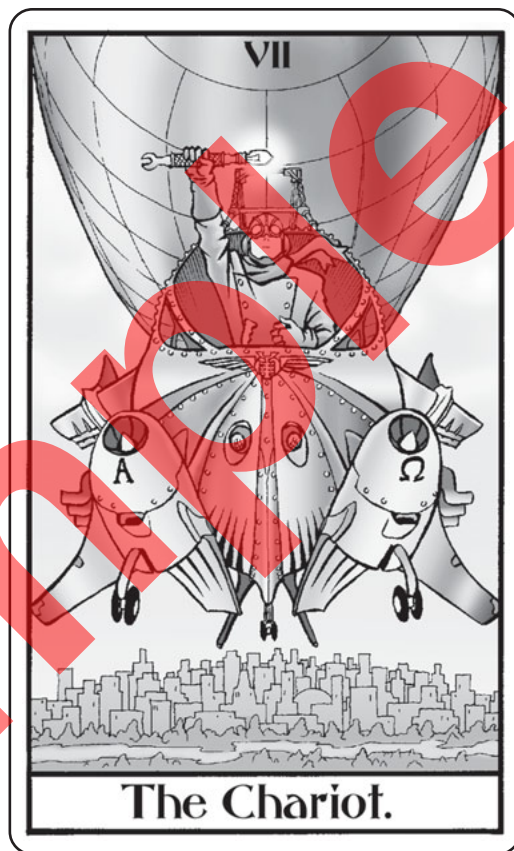


T R A D I T I O N B O O K :

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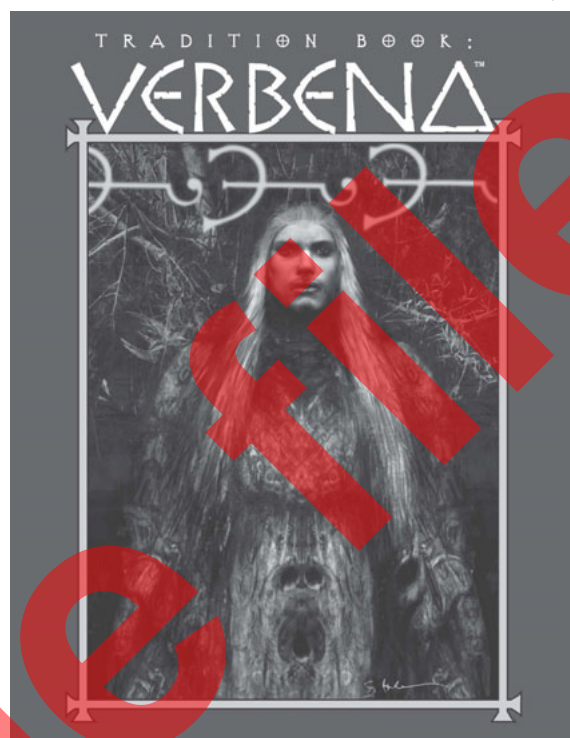
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⊕ OVERTURE: WAVES WITHIN



Southern California, 1978:

“What a heap of junk!”

“That things posed to roll, or tunnel into the ground, or what?”

“Looks like fuckin’ Buck Rogers or something!”

Ace whipped out a rag and dusted off his ride with well-practiced swipes. Not because of razzing from gringo hot-rodders — leaving them in his dust was just going to be the icing on the cake. It was the dust itself that worried him. He didn’t know what would happen if extraneous matter got caught in the field when he kicked it into high gear. Residual ionization had already coated the hull with magnetized dust, covering up his cousin’s fine-

ass paint job. Blue flames licking out of the grill against a deep red background, with “La Fuente del Ritmo — Baja ’78” written in a florid script above the fenders. When his cousin had said that the color scheme seemed backward (“Everyone knows flames are red, man!”), he had tried to explain about light-speed, relativity and the Doppler effect.

“Where’s the dingleballs? Thought you beaners always hung them dingleballs on yer rods!”

Carefully wiping out the air intakes, Ace couldn’t help but chuckle. The scoops were absurdly huge, mounted in the trunk, facing backward like rocket nozzles. *Yeah, I guess she does look like some kind of goofy Flash Gordon contraption*, he thought.

“So, we doin’ this already, or what?”

His opponent, tall and lanky, blond and tan, revved his jacked-up Mustang and drummed erratically on a chrome chain steering wheel. Ace slid into place and flipped the ignition toggle. La Fuente coughed to life, blasting dusty air forward through the grill.

“Hey, ya stupid beaner! Y’know ya got yer fan in backward?”

“Don’t you know nothin’, man? He’s gonna jet-propel on refried bean farts!”

Ace ignored the insults, watching how the dust in the air moved. Out the front, around back to the air scoops, muddying the sunset in the rearview mirror. *Perfect.* A toroidal field, like a doughnut turning itself inside out, channeled through every system in the car — combustive, electrical, heating, lights and sound — all attuned in perfect synchronization. As long as the central internal waveform retained modular coherence, it should move forward without the slightest trace of air drag, friction or even a sonic boom. After experimenting with various sorts of modulators, Ace had finally decided on a variegated electrosonic pulse running in a continuous loop — that is, his new eight-track tape of Carlos Santana’s *Caravanserai*. Now, as long as the intake filters don’t clog...

The starter flag was a monogrammed hanky held by his opponent’s squeeze, a squeaky Barbie doll in a tube-top and cutoffs. When the flag dropped, the Mustang fishtailed forward amid a shriek of burning rubber. Supremely confident, Ace let him take the lead, carefully putting La Fuente into gear while slowly twisting a rheostat taped to his gearshift handle. The outer surface of the toroidal field flowed back faster.

So intent was Ace on monitoring the movement of the field that he didn’t see the stunned expression on his opponent’s face as the Mustang fell behind. Nor did he notice the momentary blur of the finish line as he passed it one tenth of a second later. Nor did he realize that he had left the ground entirely until the horizon ahead started to curve and sink beneath the hood.

After a brief bout of scrotum-tightening panic, Ace took stock of his situation. He and his hot rod were both intact and seemed to be functioning smoothly, the motor thrumming as though happy to play a part in Santana’s masterful percussion section.

The only sense of motion was derived from the seemingly slow roll of the Earth’s surface far below. He was passing over a broad river that he guessed to be the Colorado. His mirrors showed fading red; ahead was cool dark blue. *Is this the Doppler effect?* he wondered. *No, I can’t be approaching light speed. It’s just the sunset behind me.* A layer of haze distorted the sun’s lower half; its upper portion was clear and painfully bright. With a shock Ace realized that he was leaving the earth’s atmosphere. *If I’m all the way out in space, how can I be breathing? Shouldn’t I be blowing up like a balloon and exploding or something?*

That didn’t happen. In fact, he felt wind on his face, whipping his long black hair into his eyes. Ace relaxed, enjoying the song of the wind that seemed to be flowing straight through him, as though composed of some finer stuff than mere air. Leaning back, he was astounded by how many stars he could see, even more than from the desert at night. The whole sky looked alive.

Suddenly the horizon loomed ahead, straightening and rushing toward him as he reached the apex of his trajectory and began a nose dive back to earth. His stomach twisted in protest. The brake pedal nearly bent as he pressed both feet into it, arching his whole body. Nothing. *Why didn’t I think about how to stop this thing? What the fuck am I gonna do now?* Frantic, he tried to downshift while thumbing the rheostat backward. The engine went into a coughing fit, shaking the car, now fast and now slow, following a logarithmic scale he was too panicked to register.

There was water directly below, and he was rushing toward the tip of a huge peninsula with a rather suggestive coastline that any suggestible adolescent male would recognize. Then the ground was rushing up too fast to make out any more detail, blurred by inconceivable speed into an engulfing tie-dye rosette, but at its center the impact site came into focus, opening like a stone flower to receive him. It looked like some kind of palace courtyard made of enormous rough-hewn rocks, with thick walls, a square tower, pylons topped with globes and crescents, and even tables and chairs like Flintstones furniture. A few yards from ground zero, framed by one of the large irregular crescents, stood a human figure.

In the last instant of his headlong plummet, Ace made out the details of this figure. It appeared to be

wearing a bulky metal space suit adorned with tubes and valves. Inside the bubble-helmet was a pale, gaunt and clean-shaven face, around 10 years older than Ace, with an expression that combined grim determination with peevish annoyance. The figure held a wide-mouthed ray gun pointed directly at

Ace. Purplish light from the gun's barrel pulsated in time to La Fuente's lurching engine.

Ace shot through the large stone crescent, ready to plow into the earth with meteoric force, but when his bumper was about two feet from the ground, something very strange happened.

Sample file



INTRODUCTION STRANGENESS AND UTOPIA

The nature of things is in the habit of concealing itself.
—Heraclitus, “Fragment 123”



The Sons of Ether often seem directionless, eccentric and delusional. The Technocracy would tell you that Ether Science merely trades mystical superstition for crank theories or ideals that inevitably fall to stark pragmatism. Sometimes, they're even correct.

Directionless? They are at times, but that's because the Tradition has never bowed to a timetable, a commercial vision or a political power. Eccentric? Definitely. Life is an experiment, and if it's as liberated as Science should be, then it's bound to produce some unusual personalities. Delusional? Mad Scientists aside (and the Tradition can deal with *that* problem on its own, thank you very much), the Sons of Ether will tell you that they look at all the variables in their work — including the individual. Technocrats set

themselves up for a fall when they fail to realize the importance of the observer's will, which is why so many of their proud innovations are revealed to be fraudulent or filled with dangerous side effects. Reproducible experiments might regulate reality, but Fortean phenomena, psychic Resonance and enigmatic cosmological principles will always interfere.

In fact, Ether Science is more than a set of discarded theories, pulp shticks and wild speculation. It's a gauntlet thrown down to the Technocracy, the scientific establishment and reality itself. It rejects reducing nature to a set of predictable mechanisms than can be endlessly recombined, because it knows that such underpinnings are false and always on the verge of being overturned. The truth recognized in the *Kitab al-Alacir* is a simple, exhilarating and terrifying one: *Everything is true. Anything is possible.*

THEME: THE SAVING POWER OF THE IMPOSSIBLE



As Armageddon looms, old assumptions have to be cast away before they render humanity helpless to act. As long as the Sleepers believe that they are powerless to change the universe, they will always be its victims. Now, more than ever, the Sons of Ether need to introduce Science that defies what the Consensus thinks is impossible. Cosmic forces are aligning against the survival of a species that believes that it can do nothing but wait, consume the last of its riches and appeal to its leaders to act. The Technocracy is conflicted between its desire to save humanity from harm and its will to exert control — impulses that

now work at cross-purposes instead of for the greater good of the Masses.

Enter the Sons of Ether. Theirs is a Science that rejects limits and immutable laws. It could feed billions, colonize space and fight off the worst horrors of the World of Darkness, but in saving humanity, it could give it the power to destroy itself — to wreck the very foundations of the Tellurian. Etherites realize this, which is why they're so idealistic. Limitless power needs to be guided by an ethos, or else it becomes a terrible weapon. Nevertheless, the time for half-measures is over. Change is on the horizon, and the Tradition has the tools to prepare humanity for it.

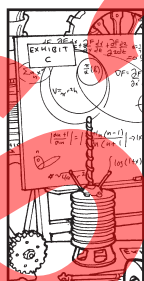
MOOD: REALIZING SCIENCE'S POTENTIAL



Ether Science is powerful and diverse, but without mass acceptance, it shares many of the flaws of occult belief systems. Scientists must be initiated into their craft and advance based on intensely personal insights. Dynamic Science is hard to reproduce, it requires years of study, and it requires discretion and subtlety to use effectively. As the world races toward its destiny, the flowering of Science must take two forms. First, new Sons of Ether need to break away from Tradition dogma, selfish motives and infighting. They need to create genuinely new inventions and push the

borders of the possible instead of recycling antique theories for their own sake. Second, they need to find a way to share these revelations with the Sleepers, to break them from a pessimism that reduces innovation to a commodity and denies that any other way of living is even possible. New Science needs to contradict the established norms, or else its possibilities will never be unlocked for general use. Quantum physics was the first “great contradiction,” but now it needs to be challenged and expanded in turn so that Sleepers will see that many theories exist, and they can use the ones that suit them in their own quests for knowledge and survival.

CONTENTS



This book provides revised and expanded information on playing the Sons of Ether: the other Enlightened Scientists of **Mage: The Ascension**. The following chapters detail how Ether Scientists organize, study and even use “magic.”

Chapter One: The Eight-Track Method takes us on a literal ride through the Tradition's history, ethos and relationship with other occult societies, Scientists and the mysteries of the World of Darkness. Ernesto C. Amanguale takes a trip to the end of the world and learns that his Science might be all that stands between disaster and Ascension.

Chapter Two: The Essence of Science introduces us to the Tradition and its Science. The Sons of Ether are about more than just pulp style and anachronistic theories. Their factions, organization and approach to Science (or magic) are all presented. And even though pulp isn't the end-all of Ether culture, it certainly has its place. Adventure never goes out of style.

Chapter Three: The Dynamic Faculty concentrates on tips for playing a Son of Ether, including notable Scientists, ideas for all-Etherite games and a sample cabal that's ready to be used in your own **Mage** games. Ready-to-play templates round out the chapter, allowing you to run a Son of Ether right from the book.

LEXICON

Aretus: “The Virtuous,” legendary sage and reputed author of the *Kitab al-Alacir*. Thought to be an allegorical or mythic character by some.

Chair: An Etherite Master, so called because of a semi-official position that she would normally occupy. Some specific Chairs have their own titles, responsibilities and requirements for eligibility.

Doctor: All Sons of Ether can claim the title of “Doctor,” either from pre-existing credentials or thanks to completing an Etherite apprenticeship (which is, of course, equivalent, if not superior, to any mundane education). Etherites who earn the title only from the Tradition are sometimes frowned upon by those who earned ordinary credentials first.

ElectrodynE Engineers: Name of the Sons of Ether during the 19th century when they re-established their identity as a distinct organization.

Emeritus: An Archmage.

Ether: The “Fifth Essence” of reality upon which the rest of the cosmos is founded. Ultimately, Ether is fundamental and imperceptible, but offshoots (“lesser Ethers”) such as Quintessence can be measured.

Etherite: Informal, popular term for a member of the Sons of Ether. Favored by Scientists who would like to divest themselves of the sexist connotations of the Tradition’s proper name.

Fortean: Unusual phenomena for which there is evidence but no known cause, such as rains of frogs or psychic phenomena. Used by the Sons of Ether to uncover hidden natural laws and to prove the Parmenidean doctrine.

Heraclitan: Theories in the *Kitab al-Alacir* similar to those proposed by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Heraclitan doctrine holds that reality is in constant flux as opposing metaphysical forces destroy each other and recombine into new phenomena.

House Golo: Medieval branch of the Hermetic House Ex Miscellanea devoted to studying the *Kitab al-Alacir*. Precursors to the modern Sons of Ether.

Kitab al-Alacir: “Book of the Ether.” Arabic name of a Greek text that espouses theories about

the Ether, human knowledge and the nature of reality. The book contains the central theories of Ether Science, but there are many divergent interpretations. This Primer Grimoire is loaned to virtually all budding Scientists and is known to spark Awakenings.

Parmenidean: Theories in the *Kitab al-Alacir* similar to those of Parmenides, a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher. Parmenidean physics holds that the cosmos is a continuous entity, without any void. This cosmos holds every phenomena, both “real” and “unreal.” Therefore, some common medium must exist to support reality without emptiness (the Ether), and laws that assert that something is impossible must be categorically false.

The Parmenideans (or Pupils of Parmenides) formed both a Greek cult and Renaissance society, both of which might have ties to the modern Sons of Ether.

Professor: An Adept-ranked Scientist capable of supervising a lab and directing Researchers in the field.

Reductionism: Scientific and philosophical tenet that holds that all possible phenomena can be reduced to a set of consistent, explainable mechanisms. Rejected by the Sons of Ether on the basis that phenomena are infinite, dynamic and possessed of simultaneous rational explanations.

Researcher: An Ether Scientist capable of independent field research but not the supervision of other Scientists. In Tradition terms, roughly equal to a Disciple.

Science: When capitalized, Science refers to Etherite Awakened inventions, research and theories, as opposed to Sleeper or Technocratic science. Also called Awakened Science, Ether Science or Dynamic Science.

Scientist: A general term of an Etherite of any rank. Usually capitalized.

Specialist: A Scientist who uses a narrow range of linear Effects; what mystics call a sorcerer or psychic.



CHAPTER ONE THE EIGHT- TRACK METHOD

BAND ONE: STONE FLOWER



"I have discovered the secrets of the pyramids, and have found out how the Egyptians and the ancient builders in Peru, Yucatan, and Asia, with only primitive tools, raised and set in place blocks of stone weighing many tons!"

—Edward Leedskalnin, builder of Coral Castle France, 2003:

Within an ornate recessed cupboard in a disused wing of a large mansion, an antique telephone rang. It continued to ring for some time, while heavy, perfectly even footsteps approached down the long hallway, pausing at each room and juncture as though searching for the source of the sound.

Meanwhile, light and sound poured from the mansion's expansive greenhouse. Candles and oil lamps hung on chains from the ceiling or swung on jointed telescoping arms, their light intensified and focused by lenses and reflectors to where a figure sat amid a cacophony of whirring wheels, grinding gears, coughing combustion devices and shrieking steam-pipes. The figure, a young man clad in insulated apron and gloves, perched upon a high stool and glared through thick goggles at the glowing core of a dismantled armature on the

worktable before him. Behind him, a second figure resembling an oversized tin soldier entered the greenhouse, its posture ramrod-straight, its stride thumping a metronomically exact rhythm until it stopped just behind the young man.

It said, "Telephone call for you, sir."

The young man covered his work with a dust-cloth and turned, removing his goggles. "A what?"

The tin soldier's words emerged from a bellows in its chest, passing through a series of tiny horns, whistles, tuned strings and rubber baffles that produced a fairly intelligible imitation of human speech. They did, however, tend to mangle the phonemes of the French language. "A telephone call."

The young man blew out some of the nearest lights and pulled a few levers, silencing some of the noisier machines. "How is that possible?"

"A simple electrical apparatus, sir, transmitting sound in the form of—"

"Must have missed one," the young man muttered, removing his gloves and apron. He followed the tin soldier into the old wing of his family estate to where the old-fashioned receiver dangled from the cupboard. A chair and end table had been dusted off and placed nearby, the only furniture in the empty room.