

magnificat anima mea dominum

w e b e n h a n



In the beginning was the word,  
and the word was with God,  
and the word was God.  
- John 1:1

oculi nostri ad **2** dominum nostrum

c e m e n t :

# the magic of the cards

or

of the pictures  
that determine fate

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## character creation

Creating a character for **Engel** using the Arkana System is a fast and easy task. It's always possible to deal extensively with character creation by writing down your character's life story up to the start of the game, by discussing the most important stations of your character's career with the storyteller and by determining modes of behavior your character shows. It is up to the individual player to decide if he wants to put in this kind of extra work. As we stress the more narrative aspects of roleplaying, we propose a process of character creation that is as simple as possible. The fewer rules there are in a game, the easier the decision to break one of them or not.

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## basic thoughts

If you have decided to play **Engel**, this decision inevitably leads to the question: What – or rather, whom – do I want to play? Obviously, there is a simple answer – this game has been designed to allow you to play one of the Messengers of the Lord who fight against the abominable spawn of the Lord of the Flies and protect mankind from cunning Heretics. Future publications will offer players ample opportunity to travel through ravaged Europe on a shank's mare and experience thrilling adventures as Grimriders, Templars, Monachs or merchants. For the time being, though, we would like to ask you

to focus on the heroes of this storytelling game: the Engel. Which Angelic Order do you want to belong to? Would you like to chase the Dreamseed back to the dark abysses of Hell they came from by exorcising them with a mighty flaming sword? If this suits your fancy, then you should decide to become a Gabrielite. If you enjoy safeguarding the secrets of the Church and joining battle from the side-rows, a Ramielite would be a much better choice for you. Or do you have more down-to-earth adventures in mind – relying entirely on yourself, alone with nature and its numerous hazards, persevering, swift, tough and nimble? Then the Urielites would be your Order of choice. If you want to face a real challenge, have a go at leading a fellowship (and thus, your fellow players). Become a shining example, a decision-maker. Do not hesitate to play a Michaelite. Or do you want to be the Raphaelite whose healing hands ensure that your fellowship will return to your Himmel safe and sound? Go ahead. In any case, you will become part of that greater whole which will make your game unique.

You should not be afraid to talk to your fellow players and your storyteller if you do not have a clue what character you want to play. Maybe others' preferences can help you make your own choice, or the storyteller can lend you a hand in assessing yourself and find the archetype best suited for your personal tastes. After you have made your decision, write it down on a piece of paper or the character sheet for the Arkana System. If the storyteller should decide to run a game in which you did not have the opportunity to give any thought to your character because you have been thrust headlong into the ongoing plot (which is not unusual for this game at all), you do not have to read any further. If, on the other hand, your storyteller leaves it up to you to define your character or allows you to play a "finished" Engel, the following questions can help you to come up with a character entirely of your own.

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## what is my name?

No matter whether you begin play as an Engel or some homeless child living on the streets or a peasant tilling his field, your name will lend a soul and a face to your character. Hence, you should choose your character's name wisely to avoid being annoyed about it later. The section **On Names** in **Chapter Two: Urbi et Orbi** in the corebook could be of help in that regard.

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## how old am I?

This simple question can eventually lead to the answers to several others. The way your character acts towards others, his world view, his profession and his hobbies are certainly going to be influenced by your character's age. In **Engel**, the player characters

are children of the ages 6-16. If you think of your own childhood for a moment, you will remember how varied your impressions of and views on a wide variety of topics were at that time in your life. At some point in the future, however, you might want to play older characters that follow other vocations.

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## what do I look like?

Another important aspect of character creation is your character's appearance. Hair color, eye color, gender, build and general appearance are individual features that distinguish your character from others. You should go into even greater detail and determine weight and height of your alter ego. At this point, there is no such thing as "too elaborate," and you should not forget to include quirks and flaws in your description, as they lend depth and credibility to your character.

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## how do I act?

Of course, it is up to you to act the way you deem appropriate in any situation during the game. Keep in mind that you play a role, however – while impersonating your character you should show at least some behavior that is completely different from your own. Therefore, it is often helpful to use notes in order not to forget how your character behaves under certain circumstances, allowing you to embody your character as realistically and consistently as possible. Just like in the case of your character's appearance, you should include idiosyncrasies and mannerisms in the description of your character's behavior – they can help you to make your hero appear even more life-like and unique. Do not overdo it, though. A drooling, butt-ugly, one-legged Engel with a speech impediment is definitely a little too much and will only serve as a laughing-stock for the other players, rather than adding more depth to an epic story.

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## where do I live?

Your character's social/geographical background should be of particular interest to you. Does your character live in the countryside in a small village consisting of two or three huts and an unfruitful rice-field as the second son of an unsuccessful peasant who lost his last belongings in a game of cards? Or is he the future heir of a vast Diadoche empire whose pockets are stuffed with mana and who is always surrounded by an entourage of loyal servants? His origin and his social rank are very important aspects of your character. They determine many of his actions as well as many of his views regarding the trivial events of daily life.

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 who are my

attachment figures?

To integrate your character into a social environment, you need certain clues that help you come up with a complete picture of his attachment figures. Who are the parents of your characters? Are they still alive? Can he remember them? Who are his friends? Who is his girlfriend? Does he have any other relatives who are still alive? Do they live nearby or in another city? Are there people your character cannot put up with? Is there anyone your character hates or who is secretly in love with your character? This list could probably be continued endlessly, but neither you nor your storyteller will benefit from the fact that you have given considerable thought to the second cousin of the cousin of your character's granny only to realize in the end that your character can never be the protagonist of a story due to his excessive involvement in family affairs. The essentials will certainly do.

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 what are my

strengths?

Here's a list of possible strengths for your character. In order not to break with the more descriptive form of character creation mentioned above, all strengths can complete sentences starting with "I am ...", "I can ...", "I have ..." or "I know how to..."

This list is in no way exhaustive, and players and storytellers alike are encouraged to add strengths of their own or expand on the ones below. You should not choose too many strengths, as this would make play more difficult for players and storytellers alike. Moreover, it makes sense to keep positive and negative traits in balance – once again, this lends more depth and credibility to your character. The traits given below are not used to roll a certain number of dice, increase them by spending experience points or apply any other game mechanism to them. Rather, they are abstract props for you and your storyteller that can be incorporated into a story at will. Keep in mind that the strengths and weaknesses you choose have to be consistent with your character's life story - otherwise, all your work so far has totally been in vain. You should always strive for a more consistent background for your character rather than one or two additional strengths.

acrobatic

*Slowly but without hesitating, Laiel moved across the thin rope foot by foot. Since she was not able to spread her wings in the narrow crack between*

*the two rock-faces, the young Urielite had had to find another way to escape the vigilant gaze of the guards high up on the plateau and down at the entrance of the canyon where the camp of the Heretics was hidden. The rope danced in the updrafts between the rocks, and Laiel had quite a hard time to balance on it. But as a child, she had excelled at far more daring feats with her parents. Why should she feel any fear while walking a tightrope a ridiculous 150 meters above ground?*

Walking a tightrope, walking on your hands, free climbing, juggling - all this is second nature to your character. Whether he performs at a carnival, at the court of a feudal lord or just for fun, your character shows excellent control over his body.

artistic talent

*The interior of the "Le Loup" remained in total silence for a moment after the last notes of Kora's song had faded away between the soot-blackened ceiling joists. Then the applause erupted. People were cheering. Kora smiled and looked at Karl. "Did you like it?"*

*The innkeep nodded. She had sung beautifully... and his guests would pay for it in cash.*

Your character has an artistic talent of a musical or visual nature.

athletic

*When the fellowship entered the Ab's antechamber, they noticed that Daniel and Adoniel were missing. [Where are Daniel and Adoniel, my brother?] the leader of the fellowship asked the tall, silver-haired Preserver of Knowledge after she had connected their minds. Malloriel shrugged. [I don't have a clue, Ariel], he replied, adding: [Daniel has been with a brother from his Order when I last saw him, and regarding Adoniel's whereabouts...] Suddenly, the door opened, and Adoniel stood on the threshold panting. He had been running all the way from the foot of the Himmel up to here.*

No hurdle is too high, no trench too deep and no distance too far for your character. This strength includes a basic familiarity with all common sports. In a time when vehicles running on muscle power are rare and vehicles with engines are but a legend, convenience is a luxury; distances – from errands to expeditions – are mostly covered on foot. Good shape, endurance and agility can be helpful in such endeavors.

backstabbing

*Andreas was hard on the thief's heels. When the skinny boy disappeared in one of the shanty homes on the riverbank, the guardsmen was certain to have him cornered. He hurried towards the door of the hut and opened it. In doing so, he ripped a nest of wasps from the ceiling the thief surely had known about. That must have been the reason why*

he had opened the door only a tiny bit. “A trap!” was the last thought on Andreas’ mind before the angry insects started to buzz around his head...

Your character had always been the runt of the litter, and when he saw no other option, he began using his wits to get at what his muscles could not provide. He learned to make up for physical weakness with cunning and perfidy, hatching plots with which he could fleece those stronger than him. Your character has an ignoble, albeit very practical talent. He can start a surprise attack from behind at an opponent, often deciding a violent conflict in his own favor before the actual fighting even starts.

## brave

*“I don’t know whom I should send,” Ab Guillaume murmured and paced the length of his private chamber again. “We know nothing about this Heretic’s forces and followers.”*

*“I could go, Father,” Aadoniel said, his gaze unwavering.*

*Guillaume nodded. He had almost expected Aadoniel to volunteer...*

Your character is very courageous. The word “fear” is not part of his vocabulary. When it comes to reconnaissance missions in unexplored areas or volunteering for a special operation literally choked with hazards, your hero is guaranteed to be in the front rank.

## brawl

*Wittgenstein’s hand chopped down on the Grimrider’s neck. He rammed the index and the middle finger of his left hand into the eyes of the collapsing man - just as a precautionary measure. The man in the black armor did not have time to react.*

*Wittgenstein’s face remained completely motionless, as the horrified Grimrider - who had been so arrogant and cocky mere moments ago - clasped his face in his hands. With the knuckles of his right hand, Wittgenstein shattered the man’s larynx. So much for the alleged advantages of body armor.*

Your character knows all the tricks of unarmed combat - from barroom brawls to ritualized duels, from throws and jabs to kicking and clawing. Talented brawlers are feared warriors, as they always come up with new, dirty techniques to incapacitate their opponents in the most painful way possible.

The storyteller should not refrain from using various westerns and easterns as sources of inspiration. One or the other dan in a martial art surely helps as well.

## child of nature

*“He has vanished! As if the ground had swallowed him!”*

*Angrily, the Komtur jerked at the reins his black stallion to make his steed turn around. “Back*

*to the village. One chosen one more or less - who cares?”*

*After having waited for a little while until he was sure that the Grimriders were really gone, Enno returned to the surface. As soon as his head had risen from the water - hidden by the reed growing in thick patches on the shore of the small pond in the woods -, he spat out the cane of reed he had used as a snorkel and allowed himself a small, triumphant smile.*

Your character has grown up in and with nature. He knows the animals of the forest as well as the plants and trees that grow there. He has experience in the extraction and application of plant toxins and knows which trap to use to catch a specific kind of animal. With regards to hiding in a forest, a field or in the mountainside, your character knows the best means of camouflage.

## comic

*“Well,” Willi said and looked around the circle of his fellow novices. “What’s the difference between an eel and an Inquisitor?” Curious silence was his only answer. “You know,” he continued, “one is cold, slimy and repulsive, and the other is an eel.”*

Your character is a buffoon. Even in the most dangerous situations, he finds time for a witty remark. Cracking jokes has become second nature to him, and he often tries to be funny without even in the most inappropriate of moments. It’s not easy to be funny on command, and there is nothing worse than to hear a comment like “Well, my character just said something really funny - simply think of something funny he just said, guys, because I don’t have a clue what he actually said!” several times during the course of an adventure. As with all other aspects of the Arkana System, this strength relies on your acting skills and how you use it in the game. So at least try to be funny, even if it does not work all the time. You can also make snide remarks, although this is not exactly the same as being funny.

## disarm

*Annaiel was not sure how long she could parry her opponent’s attacks without hurting him. The Cardinal had made it very clear to her that he wanted the Diadoche alive under any circumstances. And the Cardinal could get very displeased if he did not get what he wanted. Hence, Annael had to default to a new strategy. She parried one of the giant’s next blows, flicked her wrist quickly to get the pommel of her sword behind her enemy’s cross-guard, and after a short but strong jerk, the Diadoche’s weapon sailed high through the air, landing in the mud a few feet away.*

In many situations during the game, you’ll want to end a conflict without being forced to resort to violent means by disarming your opponent in order to ask him some questions. If you have chosen this strength for your character, he can use his own

weapon to disarm his opponents, their weapons falling harmlessly to the ground.

At this point, the mood of a given situation can range from humorously absurd to tragically comic. It is up to the storyteller to assess the situation and work out the most dramatic effect imaginable.

## dodge

*The roaring buzz of huge dragonfly wings grew louder as the monsters came closer and closer. Naziel's mind was drawn back to harsh reality by the unwholesome drone. The Dreamseed had caught up, and the Engel imagined he could already hear the eerie clicking noises of their conversation right next to him. Probably, he would have been able to defend himself against one of the demons, but he could never defeat five of them. Naziel only could think of one way out of this mess. Fast as lightning, he turned and dove towards the creature closest to him. Chasing Naziel, the other demons turned as fast as their massive bodies allowed. It would happen any second now. And yes, the giant dragonfly demon right in front of him opened its maw, spitting a stream of glowing lava as thick as a man's arm towards the veteran Gabrielite. By a hair's breadth, Naziel ducked away under the stream, and it hit the first of the creatures chasing him from behind with full force. Screaming, the creature trundled to the ground. The Gabrielite had just managed to win himself a few minutes to catch his breath.*

This strength allows the character to dodge missiles or blows. It requires that the user knows that he is being attacked and thus has the opportunity to take action to counter the attack. If the attacker has traits like Backstabbing or Sneak Attack, Dodge can only be used if your character also has a trait such as Intuition or Watchful. Even then, your character must have announced that he wants to use this trait before the perfidious attack occurred. Rely on your storyteller to judge the situation properly.

## excellent fighter

*Fast as lightning, he dodged to the right. Hiob's second blow also missed. Philippo drew his dagger from his belt. Snorting angrily, he made his opponent back away a few steps with a series of quick stabs and slashes. Hiob had nothing to oppose the Grimrider's dagger. He could only try to dodge Philippo's skillful attacks and wait for an opportunity to place another blow of his own.*

Regardless of your social background – whether you are a nomadic scrap dealer, a veteran Templar or a proud Gabrielite –, your life has always been one of violent fights. Your weapon has become your most trusted companion at a very young age. Club, hasta, cleaver, harpoon or even the feared flaming sword that brings God's wrath down to Earth – you are familiar with the use of all these weapons. Moreover, this does not mean that a table-leg or

other improvised weapon would not be enough for you to stand your ground in battle...

## folklore

*"There is an ancient legend," Rahel murmured and examined the blackish lump on Jana's palm. "A greedy ferryman in distant Vienna once helped Death to cross the River Danube because he was so bent on Death's riches. And when he looked at his palm after Death had left, he saw a plague-spot where the coins had touched it." She looked intently at the ferrywoman. "What about your recent passengers?"*

*Turning pale, the young woman clutched her hand to her chest.*

Your character knows countless myths and legends about all things and events imaginable (and sometimes even unimaginable). Many of these stories certainly are nothing but superstition, but some legends also hide a kernel of truth that could maybe be helpful to your character at some point during the game.

## heraldry

*"You are not allowed to go in there." The Monach stepped in the way of the tall man with the patch. Now it would show whether Wittgenstein's hazardous research in the old rolls of arms would yield fruit... he showed the gatekeeper the medallion. It was engraved with an image that basically was the open hand of the Raphaelites – bearing a stigma, however. The edges of the wound were highlighted with red finish for dramatic effect.*

*A sudden realization springing up in his mind, the man at the gate opened his eyes wide. "Please forgive me. I didn't know..."*

*The rest of his murmured apology died away, when he stepped aside to let Wittgenstein enter.*

Your hero is very knowledgeable in regards to the different arms, emblems and banners of the Angelitic Church as well as the Diadoche houses. Maybe he even knows something about the secret signs and sigils used by the Angelitic lodges and other secret societies.

## intimidate

*Standing on the platform of the Himmel, Adariel looked over the heads of his brothers and sisters. None of them dared to even glance at him. Everything about him radiated a very special aura. Was it pride or self-confidence, zeal or wrath? Whatever it was, it took full effect, especially among the younger Engel.*

Your character's appearance gives many others good reason to leave the room or lower their voices considerably as soon as he has entered. Maybe this is because of his stone-like face on which not even a single muscle moves or because of his energetic, steady gait that belies his grim determination. It

does not matter why everyone tries to stay out of your character's way – the fact alone keeps him and his fellowship out of trouble very often.

## intuition

*Varcanel walked through Madrid's narrow alleyways, watching the colorful hustle and bustle of the people around him. Suddenly, there was this strange tingling sensation at the back of his head. He whirled around, and his sinewy hand grabbed the wrist of the boy who had just tried to touch Varcanel's plumage.*

*"I did not mean to steal anything from you. I give you my word, oh chosen one!" the boy stammered. "I only wanted..."*

*"A feather as talisman, I guess?" muttered Varcanel and let go of the boy.*

Sometimes your character does certain things even he does not understand entirely. For example, he turns around in the right moment when somebody wants to attack him from behind, or he is standing behind a wall when an explosion tears the house in front of him apart. Whatever it is that determines his fate from time to time - a higher force of powers of his own -, it surely saved his life more than once.

## lightning reflexes

*"Catch!" shouted Malloriel to the Gabrielite above the din of battle, throwing his one-edged curved blade in one fluid motion towards Varcanel who could not make full use of his lance in the throng of combatants surrounding him. Gracefully, the Engel dropped his weapon, caught the Ramielite's blade and ended his light-speed blur of motion with a powerful roundhouse blow to his opponent's head before the latter could even draw his sword from its scabbard.*

Your character has become one with his weapon in long years of extensive training. Seldom does one of your enemies realize that you have already raised your weapon for a fatal blow when they try to oppose you. Other actions that generally require fast reflexes also are comparatively easy tasks for you.

Using this strength, the storyteller has ample opportunity to enhance the mood of a story. In scenes like the one described above, many layers of different dramatic narrative techniques can overlap. Describe the scene in slow motion or only illustrate how the situation is resolved in the end to emphasize properly the incredible speed of the character's actions.

## linguistic talent

*When Malloriel looked up to the colorful rosette of the cathedral half-sunken in the mud and overgrown by mangroves, he saw the inscription below it that still shone in splendid beaten gold as if the Lord had worked a miracle here. "Gloria in Excelsis Deo et in Terra Pax Hominibus". Praised be the Lord Above and Peace be Given to Man on*

*Earth... how much this was in accordance with his own wishes...*

*The Ramielite went down to his knees and bowed his head to pray.*

Your character understands more languages than merely Common. Maybe he has learned Latin or he knows one of the pre-Flood languages such as Greek, French or Spanish for some reason. He will certainly be able to understand one or the other regional dialect.

## local knowledge

*"How many Templars are chasing us, Kristof?" Elio asked the fat man he pulled through the maze of Roma Aeterna's winding streets in a rickshaw.*

*"Two, or maybe three of them – on foot. Can we escape them?"*

*"Of course. Straight ahead and to the right, there is a pawnshop, and behind that pawnshop is an alleyway where we have a chance to get rid of them."*

*The old rickshaw moaned when Elio made a sharp turn to the right. The ground of the alleyway was covered with dirt and dead rats. "What are you up to?" Kristof shouted from the rickshaw's cushioned bench, his fingers dug deep into the upholstery.*

*Elio frowned and pulled the vehicle through the alleyway at break-neck speed onto a crowded market place. "Two blocks in this direction we will take another turn to the right. We are headed for a vacant apartment house where we can hide in. We will leave the rickshaw here and go there on foot..."*

Your character has traveled a lot and has seen many places. On the other hand, he might only be intimately familiar with a very small area (such as his home village, for example). This strength should be useful when you want to make an escape or hide in the area you are familiar with. It could also mean that your character easily finds a good inn or tavern or maybe even knows his way around the palace of the local Diadoche.

## long memory

*The man shot Sarinael a quick glance before scurrying across the pontoon bridge. The young Ramielite had seen his face before... if she could only remember where...*

*"Got it!" she suddenly shouted out loud without noticing that people started to turn their heads to stare at her in surprise. His clothes had been all different back then... but still, the man on the bridge was Wolf, the Electi who had defected to the Disciples of the Morningstar. Having heard her shouting, he had already started to run...*

Large parts of whatever your character sees or hears are stored in the coils of his brain and readily accessible if required. His memory is very long, storing even seemingly superfluous minor details. If you cannot remember a certain fact in a given situation of the chronicle, the storyteller should jog

your memory a little – provided that you chose this strength during character generation.

### master marksman

*“Up ahead! There they are!” Simael scanned the dull sky. Despite the fact that he could barely see the creature due to the thick fog, he drew his mighty Urielite longbow and aimed at the black shade above them. After the green-fledged arrow had left the string, the Engel turned his bow down and shoved it back into the sheath. Simael was absolutely sure that he had hit what he had aimed at.*

Your character is familiar with the use of diverse kinds of ranged weapons such as slings, bolas, bows and crossbows. You came into contact with these kinds of weapons at a very young age. Maybe your father or your mother was a hunter, or you were an orphan who had to learn how to shoot in order not to starve to death. Attacking somebody in close combat with a knife or sword does not suit your nature; you prefer to aim at your target from a safe distance - whether it is a bird, a roaming wildcat or a Dreamseed creature that got separated from its swarm.

### mechanical talent

*“This doesn’t look good,” Edwin murmured and crawled under the large, steam-powered loom the woman had shown him. “This doesn’t look good at all.” At least she had thrown out the dead rats and given the loom a good scrubbing.*

*“It suffered dearly from the years of disuse, but if we’re luck I can get it going again.”*

When it comes to understanding simple mechanical devices such as locks or a steam engine, your character is the right person to ask. With a little patience, you can even replace damaged parts or rebuild them from scratch.

### medical knowledge

*Norden, who was conceived of as something like the village’s physician, felt the foot of the sweating, shivering peasant. “I can only tell that nothing seems to be broken, Garth,” he said. “But you definitely have to give yourself a break. And tell your good-for-nothing labor he should try not to drive the cart over your foot again come the next harvest.”*

Your character has a profound understanding of the functions and possible ailments of the human body. He is able to give first aid and knows the cure for harmless diseases such as the common cold. However, he could never dream of competing with a Raphaelite in regards to medical expertise – in theory and in practice.

### nimble

*Varcanel’s brow was covered in sweat. This damned Heretic he was after knew that he was being chased. Thus, it was of the utmost importance that the Gabrielite acted so swiftly that his opponent would not stand the slightest chance to escape. He managed to scurry up the outside staircase almost without a sound. He suspected that the man would try to seek shelter in the labyrinth of market stalls at the foot of the stairs. There he was! Varcanel drew his two daggers from his broad belt and jumped down out of the landings’ shadows before his prey even realized that his days were numbered.*

Your hero is extraordinarily nimble and agile. All mechanical tasks that require quick fingers are easy for you, and there is something cat-like about the way you move. You could push a wheelbarrow through a pottery without having to be afraid of breaking any of the merchandise.

### parry

*The Heretic’s knife shot down in a high arc. The tip of its serrated edge pointed directly towards Aadoniel’s exposed right flank. In the nick of time, the brawny Gabrielite raised his flaming sword, intercepting the powerful strike with its blazing edge. The attacker’s weapon slid off the flaming sword, exposing the unarmored neck of the Heretic to Aadoniel...*

In a combat situation, a combatant often can only dodge a blow aimed at him (see *Dodge*). This strength, however, gives your character an alternative – he can block an attack with his own weapon. Even though this leads to the fatigue of the material the weapon is made of much faster, but this disadvantage is outweighed by the fact that the user of this strength is usually in a much better position than his opponent during the next attack of his own. If you want to choose this strength, you should not forget that not every attack can be parried. For example, the gigantic claw of a Dreamseed creature would simply knock you off your feet. Do not make the mistake to abstain from dodging to get in a seemingly better starting position for your next attack – your character maybe would not survive such a daring strategy.

### popular

*“That’s it for today!” The grumpy castellan chased away the last applicants of the evening, before he started to close the bulky doors to his repository, panting heavily. In the same instance, a young Engel clad in the traditional garb of the Raphaelites hurried around the corner and forcibly made her way towards the portly Monach through the throng of snubbed applicants who were quite unwilling to move away.*

*“Brother Helmut,” the young healer said in a low, rather dark voice, a radiant smile on her heart-*

shaped face. “I am very sorry, but I really couldn’t come any sooner and I need new gauze so badly!”

“Rahel,” rumbled the castellan, and a smirk showed on his features that were so grim at most other times. “In your case, I will make an exception, of course...”

Your character is popular with everybody and generally considered a nice person to be around. Even you do not know exactly why this is the case. Maybe it is your pretty face, your charming smile or the way you talk to others. Anyway, your hero’s popularity can open many doors to him that remain closed to others.

## profession

“Eighteen Euro? This is open robbery,” Elihas snarled at the saddler.

His face clearly showing how deeply insulted he felt, the craftsman put the saddlebag back to the other goods he sold at his small booth. “You don’t know what you are saying, sir.”

“Maybe he doesn’t, my man, but I for one certainly do,” the Bandmaster who had stood silently behind Eliphas up to now intervened. “This seam has been sewed sloppily, the ornamental rivets are tarnished, here is a bad-tanned spot, and there...”

While the saddler was squirming because of the justified reproaches, Antonio chuckled to himself. Sometimes it paid off to have learned a decent trade before becoming a warrior...

Prior to or during his first adventure, your character has had the opportunity to learn a trade or become a professional. The following examples can only give you a small overview of all the possible professions and trades: architect, engineer, farmer, fisherman, icon painter, logger, merchant, rafter, smith, tanner, et cetera.

## read and write

The Diadoche’s son slipped into the inn’s backroom, as always making sure that he was not being followed. Inside sat the old man with the black beard he had been meeting here for weeks now, absorbed in the pages of a thick book.

“Has anyone followed you?” Helder asked.

The young man shook his head.

“Then sit down and let us commence with our lesson.”

This strength can cost your character his life if he belongs to the wrong social group. As a Ramielite, your hero is predestined to be able to read and write, but if your character is not part of the church hierarchy, he should keep his skills secret – otherwise, he could end up burning at the stake faster than he – or you – would like it.

## research

Malloriel rubbed his aching eyes and perused the scribbled notes on the sheets of paper lying on

the table in front of him once again. The text remained rather incomprehensible nevertheless. “In the name of everything I hold sacred! There must be records on this damned Diadoche in here somewhere. After all, this is a whole library full of genealogical documents... unfortunately, nobody here seems to have heard anything of a decent filing system in their entire life.”

Your character has a network of informants that can give him any important information he likes – with certain restrictions, of course. In most cases, though, your hero will be able to get the information he needs.

## rich

Manfred of Essen grinned as he entered his new salon. A whole room full of lapis lazuli. On the walls and as inlays in the furniture. Even on the floor. And tonight he would hold a reception here... the best of the best... and he was absolutely sure that his guest would be appropriately impressed.

Your character is rich, either through an inheritance or due to achievements of his own. In his entire life, there has been no material good he ever lacked. So much the worse that you have to let go of all of your riches only because the Engel abjure wealth. But who knows - maybe you are going to embody the first Engel with a manservant? Do not worry – your storyteller will come up with a suitable story.

## roll with punches

The creature’s attack brutally thrust Inael from her flight path and she hit the ground extremely hard. If it had not been for the motions that had been burned into Inael’s mind by long months of training and that were now being acted out almost automatically, she would not have been back on her feet after a perfect backward roll. The sheer force of the impact would have snapped her spine like a twig. She waited for the next attack of the Dreamseed creature, her fingers closing tightly around the handle of her weapon.

It can be useful in many situations to be able to roll with punches – under certain circumstances, you can even use a roll or back flip to eventually be in a better fighting position than during the initial attack. This strength allows the user to land elegantly (and probably even without taking damage) after a fall from a great height or after being thrown through the air by an opponent.

## scientific knowledge

“Watch this, Doganiel!” With fluttering eyelids, the young Raphaelite watched the Tempted fastened to the table in front of her with leather straps. “The poison takes effect, but he is resisting it with all his might!”

The provost of the Raphaelite laboratories at Gratianopol stepped up to Doganiel to watch the

helpless man as well. After a while, he nodded. "Indeed. And now he is dead." He smiled contentedly, his hands touching the glass with the murky liquid almost lovingly. "Finally we have a poison the bodies of this abominable spawn obviously cannot cope with."

Your hero's thirst for knowledge is only rivaled by his longing to contemplate all matters to their full extent. You can determine whether you want to have dabbled a little in many fields or whether you want to be a luminary in any particular one.

Alchemy, astrology, astronomy, biology, geography, geology and physics are merely a handful of examples for numerous other branches of science your character might be familiar with.

### sneak attack

*Nobody saw the black shadow flit over the craggy rock-face the mercenaries that were matching through the valley had passed mere minutes ago, and nobody heard even a single sound. When the shadow finally rose from the large ledge protruding out over the valley, most of the heavily armored warriors in service of the Junklord did not have the slightest chance to survive. Like a hawk, the Gabrielite came over the panicking horses and their horrified riders. But before they even fully realized what happened to them, the sharp blade wielded by the Angel of Death cut them down like a scythe cut wheat.*

This strength allows your character to sneak up to an opponent without making a sound, attack the enemy in a silent surprise move or strike against him from a direction outside of the opponent's field of vision. The decision whether or not this strength can be brought to bear in a given situation is up to the storyteller.

Keep in mind that a successful use of this strength can lead to the immediate death of an NPC or player character – you should give some thought to this possibility even before actually choosing this strength for your character. In other respects, there are again numerous options regarding this strength to tap the full potential of the dramatic elements of countless situations in the game – for example, the feeling of pressure in a jungle adventure when the travel group the party belongs to is decimated silently and unnoticed until the killer starts attacking player characters, or the thrill of suspense when a character dares to enter the lion's den armed with nothing more than guts and this strength (inside, he is of course hopelessly outnumbered and has to hope that everything will go as planned...).

### style

*Deathlike silence fell upon the ballroom when Isabella of Cordova entered and the eyes of the crowd turned towards her. The young Diadoche was beauty incarnate, and the velvet of her robe was almost as tight on her slender body as a second skin.*

*Her ebony hair fell down in soft waves to her naked shoulders whose immaculateness was accentuated by the luxurious cape made of white feathers Isabella wore – without any doubt, a mocking allusion to the hated Engel. Well, Isabella was definitely no Messenger of the Lord.*

Maybe your hero grew up in a prestigious household, served at the court of a feudal lord or learned all there is to know about the customs of decorum in another way. He knows the ropes of the minute details of protocol and is also familiar with the rules of etiquette, which can be of advantage in many situations.

### technically talented

*A car... what an invaluable treasure! Wittgenstein grinned broadly when he removed the oilcloth cover. At first only partially and very carefully, but then he simply dragged it down to the ground because he could not wait to touch the shiny red finish. The one-eyed man opened the driver's door, slumped into the sport seat and reached out with his gloved right hand to the small silver key sticking out from the steering column without hesitation. Hopefully, there was till enough gas in the tank...*

*Whether you acquired them in the hoard of a Junklord or from a Raguelite Engel – your knowledge of forbidden technology and your skills to operate it (as long as a device is not broken) give the companions of your character a major headache. If he lets the wrong people know about this, he could end up being burned at the stake as a Heretic – after a legal hearing, if you are lucky.*

### tracking

*Hiob bent forward to have a closer look at the hoof prints in the soft ground. He traced them pensively with his fingertips, before turning around to his companion with a triumphant look on his face. "There are ten of them. The trail is more than a day old," he stated. "But one of the horses is foundering, and it looks as if they are not making good headway. If we make haste, we will have caught up with them before the sun has set."*

There are not many trails that can evade your character's attention. Maybe his father or mother was a gamekeeper who taught him how to follow tracks or your character has spent long years of his live all alone in the wilderness. Whatever may be the case – as soon as your character is on the track of an animal or person, his prey will have a hard time to escape him. Broken twigs, trampled blades of grass, footprints and cold campfires are like the pages of an open book to your character.

### watchful

*Clad in his most stately attire, the Ab sat with his hands clasped on the velvet-cushioned davenport, waiting for his host. Despite the smell of incense*

that hung heavily in the entire room, Guillaume caught a whiff of... bitter almond?... and heard glasses jangling.

A Monach – probably the right hand of the Consistorial Cardinal – entered the audience room, balancing a steaming mug of tea on a tray.

“Maybe you would like something to drink while the ministrants help the Cardinal to get dressed, Honorable Ab?” the young Monach asked in a servile manner.

“I would love to, but please, no cyanide for me, if this is not too much to ask for,” Guillaume replied with an obliging smile.

Clanking, the mug burst into myriads of shards on the hard marble tiles.

Your character is especially vigilant and is also a light sleeper. He is hard to surprise and notices very fast if he is watched, followed or lured into an ambush.

**Other Strengths:** Actor, Appraise, Ambidextrous, Artifact Knowledge, Cartography, Cook, Dive, Empathetic, Good Hearing, Gourmet, Hide, Jump, Master Burglar, Navigate, Religious Knowledge, Sneak, Strong, Ride.

bad health

Vern pushed open the door to Gilda’s cell. “Are you ready? Time for the herbology lesson,” he called out to her.

“Oh, I’m sorry...” he murmured when he noticed that his fellow novice obviously had had a harder time than him to cope with yesterday’s ride. Deathly pale and trembling, she lay on her pallet, her nose reddened by a cold.

“Could you get a physician?” she asked him in a weak voice.

Vern nodded and started running.

Your character falls sick far more easily than the average European. Whenever there is a cold to catch, you can be sure that your character certainly will do so. Furthermore, this weakness can also result in your character missing some lessons and not being able to participate in important parts of his training.

clumsy

“We have been waiting for you, Aadoniel,” Lanaiel said reproachfully.

The Gabrielite grinned his disarming grin and poured himself a mug of tea.

“Oops, looks like I spilled half of the tea all over... wait a moment... Lanaiel, please tell me that this is not an original map from the Time Before...”

The angry glance the Michaelite shot towards him said more than a thousand words.

Everything your character lays his hands on will break, fall to the floor or stop working. He cannot influence it in any way, it simply happens all the time. When he turns around in an inn, chances are one in a million that he is not going to knock over the tankard of the most feared thug in the entire city. All his companions are in mortal danger all of the time, of course.

dark secret

Sitting on the battlement looking at the streams of refugees, the Gabrielite was lost in thought playing with yet another find from the Time Before he had kept hidden even from all the other members of his own fellowship. It was a device dating from the era before the Second Deluge, some kind of timekeeping apparatus. Aadoniel felt that it would be useful and extraordinarily convenient if everyone owned one of these gadgets, but they were affected by the ban of the Angelitic Church on anything remotely technological. Strange symbols were graven into the metal underside of the device. He would have loved to show his treasure to the other members of his fellowship, would have loved to ask Malloriel for the meaning of the engravings, but Ariel would at once have accused him of heresy without any doubt. With a sigh, he shoved his treasure back between the folds of his garment.

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## what are my

## weaknesses?

As already noted above, minor quirks and imperfections make a character more life-like and authentic. The following list gives a few examples for such weaknesses. Again, feel free to add weaknesses of your own design to it – and do not forget to choose them for your character.

### addicted

Having slammed the door shut behind him, he sunk down to the floor, his back leaning against the door. Hands shaking, he wrapped the leather thong around his upper arm. Skilled fingers searched for the vein. The flame of the small burner hissed, and the powder lay ready, just like the syringe.

Mere seconds after the sweet poison had invaded his system, the shivers subsided. He wiped the sweat from his brow. Lanaiel, Michaelite master tactician and hero of countless battles against the Dreamseed, was prepared for another meeting of the field staff.

Your character is somehow addicted to one or several substances. It could be an addiction to rather harmless substances such as chocolate, but it is also possible that he craves for a far more deadly drug such as angel dust. Withdrawal could have disastrous side effects for your character.

Your hero has a dark secret ranging from a secret lover to the unauthorized ownership of an artifact from the times prior to the Second Flood. Whatever this secret may be, your character guards it jealously and is afraid of it being revealed. In the run-up to the adventure or chronicle, you should come to an agreement with your storyteller regarding the exact nature of the secret your character “carries around with him.” If you withhold the nature of your secret even from the storyteller, it will be extremely hard for him to incorporate it in the story he tries to tell.

## handicapped

*Wittgenstein jumped back in the nick of time. He had totally misjudged the boatsman's reach, and the man had almost managed to stick his long knife into Wittgenstein's belly.*

*Taking cover behind a crate, Wittgenstein cursed the loss of his eye that had robbed him of his spatial vision for the thousandth time.*

Your character has a minor or major physical handicap such as a missing limb or a clubfoot. Think twice before choosing this weakness for your character, as this could result in his untimely demise due to reasons immanent to the setting of the game. Many Europeans suffer from handicaps for a whole variety of reasons (such as malnutrition), but Engel usually does not. Of course it happens that Engel are injured or crippled during battles, but these unfortunates then have a serious social problem and are not well suited as player characters. In the end, however, this decision is entirely up to you – it is your game, after all.

## nightmares

*“No! Don't! Watch out, Elaiel, behind you!”*

*But it was too late. The fiery breath of the Dreamseed bug exploded around the Urielite with all its devastating might. With burning wings, Elaiel's charred body trundled to the ground.*

*For the thousandth time.*

*And for the thousandth time Aadoniel awoke from his sleep screaming and drenched in sweat. It was always exactly the same dream...*

Your character is haunted by nightmares. This means that he is afraid of going to sleep and that he is not feeling refreshed in the morning. Moreover, he often wakes from his dreams screaming. You should come up with a reason for these nightmares or leave it up to the storyteller where they come from.

## nosy

*Hesitantly, Arl entered the forbidden section of the library of the Ramielite Himmel at Prague. He knew all too well that he – a simple novice of the Order – had no right to be here, but the thought of all these books... With trembling hands, he opened*

*the leather-bound tome on the first lectern. The book was illuminated and...*

*“May I ask you what you are doing here?” a voice asked whose tone was half amused, half menacing. Caught red-handed, Arl whirled around...*

Your character is a slave of his own unwholesome curiosity. A locked door, a book left open or a bag with unknown contents somebody left unattended are like magnets for your character, drawing him near in an almost magical fashion. It would take your hero incredible self-conquest to not try to solve a secret – and often, his entire fellowship pays the price for his nosiness.

## phobic

*With a mighty pull, Aadoniel jerked loose the slab under which they had heard the rushing sound of running water. Daniel – who always was the vanguard of their fellowship – forged ahead past the Gabrielite and placed a foot on the uppermost rung of the rusty iron ladder leading down into the bowels of the building.*

*Suddenly, the Urielite froze and turned as pale as a corpse.*

*“What's the matter?” Ariel asked impatiently.*

*“Rats...” Daniel whispered breathlessly, shivers running through his entire body. “Everything's FULL OF RATS down there!”*

A certain thing, object, situation or person instills fear in your character. You should determine what your character is afraid of and how his fits of phobia affect his behavior before the game starts (and you should let your storyteller know about your decision). Possible phobias would be: acrophobia, agoraphobia, arachnophobia, carcinophobia, claustrophobia and fear of flying.

## short-tempered

*“I told you a thousand times to keep your eyes open while you are on guard duty!” Antonio shouted at the Grimrider at the top of his lungs, his entire head the color of a blazing fire. Drops of spittle hurled with the full force of Antonio's fury landed all over the chastised man's face.*

*“But nothing happened, my bandmaster...”*

*“I don't give a shit!” For a moment, Antonio was afraid that his head might burst from screaming. “You are a threat to yourself and your companions! And now get back to your place of duty, before I do something we both might regret for the rest of our lives!”*

In stressful situations, your hero has a very short temper. He screams at his brother and sisters without a reason, leaving only scorched earth behind after some of his fits. Your character knows that he is not making himself particularly popular with his friends, but he simply cannot control himself. You should determine in which situations your alter ego goes overboard.

## shy

*Eliphas dismounted his steaming black horse, threw the reins to one of the Monachs standing close to the gate lodge and turned around to face a young novice in the traditional garment of the Chuniacensian Begines. "Where do I find the Revered Em, baby?"*

*The girl blushed, tried to answer, spluttered and finally ran away almost panicking.*

*Blank-faced, Eliphas watched her flight. What was the matter with that girl?*

Your character is afraid of strangers. He is a walking inferiority complex and does not know how to act towards others appropriately. Hence, he is very incommunicative and only speaks when it is absolutely necessary.

## sore loser

*"Two sixes and a five," Ash grinned.*

*With a grim expression on his face, the stable-lad took the dice, rolled them on the lid of the barrel – and started to grin. "Three sixes," he said triumphantly and reached out for the cent coins.*

*"Dirtbag," the blond novice hissed and kicked over the barrel that had served as their gaming table before he trudged away.*

*The derisive laughter of the others was still ringing in his ears long after he had arrived at his cell.*

*Your hero does not cope well with defeat. He loves to win in competitions of any kind, but he has a hard time accepting that others also stand a chance to gain the glory that should have been his. Your character even comes up with plans ensuring that his opponents suffer unfortunate "accidents" in order to decide the "contest" in his favor before it begins. Just as with Short-tempered, it can be a real challenge to roleplay this weakness, and it should only be chosen by experienced players, as its rendition is often directed against other player characters.*

## speech impediment

*"We have to curry the hh... the hh... the hhh-hhhh..." Egmont blushed. The other novices already had that hated smirk on their faces again. Well, whatever. Shrugging, he started to curry the horses of the Grimriders who had just arrived alone. Maybe he couldn't tell the others what to do, but he could do an excellent job even without them.*

Your character has a severe speech impediment. Maybe he has a lisp, he is stammering or the tip of his tongue hits his front teeth while he is speaking. It is also quite possible that he merely is unable to pronounce certain sounds correctly. In any case, he is often the laughingstock for his peers as well as the rest of his social environment.

## too small

*The Monach who handed out the clothing of the newly arrived Engel struggled not to give his*

*amusement away. Then he took another look at Orviel. The traditional white frock of the Michaelites was dragged over the floor like the mock image of a wedding dress. The broad leather belt that should have fitted around the Engel's ribcage reached up to his collarbones.*

*For a second, it appeared as if Brother Zacharias would be able to control himself. Then the second passed. He threw the stack of clothes he had been holding in his hands to the floor, convulsed with laughter and kept on hooting until he almost had to start crying.*

*His face motionless like a marble mask, Orviel also had a hard time not to burst into tears – albeit for a wholly different reason.*

Compared to the other boys and girls of the same age, your character is far too small. His peers are one or even two heads taller than him. His size does not only bring disadvantages, however. Even though your character is picked on because of his size, he is not taken seriously in many situations – which can sometimes be of great advantage. On the other hand, your character has to deal with being crammed into garbage cans by taller people with a questionable sense of humor.

## unpopular

*New clothes could not hide the fact that the emaciated man sitting to the right of the Ab looked as if his days were numbered. The left side of his face was paralyzed, and Prelate Karolus looked more like a skeleton than a priest of flesh and blood. His gaunt body was clad in splendid golden garments, and around his neck hung a heavy necklace symbolizing the corona of the Michaelite Order. He looked at the fellowship of Engel who had just entered with blatant resentment. Before the Ab could welcome the Engel, Karolus suddenly snarled:*

*"To you, Ariel, a mission like the one that just failed horribly and with disastrous consequences might be nothing more than a game, but it surely is a tragedy to me when one of my brothers in faith gets killed by a Heretic in some abandoned factory."*

Socially speaking, your character is very unpopular. The reasons for this may vary widely: he could act highly unsocial towards others or he may be simply loud, falling on the nerves of the people around him due to his unpolished attitude. Maybe he is not even to blame for this flaw. Anyway, your hero seems predestined to become a loner.

## weak

*"And how did you manage to survive your brawl with the mercenaries, Willi?" Gilda asked inquiringly.*

*"Well," the lanky boy said and blushed up to the roots of his flaxen hair. "You know that I am not exactly what you would call a skilled fighter." He tried to shift the weight of his rucksack that was far too heavy for him without attracting attention.*

*"The fat guy grabbed me and smashed me down on the bar. So I simply played possum... I guess I must have been very lucky, because I don't think that I would have stood a chance against these guys," Willi sighed.*

Your character's muscles are underdeveloped and he is unable to stand his ground when the fists start to fly. He simply cannot perform many simple tasks involving body strength, and if others did not help him he would probably starve to death during the attempt to lift the heavy trapdoor to the root cellar.

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## using potestates in the arkanas system

The first thing you have to take into account is the fact that the Engel gain greater powers in the course of their maturing process as soon as the divine images on their bodies are expanded. First, every Engel gets the *Signum* tattooed into his skin. This image endows the Engel with minor abilities – compared to human standards, however, these abilities are still extraordinary. After he has had the necessary experience, the time has come for the Engel to be granted his *Sigil* – his abilities increase to clearly superhuman levels. Finally, his powers are enhanced to their absolute maximum at the end of his training as a supreme champion of the Lord with the bestowal of the *Scriptura*. As a storyteller, you should not forget about this gradual increase of power in your initial planning phase for the chronicle you intend to run – especially regarding the potestates you want to give to your player characters. Do not be too generous in the awarding of divine powers, as this would surely be detrimental to the overall thrill and zest of the game. On the other hand, you should not be overly nitpicking when it comes to endowing your fellowship with potestates – after all, *Engel* is a game about heroes that should definitely feature a certain degree of heroic pomp.

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## balance of powers

When you start equipping your fellowship with potestates you should always keep in mind that every member of the fellowship is a hero played by one of your friends and that all these heroes should get the same fair treatment. Some constellations make it necessary to slightly shift the balance of power within a given fellowship, but these cases should be the exception rather than the rule. Some players

want to play the archetypical loser. Do not hinder them from doing so, but also try to give them other strengths in order to make all the players feel as if their character will play a vital role in your epic story.

*Engel* is a game based on group dynamics. Try to allocate the potestates of the Engel in such a fashion that the individual characters will have to rely on each other and that excluding one of the characters would result in a clear weakening of the entire group – unless you intend to create such an imbalance to get your characters into an especially tricky situation. There are two different ways of awarding potestates. The first possibility is to let the players decide which potestates they want to have mastered. This option is particularly valid for experienced players who know what a storytelling game should be all about. The second possibility – in which the storyteller determines the characters' potestates – requires special empathy and intuition from the storyteller, but the mood of the game can be enhanced considerably if the characters are forced to find out what potestates they have and what they can do with them after the actual game has begun.

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## storytelling potestates

After you have equipped all characters with potestates you will inevitably reach a point in the game where you have to portray their use employing certain narrative techniques. Contrary to the rules of the **3<sup>rd</sup> Edition**, there are no set boundaries for the characters regarding the use of their potestates. Since you should be aware of the fact that it can be incredibly boring to run an adventure in which the characters succeed in everything they do, it is up to you as a storyteller to set these boundaries for your players yourself. Do not be afraid of taking as many liberties as you like to make your chronicle as challenging to your players as you want it to be.

Some potestates – such as the Michaelites' *Soul of the Fellowship* – are comparatively easy to handle as they do not determine or influence the plot of your chronicle significantly. The case is different with more powerful potestates such as the Raphaelites' Lazarus, since they are entirely capable of deciding whether the characters succeed or not during the course of a given adventure. Thus, the storyteller has to be aware of the possible results and consequences of some of his players' actions beforehand. As the case may be, he can even decide that there is only one possible outcome to the story he wants to tell – though this may not always be the wisest choice.

Strictly speaking, you have three different ways of using potestates in the game. The first possibility is to decide on a case-by-case basis whether a character uses one of his potestates successfully or not. You should always consider the current overall situation when making this decision. Will it encourage your players to take greater efforts to solve the problem

at hand in any other way if a given action fails? Could such a failure lead to utter resignation among your players and bring the entire game to a grinding halt? Do you realize that you decided to let too many actions fail or does the successful use of a certain potestas interfere with the minutely planned plot of your chronicle, making part of your work entirely in vain? We cannot help you with these decisions, but we can point out that the game should be fun for everybody – period.

The second possibility is largely identical to the first – with one major difference, though. You have determined the final outcome of your story beforehand and simply decide whether the successful use of a certain potestas by your players leads closer to the predetermined point of destination for your plot. This procedure asks for a lot of sure instinct, as your players certainly will not like to feel railroaded. This should not imply that experienced players are well aware that it is all about a good story in the end, but nevertheless all players like it very much when they get the feeling as if they could change – or at least influence – the course the story takes. Always make your players feel that they can do so – all you have to do is to cleverly camouflage

the basic concept you use to decide whether one of their actions succeeds or fails.

The third possibility to use potestates in the game is to rely on the **Arkana cards**. They lend a certain element of pure chance to the game and allow your players to take on your role as storyteller by interpreting the cards themselves, therewith taking at least part of the load of telling a good story off your back. Of course, it can become harder for a storyteller to keep to his own expectations regarding the exact course of the plot he designed, but in return, this procedure can offer an incentive to the storyteller to put his own creativity and improvisational talent to the test.

All you have to do now as a storyteller is to decide which of these three ways described above you want to use. If you do not want to make a final decision, this should not interfere with the game at all; simply try out all of the three options and take your decision as soon as you know which one you like best.

As icing on the cake of this section, we would like to provide you with a short example of how the use of potestates can be portrayed in the game properly and of how you definitely should not do it.

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## how you should not do it:

*Storyteller: As you enter the vault-like tunnels underneath the city, everything around you is dark except for the small islands of twilight provided by a few flickering white lights on the ceiling.*

*Player 1: Being the Michaelite of the fellowship, I use the potestas "Corona" in order to illuminate the room.*

*Storyteller: That won't work.*

*Player 1: Why not?*

*Storyteller: Because it won't work - the room has to be entirely dark for the action to succeed.*

*Player 2: Then my Urielite Daniel will try to pierce the darkness with his potestas "Enlightened Senses."*

*Storyteller: That also won't work.*

*Player 2: And why is that?*

*Storyteller: You don't know. It simply doesn't work.*

In this case, the storyteller has made three grave mistakes. First, he ignored one of the crucial elements of the game when designing the overall situation – the potestates of the Engel. And now he is in big trouble due to his own forgetfulness. The second mistake was to let the players know that he prepared the whole situation their characters are in based on wrong – or at least flawed – assumptions. If you notice that there is a serious goof in your story, try to retouch it as thoroughly as possible rather than telling them all about it to their faces – otherwise, they will actively be looking for such goofs in the future. The third mistake the storyteller made was to not give the players any sufficient explanations why their "natural" abilities did not work all of a sudden. Sometimes, a trivial explanation is more than enough, or the storyteller gives a somewhat mystical explanation – after all, **Engel** is a game drenched in mysticism. Maybe we should give it another try:

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## how you also should not do it:

*Storyteller: As you enter the vault-like tunnels underneath the city, everything around you is dark except for the small islands of twilight provided by a few flickering white lights on the ceiling.*

*Player 1: Being the Michaelite of the fellowship, I use the potestas "Corona" in order to illuminate the room.*

*Storyteller: The whole room is filled with bright light by your corona, giving away the Heretics who tried to hide at the far end of the room.*

*Player 1: I kill the one on the left with my potestas "Outcry."*

*Storyteller: The Heretic to the left falls to the floor, dead as a doornail.*

*Player 2: Using "Eyes of the Sentinel," I scan the room to see if there are more of these Heretics.*

*Storyteller: Three other Heretics are sneaking up to you from behind, and one of them attacks Aadoniel.*

*Player 3: With "Golem," Aadoniel lets his skin turn as hard as stone so that the Heretic's blade slides off and then he kills the attacker with his flaming sword.*

*Storyteller: Okay, the dead attacker crumples to the floor, making room for the remaining two Heretics to act.*

*Player 4: My Ramielite Malloriel steps back and uses "Samson's Hair" to find out about the remaining Heretics' weak spots.*

*Storyteller: You notice that they are not particularly well armored and you can give the Gabrielite a hint where he should hit them.*

*Player 3: Having heard Malloriel's hint, I turn towards the attackers and kill them with my flaming sword as well.*

*Storyteller: After mere seconds, all of the Heretics lied dead on the floor and the vault falls silent again.*

*Player 5: My Raphaelite Rahel uses her potestas "Lazarus" to bring back to life one of the Heretics so that we can question him.*

Better than the first try, but did you notice that there was no thrill to be felt for the players whatsoever? And how the players had their characters use their potestas as if they simply took them for granted? It is very important to find a reasonable way of using potestas in a game that is not governed by a set of strict rules. Moreover, some "punishment" would be appropriate in the case of Rahel; she used her potestas like we would use a shoehorn – and for a very base reason. Similarly, Aadoniel could have used his flaming sword to light a cigarette. Try to make it clear to your players that potestas are something very special and also take into account such things as exhaustion when it comes to their use. This makes the whole affair far more thrilling. In addition, it can help if you do not tell a player right away whether the use of a potestas succeeds or fails. If necessary, describe the use painstakingly slow, but never, ever in a boring manner.

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## how you should do it:

*Storyteller: As you enter the vault-like tunnels underneath the city, everything around you is dark except for the small islands of twilight provided by a few flickering white lights on the ceiling.*

*Player 1: Being the Michaelite of the fellowship, I use the potestas "Corona" in order to illuminate the room.*

*Storyteller: The space in the direct vicinity of the Michaelite is filled with the brightness of his corona. At the far end of the room, two moving shapes are vaguely discernible in the twilight.*

*Player 2: I use "Eyes of the Sentinel" to scan the room even more closely, trying to make something out.*

*Storyteller: Even your incredible talents don't allow you to glimpse any details in the murky twilight, but you are sure that two people are standing where the Michaelite noticed the strange movement a moment ago. The blinding light of your companion's corona is a nuisance rather than a help to you. Suddenly, you hear a soft crunching noise right behind you.*

*Player 3: Drawing my flaming sword, I spin around.*

*Storyteller: You can see the blade of a Heretic emerging from the darkness coming down on you.*

*Player 3: I try to make my skin turn as hard as rock with the potestas "Golem" even before the weapon can hit me.*

*Storyteller: The force of the attack pushes you back, knocking you off your feet. Lying on the ground, you notice that the Heretic's blade must have bounced off your skin, as there is no wound to be seen. Only a dull pain is spreading across the right half of your body, for it was a very powerful blow that hit you.*

And so forth. Did you notice? Giving and taking alternated in this course of events. Even though most of the Engel's actions succeed, there is always a negative effect as well, keeping the players on edge. Remember these examples when something is not going the way you like it, and reread them unhurriedly if there is something about them you did not fully understand the first time.

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## the power of names

of the naming and  
interpretation of  
the arkana cards

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## introduction

For those among you, dear readers, who are ready to include the imaginative narrative element of freestyle storytelling in its purest form in their games, the Arkana cards can become something like a game within the game. The cards combine the events in the game with the intuitive creativity of players and storyteller alike, allowing you to determine the characters' fate with a few quickly laid cards. The Arkana cards are the narrative tools of destiny – if the Norns were a modern myth, the weird sisters would lay these cards rather than cling to their traditional yarn. The cards' symbols are the signposts on the player characters' journey through the world of Engel.

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## the arkana cards

We have designed the 22 Arkana cards to allow for a new form of storytelling in Engel. They provide storytellers and players with 22 archetypal figures and situations from 17th century Europe that can

basically stand for any event imaginable taking place in the world of Engel. In the course of this section, several options of spreading and using them are given and explained. On every card, you will find a term to use in the interpretation when the card is laid normally (upright) as well as a term to be used for interpreting the meaning of the card if it has been laid upside-down (reversed). We will provide you with some associative ideas as well as a short explanation for each of these terms. Contrary to normal Tarot cards, however, these explanations are neither strict definitions nor absolute descriptions of their meanings. Rather, they are intended to create the mood related to each card in an associative way and to give you some ideas regarding their actual interpretation.

The 22 cards should be sufficient to lay a spread for all situations that might come up during the game. Storytellers who want to work with the power of their own unique cards should feel free to create additional Arkana cards of their own design, of course; three cards have been left blank to allow just that. And if this is still not enough for you – well, we will not set any boundaries to your imagination, so go ahead and create even more new cards.

arcanum 0: the heretic

**Upright Meaning:** Freedom of Choice

New opportunities, courage, ecstasy, creativity, risk-taking, trust, freedom of choice, adventure

**Reversed Meaning:** Isolation

Stagnation, eccentricity, folly, thoughtlessness, indiscretion

Clad in the garments of an itinerant preacher and equipped with the education of the unauthorized scholar, this child of freethinking stands on the border between what is allowed and what is forbidden, having one foot in illegality and persecution. He is willing to take all options and possibilities into consideration. The book in which he has written down his manifestoes is always at hand, for the time of the final decision has not come yet.

arcanum 1: the church

**Upright Meaning:** Indulgence

Willpower, communication, miraculous abilities, memory, clear thinking and feeling, organization, determination, understanding

**Reversed Meaning:** Rigor

Weakness, indecision

“What is our own will but merely the Lord's divine energy projected into the physical world?” Fra Juda asks in his Genesis Secunda. In an act of determination, the Mater Ecclesia takes the burden of the world on her shoulders, building a bridge between the mysterious ways of the Lord and the teeming life on Earth. The building blocks of her rule – faith, love, hope and the Engel – are the stuff of which the dreams and hopes of humanity are woven; the key to knowledge and wisdom is prayer,

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## playful mysticism

*Although the symbolism used for the Arkana cards has been influenced by the symbolism of the Tarot, the Arkana cards have not been designed with fortune telling in mind. Their function is to add a new, unusual game mechanism to Engel that leaves behind the dictatorship of the dice. In other words: the Arkana cards can only tell you something about the player characters' fate. They are nothing more than tools to be used by the storyteller.*

however. Infinity is the Promised Land of the Angelitic Church. Being the keeper of the seal of the divine omnipotence on Earth, she rules everything in this world.

### arcantum 2: the begine

**Upright Meaning:** Enlightenment

Intuition, ingenuity, meditation, inspiration, growth, development, consciousness, mystery, introspection

**Reversed Meaning:** Error

Mistakenness, superficiality, delusion

The Begine, the keeper of the secret ways, has been ordained with the holy water of divine sentience. In her mind's eye, she sees the hidden truths invisible to the eyes of the common people. She wears the symbol of her respective Order on her chest, standing on the threshold between mundane and divine, between religious ecstasy and secular daily charity.

### arcantum 3: roma æterna

**Upright Meaning:** Growth

Fertility, wisdom, base of power, prophecy, charity, spiritual essence, healing, excitation, emotion, creation, balance, home

**Reversed Meaning:** Decay

Infertility, poverty, inactivity, disruption, destruction

Every inhabitant of Roma Æterna can clearly feel the life-giving breath of the Lord permeating the entire city. The Lord imbues the waters of the Tiber and the blood in the veins of Roma Æterna's citizens; the beating of His heart echoes in the womb as well as in the wine used in the rituals of the Angelitic Church. Roma Æterna is the center of the world, surrounded by rich plains and the deep forests of the Apennine Mountains. Due to the power of the Holy Angelitic Church, its gates stand open for all those of proper faith and piety. Life springs from the Eternal City in glorious abundance.

### arcantum 4: the junklord

**Upright Meaning:** Authority

Guidance, government, power, decisions, actions, negotiations, leadership, strength, respect, steadfastness, self-confidence, fatherliness, rationality

**Reversed Meaning:** Tyranny

Immaturity, bondage, dictatorship, violence

Valerian, the Diadoche of Vienna, holds the scepter that symbolizes the power of his free will. He is the master of his own mind, his own body, his own soul and his own animal instincts. He opposes his enemies – even the church – mercilessly and with all means necessary, and the soft glow of his enlightened mind warms his subjects. Rather than relying on piety and blind faith, he goes to battle using logic and common sense.

### arcantum 5: the cardinal

**Upright Meaning:** Morality

Insight, dogma, knowledge, sanctity, continuity, leadership

**Reversed Meaning:** Decadence

Gullibility, cunningness, eagerness for power, deceitfulness, malice, intrigues

Clad in the ritual garments and insignias of his office and bound to orthodox traditions, this member of the Consistory translates the mysteries of the unfathomable Lord into words understandable to the common man. He sits on his throne on the point of intersection of all contradictions, revealing secret divine lore and guarding the keys to the potestates of the Engel. His hand can bless as well as condemn.

### arcantum 6: the archangels

**Upright Meaning:** Purity

Allurement, relations, curiosity, loyalty, devotion, solidarity, duality, attraction, sobriety, openness, sensibility, integration, equality, romance, harmony

**Reversed Meaning:** Temptation

Repulsion, taint, imperfection, inferiority

Shining with the glory of divine light and warmed by the shimmering, life-giving energies of the Lord, the Archangels strive to meld all contradictions. You and me, the profane and the spiritual, knowledge and mysticism – all of these concepts can reach fruition only in the Garden of Eden. When the Archangels meet, they walk the path to enlightenment together, arriving at inner and outer harmony.

### arcantum 7: the creator

**Upright Meaning:** Triumph

Change, motion, growth, evolution, progress, opportunity, exploration, journey, stimulation, activity, advancement, conquest, fortress against temptation

**Reversed Meaning:** Defeat

Failure, collapse, revenge

In a sky of His own creation and in His role as the greater whole part of every single thing on the face of the Earth, the Creator sits on His throne amidst His Heavenly Hosts. Faith triumphant over matter, divine will triumphant over the material world, His thoughts triumphant over the borders of perceivable reality – all of these concepts are expressed in the work of the Creator, the eternal Lord over everything in existence. He controls the forces of the world in perfect balance.

### arcantum 8: the komtur

**Upright Meaning:** Strength

Passion, creativity, risk-taking, charisma, splendor, recreation, expressiveness, gifts, control, overcoming of fear, lust, strength of faith, self-confidence, self-reliance, resoluteness, intuition, authority, harmony



web exclusive: the magic of the cards

## Reversed Meaning: Weakness

Abuse, strife, corruption, wrath

Empowered by his passion and full of faith in his own spiritual power, the Komtur reigns in everything that is bestial and tainted in his men, forging these facets of their personalities into a harmonic greater whole in the form of the Band. Through his guidance, everything that is untamed and unconscious is turned into a wellspring for his creative mind to draw from. The tamed savagery of the band is like a rose blossoming on a dunghill. The Komtur's fearlessness brings freedom and self-confidence.

## arcantum 9: the monk

### Upright Meaning: Wisdom

Perfection, introspection, contemplation, experience, details, revelation, integrity, respect, leadership, transition, discovery, guidance, openness, courage, search

### Reversed Meaning: Folly

Immaturity, foolishness

Clad in the simple robes of his rank, the Monk has clasped his hands in prayer, pleading for the light of truth and safe passage for all those traveling through the dark night of faithlessness. In silence, meditation and contemplation, he has found his way to wisdom. And now he is ready to lead all those of proper faith to the unification of wisdom and trust in God.

## arcantum 10: destiny

### Upright Meaning: Luck

Opportunity, breakthrough, affluence, abundance, expansion, flexibility

### Reversed Meaning: Misfortune

Bad timing, failure, poverty, neediness, depreciation, intolerance

Everything has its proper time. No matter how many mistakes you make – life goes on. Life and death revolve around one another in a never-ending, grotesque ballet, and somewhere in-between, man is looking to make his fortune. Behind the masks of our personalities, our true self strives skywards, looking for higher truths. Cause and effect are one in the eternal cycle of creation.

## arcantum 11: the templar

### Upright Meaning: Duty

Lawfulness, balance, reorientation, truth, clarity, simplification, order, authenticity, visualization, seeing through deceit and illusions, harmony

### Reversed Meaning: Betrayal

Injustice, prejudice, inequality, bias

Surrounded by the waving flags of his Order, the Templar personifies mind and body in perfect balance. He carries the banner of divine justice. Guided by his knowledge of the Lord's commandments, this master warrior searches for a deeper truth hidden within him that determines his actions.

## arcantum 12: the grimriders

### Upright Meaning: Structural Change

Breaking with old structures, determination, freedom, vitality, new views and perspectives, awakening, deep spiritual wisdom, creativity, intelligence, prophecy

### Reversed Meaning: Havoc

Capitulation, prejudice, arrogance, give-up, indecisiveness

They gallop away from the houses they robbed of their children. Robbed of their own individuality by the black uniforms they wear, they are no longer bound to the restraints of their old existence. Only by forswearing the showiness of individualism, they can fathom the ancient traditions of their kind and the new structures that evolve from them. They outgrow themselves, becoming as new in the process.

## arcantum 13: death

### Upright Meaning: Change

Redemption, release, transformation, spirituality, new awareness, emergence, giving birth to something new, restructuring, cycles, rebirth, alteration

### Reversed Meaning: Stasis

Inertness, mutation, transformation

Whether we are old or young – death awaits us all. All we can see around us is wall of blades. Becoming as new is a two-edged sword; the siren call of sin and the reviving power of faith both spring from the unquenchable thirst for change in our souls.

## arcantum 14: dreamseed

### Upright Meaning: Unity

Adaptation, integration, synergy, balance, agreement, experience, conflict resolution, symmetry, combinations, coordination, harmonization, self-control

### Reversed Meaning: Mutation

Competition, imbalance, grotesqueness

The Dreamseed stands halfway between the pinnacle of wisdom and the ultimate end of all insight. In their unwavering loyalty to the Lord of the Flies, the Dreamseed has left all conflicting emotions behind to become one with all the other members of their abominable hordes, reaching a synthesis of body and soul – a hive mind. The Dreamseed contradicts the divinity of creation, adding to its state of imperfection – and thus making it more bearable to us humans.

## arcantum 15: the lord of the flies

### Upright Meaning: ?

### Reversed Meaning: ?

Materialism, bondage, unpleasantness, possession, temptation, humiliation, oppression, misunderstanding, injury, repression, indecisiveness, cynicism, self-indulgence, egotism, perversion, violation, godlessness, abuse of power

Those who serve the Lord of the Flies and fight his battles are trapped in the lures of his satanic treachery just like anybody else is. Animal and man are prone to myriads of temptations, limited only by the boundaries set by their own urges and greed. This card is always interpreted in a negative way. Whoever draws it has to expect an imminent disaster.

### arcantum 16: the himmel

**Upright Meaning:** Refuge

Purification, ambition, restoration, innovation, alteration, restructuring, awakening, healing, expansion, genuineness, construction, design, orientation

**Reversed Meaning:** Imprisonment

Incarceration, conflict, catastrophe, disruption, riot

No Himmel built on sand can withstand the destructive energies of the Lord of the Flies. The ivory tower of the Ramielites, the proud palace of the Michaelites, the lonely citadel of the Raphaelites and even the defiant castle of the Gabrielites are all targets of destruction. The Raguelite Himmel was only the first one to fall.

### arcantum 17: inspiration

**Upright Meaning:** Creativity

Confidence, self-worth, talent, guidance, expressiveness, innovation, ingenuity, radiance, manifestation, charisma, attraction, instinct, perfection, inner balance, spontaneity, vitality, nature, hope, insight, meaningfulness

**Reversed Meaning:** Banality

Stubbornness, pessimism, doubt, overexertion  
Within the circle of the world, the hybrid creature – half human, half Engel – points to all the different ways the mind cans stray on. Sun and moon, night and day, beginning and end are all included in our work when inspiration smiles upon us. There are no borders to the force of our imagination – and above all shines the fire of enlightenment, the divine flame representing the human spirit that goes wherever our fancy takes it.

### arcantum 18: the holy script

**Upright Meaning:** Revelation

Intuition, commitment, receptivity, thought, secret, riddle, romance, disclosure

**Reversed Meaning:** Secret

Madness, delusion, danger, insanity, illusion, phantasm

He holds in his hands the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. The Holy Script tells of dreams and nightmares. The reader trusts in God that He will reveal the truth to him. For in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God...

### arcantum 19: the fellowship

**Upright Meaning:** Unity

Liberation, team work, community, partnership, cooperation, energy, vitality, emergence, motivation, stimulation, jubilation, organization, shared visions, exploration, revitalization, creation, innovation, success, achievement, accomplishment

**Reversed Meaning:** Renunciation

Regression, exhaustion, fatigue, enervation, loss of energy

Reveling in their newfound sense of community, the fellowship needs no other symbols than the Orders of its members who can turn their backs on outdated traditions and all the trumpery that used to be so important in the world of the mortals. Like the sunflower that turns its blossom towards the sun, the combat-ready fellowship rises skywards – closer to God, the almighty Lord.

### arcantum 20: the inferno

**Upright Meaning:** Destruction

Death, disillusionment, loss, criticism, prejudice

**Reversed Meaning:** Rebirth

Reunification, awakening, awareness, discernment, judgment, perception, insight, evaluation, integration, manifestation

Burned to ashes by the searing heat of the hatred the Lord of the Flies feels for them, the children of man perish. The Inferno mercilessly destroys everything in its path. It cuts countries and landscapes in two and devours towns and villages. It creates a Here and There, a Hither and Thither, a Us and Them. Only slowly the regions bordering on the Brandland – the dark corridors that mark its passing – recover from the damage done.

### arcantum 21: the world

**Upright Meaning:** Vitality

Fulfillment, reward, freedom, wholeness, perfection, completeness, integration, unity, awareness, vision, environment

**Reversed Meaning:** Inertia

Laziness, Incompleteness, restriction, restraint, negation

God's own thoughts – the dreams of the Creator – have become reality. Within the vast void of space, the Lord creates the world, defining Himself in the process. The promise has been kept, and we have arrived in the Promised Land. The covenant entered with Noah has not been broken. Let this world never come to an end – this shall be our only purpose in life.



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## on using the cards

The possibilities to use the Arkana cards in the game are virtually unlimited. You should understand, however, that the cards are not intended to be some kind of substitute for the dice you have grown to love over many years of roleplaying. Rather, they should only be used when it is absolutely necessary and when you feel that the current situation in the game calls for it. For example, the question whether the hero will be able to mount his horse in order to ride into the setting sun does not give any reason that would justify to use the cards. In such cases, your narrative skills are asked for to present the scene appropriately. The case is different, though, when you have steered the characters into a situation that would not necessarily call for the use of the cards but in which using the cards would still make matters more interesting and thrilling to all parties involved. The best example for such an occurrence would certainly be a conflict situation, or in other words a violent conflict such as combat. Why be so specific? A verbal conflict would not justify the use of the cards in the Arkana System, as a discussion or dispute allows players and storytellers to put their acting skills to the test better than any other kind of situation in the game. So let us get back to combat. At the start of any situation that would justify using the cards, the storyteller has to ask himself how he wants to put the cards to use exactly. In the Arkana rules, there are three different ways of laying the cards.

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## 1. scene based layout

In the scene based layout, a *single* card is drawn by either one of the players or the storyteller for a whole series of actions within a certain chapter of the story. The term on the card that points towards the players stands for all actions taken within the scene. This means that all players advance the plot of the story together, using the term given on the card, until the storyteller takes over again. This procedure can be a great help particularly to novice players in getting used to the unfamiliar way of associative storytelling, as the interpretation of the card and the advancement of the plot becomes a shared effort all players can participate in. A scene based layout can also provide an excellent tool to handle the eventual outcome of sub-plots that are rather insignificant to the main plot without stalling the flow of the overall game and losing focus on the main thread of the plot. Using this form of layout, the storyteller should see to it for the sake of the game that his players do not start a heated debate about the interpretation. Actually, they are expected to "pass the ball along" and to complement each other in order to advance the plot. The storyteller is well advised to act as a mediator at any time trouble is brewing. To prevent the whole narrative process from coming to a grinding halt (which would be very detrimental to the overall atmosphere of the game), he should interpret the card himself (or at least give some useful hints to the players) if he feels that the need for such a drastic measure arises.

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## 2. character based

### layout

Once your players have become somewhat familiar with the Arkana System or the course the adventure will take is of special significance to a single character, you should change to a character based layout. Of course, all three ways of using the cards are valid options during any game, so you should feel free to mix and mingle them as you see fit. Do not conceive of the layouts' explanations given here as some kind of rules that have been carved in stone – they are merely food for thought that should make it easier for the individual storyteller to freely emphasize those aspects that he likes best in the loose framework we have provided him with.

But let's get back to the character based layout. Similar to the scene based one, the character based layout provides a tool to resolve an entire scene rather quickly. Unlike the scene based layout, however, a single player is addressed directly and the fate of his character depends on the player's narrative and interpretational talents. If the players act as a group within a given scene, the storyteller has to determine

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## scenes and actions

*To prevent this section from turning into a maze of unfamiliar expressions and regulations, we will explain two terms to our dear readers that appear quite often in the following text and that should help you to get a better understanding of the different ways to use the cards in the game.*

*In the Arkana System, an action is any single action or series of actions a character is able to perform in a comparatively short amount of time.*

*For example, single actions would be drawing a sword, mounting a horse, drawing a bow or catching a ball.*

*Examples for series of actions, on the other hand, would be drawing an arrow from a quiver, putting the arrow on the bowstring, drawing the bow and finally shooting the arrow in one fluid flurry of motion, or catching a sword thrown by a friend before spinning around to deal a fatal blow to an opponent.*

*Both – single actions and series of actions – are usually simply called actions; it is up to the storyteller to decide how many single actions in a row can go into a series of actions.*

*The second term that needs some preliminary clarification is scene. A scene defines the amount of time in which the characters experience a coherent sequence of events – fighting a single battle, searching a room or climbing a hill, for example. A scene cannot be measured in units of time such as seconds or minutes, as it is determined by the actual course the plot takes. Thus, a scene's length is entirely variable, depending on the events taking place within it.*

the exact order in which they announce their characters' actions and draw the cards they have to interpret. In most cases, this order is predetermined by the players themselves, as some of them surely know at once what action their character is going to take, while others will be more reluctant and have to be drawn into the ongoing events by the storyteller. In other cases, the storyteller may simply decide that all actions are resolved in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction, or he may even settle on a sort of hybrid procedure, using the **3rd Edition** rules for initiative (though this should be done rather sparingly).

Regardless of the way an individual storyteller handles the question of initiative, every player takes on the role of storyteller as soon as he has drawn his card. He has to advance the story until the storyteller himself reassumes this task by complementing the course of developments described by the player or simply carrying on with the story in a smooth, flowing manner. It is of the utmost importance to let every player describe "his" scene as long and as detailed as he wants without giving overenthusiastic players the opportunity to completely usurp the role of storyteller, making the presence of the actual storyteller entirely superfluous.

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### 3. action based layout

The most intricate, but nevertheless required way to lay out the cards in some instances is the action based layout that caters to the individual character to an even higher degree than the character-based layout does. Again, the storyteller has to walk the fine line between not using the cards as a means to an end (resulting in unwholesome stagnation within the story) and having them interpreted by the player as succinctly as the current situation in the game calls for. As the time it takes to perform a certain action has to be much shorter than the duration of the scene the card drawn stands for, the interpretation has to be shorter and more to the point as well.

The storyteller should always keep in mind to assess the significance of an action taken. For example, it is totally unnecessary to make a player draw a card from the Arkana deck if the player announces that his character is going to draw his sword. The case is different when the player's next action will be the attempt to kill a giant Dreamseed creature with his flaming sword. Here, drawing a card to determine success or failure of the action is almost an absolute necessity.

Regardless of the way they are laid out, the cards can never be the sole decision-makers in a game – the creativity and the ingenuity of you and your players are the things that really count to find out how the story is going to evolve.

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## on the practical application of the arkana cards in the game

Obviously, it is virtually impossible to plan and take into account all the situations that may come up during the game. Similarly, it seems that some of the Arkana cards go with some situations almost perfectly well, while the associations the players have when they look at the term on the card they have just drawn simply seem entirely out of place in others. This is partially true. Some Arkana cards such as Fate with its terms good luck and bad luck appear to be universally valid, while others – for example, The Grimriders with its terms structural change and devastation - can puzzle the beholder in certain situations. In the following, examples from the game regarding the different layouts as well as simple and complex situations will show how the cards can influence and advance the course of a story. Of

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### action versus action

*For some storytellers, the approaches to using the different layouts of the cards given above seem to be too one-sided. As already said, the tips and hints contained in this section should not be regarded as markers for a set of immutable rules – they are only tips and hints. Hence, it might be an interesting alternative option for some storytellers and players to add another element to the action-driven layout: the storyteller can draw a card for the opponent(s) of the characters and interpret it from their point of view. This layout can also be used for conflicts among the characters themselves, of course. Moreover, it provides the storyteller with a tool to direct the actions taken by the players more closely and to oppose those players who have their heroes perform overly heroic feats on a regular basis. On the other hand, the players are given more leeway when it comes to conflicts among the individual members of their party. Do not forget, however, that you did not take on the role of storyteller to be superior to the players and abuse the power this role entails – all your personal efforts should be directed towards creating the most fascinating and thrilling story possible. You should not have the time to push your players around and you should never take your time to do just that.*

*Now knowing the basics about the ways of laying out the cards in the Arkana System, you certainly wonder what a practical application in the game might look like. The following section is here to help you to put into practice the theoretical procedures and approaches and to answer all the questions you might have started to ask yourself up until now.*

course, it is quite likely that some of your questions will not have been answered at the end of this section, as not every single situation possible can be addressed here without going far beyond the scope of this text – nevertheless, the following examples try to cover at least the basic underlying structure of every action imaginable during the course of the game as thoroughly as possible. All you have to do is simply apply the generalized ideas to be found here to the particular situation you are confronted with.

First, we should address some basic principles of how to actually handle the use of the cards in the game. The storyteller “administers” the cards, i. e., he holds them out to the players when they have to draw one. Every now and then, the storyteller should shuffle the cards in order to get previously drawn cards back into the deck and to prevent players from trying to memorize where the cards whose meanings they already know are placed in the deck (this should not be too much of a problem anyway, as every new situation the characters find themselves in calls for a new interpretation of the card they draw). The cards should be shuffled casually while the storyteller is describing a scene – that way neither the mood at the gaming table nor the story itself are affected in any way detrimental to them. The deck should consist of all 22 cards at all times to provide the player with the maximum number of possibilities for the potential outcome of his action. Moreover, the storyteller should turn individual cards in the deck around from time to time until he himself cannot tell no longer whether the upright or the reversed meaning is pointing towards the players.

When the time has come for a player to pick a card, he draws it facedown and puts it in front of him facedown as well. Then, the player flips the card over as if he was opening a book – that way, he does not change the meaning again. If the storyteller asks more than one player to draw a card in a given situation, he should insist that every player flips over his card only after the storyteller has told him to do so. This procedure guarantees that the first player, who did not have much time to think about the meaning of the arcanum he has just drawn, is treated fairly – besides, the whole point of responding to a card in an associative manner would be negated if you ponder on its exact meaning for too long.

Now that the more technical aspects have been explained, we will turn to the practical application just like we promised we would. To make the examples more comprehensible for you and in order to lend more depth to the scenes depicted, we will make use of the fellowship around the young Michaelite Ariel introduced in **Chapter Four: Promissum** of the corebook.

## scene based layout under simple conditions

To bring the point home once again: When using the scene-driven layout, a single card determines

the course of the entire scene. The card’s meaning is interpreted by all the players together for their characters as well as their opponents (provided that there are any).

### Example:

*Having accomplished their last mission, the characters Ariel, Malloriel, Daniel, Rahel and Aadoziel are on their flight home. When they have to land in a small harbor town in order to find shelter for the night, they are being rudely cursed at by a bunch of drunken boatmen.*

The storyteller draws a card from the deck and puts it face-up on the gaming table so that all players can see which arcanum he came up with – **The Templar**. The reversed meaning betrayal points towards the players. Thus, betrayal will be the dominant theme of this scene. Ariel’s player is the first to speak up.

*The impertinent behavior these drunkards show is heresy and a betrayal of the Angelitic Church! Kill those Heretics!*

Malloriel’s player does not entirely agree with the Michaelite’s opinion, interpreting the term “betrayal” in such a manner that his character will not follow Ariel’s orders.

Now the storyteller is taking over again. He sticks to the overall mood of the scene by saying.

*When the drunken boatmen notice that they have kicked the traces and that the Michaelite is running towards them – followed by the rest of her fellowship with the notable exception of Malloriel –, they turn tail screaming and disappear down some dark alleyway.*

The other players in the group have not done a single thing to make this scene enjoyable – or maybe they have? Sometimes, it makes sense to simply do nothing to put the scene into perspective. It is acceptable for a player to take the occasional break during a scene and let the others handle the whole situation because he did not come up with anything interesting to do for his character. As long as this kind of behavior does not turn into a standard procedure with only the same players contributing to the narrative over and over again while the rest only sits and stares, there is absolutely nothing wrong about it.

## scene based layout under complex conditions

There is no such thing as a typical example for this kind of situation. The arcana simply cannot interfere with the flow of the game when a whole group of players deals with a scene using their combined associative and interpretational talents. We want to state explicitly once again that you should not get scared if the interpretation seems to be too slow or even sluggish at first. The longer you play, the more your broadening experience will inevitably lead to a more effortless handling of the system and the deeper your insights into what is important regarding

the use of the Arkana cards will become. Give yourself and your players enough time to learn the ropes – do not throw up the sponge in utter frustration too easily.

### character based layout under simple conditions

The following example is rather atypical, because a situation like this would usually be resolved employing purely narrative techniques. Nevertheless, it offers some interesting ideas of how far the Arkana System can take you if you want to let an element of chance determine your actions. As long as they do not overdo it, you should allow your players to draw the occasional card to let an arcanum decide what actions their characters are going to take – you never know if this does not result in an exciting twist to your plot.

*Example:*

*Ariel's fellowship enters the long corridor that leads to the private chambers of Karolus, the Inquisitor. Opening the door, the Engel are greeted by the bitter smell of old age and medicine.*

Aadoniel, the Gabrielite, harbors a deep resentment for the emissary of the Michaelite Order, and his player asks the storyteller if he can draw a card from the deck to see whether Aadoniel has to give in to the urge to punch the Inquisitor in the face or whether he can grudgingly control himself. The drawn card reveals the arcanum *Death* in its reversed meaning of stagnation to Aadoniel's player. At first, the player only sees the word "Death" written on the card, concluding that he has to kill the Inquisitor. Then, he notices the reversed meaning, thinks about it for a moment and says:

*As Aadoniel is not sure what to do, he simply decides to do nothing as long as he is in the presence of Karolus except for listening closely to every word the Inquisitor says.*

### character based layout under complex conditions

*Example:*

*As leader of the fellowship, Ariel is anything but pleased that the Inquisitor from her own Order put a watchdog at her side. This Michaelite, Henaiel by name, wants to take over her position – at least, this is what Ariel believes. When Henaiel instructs the fellowship to fly faster so that they reach the Himmel at Mont Salvage before sunset, she lets herself fall behind a little from the rest of the group. She is overwhelmed by self-doubt because she does not know how to act towards the others in the future. When she notices the Heretics down below and hears Henaiel's call to battle, Ariel is not sure whether she should follow the orders given by the other Michaelite or whether she should try to get her fellowship to disobey Henaiel's commands.*

Ariel's player draws a card and puts it on the table in front of her. Flipping it over, she sees "enlightenment", the upright meaning of the arcanum **The Begine**. At first, she is a little puzzled because she cannot think of anything that seems related to this term. Suddenly, something dawns on her and she says:

*Faced with imminent danger, I take a deep breath and recede into my own mind, looking for my true self. My ego is strengthened by self-confidence and the insight that I have actually accomplished a number of extremely difficult missions in the past. So, I dive down and take the lead of my companions in battle, resuming my old position in the fellowship – without a care whether Henaiel might raise objections or not.*

### action based layout under simple conditions

The kind of situation presented in the following paragraphs is probably easy to grasp without any further explanation. However, it still serves as an excellent example of how to interpret an action without actually referring to the term used on the card.

*Example:*

*Daniel, the Urielite, has made out the black silhouette of a huge Dreamseed creature in the murky fog. Swiftly, he draws an arrow from the quiver on his belt and puts the green-fletched messenger of death on the strong string of his longbow. He aims carefully before letting the arrow fly from the string.*

The storyteller asks Daniel's player to draw a card from the deck he holds out to him. This time, the player draws the arcanum **Fate** with its upright meaning of good luck pointing towards him. With a happy grin, Daniel's players tells the others:

*With breathtaking precision, the arrow finds its target directly between the beast's eyes and disappears into the creature's head up to the green fletchers at the end of its shaft. Mortally wounded, the creature starts to tumble towards the ground.*

### action based layout under complex conditions

This example will show how a seemingly unsuitable card can tell you something about the outcome of an action.

*Example:*

*Rahel, the Raphaelite, bent over the mutilated body of the peasant who had been attacked viciously by the Dreamseed.*

The description of the peasant the storyteller gives to Rahel's player shows that there is not much hope left that the man will survive his severe injuries. Regardless, Rahel makes a decision:



*I lay my hands on the body of the peasant who seems to be dead, looking for any sign of life.*

The storyteller decides that there still is a tiny spark of life left in the man's broken body Rahel holds in her arms. Rahel's player wants to use the Raphaelite's potestates to save the peasant's life:

*I make my mind flow into the man's body, trying to stop the internal bleeding with my potestas.*

At this point, the storyteller lets Rahel's player draw a card. Flipping it over, the arcanum **The Church** with its positive meaning of forbearance is revealed. Positive as the meaning may be, the player does not know what to make of this term. As the player is too puzzled to make a decision, the storyteller helps her, saying:

*Fate shows mercy to the poor peasant, and Death will not triumph this time.*

Of course, this is only one among many other possibilities of interpreting this card in this situation, and obviously, it is not always necessary to include the exact term on the card in one's interpretation (although including the term in the card's interpretation would be almost a natural thing to do).

## action versus action-layout

*Example:*

*Ariel's fellowship has not seen dry land for many hours on end, and Daniel, the Urielite, appears to be somehow insecure and distracted as if he does not know which way to go. The Ramielite Malloriel has a hard time keeping aloft after many hours of strenuous flight. Frustrated, he starts to insult Daniel and to loudly question the latter's*

*qualities as an Engel, especially as a Urielite. Suddenly, the short-tempered Urielite has had enough and nose-dives towards the befuddled Ramielite, planning to make him crash down to the sea below them.*

At this point, the storyteller lets the players draw cards from the deck, first the player of the Urielite Daniel and then the player of the Ramielite Malloriel. Daniel's player draws the arcanum **The Komtur** with its reversed meaning of weakness, while Malloriel's player flips over the arcanum **The World** with its reversed meaning of inertia. Daniel's player tells the others:

*As I'm so goddamned tired, my coordination is impaired severely and my strength is drained. Instead of giving the Ramielite a push that would make him fall into the water below us, Daniel crashes into Malloriel with all of the remaining strength he could muster for this attack.*

Now it is the turn of Malloriel's player to advance the story. He deducts the following from the card he has drawn:

*Actually, I wanted to dodge the attack gracefully, but obviously I have been too sluggish to do so. When Daniel hits me, my wings won't carry me anymore and we both crash into the waters of the sea below.*

*The encounter between the two characters could have had a different outcome if Malloriel's player had come up with the positive meaning of the arcanum. The term "vitality" could have meant that Malloriel could have dodged the attack of the weakened Urielite or that Daniel would have simply bounced off Malloriel before falling down to the sea alone.*

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