

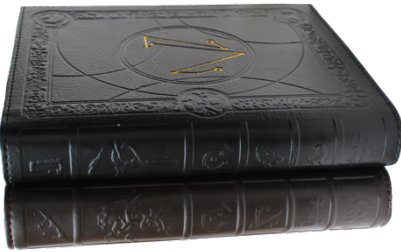
# Ordo Principium

*Almost every Magi depends upon the Ordo Principium. When we awaken, we are lost, children who must be taught to Speak again, and few Magi have the resources to transition across centuries unaided. The Ordo Principium is our bridge. Let me tell you a tale from long ago. The Ordo was already an old system in ancient Greece, but it still was a far cry from the robust organization of today...*

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## DEATH

“*shukhra*” he said, even though he knew it was useless. Magi Anakee was out of Resonance and bleeding fast. It would take something more potent than a meager Regeneration Form at this point to save him. He



looked at his fallen opponent. “Good shot, bastard. You got me with your last gasp.” Anakee crawled across Nicholas’ corpse, fingers stretching for a rectangle shape just visible under the dead man’s arm. “Ah. My reward.” He pulled out a small book... Nicholas’ Codex. Anakee stacked it with his own Codex, holding both tight in his hands. “Apparently you didn’t have a chance to send your Codex away. They say it will be automated in the future, that the Ordo is working on a way to make it a spell you cast well ahead of time. That

will make a Codex hard to steal in the future, but today, ah, today is my lucky day.” He chuckled, then winced in pain. “Not much time left before I join you.”

Anakee sat silently, meditating, trying to limit his breathing. Finally, he had collected a last pool of energy. He tore a fabric square sown into his toga and pulled out a sort of mini Codex, large enough for just one inscription. He opened to the lone page. “*gayit* *imi’* *kheshri*” he whispered. The mini Codex and the two full volumes and a ring on his finger all vanished.

“There. It’s done.” Anakee looked around at the half-finished marble building that had been their battle arena. “I had wanted to see the Parthenon finished. But given the way the world runs, it’ll probably be ruins by the time I come back. Ah well...” He closed his eyes and breathed no more.

On the other side of Athens, in the back room of a small shop, one of several open chests on a shelf suddenly snapped shut and locked itself. The shop keeper jumped a bit at the sound. “Well well well... my first test.” He looked at the name on the chest and sighed. “Gods bear you well, Anakee. The Ordo will guard your treasure while you sleep.” The shop keeper took the chest off the shelf, hid it in a sack, and went to make an offering at the Temple of Helios, the secret base for the local Ordo Principium.

## Vocabulary Lesson

<i>shukhra</i>	shukhra	form/shape
<i>gayit</i>	gayit	move
<i>imi’</i>	imi’	into
<i>kheshri</i>	kheshri	chest (box)

## INTERIM

The Macedonian king and his son had carried the day. Athens and Thebes fell before the conquerors. And in the fading daylight, soldiers reveled in the Athenian streets. “More wine!” they cried from every quarter.

King Philip had placed limits on his army and the amount of looting they were permitted to do in Athens, encouraging them to take women and not wealth as their reward. But some looting was expected, and one member of the army hurried along the darkening streets for a very particular bit of looting. Magi Nicholas moved in haste to the Temple of Helios.

The temple of the sun god had not yet shut its doors for the night — but it was close when Nicholas slipped inside. He grabbed an acolyte: “Your high priest. Fetch him to me. Now.” The boy tripped over himself running to complete the errand. Behind Nicholas, the doors closed. No matter.



They would open them again, and gladly, when he chose to leave, confident that Helios would not object to his departure. Nicholas smiled at his imaginings... he was used to being hated by men and gods alike.

Footsteps approached. Nicholas turned to see the temple leader — a much younger man than Nicholas had expected. No matter. The man had the aura of a Magi about him, which marked him as the man Nicholas had come to see. “You are the high priest of this place?”

“I am High Priest Malachai. What business have you here?”

“I seek what is mine. One of my...” he paused, taking in the acolytes all about him. “My  $\phi\tau\phi\phi\eta\epsilon\epsilon\phi$ .”

The priest looked surprised. “I do not recognize your name. We have one of yours here? Normally we are quite adept at detecting when a Magi awakens and returning the  $\kappa\eta\sigma\eta\tau\iota$  to him or her.”

“You do not have my  $\kappa\eta\sigma\eta\tau\iota$ ! My  $\phi\tau\phi\phi\eta\epsilon\epsilon\phi$  is in Magi Anakee’s  $\kappa\eta\sigma\eta\tau\iota$ . The thief stole it from me.”

“Sir, I am sorry. If you have a conflict with another Magi, you will have to take it up with that Magi when he or she next awakens.”

Nicholas bristled. “I seek only what is mine. If you stand in my way, you are no better than the dog Anakee! In this, I have the support of King Phillip. Assist me, move aside, or be destroyed when the army descends to unmake this temple!”

Malachai seemed unperturbed. “This is the Temple of Helios, god of oaths. I am sworn to the Ordo Principium to guard the chests in my care and return the contents only to the Magi who locked them there. Be you Keeper or Cain, we care not.”

Nicholas fumed. “You think I am powerless? That was not my only book, just my favorite book.” He pulled a Codex from a hidden pocket. “Take great care, priest. I prepared well for this meeting. Your next words will either be ‘let me get that for you’ or they will be your last words.”

Malachai shrugged. He pointed at Nicholas and simply said, “Thief.” A booming voice filled the temple. “DEPART NOW, THIEF, OR BURN IN THE LIGHT OF HELIOS.” A spotlight of light shown from above the altar onto Nicholas’ face.

“What is this? Am I to be afraid of light?” He laughed. But the light grew brighter and soon it had heat with it. Nicholas began backing toward the door. “I will not be driven off by mere sunlight!” He held his Codex before his eyes and tried to make out the serpent’s key well enough to cast. But the light grew brighter. Nicholas turned to the door to get out — but the doors were now barred. He clawed and clawed and screamed and burned. His clothes and skin and organs reduced to ash in the scathing light. And then it turned off.

Malachai turned to one of his acolytes. “See that the Sun’s Wrath Artifact is recharged in the morning.” Then he walked over and pulled the dead man’s Codex out of the ashes, along with some sort of ink bottle — clearly an Artifact since it escaped damage. He also took the skull. He carried these deep into the catacombs under the temple and into a room where many chests sat closed on shelves, undisturbed.

A new chest stood open on a sort of workbench in the middle of the room.

“You’re in luck,” Malachai said, addressing the skull. “I have a newly built chest. Normally we charge for these up-front, but I’ll leave a note to charge you for it later.” He broke a tooth out of the skull and dropped it into the chest — a bit of the Magi that would react when that Magi incarnated again. Then Malachai placed the book and inkwell into the box and closed the lid. “Even though you threatened us, the Ordo will keep these for you until you return. We will keep our oath to serve all Magi, even the angry ones.”

## BIRTH

Magi Kythos, the most recent head of the order of Helios, surveyed the remains of his home, Athens, from the steps of his untouched temple. Smoke still filled the air, the result of the vented anger of the Roman general, Sulla. Kythos wept over the bodies visible from his doorway, knowing there were far more across the city.

“Sir... I’m sorry to disturb you...”

He looked behind himself to see another Magi-priest. “What is it, Demetrius?”

### Vocabulary Lesson

$\phi\tau\phi\phi\eta\epsilon\epsilon\phi$	azhatomsa	Codex
$\kappa\eta\sigma\eta\tau\iota$	kheshri	chest (box)

