforting" her and (in truth) inspiring her to further grief. It will do everything it can, as a human, to keep the characters from healing her. However, if it is forced to use supernatural powers, it simply leaves.

After fixing things, hopefully, the PCs can use the occasion to pin down the treaty -- there's no Chancel business there to distract them.

Powers on Holiday:

After the hectic pace of the first week or two as a Noble, the characters get a chance to enjoy their state. Let them figure out what they want to do with their time. Do they want to handle appeals made by the citizens? Judge disputes? Show off with their Aspect? Do good on Earth? Compose poetry and study histories? Try and take over some Earth organization? Go out of their way to oppose the Excrucians? Hang around in their bathrobes splitting trees with lawn darts? Stretch themselves with daredevil feats? Meditate on their Estates? Answer prayers from those trying to contact the "patron of [their Estates]?" Go about their former lives as if nothing happened, except when engaged in Noble business? Travel? Sculpt? Become famous detectives? Learn the secrets of the Mythic World? Work behind the scenes to help their Anchors? Engage in grand plans to make their Estates more important?

As the Nobles settle into their new Role, they learn about the complication of an Anchor's life second hand. Suppose one or two of their Anchors live in a First World Earth country. A series of pictures snapped by an artist composing a "true life" view of the country could turn an Anchor into a sudden celebrity. Perhaps a blouse was see-through in the wrong light. Maybe the man in the background looks so much like Elvis that every weirdo assumes the Anchor knows him. Possibly the picture itself was somehow incredibly beautiful. Everyone starts talking about the Anchor. Meanwhile, another Anchor is kidnapped, while the relevant PC sleeps, by "aliens" -- inhabitants of a distant Chancel, intent on studying Earth humanity. The Emperor of that Chancel is the PCI's ally. The characters are ordered not to "make waves" while spitting the Anchor out. The last event of this sort is, if possible, an Anchor becoming a "bad example" in a Presidential speech -- like Reagan's

"welfare queen." The PCs may take it into their head to deal with the President, a fitting conclusion for a Noble holiday. You can end this story on a cliffhanger, as an Excrucian flower rite attack on a PC's Estate begins.

Story Two: Gluttony

Imperial Carnival:

**"No one knows more about a murderer than the bodies of those he killed."
-- Iaziz, Strategist of the Excrucians**

In this session, the characters take a mythic road back 120 years in time. Excrucians are staging an attack now/then on a PC's Estate. (In the prosaic reality, it's 'then.' In the mythic reality, as long as the road to that time lasts, it's 'over there.')

The nature of the attack depends on the Estate. Basically, take a look at the characters' Designs and let your creativity run wild.

As usually happens with an Excrucian flower rite, the relevant PC gets a "help! help!" from his/her Estate. This can be tracked to the interstate offramp that, for a few days, leads back into the human past. Once the PCs arrive in the older version of the Bay Area, things get more complicated.

Two Iaziz-shards and a shard of Coriander Hasp are on hand, having predicted the overlap-of-time. (An important note: Excrucians transcend mortal time but not Noble causality. If the Powers meet an Excrucian in one time, and then meet the Excrucian in another time, it always remembers them and bears any scars of previous confrontations. Similarly, a Noble can travel back in time and kill her mortal parents before they give birth to her but can't travel back in time and kill her Emperor before it claims her.) The three shards are engaged in a standard flower rite, but Coriander's shard is also trying to find Glutton before Iaziz does, and vice versa. Iaziz is feeding anti-nature into the corpse of the angel Glutton killed -- that is, Alcatraz Island. He hopes to animate the body and use its still-hot rage at its soul's killer to find the weapon. (It also makes a handy big stick in a confrontation.) Coriander is just gathering human accounts of mysterious deaths, hoping to figure out Glutton's movements in that era. From this he hopes to develop a predictive theory of its actions.

Complicating things, the Emperor Chemya (pick one: a fallen angel or a Magister of the Light) appears on the scene. Coriander ran up against this Emperor in the Spirit World. Summarizing their conflict in comprehensible terms, Coriander ran away very, very fast and tricked Creation into believing the Emperor was very, very drunk. The Emperor has perfect control of his faculties, of course, but ambient reality and the Emperor's own perceptions don't know that.

Chemya withdrew from the Spirit World and now seeks out the Powers as the nearest "friendly parties" -- commandeering them to see it through the crisis. In a light game, the Emperor can get into bizarre scrapes in mortal society. In a dark game, he's a mean drunk.

Close off this plot, after resolving the Rending, with Alcatraz rising from the water and becoming a giant angel-shaped golem. After that, regardless of what happened with the Rending, everything is one side or the other cleaning up. (And how will the Powers get Alcatraz back to where they remember it?)

California has fewer inhabitants back then, but these events probably do trigger an outbreak of dementia animus. The Powers may want to partially contain this by giving the population an explanation they can accept. They might create the paraphernalia of a vision, say, while the Power fighting the dead angel takes on the appearance of a demon. Note that to violate Noble law, the Powers must compound the problem. Moreover, they could argue before the Locust Court that driving a human insane decades after their death does no real harm.

Incidentally, if the Powers decide to run from the angel, instead, that's okay -- just make it a dramatic chase.

Ideally, this session should familiarize the characters with the name Glutton and the fact that at least two Excrucians think it's still in the area. The drunk Emperor can be omitted if it does not fit your picture of Imperial fallibility.

Underground Railroad:

If the characters owe Meon a favor, he calls it in. He doesn't need the favor as much as he needs to get a better measure of new entrants to Noble society. Moreover, he wants to establish a precedent of their dancing to his tune. He's picked up a lead on the location of the entity that is freeing fugitives from their bonds to their Emperors, and wants the PCs to save him the trouble of checking it out.

If the characters do not owe Meon a favor, the PC's Emperor just "sensed" one such bond being severed not far from the physical location of the Chancel. It sends them to find out who's cutting Noble-Emperor bonds and if the Nobles are surviving. (If the PCs are rebellious sorts who resent their Emperor, this might seem unwise. Remember that Emperors have trouble imagining someone voluntarily breaking the bond, though. It's as abhorrent as torture and as ridiculous as the idea of being tortured by a guinea pig.)

Sheila Sevens has operated out of St. Theresa's, a local Catholic girl's school, for four months. She has official employment as a groundskeeper, and maintains a fine lawn and garden. Most of her time on campus, she wears the shape of the school mascot, "Lightning." This calico cat is known for never slowing down, turning in quick circles even when someone pets her. No one has ever picked her up successfully. When Sheila is the groundskeeper, Glutton manifests as oddly disturbing hedge shears. On Lightning, it becomes untrimmed claws.

The underground sometimes points fugitives who elude the long arm of the law toward the school. Sometimes, a member escorts the criminal there. More often, Sheila sends them a message. Once the Power arrives, Sheila takes the opportunity to observe them for a while. If satisfied, she makes her offer via a note under the door. If the hunted Power is willing to risk a little separation from their Emperor in order to escape punishment, she enters the pipes and visits the Noble as a harsh shower. First, she explains her identity. Then, Glutton pierces their skin again and again in the form of many drops of water. If the Noble freaks and runs, despite her explanation, Sheila manifests in human shape and struggles to subdue them. At that point, they know too much not to commit themselves fully.

One rogue Power is at the school when the Powers arrive, or arrives soon after. If you want, Lord Entropy's Hunt pursues that fugitive, or another one, onto campus. (This may be a bit excessive -- the Noble underground is small. On the other hand, the Hunt is dramatic!)

You can make this investigation more interesting by putting forward many of the school's characters as good suspects. For example, one of the teachers might be "too good to be true" (a physical and mental marvel). One of the girls might be a serial killer. A janitor might do some pretty suspicious things, due to a serious and almost stalkerlike crush on a teacher. The principal might be one of Hayley Daniels' Anchors. If you have an Anchor around, you can take the strangeness further. Thieves who buried their treasure on the grounds ten years ago can return. A bear can wander down from the mountains onto campus.

Once the characters catch Sheila, if they do, they must decide whether to turn her in. (Discourage them from undergoing her treatment if you can, but don't veto the idea.) If they decide not to turn her in, she refuses their kindness. Rather, she insists the Powers not make themselves criminals if they're not going to go the whole way. If they decide to turn her in, perhaps because of her insistence, she has an escape plan. In this plan, she uses a Domain Word of Command -- she

has enough Handicaps to pick up 3 DMPs during this story -- and turns herself into a message. This zips off to an ally. She can't mail any other Nobles, but can use her powers freely on herself. Unless the Nobles stop her from escaping, they have a new ally or enemy.

If Sheila is caught, she may return later, freed by Iaziz in an attempt to reclaim Glutton. (Whether it decides to work with Iaziz or not, Glutton probably controls her now. She could even be physically dead.)

Seat of Judgment:

Most Nobles regularly hold court, pass judgment, and hear appeals. (If your Nobles don't ever do this, you'll have to plan this session out on your own -- but most player groups don't turn their Chancel into a prairie populated only by hedgehogs and the occasional wildfire.)

Powers with Realm 2+ can easily resolve disputes of fact. Powers with Aspect 2+ can read the faces (or motivations) of any disputants who are not deluded (or psychotically unbalanced.) The interesting cases, therefore, have political ramifications. Here are some examples, to sprinkle through the early part of this session :

- A competent subordinate transgressed severely against Chancel law. They might have killed a rival or slept with the wrong person (possibly consensually). They could have exchanged favorable treatment for general favors or -- for some real fun -- drunkenly and publicly insulted a Noble not their direct superior. (If the insulted Power ignores that last crime, that Power just violated the Code Fidelitatis.) A sufficiently severe punishment would compromise the subordinate's effectiveness. No one suitable is available to replace them. Ignoring the crime makes the Powers look bad.
- A Chancel inhabitant has developed a tumorous lump in the shape of an eight-pointed star. Having never offended the Nobles (to this person's knowledge), they bring their concern about this before the PCs. A cursory examination reveals that something developing inside the lump possesses the spiritus Dei, and thereby gives the petitioner the Noble immunity to direct miracles. Knowledgeable Powers, or Nobles who consult their Imperator, can determine that the lump contains a late-developing Allia. The petitioner (Charles Gavin, if you need a normal name) will be really upset if the Powers explain this to him, and want it removed forthwith. Early removal, however, probably damages the star-shaped stone growing within him. If ordered to keep it in until it achieves maturity, he grows first irascible and then greedy. He suggests that an environment of worry, fear, and pain can't possibly help the thing grow into anything good. (It's up to you if he's right. Still, the players won't be able to say you didn't warn them if they have him hauled off in chains to be a broodmare and it sprouts into something nasty.) If the PCs seem inclined to give Charles whatever he wants, you might point out that it's beneath their dignity to haggle with a human. They can, of course, give him whatever they like out of the goodness of their hearts, as long as it doesn't seem to be a direct caving in to his demands . . .
- A resident with a military mind offers to tiger-team the Chancel's security. (That is, she offers to see if she can penetrate it, and, either way, report a list of security holes found.) Of course, since she doesn't have the resources of an Excrucian, she's going to need help creating the infiltration force. Ideally, she'd determine the aid each Power gives her in a secret one-on-one conference, so that the result can surprise them all. Why should they let her do this?

"I'm damned good and easily motivated by offers of power and privilege." (Which is true.)

- An architect recommends himself to head up construction on temples to the PCs (or some equivalent.) His argument against the PCs simply creating such structures with a wave of their hand is that a gift always means more than a whim. Of course, having a mortal architect means that one temple might look more glorious than another . . .
- A Noble from another Emperor, whose African Chancel has a Convenient entry into the Bay Area, offers a trade agreement. He's studying how human genius develops under different environmental conditions, and wants human resources from the Chancel. He can trade products of his Chancel's "Advanced Robotics" Weird Science.
- A neopagan sorcerer who believes firmly that he must defend the world from supernatural menaces approaches the Court under false pretenses and then attacks the characters using the Catholic exorcism ritual, translated laboriously into its "original" Gaelic. Unfortunately for him, this has no effect whatsoever. (Wrong game universe.)

When the players are "in the groove" of handling these issues, a woman approaches them. She presents a domestic violence case that the lesser authorities "refused to deal with." (If the characters won't be interested in checking this out, try something more extreme -- "My husband is talking treason; help me calm him down before you have to kill him.") When the characters use basic Realm or Aspect techniques to judge her case, they can't read her at all. She's an Anchor -- to be precise, an Iaziz-shard's Anchor.

Iaziz knows that the PCs have come into contact with his spear, and he wants information. He might also want to rebuke them for earlier defeats, if they defeated him earlier. His plan works as follows. He intends the characters to investigate the Anchor's home, where they will find a gate opening into and out of the Chancel. This will lead the Powers into the hands of Arnaud and Yolet's Nobles, who intend to capture them by fair means or foul. (Probably foul -- i.e., not just the threat of overwhelming force but by holding a Bond or two hostage.) Iaziz has planted spiritual "listening devices" on Laurence Kimaiyo and Leslie Donahue.

The backstory here is as follows. Iaziz offered the two Emperors significant rewards if they deliver him Glutton, which he claimed the PCs carry with them. Yolet saw an opportunity to weaken the political positions of the PCI and Arnaud. It need only ally with Arnaud, find a forbidden artifact on the characters, and then allow Arnaud to trade it illicitly to an Excrucian. Arnaud saw the exact mirror of this opportunity in accepting the alliance. Both Emperors, as soon as their Powers capture the PCs, or fail to, send word to the warleaders of the deal the other is/was about to make.

Iaziz's plan hinges on timing. He expects the PCs to surrender information on Glutton, since they don't have it on them and can get political mileage out of reporting the other Powers' questions. He will hear this information due to the listening devices, and go and fetch it. Iaziz's plans almost always come together -- but not always. The messages could reach the warleaders of the Emperors before the PCs talk.

Arnaud's Powers realize first that they've been set up. The natural response is to switch sides. They may hate the PCs due to earlier events, but destroying the PCs' alliance to Yolet does more harm than assaulting them. Accordingly, they turn on Yolet's Powers. Yolet's Nobles, they explain, were dealing with an Excrucian Strategist. Arnaud's Powers "went along so they could witness this treason," and have "seen just about evidence enough." Yolet's Nobles cannot respond in kind. Hence, they argue that the characters are the traitors, concealing information about the Abhorrent Weapon. Before you go insane

running two arguing groups of NPCs, Joktan shows up. He offers the disputants a long look, and everyone goes silent. Then he defers to the PCs. "You are the injured parties on the scene;" and he gestures to the two groups. "Choose one." Naturally, he means the group on which the lash of the law will fall.

Note that Yolet's alliance with the characters' Imperator does not necessarily end if the Powers point Joktan at Yolet's Nobles. Nobles don't make decisions for Imperators, after all.

Where Do You Go From Here?

At this point, the characters should have a handful of enemies, allies, and in-Chancel contacts -- some of these categories overlapping. They've been introduced to at least one McGuffin of interest. Start running character-driven plots with themes matching the characters' Estates, if you haven't already.

As a rule, characters should deal with a flower rite every two to five sessions. Sometimes this is a small detail complicating a more unusual plot, and sometimes it is a long story of itself. Similarly, the PCs should deal with their Anchor's lives, the affairs of the Chancel, and the plots of their personal enemies every two to five sessions each. With the rest of your plot, you can expand the setting.

Oh, and . . . what does happen at the Autumnal Metamorphosis?