

AVATARS OF THE THOUSAND SPHERES

General Notes:

1. Avatars are only generally found on one sphere at a time (as far as anyone can determine)
2. Except when they wish it, their appearance is never perceived as strange or outlandish by the people of the realm they are in. This feature does not extend to Spherewalkers from outside the realm with high Water or Air scores.
3. The presence of an Avatar effectively clouds the minds of people around it. Only those with extremely high Water or Earth scores are able to resist this effect. Conversely, they are generally impervious to mind magics.

1. Mother Harvest

Represents: Autumn (Fertility/Want)

In her fertile aspect, a big fat black woman with an earthy sense of humour (lots of jokes about fecundity and fertility). She dresses outrageously in glorious golds and reds, and generally has a hat piled high with (real) fruit, which acts as a cornucopia. A great party animal. However, she has an acute awareness of people's actions and ensures that they "reap what they sow". She will withhold her favours from those that she doesn't think deserve them, or simply because she feels like it.

In her other aspect, she is a skeletally thin woman dressed only in a breech-clout, with wasted breasts. Her face is lined with suffering and malnutrition, her hair thin and unkempt, her legs and arms stick-like. She carries a staff (actually a withered sapling) and a begging bowl. Anyone whom she approaches feels compelled to give her something that they will later miss. If she plants her stick in the ground, it is a good sign - the stick takes root and produces leaves, symbolising the recovery of the realm.

2. The Hooded Councillor

Represents: The Cockatrice (Corruption/Recovery)

In his human form, the Hooded Councillor appears as an ordinary grey-haired human in a black robe, with perhaps just the faintest whiff of ordure, or the odd fly buzzing about, to warn the perceptive of his true nature. He worms his way into the confidence of the men of power in a realm, and slowly corrupts their pure vision, frequently bringing down their society with them (in this he is often associated with the Avatars of War and Destruction). He generally lairs in the sewers of large cities, taking on leeches and fungi and moulds and undead and, of course, cockatrices as his servants. As the society gradually decays and rots, the sewers overflow onto the streets, filling them with carrion and excrement and slime, forming a huge stinking pile on which he mounts, triumphant, in his true form - a giant cockatrice. In societies that are already destroyed, however, he does the opposite, advising the leaders who could clear up the mess on the best way to do so.

3. The Mother Fountain

Represents: The Creator (Nurture/Abandonment)

There is legend told in several spheres of a fountain that appears in the centre of a village, or in a forest glade, or by a road. It consists of a low-sided stone pool with a statue of a seated woman at its centre, her arms cupped as

if holding an invisible child. From her breasts dribbles milk that collects in the pool beneath. Anyone drinking the milk finds it warm and nourishing, and they feel calm and relaxed and happy.

When the fountain appears in a community it is generally welcomed, as good fortune often seems to come with it. The arts and crafts flourish, barren women who drink from it become pregnant, squabbles and vendettas fade, food becomes abundant. People start to care about one another, to give to the needy, to help strangers.

The fountain does have a darker side, however. On nights when the moon is more than half full and the night is clear, all those who are lonely and have drunk of the fountain - orphans, pestilent beggars, madmen - are possessed of an overwhelming desire to go to the statue and sleep in its arms, like a child. Fights often break out at the fountain over who shall have this privilege, and it is not unknown for the white liquid in the pool to turn pink with blood. The lucky soul who finally gets to sleep in the arms of the stone mother, if not disturbed, will have vanished by the morning. Often, they are never heard of again, gone, it is said, to a heavenly paradise where all their needs are attended to forever. Others reappear after many months or years, having woken abandoned in a dismal wilderness, with only a beautiful dream of a Presence who cared and watched over them, a mother far more perfect than the mother they had. Despair at being rejected frequently drives such poor unfortunates to an early grave. It is said that whole villages have been abandoned as, one by one, the inhabitants have gone to sleep in the arms of the Mother. Some have compared the effects of the statue to those of the Cinnamon Plague.

Eventually, the fountain vanishes, generally at the dark of the moon, leaving only an aching sense of loss in those left behind, whose wailing and lamentations at their abandonment can be heard for many a night after. Recriminations for the fountain's disappearance often lead to violence, especially to outsiders. Travellers beware.

4. Anubis/The Walker

Represents: Death (Change/Stasis)

Death is the only avatar which exists as two completely separate entities. Anubis, the Avatar of Change, is the dog-headed figure represented on the card. His colour and shape constantly shift and blur, but he retains (just) this basic shape. He is currently trapped at the centre of the labyrinth in the Walker's Pyramid - this is reflected elsewhere in the lack of cults devoted to Anubis and in the absence of his symbol, the Ankh, in the symbolism of any major culture. If the Walker succeeds in finding the capstone and placing it on the pyramid, Anubis and all he represents will be lost forever. This includes all magic, which, of course, changes things. And all life.

The Avatar of Stasis is, of course, the Walker. She is a golem made of pure midianite and as such is impervious to all harm, physical and magical. She cannot, of course, use magic (except to make gates). She cannot speak. She is ill-formed - midianite cannot be worked as such, only hacked with fragments of midianite until it shatters along natural fault lines. She is very slow - her movement is imperceptible, so that she seems always to have been wherever you see her.

5. Warspear Orangebeard

Represents: The Defender (Safety/Peril)

A big burly viking type with a long golden beard. Energetic and forceful. Generally turns up when invaders are about to overrun and all hope is lost. He takes over, revives the demoralised defenders, contrives ingenious contraptions and fights fiercely with his spear and shield. Regardless of the odds, he invariably wins, in part because his spear can call down lightning and his shield emanates an impenetrable barrier. However, his enthusiastic leadership can sometimes lead to peril - he will tempt ambitious leaders to overextend themselves, with the inevitable resulting loss of life.

6. Alurax

Represents: The Dragon (Cunning/Blind Fury)

Alurax is a red-white cross, the offspring of Conquering Flame and Howling Wind, both of whom had been wronged by Beautiful Wave. He therefore has no liking for blue dragons in general and Beautiful Wave's offspring in particular. Like most red dragons he can shape-change; his peculiar curse, however, is that he finds that any shape other than a human one is almost impossible to sustain. Once a year he can change into his true dragon form, which is enough to remind him that he truly hates the human form. There are many tales of his plots to confuse and destroy human societies, some of which may be true. Their most common feature is their cunning and deviousness - he thinks of everything and his hand can never be seen until it is too late. In his guise as the sorceress Allure, he has bewitched the Copper Duke and is influencing the production of his metal hounds. He is also attempting to create "the perfect dragon", a project in which Tempest features heavily.

7. Count Roderick

Represents: Drowning in Armour (Protective Measures Turn Dangerous/True Prudence)

A big burly man in plate mail armour, he appears during times of danger of peril. With his deep honeyed voice, commanding presence and apparently great knowledge of siegecraft and other matters, he appeals to the military leaders. Oddly, he always wears full armour and a helm, a large ornate affair with narrow eye-slits and a yellow feather, revealing no human flesh. This fact is rendered less disturbing by the fact that everyone can remember him - there are tales of him in every culture, but no-one can remember what they are. He is soon invited into the councils of the great and the good, and gives defensive advice that, on the face of it, is sound (and usually chimes with what the leaders want to hear). Generally, following his advice leads to utter ruin - castles protected by moats are flooded, cities with strong walls are undermined, guerillas sheltering in the mountains are buried under avalanches or perish in freak ice storms.

Sometimes his advice is so outrageous that wise leaders ignore it and do the opposite of what he tells them. The result is generally favourable when they do, which is, of course, what the Count wanted all along.

The Count is often seen with Warspear Orangebeard. Some claim that they are brothers.

8. Feather on the Breath of God

Represents: The Eagle (Mind Prevails/Thoughtlessness)

A small, sharp nun with a mane of white hair that falls to the small of her back and fierce brown eyes. Anyone looking closely will see faint lines on her face like old scars. Closer inspection will reveal that they outline a tessellated bird motif. She appears in appropriate female religious garb for the realm and joins in any intellectual and theological arguments going with great zest and energy. She is the bane of many a high-flying academic and religious leader as her arguments ruthlessly expose their contradictions and flaws. The simplest way to get rid of her is not to interrupt one of her diatribes - she starts to talk higher and higher and faster and faster, her words swooping around the room, until she breaks apart into a flock of doves that fly away and are never heard of again. Beautiful music can do the same thing to her - she composes music of staggering complexity and rigour, and if anyone can play it back to her, she lifts off the ground and flies around the room, finally disappearing out of the window and off into the sunset, where her figure dissolves into a flock of birds.

9. The Spider Woman

Represents: Fearing Shadows (Unnecessary Fear/Recognising Safety)

An attractive young woman dressed in black, with large haunted eyes. She wears a hat so that part of her face is permanently shadowed. She comes into a town or village as if running for her life, and collapses in the arms of the nearest sympathetic-looking person. She cannot say what she is afraid of or what she is running from, for she is mute. If allowed to remain, a mass hysteria possesses the village. Instead of working, the people cower behind closed doors, sometimes until they die of starvation or thirst. The fear derives largely from the minds of the people, though the presence of the spider woman does have some eerie physical effects. Shadows become deeper than they should be, lanterns and torches seem dimmed, strange and inexplicable sounds are heard at night. And spiders become preternaturally active, filling all available corners and openings with dusty webs. They seem particularly attracted to the spider woman, crawling over her face and hands as she ineffectually tries to remove them. As the fear grows, people come out of their houses, but to form mobs that attack and kill anyone seen as a threat. Entire communities have destroyed themselves through fear.

If the Spider Woman comes with you, however, she can be a valuable ally. In dangerous situations, she has an unerring sense of the safe path.

10. Blue Lotus

Represents: Fertility (Growth/Decline)

Blue Lotus is a little wizened blue-skinned sage who wanders from village to village. Infertile couples are always pleased to see him. In return for a small consideration, he dispenses a blue elixir distilled from the petals of the fabulously rare blue lotus. The elixir can be anointed on or ingested by any living organism, and generally has an effect similar to Viagra. Plants produce hundreds of seeds, animals produce dozens of offspring and humans have a very interesting dream. They dream that they are strolling around a fabulous formal garden, faintly Japanese in design - the weather is warm, the air is full of luscious and intoxicating scents and fluttering butterflies, water trickles over

mossy stones crossed by tiny bridges. At the centre is a circular pool containing a vast blue lotus flower in bud. There they also encounter their partner. If they have intercourse by the pool, then at the climax the bud opens to reveal the child or children that will be born.

The gift of fertility that Blue Lotus brings does have its downside. Multiple births, with the attendant dangers, are common, and plants that produce seeds do not grow so well again. Things are even worse when people attempt to misuse the elixir or fail to pay Blue Lotus his small consideration. The seeds and young that are produced are deformed or dead - and not all couples are delighted by the contents of the blue lotus flower...

11. The Soul Doctor

Represents: The Fish (Soul Prevails/Shalowness)

Got a sickness of the soul? A debilitating grief, a longing for someone or something that gets stronger by the day? Then take it to the Soul Doctor. Do not be misled by his charlatan-like appearance, his ragged, colourful clothing or his huge collection of unguents, powders and potions. Just gaze into his deep brown eyes, listen to his honey-coloured voice and do what he says, and you will be cured. Whether curing is really what you needed, or not. Do remember to pay him in fish.

12. Silly Me

Represents: The Fool (Freedom/Lack of Connection)

Silly Me appears as a young woman about 20 years old. She has a gypsy-like appearance (she is often found in the company of the Basahn) - dresses in rags, mismatched eyes (blue and brown), long multi-coloured wavy hair. She carries a bundle in a red-spotted handkerchief on the end of a stick (the bundle contains a random assortment of items that she has picked up, as well as a complete set of Fortune cards and her painting things). She walks with a light skipping gait, humming to herself. Has a habit of asking disconcerting questions (such as "why is the sky blue?") or making remarks that make you think. She seems incapable of concentrating for a long time. Talking to her at any length has the effect of making you look at the world in new ways. Sometimes she leaves a gift that gives the user greater freedom (such as a key to let them out of jail). Listening to her can be risky - she doesn't think through consequences and is frequently surprised at the outcomes of her or others' actions.

13. Yellowface

Represents: The Griffin (Valour/Cowardice)

Yellowface is the most pathetic excuse for a human being you are ever likely to meet. Utterly craven, he spends most of his life paralysed by fear, exhorting others to be the same. He sometimes goes about as a priest preaching a message of easy moral choices. Beware of pushing him too far, however, for if cornered or otherwise induced to fight, his long pale yellow face and bald head become covered with feathers, his nose elongates into a hooked beak, claws spring out of his hands and his hindquarters sprout fur, as he transforms into a griffin of enormous size. At his call, all the griffins in the realm come to him and together they plunge into most dangerous part of the fray, ripping and tearing until there is nothing valorous left to do. Do not even

think about trying to ride him.

14. The Hermeneutic

Represents: The Hermit (Wisdom/Isolation)

A grey-cowled, hunched figure. Large nose, deepset brown eyes. Brown beard. Many seek the Hermeneutic, but few find him. He is generally seen only in the outermost spheres and in the most remote of places, and does not leave a trail. Locating him is well worth while, however, for he knows the answers to many questions.

Travellers who seek him, however, should take note of the tale of Querant. As a child, Querant was forever asking questions - what is the sky made of? Do trees have souls? Where do lions come from? His parents tried to answer them, and when they failed they sent him to the village wise man, and when he failed he sent him to the town sage, and when he failed he sent him to the king's wise woman, and when she failed she sent him to the Emperor's librarian, and though Querant read every book in his sphere there was still no end to his questions. Then a passing spherewalker took him to Everway, but not even the Library of All Worlds could slake his thirst for wisdom. Then he went out into the spheres, and at length found the Twisted Library, which told him of the Hermeneutic. So Querant sought him out, and travelled through many spheres, and eventually after many years, when he was twisted and bent with age, he found him. They talked for a long time, and the Hermeneutic answered all his questions. But instead of his thirst for wisdom decreasing, it increased all the more. At length the Hermeneutic pointed at him and said "Enough! Complete your journey - find the answers for yourself." And Querant turned and walked into the darkness- some say that he seeks his answers still in the remotest parts of the remotest spheres, others that he ascended to a higher plane. Whatever the truth, his quest cut him off forever from the worlds of men. So be careful what you ask.

15. The Prince of Swans

Represents: Inspiration (Creativity/Lack of Imagination)

A tall young man with fair curly hair. He has the deportment (and the clothing) of a prince. He arrives in an air-bourne sled drawn by swans. He is an impresario, immediately dominating and taking over any artistic endeavours that are in progress. Whilst he is present, all creative works flourish - a mummer's play becomes a spectacular carnival, a modest scribbler of verse becomes a major poet, a minor scribe writes a great book. The prince has an impresario's nature; arrogant, fiery, easily bored.

16. The Crown of Odin

Represents: The King (Authority/Tyranny)

This circlet of gold has an awesome reputation. Many have sought it, for the wearing of it gives the wearer Authority. No matter how stupid or small he or she may be, others will bow and scrape and do their bidding. Some think that the crown gives power, but that is not so; power is simply an adjunct to the effect of the crown. How the wearer uses his or her authority is up to them. Some rule their realm justly and wisely; others become tyrants of ferocious cruelty. No wearer is ever happy, for the crown whispers to them, tempting them to do wrong if they are just, and voicing their conscience if they

are not. Not a few who have worn the Crown have died by their own hands.

17. The Twisted Library

Represents: Knowledge (Truth/Falsehood)

This singular edifice appears in realms throughout the Thousand Spheres. It is reputed (wrongly) to be the creation of a powerful wizard (whose identity varies from realm to realm) who took pride in collecting knowledge in all its forms. Eventually, however, hubris claimed him and he began to boast that his library made him as wise as the gods themselves. So the gods caused a subtle falsehood to enter into one of his spell books. When the wizard had cause to use the spell, it summoned a demon to the library who carried the wizard off screaming to the nether hells. The demon's evil, it is said, twisted the library and sent it hurtling off through the Thousand Spheres.

Certainly, reports of the library's appearance would bear this tale out. All the bookshelves are warped, as are the books themselves. The library is on several floors which are linked by abnormally long twisty metal spiral staircases. Light from the ever-lit candles fails to illuminate pools of inky darkness in its maze-like recesses, and scholars have reported a feeling of being watched as they browse its shelves or read from the owl-shaped lecterns. Nonetheless, seekers of knowledge still flock to it when it appears in their realm, for though there is no index nor any apparent order to the books, the answer to any question you care to ask can be found in less than a day's browsing. Unfortunately, half the time the answer is subtly or blatantly wrong.

18. The Judge

Represents: Law (Order/Treachery)

Appearance: An elderly man, tall and upright, dressed in fine brown robes and a renaissance-style cap. His nose is hooked and his brown eyes are penetrating. He carries a book of law which is chained to his waist. He has an Air of Authority, which causes people to respect his judgments (Air 8). When the Judge enters a town, anyone with a grievance is drawn to him, for they intuitively know that he will judge them fairly. This is not, in fact, the case, as some find to their cost. He judges according to the book of law, which is the same regardless of the local customs of the realm he is in. His judgments are remorseless and there is no appeal. If he dons his black cap in front of a prisoner, that prisoner will die, in a manner appropriate to their crimes. Various people have tried to influence his decisions by bribery, threats or rhetoric - he accepts their money or acknowledges their arguments, then gives the judgment that the book of law prescribes.

19. Strength of Ten

Represents: The Lion (Body Prevails/Weakness)

A well-muscled man (to men) or woman (to women) with hair in the colour and style found most attractive in that realm. He or she is completely naked, a fact that somehow does not seem to concern people, even in realms where public nakedness is taboo. Nor does the fact that s/he is surrounded by a faint golden glow like a halo. He/she does not appear to suffer from cold or heat.

The arrival of Strength of Ten in a realm triggers an obsession with strength and physical fitness, especially amongst young people. Folk abandon

their usual pursuits and give themselves over to vigorous regimes of exercise and training. Some inevitably overdo it and suffer the consequences, sometimes for life. The people become highly competitive and fights are not uncommon.

The training culminates in the Lion Games, in which people compete for the honour of running against or wrestling Strength of Ten. Usually they lose, for Strength of Ten is as strong as s/he looks (Earth 7, Fire 6). In such cases the loser becomes a weakling for life and forfeits one point of Earth permanently. If they should win, they gain a point of Earth or Fire permanently.

20. The Lord of Trees

Represents: Nature (Life Energy/Energy Sapped)

A twenty foot bluff humanoid figure made entirely of wood. He is anchored to the ground by thick roots, but nevertheless moves a few feet every day. In his summer aspect, his hair consists of twigs with young leaves, shoots and buds. In his winter aspect, his skin has the roughened, fissured appearance of a mature oak, his hair is dead branches and a beard of moss adorns his face. He moves with a creaking sounds, and unsurprisingly is most often found in forests.

The Lord of Trees is a friendly being who knows everything there is to know about the natural world. Spending time with him, however, is perilous, for he alternates spring and autumn phases, transforming between his summer and winter forms. During his autumn phase, all living creatures in his vicinity gain +1 life permanently as he grows older. The opposite happens in his spring phase. Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell which phase he is in until it is too late...

Note: The presence of any the four season avatars on the same realm will force him into a spring phase (for spring or summer) or an autumn phase (for autumn and winter). This could, in theory, kill him.

21. The Dream Taker

Represents: Overlooking the Diamond (Failing to see Opportunity/Recognising Opportunity)

The Dream Taker looks like something out of a children's story - tall, thin, curly black hair, permanent surprised look to his eyes. He creeps around on spindly legs, hunched over like a preying mantis. He wears a black tail coat and has abnormally long fingers. He speaks, rarely, in a faint breathy voice.

Hush, children, and let me tell you of the Dream Taker. You see him out of the corner of your eye, creeping up in his black coat. He offers children brightly coloured sweets; do not take them, for as you do so, he brushes against you his long, tapering fingers and takes away your dreams, your hopes, your ambitions. Those cursed by the Dream Taker remain toiling drudges for the rest of their lives, overlooking any opportunity to make use of their talents or to better themselves. Conversely, those who eat the sweets sometimes find themselves considering possibilities that they had not considered before, for the sweets are made of the essence of the dreams he has taken.

No-one knows why the Dream Taker works as he does. Some say that he is looking for a dream or hope that he himself lost, long ago.

22. The Bull

Represents: The Peasant (Simple Strength/Lack of Vision)

A man of pure stone. His head is square, his arms rounded rectangles. He is immensely strong (Earth 8). His features are chiselled like the stone heads on Easter Island.

The appearance of the Bull in a realm is a signal for a surge in peasant values. Simple homespun common sense, closeness to the land, plain speaking, conservatism, tradition and superstition are enhanced. Intellectual sophistication, wit, revolutionary fervour and culture are all despised. These values frequently express themselves in peasant uprisings against institutions and individuals that the peasant classes dislike. The Bull takes the lead, carrying a scythe. By the time the smoke has cleared and the peasants are either triumphantly smashing priceless works of art or lying butchered to the last man, the Bull has disappeared.

23. The Phoenix Queen

Represents: The Phoenix (Rebirth/Destruction)

A young woman covered from head to toe in phoenix feathers which are sewn into her skin. She burns constantly, flames dancing over her body. She is often attended by one or more phoenixes. She is utterly immune to extremes of heat and cold.

The Phoenix Queen has similar abilities to those of Flame (she is, of course, related to Flame), but far stronger. She can set fire to anything simply by pointing at it. The effect of the flames depends on the amount of virtue or spiritual force possessed by the immolated person or thing. If they are pure, the fire burns away the dross and leaves them purer and cleaner. If the thing or person is corrupt, they are utterly destroyed.

24. Heaven's Light

Represents: The Priestess (Understanding Mysteries/Impracticality)

A thin grey-haired matron (or, in some realms, a man), dressed in non-descript robes. She has a beneficent and kindly smile and a powerful speaking voice.

Heaven's Light appears as an itinerant preacher. Thousands flock to hear her, for she can explain things which are otherwise completely mysterious. This almost invariably results in the creation of a new religion which she leads for a while. As the heroes have already found out, however, her religions often turn out to be impractical in the long term.

25. The Bacchanal

Represents: The Satyr (Indulgence/Moderation)

A group of satyrs who take over an unoccupied building, or, if a building is not available, their own enchanted glade.

When the Bacchanal appears, everything in the realm stops for a party at which every want and vice is indulged. When the participants are exhausted from the effects of wine, song and lust, the satyrs move on, leaving the locals to clear up the mess. The effects such as missed harvests can sometimes take years to overcome. As a result, an increase in temperance movements of one sort or another is often a result of a visit from the

Bacchanal.

Occasionally, those who go particularly far in sensuous indulgence disappear at the same time as the satyrs. When next the Bacchanal appears, one of the satyrs has strangely familiar features...

26. The Copper Duke

Represents: The Smith (Productivity/Evil Effort)

A richly dressed man with a shock of copper-coloured curly hair (if anyone gets close enough, they may spot that it's real copper). He specialises in making metal animals such iron hounds. His arrival in a realm triggers an industrial revolution, which may produce products that make everyone's lives easier and more productive or weapons of war. His wife is the sorceress Allure, said by some to be Alurax in disguise.

27. Corporal Everyman

Represents: The Soldier (Duty/Blind Obedience)

[Note the irony of his name] An apparently perfectly ordinary soldier, he is everything that a soldier ought to be. He obeys orders to the letter, is the first to volunteer for dangerous missions and shows unflinching bravery in action. However, his rigid adherence to the orders he receives can sometimes bring disaster on the armies in which he serves. He is said by some to have faerie blood.

28. The Advisor

Represents: Sowing Stones (Fruitless Labour/Ceasing Fruitless Labour)

A small man with a large bald head, a long thin shiny nose, red and watery eyes and protruding lips. Dressed in whatever the local bureaucrats wear.

Beware any king who listens to the weasel words of the Advisor. He is the ultimate time and motion man, proposing improvements to the running of the realm which seem sensible and persuasive, but are anything but. In no time the realm is paralysed by rules and regulations; bureaucratic absurdities abound (think of the Common Agricultural Policy) and any enemy realm with its ear to the ground promptly invades. Many a ruler has been suffocated by paperwork (in the case of Titus the Just, literally - the ceiling above the royal bedchamber gave way under the weight of the thousands of scrolls in the room above). The Advisor himself gradually disappears, becoming harder and harder to reach through the bureaucratic maze he constructs around himself until eventually, all that remains of him is a mass of papers. For kingdoms that are in a mess, the Advisor's words can be useful, provided that one does not listen to them for too long.

29. Maria della Rosa/Maria Dolorosa/The Dolorous Queen

Represents: Spring (New Growth/Stagnation)

Like all the season-based avatars, she has two aspects. Her Maria Della Rosa aspect is a pre-Raphaelite maiden with long red hair, rich silk clothing with rose motifs and a circlet of gold. She walks with grace and elegance, and though she laughs and sings, her gaze has an intensity that betokens a secret sorrow. She is the source of the roses which appear on almost every sphere - they spring up wherever she resides and turn towards,

in a slightly disturbing fashion, whenever she walks amongst them. Her roses have many powers, depending on their type. Flame roses can be used to tell the truth, for they burst into flames when a lie is spoken. Home roses can be bent over to form huts to live in. Stone, Ocean and Butterfly roses are merely pretty. The unity roses are in fact crystallised forms of roses that have grown near Maria della Rosa. If she gives you a rose, your life will have new beginnings.

Her Dolorous Queen aspect is older and has a fuller figure. She wears black and weeps constantly. She cannot say about what. Her grief is overwhelming, contagious and debilitating. If she gives you a night-blooming star rose, you may, if you choose to sell it, be rich for the rest of your life. But grief will always be with you (-1 Fire permanently).

30. Voice of Reason

Represents: Striking the Dragon's Tail (Underestimating the Challenge/Recognising the Larger Problem)

Voice of Reason has no physical form, consisting entirely of a disembodied voice. It can be perceived in a mirror, where it appears as a reflection of whatever the viewer thinks themselves to be.

Voice of Reason is an advocate of simple, black-and-white solutions to complex problems. It speaks in town squares or in council meetings, or (in literate societies) by producing tracts, proclamations or letters. It is most persuasive, for each speaker hears a solution based on their own political, religious, sexual or racial prejudices. Those wise enough to resist its blandishments may learn to look at the problem in its full complexity.

31. Golden Sun

Represents: Summer (Energy/Exhaustion)

A full-figured oriental-looking woman with long straight dark hair, dressed in a golden kimono which gleams brightly. Her green eyes are thin slits from which she looks at you sidelong. She has a fan (golden background with red rayed sun) which she uses to conceal her dazzling smile. She radiates warmth; sunlight drifts off her like smoke. Anyone who encounters is filled with energy and enthusiasm for their work, whatever it may be (+1 Fire). Wherever she is, the sun burns hot in a cloudless sky.

Her other aspect is similar, but her clothes are worn and soiled and her hair is bedraggled and limp. She also emanates heat, but the heat is that of a fever victim and the smoke which rises from her body is a pestilential miasma. She sweats constantly, lying indolently under a shady tree, and fans herself with black fan bearing a red dragon motif. The weather where she rests is always stormy and sultry (as is her personality), and all work ceases as the people succumb to torpor and summer fevers.

32. Redfox

Represents: Trickery (Deceit/Subterfuge Revealed)

Most frequently appears as a perfectly ordinary-looking young man with red hair. In fact he is a fox in human guise, as someone with a high Water score may spot. He is a mirror mage, and can use them to mislead and misdirect as well as to reveal the truth. He also has the capacity to create Gates from reflective materials. Slight will interest him, either as a rival or as a

pupil.

33. Innocent

Represents: The Unicorn (Purity/Temptation)

Appears as a six or seven year old boy, perfect of face and manner. He sings in a pure treble and dresses in spotless white. In his purity aspect, he will not associate with anyone who is not themselves pure - if he looks at anyone who is impure, thoughts of their inadequacies well up and may threaten to overwhelm them. His touch, however, will remove all unearned guilt. It will also purify contaminated food or drink. Close observation of his feet will reveal that they do not actually touch the ground, as this would sully them.

His temptation aspect is very similar, but is utterly trusting. He carries a little sack containing precious gems or herbs by his side, which he will give to someone "for safe-keeping". He does what he is told, washes dishes, runs errands and gets into bed with them at night because he "feels scared". Needless to say, all but the most pure will be tempted to betray his trust in some way. To give in would be most unwise, however, for the boy's betrayed, lost look will appear in their mind's eye for forever more whenever they try to do something in the area in which they betray him, accompanied by such feelings of guilt that their ability to carry out the task will be reduced by two. In addition, any food and drink that remains in their presence for more than a short time will become contaminated.

34. The Titan

Represents: War (Great Effort/Effort Misspent)

A giant, twelve feet tall and six foot broad, dressed in tin mail, wearing a helmet and carrying a huge club. He is a brilliant military leader (a fight between him and Warspear Orangebeard would be interesting but inconclusive), always in the thick of battle as he is totally impervious to physical harm. He is equally good at inspiring other endeavours that require persistence and effort to pay off, but if the leader and the planners are not precise in what they want, they will find that the project will not turn as they expect or wish.

35. The Wise Mother/The Ice Maiden

Represents: Winter (Maturity/Inexperience)

A grey-faced, grey-haired old woman, thin and dressed in deep blue. Frost glitters in her hair and she radiates a crisp, invigorating chill (both in manner and in fact). She uses a six-foot long icicle as a stick. She tends to appear in societies which have been around for some time. In her presence, memory is clarified, making it easy to draw conclusions from one's experience.

The Ice Maiden is young, pale and scarily beautiful. She has long raven-black hair in which icicles glitter, and ice jewellery adorns her brow and throat. Her eyes and fingernails are sky blue. Her manner is the epitome of naivety and artlessness. She emanates a sharp, biting cold which makes people forget their accumulated wisdom. She is, of course, a virgin.

AVATAR GROUPINGS

These avatars have similar aims and might be expected to work together:

Mind

Alurax [Dragon], Redfox [Trickery], Twisted Library [Knowledge], Feather on the Breath of God [Eagle]

Wisdom

Soul Doctor [Soul Prevails], Heaven's Light [Priestess], Ice Maiden [Winter], Hermeneutic [Wisdom]

Body

Strength of Ten [Lion], The Bull [Peasant]

Martial

Warspear Orangebeard [Defender], Corporal Everyman [Duty], Count Roderick [Drowning in Armour], Yellowface [Griffin], Voice of Reason [Striking the Dragon's Tail], Titan [War]

Economic

The Bull [Peasant], Copper Duke [Smith], The Advisor [Sowing Stones]

State

The Crown of Odin [King], The Judge [Law], Corporal Everyman [Duty]

Freedom

Silly Me [Fool], Dream Taker [Overlooking the Diamond], The Bacchanal [Satyr], Innocent [Unicorn]

Nature

Mother Harvest [Autumn], Mother Fountain [Creator], Blue Lotus [Fertility], The Lord of Trees [Nature], Maria della Rosa [Spring], Golden Sun [Summer], Ice Maiden [Winter]

Change

The Phoenix Queen [Phoenix], Anubis/Walker [Death], Prince of Swans [Inspiration], Hooded Councillor [Cockatrice]