

GODS

Twinkle, twinkle gentle Lords, so high above, so near at heart. We dare not wonder what you are, for yours is Heaven and ours to enjoy. We avert our eyes, gentle Lords, lest we offend and lose today our daily bread. Guide our souls lest we sin, temper our thoughts lest we question, save us all forever within the comfort and leisure of your Dream Canopy.

—prehistoric prayer, recovered from an ethnographic vidy crystal unearthed at the Machine Museum.

There are two species of sentience in the Given World. There are the humans in all their pananthropic excess of forms. Mortal, finite, possessed of soul and body and personality.

Then there are the gods. The viles. The lords. The builders. The unlords. That sentient species that is immortal, infinite, entwined with the stuff of the cosmos, of it and bound by it.

Throughout history and, if the antropologist priests are to be believed, prehistory, fallen humans, forgetting their abilities and achievements, have been drawn to worship the gods, to seek guidance and support from them.

But the gods were never on humanity's side.

They exist in their own strange world, where memory and premonition collide, combine, and collapse into an alien eternity unmoored from the passions and privations of humanity.

They are the volcano and the second sun, the living fast star and the slumbering city, the invisible hand of the market and the rancid process of decay. Their power over the cosmos is great, indeed, they make and remake the cosmos by their existence according to some traditions, but they do not fundamentally care about humans.

This must be repeated: the natural state of the gods is absence.

A child possessed by a daemon, a pet stolen by a razor storm, a village consumed by the eating dark. These, by themselves, arouse neither interest nor pity in the gods.

PRAYER

The purpose of prayer is to avert the gaze of the gods, to pass unnoticed and unseen and untouched. To distract them with chant and symbol and make the human seem innocuous.

1. Rubra's ruminantion, to avert the Red Queen and make the lord of flesh and fang overlook the human, "I am the cud, already in the gut, eaten and digesting, I am passing through you, I am done and undone, I feed you ..."
2. Soma's solace, to make the mind-eater pass by, "There is no I, there is no mind, there is no drive, there is only the pebble on the shore, tossed by wave ..."
3. Araña's abjuration, to let one rest, "Wheel is turning, back is breaking, brow is bleeding, prayer clock is turning, the work goes on ..."
4. Aspera's annihilation, to accept one's failure, "Rage is done, light is faded, day is done, night is come ..."
5. Abaco's accumulation, to promise eternal increase and

momentary surcease, "Line go up, to the moon, to the sun, our work today and everyday and after soul gives way ..."

6. Cathedra's contrition, to let anxiety go and live in the moment, "Cogitate, regurgitate, garbage in, garbage out, logic gate, thesis, magic gate, antithesis, cosmic gate ..."

Does prayer ever help? Once per session or so, when woe, terror, doom befalls a PC, roll a die twenty-sided and charisma.

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| 1 or less | Curses! The gaze of a god upon you. A burden. A doubled suffering. |
| 2–19 | Nothing? But this number is now hot! When next rolled, it is what you like. |
| 20 or more | Overlooked! Divine attention averted! Undo your burden, halve your suffering. |

SACRIFICE

If prayer hopes to make the dread angel pass the human by, sacrifice is designed to attract the attention of a god and by gift and offering acquire aid and obtain blessing.

1. **Whisper.** The barest promise. A future token at a temple, 1 cash, to add 1 to a roll. Roll 1d6: (1–3) alas, no blessing, (4–5) promise 1 more, (6) you are heard!
2. **Nudge.** So little between failure and success. A drop of blood, 1 life, to add 1 to a roll. Roll 1d6: (1) alas, no blessing, (2–3) pay 1 more, (4–6) you are heard!
3. **Oath.** Certainty through submission. Add 1 to a roll, resolve the roll, then lose 1d4 life.
4. **Burn.** A gift sent willing and happy, through an altar, its sweet aroma a perfume to the god. 10 cash gives 1d6 on your chosen roll, 100 gives 1d8, 1,000 gives 1d10.
5. **Penance.** A week of life, a session's absence, a prized item surrendered. A weighty burden is removed.
6. **The Greatest Sacrifice.** A terrible offering, a permanent loss. The future softens and is made malleable, where things were hopeless, a chance appears for heroes to seize.

LORDS AND UNLORDS

Now we shall list the Lords of the Dream Canopy and the Unlords to Be Avoided. The smart human should avoid both.

LORDS OF THE DREAM CANOPY

The six traditional creators, preservers, and destroyers of the circle of the sea and the ring of the lands.

BLOOD LORD RUBRA, RED RUBRA

ruby, locust, fig

They that sets in motion the Queen's Race of evolution. They that brings motivation, drive, hunger, lust, and need. The maker of tusk and claw. But also, the maker of suffering, the sower of terror, the warden of death.

BLISS LORD SOMA, BLUE SOMA

sapphire, salamander, mold

They that brings the Illusion that replaces meaning. They that brings the Pleasure that consumes time. They that consoles the fallen flesh. But also, the eater of minds, the corruptor of ambitions, and the thief of time.

DANCING LORD ARAÑA, ORANGE ARAÑA

amber, spider, cotton

The kind weaver, the gentle keeper, the tender and producer. They that gives meaningful labors to open the Garden Path to all humans. But also, the breaker of backs, the wringer of blood, the scourge of leisure.

GARDEN LORD ASPERA, GREEN ASPERA

emerald, eel, baobab

The great builder who nourishes the growing things. The giver of living stone and undying flesh. The maker of homes and hearths. But also, the wrathful one, the dictator of needs, the judge of right thought.

MATHIC LORD ABACO, YELLOW ABACO

heliodor, hawk, drago

The eternal scribe who tallies and accounts. They that accumulates and invests, rations and divides. The bringer of profits and poet of growth. But also, the devouring machine, the taskmaster, the grinder of dreams.

OLDTECH LORD CATHEDRA, VIOLET CATHEDRA

amethyst, cat, agaric

They that remembers time before time, reason before reason, cosmos before cosmos. They that administer the reality subroutines. But also, the mad one, the collector of memories, the harvester of dreams.

UNLORDS TO BE AVOIDED

The five traditional accusers, corruptors, and seducers of the feral wastelands.

CHEM CAOUTCHOUC, VULKANA

obsidian, olm, fireweed

The chemical mother that transforms crude reality. They that took the raw and made it cooked. The hacker of the builder's raw perfection. But also, the refiner, the mistress of fuel, the bringer of fire

ILL NANO, THE CHAOS DWARF

steel, fire ant, xanthoria

They that seeded the Wilderness with self-eating machines. The perverter of orders, the gremlin in the Garden, the error at the source. But also, the inventor, the lord of the forge, the master of questions.

MACHINE BEAST, ALFATUŠTRA

fordite, hydra, irish moss

They that generates and regenerates the Random Number of the Beast, the Seed from which the many-pronged multiplicity exists, the cause of specifics. But also, the amoeba of mathematics, the maker of possibilities.

MOHLACK, THE INVISIBLE HAND

bone, vulture, poppy

They that creates growth, that promotes plurality and possibility, the bringer of pleasures and rewards and treasures. The good of greed. But also, the cancer in the heart of the fruit of knowledge, the seducer of fools.

SABO REÇU, THE HITCHIKER

uranium, butterfly, milkweed

The extra-cosmic wanderer. They that should not have come. The hair in the egg. The feral spoiler, the pervert at the edge of time. But also, the hound of laughter, the spur of life, the appeal to motion.