

MAGE™

THE SORCERERS CRUSADE



North  
Sea

Atlantic  
Ocean

Bay of  
Biscay

Tyrrhenian  
Sea



Baltic  
Sea

Kapala Hills



EVROPA

-City Independent Covenant-

-Battlesite Great Crag-

MAP KEY

Black Sea

Adriatic  
Sea

Constantinople

Mount  
De Aris

Albion

Delphi

Venus Hill

Mt. Olympus

Aegean  
Sea

Bura

Gediz Caves

The Bull Maze

Mediterranean Sea

Jerusalem

Alexandria



THE KING OF  
MILDEBRANDT

# Prelude

by Storm Constantine

As the Yuletide holly bared its bloody poppets in the lane, she had been married only a four-month. Thomas Gifford was a gentleman farmer, only 10 years older than she. He had wed her in the simmering high summer, taken her tiny, sun-gilded hand in his among the corn, where the regal poppies had shed their crimson gowns like fragile brides. Her parents had been pleased. It was a good match, and they'd feared their jey Melusine would never catch the eye of a man — she being what she was.

It was in the old gray church hidden by yews, that the priest had bound their union. The sun had pressed itself through the high coloured windows, and the blood of Christ had flushed her skin, and her pale-linen gown. Red: that was the colour she saw most of all in this land of green and earth.

She hardly ever spoke, which was one of the reasons her father had feared for her future. His own mother had sometimes whispered that Melusine, with her jey, faintly inhuman beauty, might be a changeling child. "She's no changeling," Melusine's mother would declare. "Put the holy cross on her tongue and see the truth of it. She'll make a good wife for a man."

True, Melusine was a strong girl and had a way with the beasts of the field. She would work from sunrise till the twilight, yet there was a strangeness about her. She was not simple, but rather, a stranger among her kind. Poor little Melusine; she was fair enough and obedient enough not to invite fiercer censure.

At first, as Mistress Gifford, Melusine had resigned to her fate. Thomas was not a cruel man, and she imagined that life with him would be good for her. She tried to be personable, and murmur words appropriate for a wife. In private, she chattered to the animals, unaware that sometimes others heard her and puzzled about her behaviour.

She had her own room at the top of a narrow, twisting staircase. Each night, she would listen for the creak of the boards that would advise her of her husband's approach. This too she bore in patient silence. Before Yule, she ran away.

All her life, Melusine had been haunted. It was as if the world was a far larger place than it seemed, and something immense and unimaginable would one day be revealed to her. At times, the landscape became still, almost unreal. Her lungs would squeeze shut and the air would shimmer before her scalding eyes. She would have to sit down where she stood, afraid yet full of a strange desire.



GREG & TIM  
HILDEBRANDT

On the night she saw the angel, four months after her marriage, she knew her strangeness had slipped over into something more terrible. This was no holy creature like the statues with sad faces and drooping wings that stood guard in the churchyard. This was a being of fire and storm, whose eyes were smoking flames of madness, whose voice was a howl that broke men's hearts. It manifested from the shadows in her high, narrow room in the farmhouse. Melusine awoke from a dream she could not recall, and her eyes searched the darkness. Thomas could be heard snoring in his chamber below. She felt afraid — and almost certain that she was not alone. Then she saw a blue glow in the corner of the room, and a being stepped forth as if coming through a door. Behind the being, it seemed, was another world of light. The angel, however, cast shadows of radiance that eclipsed everything but the immensity of itself. It hissed to her in a language she could not fathom, then raised its right hand and pointed at her heart. All the while, silver tongues of fire fell from its lips, its hair. It was beautiful, but terrible. It could not be an angel of God.

Melusine scabbled her way backward in the bed, until her body pressed against the rough headboard. She uttered little grunts of horror, her breath puffing on the cold air. Outside, the stars shone like unwinking eyes as God beheld their unholy transaction. All her life, when the episodes had overtaken her, she had sensed a far-off presence in the fields. Now it had manifested itself before her in all its dark glory. It had come for her soul, which all these years had been leading a stolen life in the world of men. Thomas knew not what he had married. She would bring a blight and the wrath of the Church upon his house. What could she do but run?

Thomas, waking from a libidinous dream, stumbled up the stairs to his wife's room and found the door hanging open. Winter had invaded the room with its cold breath, and frost had formed over the furniture. She was not lying awake with her wide brown stare, as he was accustomed. Through the open window, he saw a slight black shadow rippling over his fields and knew that it was she. Something cold, hard and hungry stole into Thomas' heart. He was a good man, but a man denied. He sensed the "otherness" in Melusine and wanted to taste it, yet lacked the words to frame this desire.



"She is out among the sheep," they told him as he ran out into the yard, pulling on his coat. His people had been awakened by the crashing of the great front door, the babbling of the disturbed hens, and the alarmed honking of the geese. She had left chaos in her wake, and a sense of herself lingering on the chill air.

They chased her across the seven-acre field, and over the spreading downs where the heather bunched fibrous and unyielding. She flew like a hare before their flaming brands, her feet bare and pale against the crackling, frost-rimed soil. She ran all the way to the village, and there, they cornered her in the churchyard. It was Old Mag who found her crouched behind a crumbling tomb, her hair hanging over her wild eyes. They brought her home. Thomas, a silent presence behind the company, watched his girl-wife struggle in the hold of the women, heard her strange mutterings. What had possessed her? He shuddered. In the house, they dragged her up to her room, closed the window tight, and turned the lock upon her, fast.

Trembling on her bed, Melusine heard them leave the house. She saw the yellow lights wink out one by one in the cottages around the fields. She heard Thomas' heavy movements in the kitchen below, and then the more subtle sounds of beetles crawling over the hearth, of the cracking of the last embers in the fire, and finally, Thomas' breath, his weeping.

She was marked, and her fate was inescapable. In this colourless world of midnight, even her blood would be black. She leaned her face against the cold window, and whined beneath her breath.



Down the winding road, on the other side of the village, sat a modest castle of three stories. There, Sir Renaud Aquinas, lord of the district, lived. Renaud had inherited his estate at a young age; his father had died only a few months before in a hunting accident, and his mother had succumbed to a mysterious palsy three years previously. Renaud was regarded as a handsome, yet insular man. Books meant more to him than social gatherings.

On the night Melusine fled across the fields, Renaud sat before a roaring hearth in his hall, drinking mellow foreign liquor with the priest, Father Rathford. They heard the yelping of the dogs as Thomas' company brought Melusine to earth in the nearby churchyard, but paid it little heed. Father Rathford was holding forth on the superstitious nature of the villagers, and Renaud, only half-listening, nodded and smiled at appropriate moments. "I despair of them," Rathford said. "They are little more than barbarians. The pagan creed lies in a shallow grave in these parts. It takes little for them to go scrabbling at the mould to dig it up again."

"You have a hard task," Renaud said politely.

After the priest had gone, red-checked and reluctant back to his parsonage, Renaud climbed to the highest room of his castle. The hour was late, yet he felt languid and at peace. In the great hall, his servants snuffed out the candles one by one and the old stones of the walls cooled themselves to sleep. In one of the circular turrets, Renaud had his workroom. It was approached by a precarious, winding staircase, where ancient dust, fragments of neglected birds' nests, and bat droppings made the climb more perilous. Only one other person apart from Renaud possessed a key to the thick, iron-studded door that garrisoned the bottom of the stair. To the servants, it was closed to one and all.

The workroom was decorated in a fashion quite different to the rest of Renaud's domain. Colourful rugs from Persia hung upon the walls and adorned the floors. The air itself smelled of perfume, a scent that partially eclipsed a certain sulphurous aroma. Artifacts gathered by his ancestors from every hidden corner of the world reposed in dusty alcoves or crowded upon sagging shelves. As the young lord entered, dying firelight glimmered off yellow brass and iridescent jewels.



steeds wreathed in the smoke of brimstone. "Face the shadow of chaos in all its repugnance," Kalid had said. "For within lies the gold of your soul." Renaud could not imagine ever finding it.

Now he rubbed his aching forehead. He wanted to work, yet did not. "The anima resists me," he protested. "I will not find her."

"Once the Deluge of the initial chaos recedes, she will be there," Kalid said. He rubbed his fingers together quickly, making a papery sound.

It occurred to Renaud that the Arab enjoyed the effects of the *vinum nostrum* on more than one level. Perhaps one day, when Renaud himself could control the experience, he would find joy in it too. The elixir was said to be composed of the mercurial waters of the *prima materia* — the virgin's milk, the fountain's vinegar and the water of life — yet Renaud had helped prepare it and knew it comprised the less spiritual ingredients of henbane, belladonna, thorn apple and mandragora — tidbits more suited to witches' ointments than to spiritual elixirs.

Kalid offered Renaud a pewter goblet, in which the bitter brew shimmered. Lord Aquinas raised the philtre to his lips; the cup seemed full of disembodied voices, of disturbing thoughts. Closing his eyes, he drank, and drank again. Presences waited in the corners of the room, and the candles bent their flames to the spirits' breath.

A sparkling mist stole across Renaud's vision. He collapsed backwards into a chair, blinking at the ceiling where an astral doorway seemed to churn and writhe. They were waiting for him; he knew it. Already he could hear their gleeful howls and the thunder of their infernal horses' hooves.



Thomas told Melusine she must not run away again. It was not safe for a girl out there in the darkness. Some strange beast might come out of the forest and take her life. Melusine knew she was safe from any such attack, but bowed her head, with her hair over her eyes. She could not explain about the angel and the cold dread of its presence.

As soon as Thomas would let her out of the house, she went down to the church with Old Mag. Here the yews, beaded with blood, dripped dew onto the lichened mulch around their roots. Crows shook the branches, flew rasping into the cold white sky. "Snow might come," said Old Mag, lifting a finger to the wind.

Melusine pulled her cloak around her. The world seemed a drab place that day. It was too damp, and everything seemed colourless save the poisonous yew berries and the bloody carcass of a slaughtered rabbit that lay half-devoured upon one of the graves. Inside the church, Melusine slipped into one of the mist-wetted pews. Her breath was a heavy cloud before her eyes. She clasped her hands and tried to pray, but her mind was confused. It was not an angel of Christ who had come to her; was she welcome now in this House? "Holy Father, cleanse me of all evil. Protect me..." The prayer seemed hollow, powerless. Melusine kept her eyes tightly shut; her forehead wrinkled in a frown. She could hear Old Mag moving about the church, arranging the holly branches and the late-blooming roses in a vase. But someone else was here. She could sense it, someone sitting right behind her. She could almost feel his breath, a plume of warmth, reaching out to her through the frigid air. She had not heard the great oak door open, nor footsteps upon the flagged floor. Whoever sat there...

"Mistress Gifford, young Mistress Gifford, isn't it?"

Melusine's eyes flicked open. The stooped, dark shape of the priest stood before her; his small, yet piercing eyes fixed upon her like a bird of prey. "Father..." she managed to whisper.

The priest smiled, although she sensed a predator edge to the gleam in his eyes. "I heard you had a bad scare the other night; ended up here in the churchyard."

He paused as if waiting for an answer. Melusine could not speak. Helplessly, she twisted her mouth and rolled her eyes, quite aware of how she must appear to him.

The priest loomed closer. "What frightened you, my child? What chased you through the night?"

She drew away from him, clouds of breath puffing in between them. She was terrified that he knew what she was, that he saw her black core. Now he was trying to urge confession, which would be followed by accusation, pain, even the flame. In her panic, Melusine still sensed someone behind her, pressing closer, eager and alert. It was almost as if they wished to speak for her. The priest leaned forward, frowning, perhaps concerned. He must not touch her; if he did, she would scream profanations or spew flies. Then came a sound, like silver knives clashing. It might be laughter, out of place in the church. It was certainly not holy. She was aware of a radiant flash in the corner of her vision, and the metallic clatter of monstrous wings. She carried it with her, around her. The priest could not see it, but a certain knowing distaste crept into his eyes...

Melusine scrambled from the pew and pushed past the priest. Out, out, into the winter light, where a murderous coven of crows lifted from the yews, rasping hysterically. The sky was full of wings, moving too slow, too fast. And it was there before her on the path — a tall, shadowy figure; its light closed in against the day, yet still inhuman. Behind her and before her. Was there no escape?

She found herself out in the meadows, stumbling past the cows in their shaggy winter coats, skidding in their frost-rimed dung. Bare trees clawed the colourless sky and the birds wheeled across it in a shape like a crown. Once the creature touched her, she would be lost. She would belong to it and whatever tenuous hold she had on being a normal girl would disappear forever. Her grandmother had been right. She was a changeling child, born of evil.

The forest was ahead of her now, its forbidding branches a puzzle of darkness that would either hide her, or simply hold her as a prisoner until the angel came for her. She had no choice but to run. The air grew opaque around her. She felt so cold. Stumbling, arms flapping, she hurled herself into the shadows of the naked trees.

Renaud saw the girl from his high window. She ran across the fields along the edge of the forest as if demons from the Abyss rode behind her. Her terror drew his gaze. What could she be fleeing from? High overhead, a tangle of crows lifted and fell in a tattered curtain. Then the sky was full of falling stars. The birds seemed to be flickering in and out of reality. The snow had come.

Behind him, Kalid stirred in his chair: "You are close now, very close."

There is some fault in me, Renaud thought, ignoring his mentor's remark. Perhaps I am not destined to follow my parents' work. Perhaps I am both Awake and Asleep, one foot in each world, never fully in one nor the other. He blinked at the littering snow, his hand upon the heavy drapes, and watched the diminutive female figure spin and whirl like a rag on the wind as the weather closed around her. For a brief moment, Renaud saw a spiraling column of silver light flicker in the place where he had last seen her, but he could not be sure. The *vinum nostrum* sometimes coloured in the world with strange shapes of the mind. He let the drapes fall.



Father Rathford was present for dinner. "I have had a day to try the saints!" he informed Renaud as they sat down to partake of a sizzling haunch of beef. A servant heaped steaming scallions onto his platter, while another filled a tankard with foaming ale. "Ages and complaints, and two deaths in the parish. On top of that, young Gifford's bride taking another strange turn — in the church itself! I'll fancy he'll have trouble with her. She's touched—or worse." These last two words were delivered with a meaningful scowl. "She's always had a strange way with her."

Renaud tremored, but not on behalf of the unknown woman. Rathford's words seemed strangely portentous. "And now the snow has come."

"More deaths in store, no doubt — sickly children, doddering ancients and the like." Rathford tucked into his meal with relish. "You look tired, m'lord."

Renaud could do no more than pick at the meat. In truth, he felt weary to his soul. He shrugged.

"Too much peering," Rathford announced. "Bad for the eyes and the brain. Put your books away. You should get out more. I do believe you rarely see another body but myself. Perhaps a comely young wife would bring joy to these halls. Think on it. You'll not be short of offers, I'll wager. A spring wedding, yes..." The priest's eyes took on a dreamy cast.

Fortunately, an interruption curtailed the priest's advice: a heavy knocking at the outer door. It boomed throughout the castle. "Someone in need!" Rathford declared, wiping grease from his chin.

Fate is at the door, Renaud thought, and his flesh turned momentarily hot, then cold. He stood up. Presently, a servant came into the hall and addressed the priest. "There's some folk at the gate for you, Father."

"What, they come here? Disturb our dinner?" Rathford's face had gone pink.

"Another death, perhaps," Renaud said. He knew it would not be that. "Show them in," he told the servant.

Thomas Gifford headed the crew, a landowner faintly known by Renaud. He remembered the priest's earlier words concerning Gifford's wife, and knew this must be no coincidence. After a groveling apology to the lord and his guest for interrupting their meal, Gifford gave an anguished voice to his dilemma. "She's gone, Father, not come back this eve. Old Mag took her to the church, but she had a

turn and fled into the fields. We have searched, but only found five of Morton's kine stiff and dead in the snow, with no mark of injury. Of her, there's no sign. Father, I am afeared. What must be done?"

*They believe she killed the cows, Renaud thought. It often begins that way, with the death of animals. Though he had heard little of this story, in his mind he saw the damning evidence that had been mounting against this unfortunate female. It would consist of small things, but together they made a dark picture. He wondered, for a moment, whether she was truly a witch or just some stripling moon-calf, cursed for her difference.*

"Thomas, I am aware of your problem," Rathford said, sighing heavily. "It occurred to me this very day that all was not well with the child. We must find her, of course, before more ill befalls man or beast."

"But what is wrong with her?" Gifford asked, his words constricted in his throat. "Can it be remedied?"

The priest got to his feet. "I will do all I can. Sometimes evil can be cast out, sometimes not." He turned to Renaud. "You must excuse me, m'lord. This is urgent business."

"I understand. Of course, this poor maid must be found. I will naturally lend my aid to the venture."

*I should not be going out, he thought, as his steward laced up his stoutest boots and brought out his heavy winter cloak. The effects of the nostrum seep back into the brain in the hours of darkness. I should speak to Kalid. But he had to see this girl. He thought back to what he'd witnessed from his high window that afternoon, and knew that he'd seen her vanish into the forest, and more: A light seemed to follow her, an incandescent spirit light, like the Daemon of a mage.*

Outside, the world was hushed and shrouded. Already, the snow lay thick upon the meadows, and although the moon was eclipsed by the snow-bearing clouds, the landscape was lit by the ghostlight of the winter blanket. Renaud's hounds leapt before him, yelping like puppies, as gaunt as werebeasts in the unnatural radiance. The priest tramped beside him, muttering. They had broken away from the main band to skirt the forest that bordered the Aquinas estate. Renaud knew the woods well, having spent most of his days there as a boy. If the girl was what they believed her to be, perhaps this maiden witch would be drawn to the place where his youthful imaginings had conjured spirits from the trees. His mind had enlivened the life force there, and it would perhaps give succour to the girl. Renaud glanced back at the castle, before they entered the darkness of the trees. A dim light burned in the turret room; Kalid would be waiting for him. No matter. Privilege of birth had protected him from the zeal of the Church, and it was perhaps his duty to offer aid to this wench, whether she had the way of wyrd or not. If he had been born into peasant stock, perhaps he too would have been hunted across the land, brought to earth, bound and condemned.

Amid the trees, snowflakes hissed down through the canopy. A stag broke cover and thudded away down the bracken path — an omen. Renaud would follow it.



"No night for this," the priest declared. "I fancy she'll be frozen to a stone by daybreak. Perhaps we should return..."

His righteous sanctimony was tempered by physical discomfort. He had a hand pressed to his beef-fattened flank. Renaud paused a moment, then said, "Father, fear not. Return to Aquinas. I will scour this area. If I happen upon the maid, I will bring her to you. If not, perhaps the others will find her."

The priest looked uncertain. "I should not leave you to search alone, m'lord. It is my duty to hunt this blighted soul for the love of Christ and His eternal Father."

Renaud laughed sweetly. "I know this land better than any. And I shall not mention I tramped it alone. Go back, Father, seek the warmth of my hearth. The cold does not discommode me. Please, I insist. If we go any further, you will not be able to find your way back alone in the snow."

The priest needed no further encouragement. He offered a few perfunctory apologies, then turned his steps back towards the castle. Renaud watched his figure diminish amid the soft deluge of snow. Then he dismissed the priest from his mind and began to jog down the forest path, following the spoor of the stag.

As the forest claimed him, its spirit connected with his soul. He became one with all the hunters of the past. His sense of smell sharpened, as did his hearing. On his tongue, he tasted a thousand subtle scents of beast and plant, even the distant taint of human sweat, which told him in which direction the other men were headed. His magicks might be weak, perhaps, but his senses were far greater than those of his companions.



Melusine thought she must soon die. She could no longer feel her toes and fingers, and it grew difficult to keep her eyes open. The angel had cornered her in a bower of briars. She had crawled through the thorns seeking a sanctuary, and now a shimmering radiance hovered at the entrance to the barbed tunnel. Perhaps it was waiting for her to come out, or else for her to die. What had she done to invite its presence? She could hear it speaking to her, but its language was a mesh of elemental sounds. The angel spoke like water running through the forest, the fall of rain, the bustle of leaves in the wind, and the call of a stag. Part of her wanted to go to it, for she somehow sensed it would make her warm again. Another part was afraid. Emerging from this bower of thorns would be like throwing herself over the edge of a waterfall. And yet they were coming for her. She could hear their heavy movements through the forest, their hard voices. She could hear everything, even the progress of the king stag that made its way towards her, followed by a hunter.

Strange. Melusine's peril seemed in no way connected to the stag, but the beast and its pursuer seemed as one with her all the same. They might be ghosts, she thought, or shades of the forest spirit, enacting timeless rituals of life.

Beyond the naked briars, the angel said her name: "Melusine." The name was distinct and perfect, like a word from a song.

Melusine held her breath. Her head swam with the cacophony around her: men's clumsy feet, the breathing of the forest, the crash of snowflakes against the high branches. She put her burning forehead against her raised knees. How could she be so cold, yet so hot?

"Melusine!" It said, more urgently now, as loud as the sky, yet quieter than the scamper of voles. This was the end of her life and she had a choice. What would take her? The cold, the hands of men, or the voice of an angel? Slowly, she lifted her head. Her vision boiled with light. The angel glowed so brightly that all the briars looked like fragile burned sticks before it. She could see the angel clearly now, a tall figure crouching low, silver hair spilling forward, its eyes like white coals. Its face reminded her of a serpent; long, with slanting eyes. In her mind, she answered its summons. "Leave me! I don't want to go to Hell."

"There is no Hell, but in men's hearts," it replied. "Come forth, Melusine. Come unto me. Do not shut your mind to me, for we are one, you and I."

She knew then, in an instant of blinding clarity, that this brilliance was indeed hers. If she reclaimed it — and she had no doubt it would be reclamation — the strangeness of the world would make sense to her. The feelings she had, the differences she possessed, would plait together into a single, shining whole. She could escape her fate, and if doing so was the Devil's work, then so be it. She did not want to die here in the chilled dark, nor upon a witch's pyre. She would fall backwards into the arms of Fate and see where she landed.

Numb as she was, Melusine found it hard to move. Gradually, she uncurled herself and crawled towards the angel. Its hands reached out to her through the taloned branches. When she took that shining hand in hers, she would rise up with renewed strength. She would be reborn. So close now... She could see the clearing beyond the briars, and her head was full of a rushing sound. She lifted one hand, reached out.

A stag crashed through the frozen bracken into the clearing. Even the angel turned to see it: a magnificent beast, the primal archetype of all stags. Its flanks ran with steaming sweat; its eyes rolled, and it bowed its regal head with exhaustion, its antlered crown kissing the earth. Behind it came the hunter. He wore a long, flapping cloak, and his hair hung wild around his shoulders. He could be no mortal lord. Melusine felt overwhelmed rather than afraid. Without thinking, she scabbled her way through the final barrier of thorns and threw herself against the angel. The breath left her body and she was swept up into a place beyond heat or cold. Sometimes, she had felt this way when Thomas had come to her bed and their union had been eclipsed by dreams of a far-off, shadowy presence. It was all this and more. The angel was inside her and she inside it. When she stood, she would be eight feet tall and shining. The man who pursued the stag was her hunter, as much as the angel was her angel. As her mother had once told her, three herbs apart possess little strength, but grind them together and they become something beyond themselves, much greater.

Renaud stood at the edge of the clearing. He was as the Red Slave approaching the White Woman, the body of the alchemist approaching all that is celestial and pure within his soul. She was queen of the snow, and above the trees, the sun glared alongside the moon, his light devoured by ravens. *I have come home*, Renaud thought, and dropped to one knee. All this time, he had searched for the Daemon in a goblet of alchemical potions, yet here she was, out in the forest all along. He had been blind, lost. And so had she, attaching herself to some strip of a girl, some pathetic witchling pursued by all that was gross and impure. The time had come for them to conjoin. The Daemon would take him by the hand and lead him into the realms beyond human thought, where all the arcana of his Art would be revealed to him — at last.

She came towards him, drifting above the white-starred mulch. He dared to look upon her and was surprised to see she did not seem wholly female, but certainly not male either. His heart yearned for the bonding. He stood up to face her, opening his arms to take that light into his body.



Kalid sat alone in the high tower, listening to the sounds of the fat priest picking at the remains of his meal. The magus pressed the fingers of one hand against his eyes, muttering words from an ancient hermetic work: "I Hermes, cause to come out to thee, O Sun, the spirits of thy brethren, the planets, and I make them for thee a crown, the like of which was never seen; and I cause thee and them to be within me, and I will make thy kingdom vigorous." He had foreseen what would happen. Sometimes he had wished to speak, to tell Renaud his suspicions. But the journey of a mage to his or her Daemon was personal, and no man or woman should intrude upon its course. It had fallen to the Hermit with his lantern to guide the young mage back to himself.

In the snow outside, the soul reclaimed both man and woman.

Downstairs, the priest licked his fingers, oblivious to miracles.







GREG & TIM  
HILDEBRANDT

It was nearly dawn when the door at the bottom of the tower stairs creaked open. Kalid heard footsteps rising higher towards him. At their peak, a drenched creature appeared. The warmth of the castle had melted all the snow upon its hair and cloak, and its face was full of bewildered questions. Kalid stood, his vision dimmed by tears. He gestured to summon it: "As a shadow continuously follows the body of one who walks in the sun," he said, "so the *rebis*, though he appears masculine in form, carries hidden within him his feminine part."

The being collapsed into a chair before the fire, blinking at the flames. It was Renaud, yet it was Melusine, yet it was neither. Kalid gave it wine and it took the goblet with quivering fingers.

"You have a crown of planets about your head," said Kalid, "it is the symbol of the metals and the astrological temperaments. You are the star of perfection. Drink, my friend."

"What am I?" it whispered hoarsely.

"The *rebis* is a hermaphrodite, the divine marriage of male and female, of the sun and the moon. Your separate physical parts shared, and were joined by a single Daemon, and Fate smiled kindly upon you, for you found one another quickly in a life that can be long."

The *rebis* put its head into its hands, letting the goblet fall upon the floor. Indigo wine soaked into the rugs, and flowed between the floorboards.

"Fear not," Kalid murmured. "I shall take you from this place, to the East, to your parents' Covenant. There, you will learn what you have become, and its potential. You will advance beyond the conflict of opposites. Your advent will be welcomed by your brothers and sisters." He reached down and pressed a hand upon the red hair of the *rebis*. Bone-white, flawless skin showed at its neck where the hair parted. Its frame was at once delicate and robust. It was the dark hunter and the white hart in one body. Slowly, it raised its head and stared at Kalid with wide eyes.

"I did not realise... did not know. The forest... I should have stayed here... stayed in the church... gone home, stayed home..." It shook its head, as if warring personalities fought to express themselves.

"Be calm, my friend," murmured Kalid. "You are at one now, and have made contact with the Divine Spark. It is only forward now."

Forward yes, but the Path was littered with thorns, dark stones and twists. Monsters lay concealed there, but also light and knowledge. Kalid sighed. He had been right to come here. He had not realised how much he would be needed.



There were no heirs to Aquinas. The king gave the lands as a gift to another duke, who in due course, took up residence with his family. Thomas Gifford took another wife, an older woman who chattered all the time. No sign was ever found of Melusine and Renaud, other than a strange, scorched area in the heart of the forest, circled by the neat spoor of a stag. The locals presumed that Melusine had indeed been a witch and had killed the young lord before spiriting herself away. Father Rathford declared she must be thought of as dead, because she'd been no child of God. Thomas was pitied, though few liked to talk to him about his vanished bride.

At night, Thomas would lie beside his warm, ordinary wife and think about the small room at the top of the house. He thought about the way she had slept there all alone. Was there evil in her? There had only ever been a staircase betwixt them.

Sometimes, he would weep.



MAGE:  
THE SORCERERS  
CRUSADE

# MAGE™

THE SORCERERS CRUSADE

A Storytelling Game of Magick, Faith and Science  
Designed by Phil Brucato

## Credits

**Concept, Design and Development:** Phil Brucato

Writing: Phil Brucato, Richard Dansky, Kenneth Hite, and Deena McKinney

**Additional Material:** Bill Bridges, Brian Campbell, John Daigle, Roland Green, Eric Griffin, Judith McLaughlin, Frieda Murrey, and Allen Varney

**Original Prelude Story:** Storm Constantine

**Original Prelude Art:** Greg Hildebrandt and Tim Hildebrandt

**Based Upon Mage: The Ascension, Designed by:** Stewart Wieck, Stephan Wieck and Phil Brucato, with Rill Bridges, Brian Campbell, Sam Chupp, Ken Cliffe, Chris Early, Andrew Greenberg, Robert Hatch, Kevin Andrew Murphy, Mark Rein-Hagen, Kathleen Ryan and Richard Thomas

**Additional Sorcerers Crusade Concepts:** Emery Barnes, Steven Brown, Sam Chupp, Elizabeth Fischi, Chris Hind, Sam Inahinet, Mark Rein-Hagen, Kathleen Ryan, Jonathan Tweet, Allen Vamey and J. Porter Wiseman

Research and Brainstorming Assistance: Beth Fischi, Wendy Gash, Lucian Soulhan, Rachele Udell, Andrew Watts

**Editing:** Cary Goff, with Andrew Vetromile

**Art Directors:** Aileen Miles and Richard Thomas

**Front and Back Cover Design:** Aileen Miles

**Layout and Typesetting:** Katie McCaskill

**Art:** Barbara Armada, Kent Buries, Jim Crabtree, Guy Davis, Jason Felix, Darren Frydendall, Michael Gaydos, Doug Alexander Gregory, Fred Harper, Henry Higgenbotham, Eric Hotz, Mark Jackson, Ryan Kelly, David Leri, Vince Locke, Larry MacDougal, Matthew Mitchell, Omar Ryyan, Kathleen Ryan, Ron Spencer, Temujin, Richard Thomas, Conan Venus

**Front and Back Cover Design:** Aileen Miles

**Playtesters:** Meredith Abbott, Kraig Blackwelder, Mike Boaz, Michael Broadwater, Lazerus Chemik, Jean-Marc Couture, Tatmie Ray Davis, Don Flinspach, Coranth Gryphon, Isahelle Henault, Oliver Hoffman, Ben Jacobs, Dan Keller, Mike Nelson, Nik, Simon Rivest, and all the rest of the GenCon, SciCon and DragonCon folks who participated in the developer-run demos but dropped off the face of the world afterward.

## Dedication

Our era is the product of centuries of change. This book is dedicated to the countless people who defied fear and flame to bring us, 500 years later, a world far better than the one they had.

And to those who, in the modern world, try to do the same.

## Ritual Disclaimer for the Ignorant

Yes, it's a game.

No, it's not Satanic.

Don't kill anyone.

Get a life.

Thank you.

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735 PARK NORTH BLVD.  
SUITE 128  
CLARKSTON, GA 30021  
USA

# MAGE™

THE SORCERERS CRUSADE

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# Introduction

*Now entertain conjecture of a time  
When creeping murmur and the pouring dark  
Fills the wide vessel of the universe.  
- William Shakespeare, Henry V*

## The Weaver's Daughter

*Agnesa Gewebetochter did not pause in the market to pluck a luscious fed apple from the farmer's pile, nor did she stop to stroke the huntsman's exquisite furs, as she had done as a child. Today, her sapphire eyes strayed beyond the bickering and bustle of the town square to fix upon six condemned women receiving last rites before nooses tightened about their necks.*

*"God's mercy and justice be done," she whispered softly. For God's Word had been not to suffer witches to live. Satan's doomed ones twitched as they strangled slowly and painfully. She watched until the last one, a girl not much older than Agnesa's own 15 years, finally stopped moving. The bodies hung in the autumn morning sunshine, still and warm. Agnesa crossed*

*herself and turned to leave; her father's finely dyed yarn must fetch a good price today, or she would hear of it.*

*"Pity about that last girl," said a voice behind her. Agnesa turned and gaped at the most handsome man she'd ever seen. He stood tall and clean-shaven, with shoulder-length black hair. Rich garments graced his form.: a linen shirt with fine embroidery, cinched by a green velvet doublet, which he wore under a burgundy jerkin trimmed with white fox. Around his neck shone the fine chain of a knight.*

*"Permit an introduction," he said with a shun bow. "I am Ritter Manfred von Ulm, late of the province of Bavaria. And you are Agnesa, daughter of the finest weaver in Heidelberg."*

## A Magus Is...

The tongue-tied girl nodded and dropped into a deep curtsy. "Good!" replied the knight, "for you are the very lady I've been seeking." He looked towards the bodies. "Give all your compassion to those poor souls, my dear. Some knew not what they did. One was as gifted as your father, in her own way."

Agnesa finally found her voice: "My lord knight, they conspired with demons! Surely it is better for them to find mercy in the presence of our Creator than to commit more evil in this world."

The knight's gaze met hers. "Oh, really?" he asked coldly. "Well then, girl, we shall see about that. Come along. Your father will not miss you, for we struck a bargain scarce an hour ago. Now you belong to me."

Agnesa clutched her basket, unsure, and afraid. Ritter von Ulm was a noble and a peer of the realm. To disobey him would be folly. Yet something about his voice terrified Agnesa. The wings of a dark bird fluttered in her heart, even as she felt an irresistible draw to the knight's wealth and intellect.

"Come," von Ulm repeated. "You have my word as a knight that no harm will befall you." He held out a hand.

Agnesa did what any woman of common means would do; she took his hand and trotted obediently along beside him.

Towards what, she did not know.

## A World Aflame

The world is on fire. The light of the artist, the vision of the scholar and the pyre of the heretic burn with an intensity never before seen. This is the Renaissance, the battleground of the early Ascension War and the beginning of the modern world.

Blades clash and spells blaze forth as the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions gather to preserve the ways of magick. Against it, a united Order of scholars, visionaries and monster-slayers struggles to illumine the world with Reason. In the shadows, antichrists and mad fanatics kindle the flames of hatred and feed them with souls. Magick has gone mad, and a terrible Scourge punishes those who pursue its Mysteries. Across the Earth, magi come together, and their adventures lay the foundations — or the graves — of the future.

This is, in many ways, the Age of High Magick. Mighty enchantments summon demons. Storms rise at a wizard's command. Love charms seduce the unwary, and faeries dance in forbidden rings. Yet the wonder is ever undercut by the spectre of death. Plagues, wars, conspiracies and Inquisitions turn this age into a Dark Fantastic wonderland. To drive the shadows away, men and women of science create grand machines — airships, cannons, medicines — and take up the banner of the common folk. Other visionaries pray for God or the Pit to deliver the world into their hands — one way or another. Fate places Magick, Faith and Reason at odds, and the contest is far from decided.

You are the magus — the wizard, the scientist, the miracle-worker. This age is your age; this world, your world.

A prophet. A heretic. A sell-soul. A genius. He is all these things and more. But above all else, the magus is... himself.

This is not a simple thing. For millennia, churches and kings have crashed the lite from mortal men. "Individual" is a foreign concept. Bound to service, the human soul has slept. No longer.

Magick is alive, and it Awakens the human soul.

Guided by ancient secrets and mystic tools, the Arts of Creation well up in man's imagination. To embrace them is to Awaken, to throw off the mantle of sleep and stride into the night with a Mazing torch. That fire burns, but it purifies as well. Every magus, whether he is a warlock, priest or artisan, leaves sleep behind.

Nor is the magus necessarily a man; indeed, tales say women possess magicks beyond any man's comprehension. Such women refuse the chains of a common life; instead, they dance with devils or bathe in Divine glory. Disguised as men, they take up arms or master the forge. Magick is the spirit of freedom, and freedom wears no man's yoke.

Such passion has its price. Each magus dunces along a Path of Thorns, daring the Abyss of pride and damnation. Even the grandest magicians hide themselves from jealous peasants and hungry night-folk. Even so, magick cannot be denied. Clandestine societies bum candles against the gloom; arcane fellowships school their apprentices; universities and lodges shelter the architects of anew day, and hills blaze with the light of Old Gods. The price is great, but the magus pays it gladly.

The stage is set. The players stand ready. Take up your blade, your books, your poisoned cup, and join the crusade. Let the play begin.

## All the Troupe's a Stage

If you're reading this book, chances are you're already familiar with storytelling games or roleplaying games (RPGs). If not, we'll offer you a quick description;

Most forms of entertainment are passive. You sit down and someone else tells you a story. In storytelling games, you make your own rule. The characters become the game pieces, imagination becomes your game board, and a few simple die rolls resolve matters of chance. It's sort of like a cross between chess and improvisational theatre.

The rules given later in this book offer the core framework for those die rolls, but the majority of the game occurs between the *players* (who assume the roles of various characters) and the *Storyteller* (who sets the scene, portrays the supporting cast and plays the Hand of Fate when needed). Working together, this *troupe* weaves a story; that story may be an orgy of slaughter, a romantic rale, a swashbuckling adventure, or a thousand other possibilities. The key to the game is imagination, coupled with forethought and a sense of wonder. To win, you only need to play.

Later in the book, we'll make a lot of distinctions between *game terms* and *story terms*; simply put, when we say, "in game terms, this means..." it's referring to an objective, rules-based fact—a number, a rule, whatever. When we say, "in story terms..." we're referring to the world of the imagination—a world where things are rarely what they seem.

Because storytelling games are interactive, you get out what you put in. When a troupe works together, the game, or *chronicle*, comes alive; if the troupe members try to top one another, the game degenerates and everyone gets annoyed. Chapters VII and VIII cover the rules of the *Storyteller System*, a loose collection of dice rolls and modifiers. The heart of the game, however, comes from the troupe and its collective imagination. Remember: Roleplaying isn't really about rolling huge handfuls of dice; at its best, it's a challenge to take part in an imaginary world where dice and rules fade away.

Storytelling games are a combination of entertainment and modern mythology. By entering an imaginary world, we leave our mundane world behind for a while and literally move mountains with our imaginations. It's important to remember that our shared myths are just that—myths; with that fact in mind, however, we can go on and have a good time. Set in this context, "winning" and "losing" are petty considerations. As Shakespeare said, the play's the thing.

Enjoy!

## Why the Renaissance?

Magick is the Art of change, and until the Industrial Revolution, no human era heralds greater changes than the Renaissance. Literally "The Rebirth," this era unlocks [the feudal cage and sets imagination free.

In many ways, that age is a lot like our own.

Think about it. The first mass media—printed works—spreads like wildfire; old concepts tumble and new ideas spark romance and debate. The best and worst in humanity runs riot, and no amount of threats or prayers can put them back in their old prisons. From this point on, things are *different*. Man, once seen as a thrall of God and State, is exalted. Artifacts of past glories are resurrected, and people see themselves in a new light. Questions are asked, and the old answers no longer suffice. Cultures meet—sometimes in commerce, often in blood—and those meetings change the world. Art, trade, philosophy and knowledge prosper, and the shackles of the Dark Ages fall away.

Not that this era doesn't have its share of darkness. Far from it! The Rebirth spreads slowly; when it does, it's tainted with greed, prejudice and outright fear. Some swear the world stands on the verge of Judgment Day, and the portents all seem to agree. The cracking of the Dark Age ice sets free the plunder of three continents, war technology and a witch-craze that lasts over 200 years. "Rebirth" maybe the watchword of the day, but each night the shadows lengthen and even the wisest of men grasps his charms and crucifix and prays for the return of dawn.

It is a grand and terrible time to be alive.



## Using This Book

It is a big book true. At its core, however, it's pretty simple, organized with an eye toward both utility and grace.

**Book I: Magick** unveils the setting. In three chapters, we see the worlds of magus, mortal and spirit. **Book II: Faith** introduces you to character creation, the societies of the Art, and the secrets of the Storyteller. **Book III: Science** takes care of the basic rules and magick systems that transform the setting into a game. Finally, the **Appendix** overflows with adversaries, treasures and resources for your troupe.

Speaking of resources. **The Sorcerers Crusade** is part of & much larger world. Its foundation game, **Mage: The Ascension**, offers dozens of sourcebooks for various details; while those books are geared toward the 20th-century setting, some of them, particularly **The Fragile Path**, **Horizon: Stronghold of Hope**, **The Book of Mirrors** and the various Tradition supplements, are especially useful to a Sorcerers Crusade troupe. As for this setting, several hooks, including **Crusade Lore** and **World of Darkness: The Bygone Bestiary**, are available (or soon will be). Finally, **Vampire: The Dark Ages** and its various supplements

## Three Important Notes

*There are certain rules. We cannot fly to the moon. We cannot defy death. We must face the facts, not follies of fantasists like you, who do not live in the real world....*

— The Honorable Mr. Jackson, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*

• **One: Mage** is a game. It's fun. It is not a lifestyle, an occult handbook, a canticle of enlightenment or a lure for Satanic indoctrination. If you can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality, get a life. If you can't tell the difference between the real world and trash TV exposes, then again, get a life.

• **Two:** By necessity, this core rulebook concentrates on Renaissance Europe. Other cultures are touched on briefly, but a book that described the entire world in detail would be larger than we could produce (and costlier than you could afford). Future supplements will treat the Orient, the New World, the Middle East and Africa with the attention and perspective they deserve, but for now, we concentrate on Europe.

• **Three: Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade** is a fantasy game, not a historical simulation. If anything, it's about *rewiring* history. Some liberties — some pretty *major* liberties! — have

## Future Fates

Many sections throughout this book have headings called "Future Fates." Since **Mage** is based in the World of Darkness, certain events occur in the coming years, events that will transform the Dark Fantastic world of **The Sorcerers Crusade** into the Gothic-Punk world of the 20th century. If these events were set in stone, the result might be a depressing, no-win series of adventures culminating in the death of magick and the rise of the Order of Reason.

These events are not set in stone unless you want them to be.

The "Future Fates" headings foretell events on the horizon. You, as the Storyteller, may decide one of three things for your own chronicle:

• **These things will happen.** They are pre-ordained. Fate has spoken. No matter what happens in your chronicle, these events will come to pass. In several centuries, they'll result in the modern World of Darkness. Players might make some difference, but the greater events are beyond their control. This is the Theme of Fate, and a helpful way to bring prophecy (and modern supplements) into the game.

• **These things might happen.** They're probably going to occur, but events in your chronicle may stir things up enough to cause some changes. Certain details — like the painting of the Sistine Chapel or the burning of Joan of Arc — might be altered by the course of your chronicle, and may result in a different world down the road. This is the Theme of Fortune;

while your course is plotted, things might change somewhat. It will be up to you to decide where the winds blow from there.

• **These things might never happen.** Everything is subject to change. The world's entire future history could be altered by the events in your story. The Nine might never fall. The Craftsmen might rally against the Cabal of Pure Thought. The fragile unity of the Traditions might be reinforced by some victory, resulting in a new age of magick (with its own attendant problems). This is the Theme of Free Will: Your players can change history — radically. A Storyteller who chooses this option had better be prepared to do some serious improvising.

If you, the Storyteller, have the imagination, the historical knowledge and the sheer balls to throw the future out the window, we *say*! If, on the other hand, this is your first gaming experience, we recommend you choose a less challenging path.

Naturally, your troupe should never know which option you've chosen. It's far too tempting, if you know you can change history, to go off to assassinate the Pope or make a passionate warning to the Nine. These kinds of actions, especially coming from care-less players, can send your chronicle spinning into directions you can't even imagine, and can make it run less effectively. Therefore, the truth behind the "Future Fates" notes rests in the Storyteller's hands. The Future has been suggested. The Fate is up to you.

been taken with various aspects of the era. This artistic license is intentional; in a world where history itself is changing, it would be inappropriate to dwell on exact details. If Joan of Arc escapes the flames, the date of her execution becomes a moot point.

We also have the element of secret history. In the Dark Fantastic world, many wheels are spinning behind the scenes. Five hundred years from that time, those wheels may have been forgotten, deliberately concealed, or annihilated. There are many secrets in the night, and most of them will not survive the coming dawn, much less halt a millennia. In other words, forget what you know. Enter this world and be amazed.

## Lexicon

*Custom, that unwritten law,  
By which the people keep even kings in awe.*  
— Charles Davenant, Circe

## Common Terms

Each magical culture has its own names and terminology for various things. Trying to list them all would be an exercise in futility. The following terms, however, find their way into conversations between magi across the known world.

**Acolyte:** A servant who follows a magus out of religious devotion or sacred duty; in this period, many servants are acolytes. (See *Consor, Grog*.)

**Aethyrs:** Realms of higher consciousness, surrounding the Earth and radiating outward into ever-more esoteric states. (See *Earth, Realms*.)

**Apprentice:** An aspiring magus or craftsman serving a greater master in return for training and accreditation.

**Artisans:** When capitalized, this term refers to magi who work their magicks through mechanical devices or sacred geometry. Also a general term for craftsmen (uncapitalized).

**Ascension:** A higher state of being, one beyond power, beyond limit, beyond care. (See *Path of Gold*.)

**Astral Flight:** Leaving your body behind and traveling into the spirit worlds or across the mortal one.

**Awakening:** Opening your eyes to the mystic Tapestry. Awakened One refers to a magus, and occasionally to other *night-folk*, too. (See *Mist, Enlightenment*.)

**Common World:** A casual term for the mortal, material reality that most people live their lives within.

**Consor:** An un-Awakened associate of a magus. Though he lacks magical ability, a consor has some other extraordinary talent that sets him apart from mere grogs or servants.

**Contrarium, the:** Heaven's dark mirror. This Underworld lies below the Earth's crust, housing Purgatory, the true Hells and the ghostly Shadowlands. Lesser Purgatories and Hells spin in the *Umbr*a, dimly connected to the Contrarium.

**Council of the Nine Mystick Traditions:** Also called the Council or the Traditions. A newly forming fellowship of mysticks who seek to preserve the ways of magick while following the *Path of Gold*. (See below.)

**Covenant:** Although it formally applies to a Hermetic stronghold, "Covenant" can refer to any established magical community.

**Cray:** A wellspring of mystical power, where the energies of Creation surge into pools.

**Creation:** Everything made by the hand of God (or the gods) — the mortal world, the *Otherworlds* and the *Void*.

**Daedalean:** A catch-all term for members of the Order of Reason. The name comes from the Greek scientist Daedalus, one of the "patron saints" of the Order.

**Daemon:** A common term (or the Mystick Self, which comes to "life" during the *Awakening*. Later called the Avatar.

**Disparate:** An insult for magi who refuse to take sides, Also a group (or a member of a group) that attended the Council but never joined.

**Dreaming, the:** Also known as Faerie or the Faerie Dreaming; a half-world that mirrors the mortal one, but with a vivid, distorted edge.

**Earth, the:** Capitalized, Earth refers to the material world.

**Ephemera:** Spirit-flesh — not quite matter but still "solid" to the proper Arts.

**Ethiopo:** Archaic term for black Africans (as opposed to Arabs). Also Moor.

**Fall, the:** The loss of ideals and vision. Usually wrapped in *Infernalism*, Hubris or both, the Fall often ends in death, slavery or corruption.

**Familiar:** A spirit that inhabits an animal form and assists a magus with her work.

**Fate, Fortune or Free Will:** One of the great Renaissance debates; is humanity governed by predestination (personified as Lady Fate); blind luck (personified by Dame Fortuna); or man's own decisions (often epitomized as virtues and vices)? Either way, the principles play active roles in magick.

**Fragmentum:** (plural *Fragmenti*) An Otherworldly Realm that mirrors an aspect of magick. Later called a **Shard Realm**.

**Gauntlet:** A common name for the chilly threshold between the worlds of Matter and Spirit.

**Ghost:** A restless human soul. Also known as a wraith or spirit.

**Grog:** A (fairly derogatory) term for a sorcerer's servant.

**Horizon:** The border of God's Earth and the threshold of Heaven; also the name of a colossal Realm in which the Traditions meet.

**Hubris:** The fatal pride that drives most sorcerers to destroy themselves and those around them.

**Humours:** Bodily fluids, thought to influence temperament and health.

**Infernalist:** A sorcerer who bargains with unholy powers, turns his back on everything he considered sacred and follows the *Path of Screams*.

**Lilith:** By some accounts, the original wife of Adam. Refusing his dominion, she stole fruit from the Trees of Life and Knowledge, then ran off to learn the Black Arts. Seen as a Divine figure by some Pagans.

**Mage:** Also magus, sorcerer, wizard and a host of other names. A person who transcends mortal vision. Awakens to the truth of magick and learns to use it.

**Maraud:** A demented magus (or Mad One) who twists Creation into knots simply by existing. (See *Path of Screams*.) Marauds embody chaos in human form.

**Microcosm/Macrocosm:** The concept that a smaller thing (*microcosm*) reflects a larger thing (*macrocosm*). Often expressed as "As above, so below." A fundament of magickal thought.

**Mist, the:** The tog of blindness most mortals spend their whole lives wandering through. (See *Awakening, Sleepers*.) Also, the eternal fog that shrouds the spirit worlds; to travel, one walks into the Mists.

**Moonpaths:** Shining bridges through the Mists, guarded by moon-spirits and leading to Otherworldly Realms.

**Mysticks:** A general name for magi. Usually refers to those who practice obvious magick, rather than science-magick. (See *Philosopher-scientist*.)

**Naturae:** Nature spirits (see spirits), as opposed to demons and angels.

**Night-folk:** Vampires, werewolves, faeries and other magical creatures.

**Old Gods:** The pre-Christian deities worshipped by Pagans and shamans but displaced by the Word of God. Seen by Christian magi as spirits, these deities still command respect in rural places.

**Order of Reason, the:** An international affiliation of philosopher-scientists dedicated to helping humanity. Rejecting magick in favor of science and reason, the Order seeks its own *Path of Gold* in the form of Enlightenment for all. (See below.)

**Otherworlds:** Spirit lands outside the borders of the Common World — the Heavens, Hells, elemental courts and other, more esoteric Realms. (See *Umbra*.)

**Pagan:** One who believes in the many gods of the Old Ways, as opposed to the one God of Christianity, Judaism or Islam. In this world, an endangered but defiant creed.

**Path of Gold, the:** The road to Ascension, idealized by many but followed by few.

**Path of Screams, the:** The road of the Infernalist and the Maraud. Instead of a higher state, the wizard seeks a debased or demented one. While this road has a valid place in Creation, those who follow it cause misery and sorrow.

**Path of Thorns, the:** The wizard's destiny — to follow a winding, upward, dangerous road through thorns of temptation and blindness. Hopefully, the sorcerer will eventually reach the *Zenith* or pursue the greater *Path of Gold*.

**Paths of the Wyck:** Weird passages between the mortal world and the spirit one, supposedly left by elder sorcerers. (See *Wyck*.)

**Pattern:** The shape of any given thing, from a flame to a spirit to a brick to a drop of water. Filled with Quintessence, a Pattern comes into being. (See *True Form*.)

**Penumbra, the:** A twilight spirit-shadow of the mortal world, resting on the other side of the *Gauntlet*.

**Philosopher-scientist:** A magus who explores the natural and esoteric worlds. Weaving his magick from formulae and science, rather than from mysticism, he rarely considers what he does to be "magick." (See *Ars Praeclarus*.)

**Quintessence:** The "fifth essence" that permeates and flows through all Creation. Also called Prima, Vis, Earth's Blood and Odyllic Force. (See *Toss*.)

**Regio:** An area shimmering with mystick power, usually aligned with a certain kind of Resonance.

**Resonance:** The lingering essence of a person's deeds or emotions. Resonance flows through magick, "coloring" it with hatred, greed, kindness, love, etc. The stronger the spell, the more Resonance it carries. Through this essence, a magician's acts and intentions follow him, or mark the places he has passed.

**Scourge:** The price of magick; beneficial or baneful fortune surrounds all sorcerers, and occasionally rises to strike them down. Some believe this whipping (scourging) is from God, and is a punishment for presuming to alter His Creation; others see it as the snapping of mystick threads, or the whims of angry Pagan gods.

**Shadow-walking:** Entering the spirit world (the "shadow") and traveling through it in bodily form (as opposed to *astral flight*).

**Shallowing:** A time when the mortal world and Otherworlds overlap; or a place where a normal person could cross over without difficulty.

**Sleeper:** Also Sleepwalker. Caudex; a person who cannot see Creation the way it truly is. One who has not Awakened, and probably never will. (See *Awakening, Mist*.)

**Solitary:** A sorcerer who chooses to be left alone. A solitary might join a group for a while, but she avoids long-term alliances or indoctrination.

**Spheres, the:** Nine elements of Creation spinning in orbits around the Earth. According to legend, they chime like crystals, giving forth the "Music of the Spheres." Also a name sometimes given to the nine Arts associated with those Spheres.

**Spirit:** A creature from the Otherworlds, formed of ephemera, rather than matter. Also called *Iwa, Umbrood* and many other names. (See *Imsginis, Umbrood*.)

**Tapestry, the:** A symbol of Creation.

**Tass:** Quintessence refined into solid form.

**Trinity, the:** The interplay of change (*mutatio*), order (stasis) and decay (*entropy*) that keeps Creation moving.

**True Form:** The original *Pattern* or name given to a person or thing. Magick can change this Form, but doing so places the wizard above the Creator — not a wise move! Sometimes called the Holy Form by deeply religious magi.

**Umbra:** An uncommon name for the vast spirit world (or more properly, *worlds*) surrounding the mortal one. (See *Otherworlds*.) Also called *L'Umbra Haute*.

**Vadium:** (plural *Vada*) An Otherworldly Realm in which principles of magick keep the place in an endless state of flux. Later called a Shade Realm.

**Void, the:** Also called the Abyss; the endless space that surrounds God's Creation. Known in later days as the *Deep Umbra*.

**Weavery:** Spellcasting. The term comes from the idea of reweaving Creation.

**Witchwalk:** Eerie phenomena that betray a mage's presence. Soured milk, strange sounds, rustling winds and hundreds of other portents can follow "when a witch walks by."

**Word, the:** A great Truth, often seen in different lights (the Holy Word, the Word of Reason, the Word of Insight, etc.). Sadly, most people consider their chosen Word to be the only truth, and will kill in its name.

**Wyck, the:** According to Pagan legends, the first race of magi.

**Zenith, the:** The paragon of magickal power. Not true enlightenment, but mastery of great and terrible forces. (See Ascension, *Path of Thorns*.)

**Zodiac:** The celestial bodies (often viewed as legendary heroes and creatures) that influence *honours, Fate and Fortune*.

## The Council of Nine

It takes a lot to create a common "language"; nevertheless, the diplomats and visionaries of the Council have coined the following terms and titles to make inter-Tradition conversations easier. Within its own ranks, each Tradition still employs its favored terms and names, some of which can be found in Chapter V.

**Adeptus:** A magus of some skill and insight.

**Bani:** An honorific meaning "Of the House of...":for example: Cygnus Moro, *bani* Euthanatos.

**Cabal:** A group of magi working together.

**Certamen:** A magickal duel between two parties, with formal rules and observers. To safeguard bystanders, a certamen occurs inside a circle prepared for its use. On pain of death, the combatants agree to limit their attacks to each other. Although rarely fought to the death, some duels prove fatal.

**Compact of Callias:** Declaration of cooperation, suggesting the formation of inter-Tradition cabals.

**Deaconus:** One of the founders of a *Covenant*.

**Discipulus:** A magus recently graduated from *apprentice* status. Female form is **Discipula**.

**Gilgul:** A magickal punishment in which the offender's soul is ripped apart and scattered. It is reserved for the most horrible crimes.

**Icari:** An insulting play on words referring to the Daeduleans. Daedalus was the successful inventor; Icarus was his jealous son, who flew too close to the sun, was burned, and fell.

**Legatus:** A Council diplomat, skilled in both magickal and mundane politics.

**Magister:** A Master-rank magus. The variant title *Magister Mundi*, denotes a wizard of great power and reputation. *Magistra* refers to a female Master, but many Tradition wizards simply use *Magister* as a catchall term.



**Mastiga:** A foolish apprentice, a young and stupid magus or an errant *censor*.

**Primi:** "The First"; the 10 founders of the Tradition Council, and the spokesmen for each group.

**Promethian:** A left-handed compliment, this term refers to a member of the Order of Reason. Taken from Prometheus, the titan who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humanity. While most Tradition mages use the term scornfully, many of them still respect those who bear the title. (See *Icarí, Squama*.)

**Squama:** An insulting name for Daedaleans; refers to the metal plates used in armor (with the idea that their heads and hearts are made of the same material).

**Tradition:** A large sect composed of like-minded magi and operating within certain protocols. These are: The Ahl-i-Batin (*Batini*); Akashic Brotherhood; Chakravanti/Euthanatoi; Choeur Celeste (*Celestial Chorus*); Dream-speakers; Order of Hermes; Seers of Chronos (*Sahajíya*); and Solificati.

**Umbrood:** Literally means "shadow-children"; a Hermetic term for *spirits* of all kinds.

## The Order of Reason

Like the Council, the Order employs a number common terms. Few magi outside the Order know these words, or understand what they mean.

**Ars Praeclarus:** "The Brilliant Art"; magick with a scientific basis, as opposed to a mystical one. The craft of the Order of Reason, named for the sun that illuminates everything in a blinding light, and for the ingenuity of the men and women who wield the Art.

**Brethren:** Un-Enlightened companions, servants or acolytes of the Order. Singularly, Brother or Sister.

**Convention:** A fellowship within the Order of Reason. At this time, the Conventions are: the Artificers (or *Dalou'lanshi*), the Cabal of Pure Thought (*Gabrielíves*), Celestial Masters (later, *Copernicans*), **Craftsmasons** (*Lion Brothers*, or simply *Masons*), High Guild (*Grand Financiers* or *Guildsmen*), **Hippocratic Circle** (Cosians) and Void Seekers (*Explorators*). Another group, the **Ksirafai**, is not listed among the Conventions. Influential as they are, these so-called "Razors" remain unknown, even among their own kind.

**Dolores:** "Griefs, pains"; a name for night-folk and rival magi.

**Enlightenment:** The Order's term for Awakening. Theoretically, all people can be Enlightened when the plagues, monsters and oppressions that weigh them down are eliminated and the Word of Reason is clearly heard.

**Guildhall:** The main lodge of a Convention.

**Inner Circle:** The governing council within the Order of Reason.

**In Profundum Expeditio:** "A journey into the endless"; the name Celestial Masters give their expeditions into the Void.

**Lodge:** A Daedalean Covenant, used as a gathering place and workshop for Resplendants and Brethren alike.

**Machina:** A powerful item of Enlightened technology, i.e., a magickal Device.

**Magistrate:** A ranking member of the Order, often (but not always) a skilled Resplendent.

**Mediator:** A magus-in-training who has achieved Enlightenment but has yet to master *Ars Praeclarus*.

**Resplendent:** A philosopher-scientist who uses advanced principles to work a craft others would call magick. (See *Ars Praeclarus*.)

**Resplendent Honestus:** (plural *Honori*) A high-ranking, highborn Daedalean.

**Resplendent Maximi:** A Convention leader; each group has two *Maximi* (one man, one woman) who represent their group on the Inner Circle. Also the highest rank in the Order of Reason.

**Sacred Artisans:** The original fellowship of Artisan-magi, founded in ancient Egypt.

**Skyrigger:** A ship designed to fly into the Heavens; also a term for those who fly those ships.

**Superstitionists:** An insulting term for mysticks, especially those of the Nine Traditions.

**Viasilicos:** Magickal crystals that facilitate communications between distant lodges.

## Game Terms

Mages do not use these terms; the rules, however, do. The following phrases really shouldn't be coming out of your characters' mouths, but they'll show up a lot during the course of the game. (See **Books II and III** for detailed explanations.)

**Ability:** A Trait that reflects what a mage knows or has learned, as opposed to what she is. Intimidation, Stealth and Moneylending are Ability Traits.

**Action:** One given task, sometimes achieved with a die roll, often roleplayed.

**Advantage:** An unusual Trait, something Jew mortals possess. Backgrounds, magickal Spheres, Willpower and Otherworldly things like horns or wings are good examples.

**Affinity Sphere:** A magickal element linked to a sorcerer's personality and Awakening. (See *Sphere*.)

**Arete:** A Trait you roll when your mage casts a spell. In Story terms, Arete measures a mage's force of enlightened will.

**Attribute:** A Physical, Social or Mental characteristic that reflects a character's natural aptitudes.

**Automatic Success:** An action that, under normal circumstances, does not require a roll.

**Bane:** A nasty Scourge backlash (see *Boon, Scourge*). Also a term for an evil Nature-spirit.

**Boon:** A mystical "reward" for virtuous magick; the opposite of a Bane.

**Botch:** A catastrophe; a negative success "earned" when a player rolls more "ones" than successes during an action.

**Casual Magick:** Spells that come through a mage's contact with the Divine or spiritual. Workings called up with the help of God (or the gods), or through the rituals given to humanity. In other words, the Dark Fantastic equivalent of "coincidental Effects." (See **Mage: The Ascension.**) Witchcraft, Church miracles and many forms of High R itual magick are considered "casual" because people believe they are possible. (See **Vain Magick.**)

**Character:** A fictional being, represented by Traits, a background and roleplaying.

**Dice Pool:** A handful of dice used to determine an action's success or failure. Usually determined by adding an Attribute and an Ability together. A Dice Pool can be split between different actions, but cannot exceed its original amount unless some circumstance adds more dice to the Pool.

**Difficulty:** A target number between 2 and 10, used to determine an action's success or failure. For clarity's sake, difficulty numbers are given as numerals (7) rather than as words (seven).

**Effect:** A game term for a magickal spell; more often referred to as a **spell, enchantment, casting or working.**

**Extended Action:** An activity that requires a certain amount of time and successes to accomplish.

**Health Level:** The measure of a character's injuries, or lack thereof.

**Player:** A troupe member who assumes the role of a magus; his character is, naturally enough, called a player character.

**Points:** A measure of Traits that go up or down (as in "lose one Willpower point"), the cost of a Trait (as in "each dot of Strength costs five points"), or a reflection of experience (as in "you receive five experience points"). Points are fluid; unlike ratings, they often change during a single game session.

**Rating:** The permanent dots in a given Trait. Most ratings remain intact throughout the game; it takes some monumental circumstance to alter a Trait rating one way or the other.

**Refresh:** The rate at which a Trait returns to its original rating. When points are lost from a Trait like Willpower or Health, they come back at the refresh rate.

**Resisted Action:** When two characters oppose each other, the matter is resolved through a resisted action. Both players roll and compare their successes; the one with the most successes wins.

**Simple Action:** Something that can be achieved with a single success.

**Sphere:** An element of reality controlled by magick. Spheres measure what your character knows and what she can do with it.

**Storyteller:** The player who "sets the stage" and portrays the background characters (or Storyteller characters). It's important to remember that the Storyteller is a player, not an adversary. This distinction sometimes gets lost.

**Success:** A die number that equals or exceeds a task's difficulty.

**Trait:** Any characteristic that can be described as a number or as dots (Strength, Willpower, Health, etc.).

**Troupe:** Your group; the players and Storyteller united.

**Vain Magick:** Also known as vulgar magick, vain magick oversteps the boundaries of belief. Without Divine aid, vain magick defies the natural order and calls down The Scourge. Shamanism, Do and many forms of "science magick" are considered "vain" in Europe because few Europeans believe they are possible. (See "**Casual Magick.**")

**Virtues and Vices:** Defined by the Cardinal Virtues, Pagan Virtues, Theological Virtues, Pagan Vices and Seven Deadly Sins, these behaviors measure a sorcerer's intentions — and suggest the effects of Scourging.

# Book I: Wagick

## The Sorcerer Rejoices

Spring lays her mantle downe As fair Persephone rises, so rise I. My underworld is the tower, hers the stony earth. The celebration is at hand!

As Lord Sol blesses us with the thans, I will take my leave of rancid straw (so long in the turning!) and step my feet in fresh-grown grass.

I'll air my gowns on budding branches and ramble to the clear streams to bathe. The water's bite is sharp relief to the pains of musty air. Spitting out the last of winter, I shall drink the nectar of spring.

Maled as a child, I'll embrace the winds and leave the mortal Earth. My hands raised and outstretched like a palmer's, I shall close my eyes and clasp the mountain air. And she shall answer, this Demeter, suckling me like a bygone waif returned to sunshine: and I'll kiss the clouds when they pass!

By nightfall, we'll gather from across the land: Like crabs fleeing from their shells, my kind shall scurry from our dead, dark nestles and join hands around the Mayfires. Leaping the flame (so pure and full of life!), we will call the Summer back, then plant our seeds and plow our furrows and dance the Green Man's way.

So it has been. So it will be. The time of turning is at hand, and I am ready for the coming sun.







# Chapter I: The Path of Thorns

*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth.*

*So God created man in His own image, in the image, of God created He him; male and female created He them.*

— Genesis I: 26-27

## Light and Shadow

*Agnesa rode in silence behind the knight, still numbed by her father's willingness to sell her. True, even a wealthy craftsman's daughter had little in the way of a dowry, but being sold to a stranger was beyond her worst imaginings. Agnesa said a prayer of thanks that the handsome ritter had not raped her. Courage umbered, though, as twilight deepened into dusk. The forest closed around them, dark and tangled. Finally, the knight reined in his steed, dismounted and gentry set Agnesa down.*

*"Sit there." He pointed to a stump. Agnesa sat cold and hungry as von Ulm built a fire. Fear prickled her spine. A wolf howled in the distance and owls hooted close by. A thousand eyes watched from the shadows, Agnesa nearly screamed as von Ulm drew a dagger from his belt. All was clear: This knight practiced witchcraft, and she was to be his virgin sacrifice! When von Ulm sliced his own palm, Agnesa whimpered. Blood welled up, sticky and black. Horror paralysed the girl's tongue as the knight approached, but she prepared herself to bolt. Better to be eaten alive by forest beasts than to be ravaged by demons after death.*

*Von Ulm stopped short, bent down like a supplicant and dipped his fingers into the blood. Careful not to touch the girl, he*

*used the gore to draw a line around the slump. Von Ulm spoke in low, half-whispered words. Agnesa tensed. The knight sensed it and looked up, fixing her in place with his eyes. "Agnesa," he said in a parent's soothing voice, "hear me. You are alone in the world, yet never alone. Within you rests the power to truly live, to become a maker of dreams and a shaper of destinies. But you must cast aside your childish shell. Listen to the voices of the beasts. They summon you. Answer them and find yourself."*

*Despair cut through her as she heard the forest songs. She wanted none of them—Hell awaited her if she made such a bargain! Cast out forever from Paradise... lonely, as she had been her whole life... an unwanted girl, another mouth to feed... she could be greater... a maker, not chattel... The calls beckoned but Agnesa resisted. What was loneliness compared to eternal damnation? But then other voices echoed through her soul; soon, Agnesa listened.*

*In time, she heard her own dulcet tones gliding into harmony, singing, welcoming. Something tore inside her heart. Pain, like frost beneath bare feet, burned through her. Tears came, hot against the cold. The weaver's daughter left her shell. When she finally opened her eyes, morning had come.*

*Manfred von Ulm smiled up at her, his face lit with saintly joy. Agnesa stood above him, though she could not remember rising. As she opened her eyes, the knight spoke: "As she who died, you shall become like a daughter to me. No harm shall come to you in my care. Follow me to my home and I will make good my promise."*

*"Good sir knight," she answered with a forthrightness she had never known before, "please rise. No daughter should stand so before her father—nor a father kneel so before his daughter."*

*The knight's laughter boomed like a cannon. He stood to embrace her and his joints popped like a pinewood fire. "So soon Awakened," he mused, "and so sharp already. You shall be my greatest labor — and your own!"*

## I: Magus

*Am I god in mortal shell.*

*Yet shine no brighter than myself?*

— Faith and the Muse, "Caesura"

**S**tand before that silvered glass and admire your reflection. Be proud of what you see, for you are The Magus and pride is your birthright. Let the merchant mumble, the lord conspire and the churchman bow before God. You and I have tasted the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and we arc meant for greater things.

Where did we come from? Better you should ask the stars from whence they shine. Our kind has always been; tales of why we exist are as plentiful as the shining Hosts of Heaven and nearly as ephemeral. Truth, as any seeker knows, lies not in cold facts hut in the hot breath of mythology. Each word of a legend contains a thousand truths; what matters is not the *littera* — the "written letter" — but the *litteratus* — the culture and learning. For what are letters hut carriers of ideas? And what are we hut carriers of the Great Art?

What are our ways? Again, look to the stars — they would provide an even measure of the many cults and sects of wizardry. This world is vast, and human imagination is grander than any archive. By rough estimation, I would divide our kind by *magick, faith and science*. It is a fool's distinction — every magus hears faith in his breast -- hut t'll serve. The mystick magician calls herself as much; her Arts are plainly magickal and she commands them through force of wit and will. The faithful magus shuns the name "sorcerer"; to him, the Art is a manifestation of God's will, not his own. The scientist quests for Enlightenment through observation and chronicle; he builds bridges of logic to support the miracles he performs, but also disdains the title "magus." Within these distinctions, sects and lodges rally like ants. Sometimes they cooperate. Occasionally they fight.

So what is the Great Art, and what are we that practice it? Ah, those are questions of an epic scope. Our time is short, though, so I shall be brief. We are Those Whose Eyes Have

Opened. Our Sleep has passed, and with it, mortal limitations. The Great Art is our birthright, ceded by God and perfected with endless toil. It is the thread upon Creation's Tapestry, and our hands hold the needles and guide the loom. The stitching and weaving may take a hundred years to learn, but the moment you Awaken, the needle pricks your fingers. Thenceforth, you shall never Sleep again.

## Mists and the Awakening

What do I mean by this "Sleeping" and "Waking"? It's very simple: Each man and woman wanders in the Mists of Ignorance. Like the fog that blankets the border between Earth and the Otherworlds, the Mists of Ignorance cloud perception. When you Awaken, those Mists tall away, as they do when a seeker passes through the fog and begins a morning journey.

Our bodies are shells of Divinest sense, but our minds arc fragile things. Full rightly, the Creator forbade Adam and Eve from the Tree, knowing that their minds would snap with the taste of its fruit. In His mercy, God created the Mists of Ignorance tor the children of the Garden; and, like a blanket, they wrapped the mists about their shoulders as they fled. In time, the Mists shielded their eyes as well as their bodies, and they fell into a Sleep. And so they remain — made in God's image, aye, and still possessed of Divine favor — but walking in a fog.

We arc, magus and mortal, each a miracle incarnate — yet the Sleep blinds men to such awareness. They plot from Jay to day like shadows, cringing in the wake of kings and heroes, bent at the altar and the plow until Death comes, sweeping their promise away with a swing of his scythe. This has been the sorry state of man since time immemorial, but the current age sees it riding like a lord.

You and I are *virtuosos*, men and women of such genius, privilege and perception that we rise above the common folk. Nothing is beyond our grasp, nothing outside our sight so long as we desire it and make it so. Simply put, we are the Awakened Ones. With our opened eyes, we see further and more clearly than the mortals, and we hold Creation's threads in our trembling hands,

Each magus remembers the moment the needle hits the skin. This jolt throws his senses into such turmoil that from that day forward, the sky shines with a different hue. Some men go mad from this prick and plunge the needles into their eyes. People born to magick, like the Pagans, Ethiopians and strangers from afar, can grasp the tools with more confidence than we, but Awakening is always dangerous. The designs we craft can turn on us like vipers.

Yet we persevere. With our opened eyes we seek out those like ourselves. Some of those folk teach us; others walk beside us; still others wave and walk away; there are also the wolves, magi who, out of jealousy, bend or break us. When you Awaken, the world transforms; like a traveling player's wagon, it unfolds into a stage and becomes a tumbling world of characters painted in bright, shiny hues.

## The Daemon

One such lives inside you even now. I refer to the *Daemon*, that inner genius that goads every sorcerer to greater things. Driven by an Essence that the stars themselves decree, this Daemon wears a player's mask and takes the role of teacher. His lessons are not subtle. He'll spring from shadows like a hound, biting you with mockeries; he'll guide you through a nightmare or up the rungs of Jacob's ladder; he'll flirt and whisper and torment you till you're sure to lose your mind, but his ministrations are sincere. He's a teacher, and a part of you.

What defines his mask? Why, what do you believe in? To a Christian, he's a messenger of God; to the philosopher, an inner genius feeding the hunger of the mind; to the witch, she's a goddess or Green Man; to die animist, a beast of uncommon power. Each Daemon suits himself to the magus he attends. His voice seems like gospel to some and Infernal bribes to others, but his words are full of wisdom. Unlike a human mentor, he'll never leave you (much as you might wish he would!), and his lessons take you on a hunt through imaginary woods — the *Forests of Seeking*.

## Seeking

Awakening is only the beginning of a magus' journey. To advance in understanding, each sorcerer must embark on many trips to an Otherworld where only the magus, his Daemon and a host of holy horrors may go. To find your way through the Forests of Seeking, you must be prepared to admit your failures, face your deepest terrors and return with some prize that marks a new insight. Without such Seekings, a magus *sees* but can only see so much.

To enter those woods, you must fall into a deep slumber. Soon, you are alone in the Forests. The Daemon appears and, like a hound, drives you through the woods, forcing you to confront ghosts of your past, phantoms of your failures, and crossroads where each path leads to agony. These woods are filled with serpents and crows, with caves of doubt and flames of purification. The deeper into the Forests you go, the harder it becomes to press onward.

The appearance of the Seeking, like the Daemon that guides it, relies on the culture of the magus; you see what you expect to see. I call them "Forests" as a common definition; some sorcerers wander endless deserts; others climb titanic peaks or dive beneath the sea.

By my reckoning, 10 crossroads (sometimes called "stations" or "chambers") await the traveler; each marks A degree of Enlightenment. To achieve that degree, you must pass the test at the crossroads. The Daemon sits in judgment, and he is not an easy spirit to please.

## Essence

By the will of Heaven, each Daemon contains an Essence — his humour, if you will. Some are rigid like stone fortresses, some pliant as water, some burn like infernos, and still others swirl like tempests. The elements and stars guide each Essence-nature, and the Essence, in turn, guides you.



Their names and natures? Of course:

- Castellum the Earth-worker, Shaper of Patterns
- Furo the Fire-queen, Herald of Change
- Mare, Lady of the Watery Depths and Primal Secrets
- Susurro, Wind-lord of the Questing Spirit

Each Essence shapes the masks of its Daemons, and moves them like knights on a chessboard. You may not feel its hand on your shoulder, but its commands set goals for you in ways even the wisest spirit-masters cannot fathom. Can you disobey their dictates? Of course, you can. You are, after all, Awakened, and possess free will of a most unusual kind.

## Free Will, Fortune and Fate

I must digress for a moment to address the greatest question of our age: Are we creatures with Free Will, prisoners of Dame Fortuna or slaves chained to a predestined Fate? The greatest philosophers, artists and clergymen debate this query night and day: Some point to the grand achievements of humanity, claiming that such things could not be possible without a free and open mind. Proponents of Fortune's whims simply shrug and indicate the randomness of human existence. What role does mankind play in a thunderbolt or a tumble of dice? To the cause of predestination, one merely reads the Revelations or discerns the prophecies that mark each age. Surely, all is foreordained!

What does this mean to the magus? Consider: If you are an agent of Fortune, the dice compel a certain destiny that is out of your hands. If predestined, your Awakening is a toy for higher (or lower) powers — the pawn to your Daemon's knight. Ah, but if Free Will reigns, you are your own man or woman. The Arts are expressions of your individuality, and each design you weave with them is a new creation.

I like the last option best of all — but then I am not God, merely a magus. I suppose you'll have to make your own decisions — which is, of course, part of Awakening's charm: to shape Free Will, Fate and Fortune into a design of your liking.

## The Path of Thorns

In *Utopia...* the religion of all is not the same, and yet all its manifestations, though varied and manifold, by different roads as it were, tend to the same end, the worship of the divine nature.

— Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*

Thar design is not as free as it appears. All too easily, the threads of Creation snag upon brambles: Power. Temptation. Ignorance. Fear. Envy. As brambles will, those tangles unravel the designs of even the greatest magicians. No sorcerer escapes their sting; he who believes his weaveries are immune is often the next to see them fall to pieces.

To open your eyes is to embark upon a Path of Thorns, a winding road that leads through Mists and Forests and ascends the *Mountain of Enlightenment*. On either side lie *Pits of Pride, Despair, Damnation and Madness* — to Fall into

them is to lose your soul. At the top, a Zenith awaits the wise and nimble magus. Off to one side, shrouded by legends and rising into clouds beyond the Zenith, the fabled Path of *Gold* transcends all power, want and mortality, and leads to the highest peak of all: Ascension.

Over the course of his lifetime, each magus makes a four-part journey up this Mountain:

- **Awareness**, in which the Mists part and the magus sees his new Path unveiled before him. These are the *Hours of Enlightenment*, marked by both the Awakening and the sorcerer's subsequent trips through the Forest of Seeking.
- **Instruction**, in which both the Daemon and human teachers take the initiate along the roads they have already traveled, teaching him the skills he'll need to follow their course. These are the *Hours of Apprenticeship* — a magus surrenders himself to the will of a tutor and learns his Arts and manners.
- **Conflict**, when beasts (both external and internal) chase the magus up and down the Path. These are the *Hours of Reckoning* — enemies and pride take their toll and madness swoops 'round a wizard's head. Most magi Fall during such times.
- **Resolution**, when the magus either Falls, reaches the Zenith, or scales the Path of Gold. This is the *Hour of Sovereignty*, when the magus can go no further; *Destruction*, when the Pit of Hell opens and the Adversary comes to embrace his prize; or *Ascension*, when the Heavens draw the magus into the company of God. Unlike the other stages, Resolution is once and final.

Faith is essential to navigating this road; vision and experience are nearly as vital. Too often, a sorcerer will run toward the Zenith, cutting her soul to tatters on the thorns before falling headlong into the Pit. The dangers of such a course (which I'll discuss momentarily) beggar more than the magus herself; a careless magus is a danger to all Creation. For that reason alone, many of her compatriots will strike her down if she cannot or will not check her course. If nothing else, they will move to educate her of the road she travels, preparing her for its twists and pitfalls.

Each magus blazes her own Path; other sorcerers may advise or hinder her, but ultimately she Ascends or Falls by her own choices. Every sect, be it Christian, Pagan, Mohammanad, Jewish or any stranger faith, has tenets and philosophies by which a traveler might find her way. Some sects even propound roads of damnation and madness — known collectively as the Path of *Screams* — which lead straight into the Pits; these roads willfully debase the magus, drawing power from the misery she breeds. In the end, regardless of the advice she receives or the trials she encounters, each magus stands before the Divinity and accounts for her deeds in the Book of Life. Even the Pagans and their ilk attest to this; they might deny the existence of Our Fattier, but they have their own names for damnation.

## Divine and Infernal Powers

Ours is a Christian world; nevertheless, there are those among us who keep other gods. This is especially true among magi; some recall the gods of Greece or Babylon, or dance the Horned One's revels; many follow Brigit Brightflame or cavort with Bacchus and his kind; I have met wanderers who pray to the *Wakin-tanko* or bow their heads to golden idols, or lift their voices to spirit-beasts, ghosts or even Satan's armies. Be assured, however, that no magus believes in nothing. Even scientists can sense Divinity.

There are those among us who say our powers come from Above or Below. Many have pledged their souls to some Divine or demonic patron and enact his will on Earth. Personally, I would say that we are beneficiaries of God's grace (and often pawns of Satan, too), but hold the reins to our own Arts and actions. Still, no one can doubt that the hand of the Otherworlds lies heavily upon us.

As any magus knows, the Otherworlds house a thousand kingdoms. Each is home to magical beasts and spirit-servants; there are elemental kingdoms, Hell-chambers and elysiums of all possible descriptions. Often, their denizens come play upon the Earth, sometimes at our request, other times of their own volition. The legends of monsters, demons and angels are true, my friend and we are privy to their games.

Shall I name the gods? Do you have a day to spare? For brevity's sake, I simply say this: Divinity dwells in each magus' hand. The gods he follows are of less importance than the holy power crackling through his deeds and misdeeds. While mortals speak Latin they can scarce comprehend, our Awakened tongues speak in words of fire. But even *we believe*.

## The Word

To a magus who follows his creed with deep conviction, those fiery words become a single *Word*—an ethic that guides his every thought, and often manifests in his weaveries (the "Resonance," which I'll discuss anon). A devoted Christian views everything in Scripture's light, and he glows with holy radiance. A faithful Pagan sees Old Gods among the trees, and calls beasts to her side. A philosopher-scientist regards the world in charts and formulae, and crafts great machines to do his bidding. None can be convinced to see things any other way and each would defend his Word to the death.

In some cases, a Word might limit a magician's powers; the scientist could no more fly a broomstick than the Pagan could employ his cannon. A wizard's Word might be strong enough to affect the world around her; manifestations of True Faith can drive rivals away, while Echoes of the Word may weaken the magus who violates its tenets. Fanatical creeds breed fanatical magicians, and a fanatic's Word burns him like a brand.

Magick is like a mirror. It reflects what you are and what you honor. We are creatures of our convictions, and belief is the foundation of the Arts.

## II: Magick

*The inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it; the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief in truth, which is the enjoying of it—is the sovereign good of human nature.*

— Francis Bacon

Magick is a flame burning within all magi. It illuminates the night and excites the soul. Channeled wisely, it grants great enlightenment; but fueled by ambition instead, it creates a bonfire. Either choice confers great power upon the magus.

The Arts come as naturally to us as flying does to birds. Even so, we must learn to use them properly, and there are many Arts to master. Few magicians could presume to know them all—each Art is a different field of study with its own rules—but most magi of some experience understand at least a smattering of their principles.

By rough reckoning, there are nine essential Arts:

- **Connection**, the Arts of Correspondences
- **Entropy**, the Arts of Turning, Fate and Fortune
- **Forces**, the Elemental Arts
- **Life**, the Arts of Fertility and Form
- **Matter**, the Arts of Shaping
- **Mind**, the Arts of Command and Intuition
- **Prime**, the Arts of the Divine Fifth Essence
- **Spirit**, the Otherworldly Arts
- **Time**, the Arts of Prophecy and Occasion

Each sect views them differently, of course—magi are nothing if not contentious!—hut, like most generalizations, 'twill serve for simplicity's sake. Each sorcerer views the Arts through different eyes and works them with a slightly different hand. The principles, though, remain the same, whether worked by an Ethiope healer, a one-eyed rune-warrior or a priest of the Holy Catholic Church. Among all the varieties of magi, almost anything can be done, so long as the principles are understood,

## Affinity

That understanding often begins with the Awakening. When the needle pierces a Sleeper's finger, she cries out. The circumstance that caused the Awakening often shapes that cry, and the first Art—the *affinity*—listens.

Affinity often follows temperament—a melancholic magus is more likely to follow the somber Arts of Turning than the dynamic Arts of Force. As the magus grows, that temperament often deepens: Our melancholy friend becomes ever more somber as time goes by. Even so, the Awakening has a way of stirring a person's humours, perhaps even changing them completely: If our dour friend were to Awaken during a great romance, his lusty humour might embrace the Arts of Life rather than Turning, and his temperament become brighter than it once had been.



Most often, a magus favors his affinity throughout his life. It is usually the first Art he learns, the one he works most easily, and the one that guides his temperament. There are no firm "rules" for such affinities, save this: A magus is what he *does*, and what he *does* often flows from what he is. A somber man casts somber spells; a lusty one weaves lustily.

## Weaveries, Tools and Vanity

Needles dance across the fabric of Creation, Magick's loom weaves new cloth from old fibers. The hand of the magus is at work, guiding her Arts; from the designs she crafts, we take the term *weavery* — a metaphor for magickal spells.

Any artist needs tools; ours are as diverse as the stars. Some magi employ herbs, barks and other fruits of nature; devout miracle-workers bow their heads and beseech Divinity to guide their hands, and High Artisans aim their machines and chart their formulae. The designs we make and the tools we prefer come from our beliefs, but it is the instruments of our Arts that connect our fingers to the weave. While it is said that some weavers can shift the patterns with only a word or thought, such craftsmen are rare and deeply skilled.

When a magus weaves a spell, she employs her tools and Enlightened will to reshape the Tapestry. Some designs are simple, so quick and subtle that they appear to be casual tricks of the light. Others are bold, so vain and vivid that the viewer must either attribute them to Gal's band or to some overproud witch. I will tell you that while vulgar designs are sometimes desirable or necessary, it best to avoid them when you can. While we live in a proud time, my friend, it never pays to appear too proud. Vanity tempts Fate and God to strike you down.

## Consequences

... when gifts increase, greater responsibility is imposed.

— Isotta Nogarola, "Of the Equal or Unequal Sin of Adam and Eve"

We do not act without consequence. An action as small as the lighting of a candle may return in some unforeseen way. Huge weaveries have huge repercussions; like thunder from a distant storm, they may take time to reach us, but they *will* be heard! The greatest lesson a magus must learn is to gauge her magicks so that the consequences will not be more than she can hear.

Have you heard the phrase "As Above, so Below"? What it means is this: All things are related, the smaller to the larger. To move one is to shift the other. This illustrates the principle behind most magickal tools, but more urgently it also illustrates *Resonance* — the idea that our Arts are shaped by our intentions, and that the results come back to us anon—often magnified, And if ill fortune results from our activities, we are not blameless.

Magick's consequences are twofold: *Resonance* and the *Scourge*...

## Resonance

The first principle shapes the world around you in small, subtle ways. Actions and emotions become like drops of wine in water; the stronger the actions, the stronger the wine. Just as wine alters the water's taste, your activities and temperament alter the "taste" of your magicks. Creation, "tasting" that "water," will respond to you in kind: A gentle magus inspires love in those she meets, and small strokes of Fortune (a ray of sunlight, an especially good meal) follow her. Now regard our sullen friend: His melancholy affects everyone around him; his spells evoke darkness and lively things begin to slulk.

Resonance colors places and items, too. The site of a great battle, the blood of a tyrant, the fingerbone of a saint—all these things carry Resonance from the person or event that birthed them. They may not be magickal in and of themselves, but any sorcerer can taste their "wine." If such an item were used in a spell, the Resonance would well out of its vessel and mix its own flavor with the sorcerer's intentions. This can be very helpful when the flavors are compatible — like a saint's joint and a healing spell — but disastrous if they are not — like that same bone and a plague-casting. Creation spits such mixtures from its mouth, often invoking deeper consequences....

## The Scourge

Magicks are like honey or poison. When the magician is virtuous, his Arts are sweet and good things come. When a proud wizard stirs poison into God's cup, God's Scourge cracks down like a whip from Heaven. With a turn of His hand, our Lord rewards the just and skins the guilty.

This whip leaves marks. Where Resonance flavors the water, the Scourge spills it. A magus who earns a Scourging (as all of us do at some time) feels it for some time afterward. Depending on the wizard's virtue—or lack of it—these marks might be bountiful or baneful. Kind deeds invoke the angels or cause Fortune to fall the sorcerer's way; dark intentions yield dark results — and oftimes a scorch from Hell's flames.

But this is Divine favor of a mad sort; sometimes it skins the just and rewards the guilty! In a world run by the Divine Plan, such things would not be, but we live in the shadow of imperfection. Just as men are flawed, the Scourge is occasionally unjust. So beware the lash of God!

## Purification

A wise magus knows when to shed his sins. Like a serpent, he occasionally doffs his pride, retires from view and purifies himself. Thus cleansed, he may return to the world with less fear of Scourging or Resonance.

Every magickal practice recommends purification of mind, body and soul. Whether it comes from the priest's confessions, the shaman's ordeals or the artisan's labors, each magus worth the name takes time to clear his vision. Without such relaxation, his sins pile upon him like stones. Sooner or later, the Scourge will strike and crush him beneath its weight-

So employ your Arts with caution; let virtue and wisdom guide your designs! Our needles work great wonders, hut their points are sharp and their threads uncertain. Be careful not to break your hands in magick's loom!

## III: Marvels

SOLOMON *reflected*, "If I ask for gold, silver, or jewels, the Lord will give them to me; I will ask, however, for wisdom; if that is granted me, all, other good things are included."

— *The Greater Key of Solomon, Preface*

Suchstem warnings, aye? Why, you might wonder, should we toil under these ill tidings? Why not simply pur. down Creation's needles, close our eyes and drift back into Sleep?

Well... For Enlightenment's sake. And power's. And wisdom's. And even Creation's. I tell you this: Without those such as we, mankind is doomed to wander in the shadow of Eden, hungering for fruit it has eaten but cannot taste. Without our visions, our Arts, even our wickedness, Creation is a dull stage, peopled with sorry actors and draped in sackcloth.

We do not lack for power, either. With proper skill and discretion, we may cause crops to grow, bones to knit, spirits to appear and machines to rise into the skies. A magus stands one step between man and God, like unto the angels, yet mortal. There are creatures — the night-folk — who may be stronger or more vicious, but we are pinnacles of mankind, mixing power with enlightened sense.

Nor is wisdom to be scorned; without it, man would be a brute. As much as the wizard, priest and scientist might squabble, they are all necessary; without their vision, discipline and innovations, we should till be poorer. And without wisdom, no man or woman can truly be called "Awakened."

Other marvels attend Awakening, too....

## Quintessence and Tass

As any alchemist can tell you, a Fifth Essence tops the corners of Earth, Air, Fire and Water: Spirit, the *Quinte Essence* from which all others come. This is the fiber of Creation's threads, the grape of our mystick wines. Our world is magickal in and of itself; this Essence, also called *Quintessence*, is the lifeblood of all magick and Creation.

Quintessence gathers along the seams of our world, in the places where great events or tragedies have caused the Tapestry to thin. It gathers in items, locations or people that are deeply attuned to magick. Called *The Prime*, *Odylic Force*, *Dragon's Blood* or a thousand other names, it flows like humors beneath the Earth's skin. When you Awaken, Quintessence fills you; the greater your connection to it, the brighter it blazes inside. In dire need, you may pull this fire from within yourself and add it to your weaveries, making the threads stronger and allowing the needles to dance more smoothly.

Just as water freezes to ice, Quintessence freezes into solid a form called *Tass*. A skilled magus can thaw that ice and absorb the Quintessence into herself or employ it in some great weavery. *Tass* takes many wondrous forms — faerie mushrooms, demon hones, sun-crystals.... Although its mystick glow remains hidden from mortal eyes, *Tass* has a sheen that any perceptive man or woman might notice. Magi with mystick sight can, of course, see this marvel in all its glory, shimmering like frost on a winter's morn. Sadly, that glow fades in time; if you take some *Tass* with you on a journey, use it quickly. When removed from its well-spring, *Tass* fades, eventually crumbling to dust.

Quintessence and *Tass* both carry Resonance, a "taste" flavored by the event or place that supplied it. Like spice in a stew, this flavor suits certain magicks and spoils others: Ivy plucked in a Bacchus grove would benefit a lust charm but probably undo a devotional prayer! Should you choose to employ Quintessence in a spell, be careful what you use. The QuinceEssence is spirit incarnate, and no Spirit is truly neutral-

## Crays

As I said, our world is magickal, even after the Fall from Eden. Despite the separation of Mutter and Spirit (our legacy from the Fall), Divine attention keeps some places — *Crays* — caught between both.

To some magicians, Matter and Spirit were never torn apart. The Pagans and their ilk maintain that each stone, blade of grass, bird or creature is alive and aware — we have simply forgotten how to see them thus. Some places are so alive and aware, however, that even the dullest mortal can sense their power. Skin prickles and hair stands on end as you enter such a site. This is a Cray — the "Heart" of the magickal landscape.

Each Cray is a wellspring of Quintessence, a garden of *Tass*, a place of resting and a haven for magical beasts. Long ago, some mighty event shook the land — a battle, a romance, a great feat of magick — and weakened the wall between Matter and Spirit. If the Lord smiles upon that place, it becomes a sacred site; if Satan or the Old Gods favor it instead, the Cray takes on a more sinister aspect, becoming a grove of terrors or a haunted moor.

Like Quintessence, a Cray carries Resonance from the events that spawned it. The Well of St. Michael radiates tranquility; its waters are pure and cool, and no man or beast may harm another there. Blood Lake, in contrast, is a sea of horrors; its waters have been reddened with unholy sacrifices, and its stench rouses the worst passions imaginable by man. You can see, I trust, where the waters of the Well might have a different "taste" than those of Blood Lake! A magus who would use either fluid in an enchantment had best know what she is doing!

## Sanctums, Covenants and Realms

Like any man, a magus needs a place to live and work. Since he presses strange wines, his needs demand a Sanctum or *Covenant* — a mystics shelter where he may be free from

intrusions and distractions. Surrounded by his tools and books, the wizard becomes a lord; perhaps he has servants to attend him, too, and vassals of the magical kind.

The distinction between shelters is simple: A *Sanctum* is a small, private dwelling — a rower, a grove, a forge — lorded over by a single magus. A *Covenant* is a community — a castle, a village, a shipyard — where Awakened folk work toward a common purpose. Although the name "Covenant" comes from the Hermetic strongholds established during bygone ages, all sects have their meeting places. Not every magus is fortunate enough to own a Sanctum.

Such shelters are often built on Crays, or neat them; truly powerful wizards go one step further and open gateways into *Otherworldly Realms*, joining an earthly keep to a distant domain. As the fabled towers of Horizon or the refuge of ruined Doissetep display, a master of the Arts truly stands outside the ken of man! In Otherworldly splendor, fortunate sorcerers practice their weaveries in fair security. No mortal man could breach the walls of such a palace.

Ah, but I did say "mortal man," did I not? Otherworldly Realms have other hazards — angry spirits, mystick creatures, rival magicians and internal quarrels. Locked away from Earth, these places are likewise isolated from aid. When a dragon or unearthly storm threatens the Otherworldly Covenant, the magi there must survive with their own resources — or perish. No help will be forthcoming.

Regardless of the form it takes, a magickal stronghold is a boon. Within its walls or gardens, a magus is free to be herself. In mortal places, the jealous Sleepers make each day a test; in mystick shelters, the greatest hazards come from within.

## Companionship

Magick is a candle, drawing all manner of strange and wonderful moths. While many of these "visitors" are rivals and trespassers, a good handful or so prove to be boon companions — mortal servants, skilled associates, familiar spirits, even magical beasts. If you would pursue the Arts, prepare a place for your companions. Every magus needs assistance on occasion.

Sadly, some wizards despise their companions, or treat them like serfs in a prince's war. I say to you: Respect your companions! While they may not rival you for raw power or awareness, these, so-called "*consors*" and "*brethren*" make skillful stewards. Even more importantly, they guide us away from the mirror every so often and force us to walk in the sun; without such interruptions, we would surely lose ourselves in our own reflections! Cousins, soldiers, lovers, families — un-Awakened or not, they are worth every bit of trouble they might cause.

Some spirits take material form and present themselves at a wizard's feet. While such "*familiars*" might seem lowly, I caution any magus against treating one so! A spirit-beast has insights no man can match; for respect and small considerations, she'll pass them on to you. Her demands may seem strange — most are — but heed them. A disappointed familiar will leave her master, often at the worst of times,

## Major European Crays and Covenants

### Council Sites

Al-Khadima (Batini Covenant, Istanbul)  
 Alexandria (Batini/Hermetic Cray, Egypt)  
 Angelino Colligium (Chorus Covenant, Sicily)  
 Athioss (Euthanatoi Covenant, Greece)  
 Balador (Seers Covenant, Otherworlds)  
 Black Forest/Baerwald Ruins (Verbena Cray, Germany)  
 Celestial Temple of the Sun (Chorus Covenant, Rome)  
 Doissetep (Hermetic Covenant, moved to Otherworlds)  
 Eska (Verbena Covenant, submerged in North Sea)  
 Gediz Caves (Seers Cray, Turkey)  
 Glastonbury Tor (Verbena Cray, Wales)  
 Golden Lane Lodge (Solificati Covenant, Prague)  
 Grace Glen Collegium (Hermetic Covenant, France)  
 Horizon (Council Realm, Otherworlds)  
 Jerusalem (Batini/Chorus Cray, Arabia)  
 Londinium Collegium (Hermetic Covenant, England)  
 Lough Neagh (Verbena Cray, Ireland)  
 Lyonesse (Hermetic Cray, submerged near French Coast)  
 Mistridge (ruins, France)  
 Stonehenge (Verbena/Hermetic Cray, England)  
 The Bull-maze (Euthanatoi Cray, Crete)  
 Valley of Kings (Batini Cray, Egypt)  
 Venus' Rest (Seers/Euthanatoi Cray, Greece)  
 Winter Castle (Verbena Realm, Otherworlds)

### Daedalean Sites

Alcazar (Gabrielite Covenant, Spain)  
 Artisan Circle (Daedalean Covenant, Florence)  
 Brandenburg Krankenhaus (Cosian Covenant, Germany)  
 Castle Stovka (Gabrielite Covenant, Bohemia)  
 Locus Praesidii (Daedalean Covenant, Venice)  
 Krak de Leon (Gabrielite Covenant, France)  
 Montsalavar (Gabrielite Covenant, Genoa)  
 Mt. Olympus (Artificer Cray, Greece)  
 Portus Cruis (Master/Seeker Covenant, Portugal)  
 Rowan Castle (Gabrielite Covenant, England)  
 St. Peter's Catacombs (Gabrielite Covenant, Rome)  
 Subtle Dragon Lodge (Cosian Covenant, Prague)  
 Thorwald (Gabrielite/Artificer Covenant, Germany)  
 White Tower/Languedoc (Daedalean Covenant, France)  
 White Tower/Yoassmy (Daedalean Covenant, France)

### Other Sites

Blood Lake (Infernalist Cray, Poland)  
 Chateau de Rais (Infernalist Covenant, France)  
 Kupala Alka (Infernalist Covenant, Lithuania)  
 Oxford University (opposed Covenants, England)  
 St. Michael's Well ("open" Cray, Naples)  
 Vatican (opposed Covenants, Rome)  
 Venice (opposed Covenants, Venice)

### Wealth and Magickal Treasures

Material wealth is no substitute for companionship, but a magician who craves it can easily slake his thirst. Gold flows from the alchemist's table; crops rise at the witch's command; offerings fill the coffers of the priest while the scholar councils merchant princes. Even the landless gypsy finds comfort in her skills; a purse is easier to lift when your fingers know the Arts.

Better still are the magickal treasures — enchanted swords, elixirs, grand Devices and spirit-haunted fetishes — spoken of in legend. Like tools of the Art, they gild our rites; unlike those tools, they possess powers of their own. Such items are far more common in folklore than in reality, of course, but they *do* exist. A truly powerful magus may create such things himself; indeed, the High Artisans do so as a trade!

Such are the rewards of Awakening, the marvels of the Art. In the Path of a greedy magus, they might become brambles; a wise magician, on the other hand, can regard such boons as profit from the trade. Magick is no easy profession; there is no sin in occasional recompense.

### Conclusion

*What remains to be done must be done by you.... God will not do everything himself.*

— Niccolo Machiavelli, "The Prince"

Our Church has caused us to fear awareness, to drown it in a pool of terror. The frightened ones see Hell in each flickering candle, and they snuff those candles — candles like ourselves — with the cold breath of exorcism. We Awakened folk know better; magick is a birthright, not a curse. All the same, it can burn with the intensity of alchemical flame, and its heat can blacken all our souls.

So treasure your reflection. The mirror marks you as a magus. Be proud, but riot too proud; be imaginative in your Arts, but recall their consequences. Your eyes are open now. The Mists draw aside. Beware the Thorns and stay true to the Path.





# Chapter II: The Mortal World

*If you seek my monument, look around you.*  
— Epitaph of Michelangelo Buonarroti

## The Tower

A knight's hunting manor, rooms of her own, decent clothes, hot bread, mulled wine — all these, von Vim had promised and provided. Agnesa snuggled in her warm robe, woven of the finest linen, and listened to her mentor's words as embers glowed in the great room's hearth.

"One, clay," he said, "I heard your songs as you walked to market, and I knew you had the talents to become a powerful workwoman. Ancient power echoes through your soul, my dear, a melody most precious. As your teacher, it is my duty to nurture and sustain that swig until you are fully grown and ready to make your own way."

"But what of the Holy Church?" Agnesa replied, dubiously. "I still believe in my faith."

Von Ulm smiled like a father. "And why should you not? Child, I would not ask you to forsake that faith. Many are the Paths of Gold; how can they all be right or wrong? Each man must find his own way, his own road to stride. So how can I say that, your beliefs are any less sacred than my own!"

The knight looked up as a young man entered. Like von Ulm, he was tall and handsome, but his eyes were hard as obsidian, and his dark hair recalled a raven's wings. "Ah, Bartolomeo," said von Ulm, rising. "You must meet Agnesa, my newest pupil. Agnesa, I give you my adopted son and heir, Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, late of the city of Padua."

The girl curtsied. The young Italian kissed Agnesa's hand, sending shivers through her flesh. "Welcome, Agnesa," he purred. "I shall be delighted to have such a lovely young lady in my father's house." His cold eyes appraised her. "Perhaps I can teach you the Latin tongue, so you may share my joy in the great work of Brunenschwig I have recently discovered."

Agnesa smiled sweetly. Chills brushed her heart. She tried to ignore them, and failed. Bartolomeo's warm hands held the promise of winter. He squeezed her fingers once, more before releasing them. The trials had begun.

## Fire and Twilight

As Christians measure the years, it is 1450. Shadows reach across Europe like grim gnarled trees looming above a garden: the shadow from the past, the shadow of the Turk, and the shadow from beyond.

The shadow from the past is the Plague. Less than a century ago, it swept out of Asia. After a few dreadful years, a third of Europe's people are gone. Forests have grown where villages flourished. Fields go untilled for lack of hands. Those with labor to sell can earn a better price (or even their freedom) in return. With fewer mouths to feed, the fields provide plenty for all. But even the prosperous folk must live with the tales of the march of Death, of priests abandoning stricken flocks, of parents deserting dying children.

On the borders of God's land stand the Ottoman Turks. With the finest army in the world, they have already overrun most of East Europe. They have only to reach out their hands, and Constantinople, the ancient seat of Eastern Christianity, will be theirs. Will they halt there? In the heart of Iberia (Spain), Moorish infidels still stake their claim. Can the armies of Castile and Aragon unseat them? And if not, what does the future hold for the Iberian Church?

The Church itself reels in the grasp of greedy, faithless priests. For each true man or woman of the Lord, another abuses his office, stuffing his coffers with the peoples' bounty. Tithes — compulsory offerings — grow more onerous every year, and so-called "pardoners" sell relief from Purgatory. Tales of Papal excesses, of orgies in Rome and gold-lined altars, reach the common folk's ears. Who could doubt a man for losing his faith?

Beyond the material world, Hell and Satan await the sinner. Sometimes they do not wait, but reach out into the living world. Witches, ghosts, evil spirits and other menaces tempt the weak to damnation. The Church can drive them back (for a price), or so the priests say, but still the Black Masses thrive and the vampires feast-Night holds a chill, even in the warmest lands.

Yet folks are often too busy to think of these shadows. When the last beans and turnips must suffice until harvest, when it is two days on a muddy road to the town market, when a harsh winter or a dry summer kills half the babes in a village — when this is the way of the world, one has little time to sit and fret.

Nor are the shadows everywhere. It is everyone's birthright to rejoice in a happy marriage, in children who grow tall and wise, in good work sold for a fair price, in a prayer offered humbly and sincerely to God. Bright fires drive back the shadows, too. Old philosophies are dusted off, and new ideas take hold. Trade, invention, art — all of them thrive, especially in the prosperous Tuscan

(North Italian) states. Architects, sculptors and painters employ Classical models and mathematical theorems; international bankers let money travel where it is needed; warriors have new ships, new cannons, and fine new armor to uphold causes both just and unjust. France and England end a century-long war. An Italian scholar assembles libraries in the Vatican. Far away, a German craftsman named Johannes Gutenberg perfects moveable type and a machine to use it. In less than 50 years, printed books will be everywhere.

Patches of sunlight amid the shadows. Expanses of shadow amid the sunlight. In later days, men will call this "the Rebirth" — the *Renaissance*. For now, we'll just call it *home*. Let us peer into the mirror of past and future. Let us look beyond mortal sight and see the world as it is, as it was, and as it shall be....

## Historical Note

**The Sorcerers Crusade** takes place across a 100-year time span, from the early 1400s to the early 1500s. Where and when you set your chronicle depends on what your troupe wants to do. You could choose the time before the Council foundation, playing out the tumultuous days of Joan of Arc, Wyndgarde's March and the Decade of the Hunt — a time when the Middle Ages still hold sway over the land. Or you could adventure in the mid-to-late 1400s, when the Council and High Renaissance have been established. A late-Renaissance tale could begin after France's invasion of Italy, the *Reconquista* of Spain and the journeys to the New World; an even later chronicle might trace the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation, the subjugation of the Americas, and the beginnings of the swash-buckling era.

Naturally, the period you choose will affect the events in progress: An early chronicle would focus on the fierce battles of the Convocation period, while a later one might see the Council in decline and trace the Daedaleans' war against Tezghul, or the Seven Thunders' war against everyone. Location matters, too: A tale set in the England of the early 1400s will be far more medieval than one set in Florence at the same time. The Rebirth spreads slowly; many areas, especially rural ones, never see the glory of the Tuscan Renaissance. Its changes wash up on their doorsteps nearly 100 years later. Still, no matter where or when you set your chronicle, the world is changing — more rapidly than anyone would like to admit.

## Imago Mundi: A View of the World

*An age will come after many years when the Ocean will loose the chains of things, and a huge land lie revealed; when Tethys will disclose new worlds and Thule no more be the ultimate.*

— Seneca, Medea

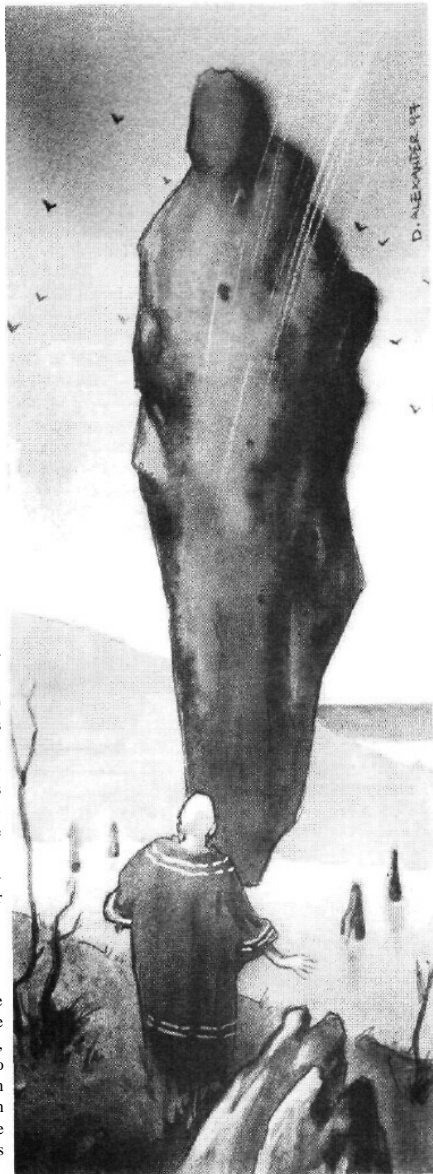
In 1453, the Turks finally take Constantinople, ending the reign of Byzantium. With the fall of Constantinople, Europe's front door slams shut. Over the next century, Europeans find new windows, open their Atlantic back door, and break down their walls of geography and superstition in an overwhelming attempt to bring Christendom overseas — and foreign treasures home. From an imperiled Christian outcropping in Moslem Asia, sailors, traders and conquistadors transform Europe into the richest, most vibrant, expansive and dangerous civilization on Earth. Soon, English noblemen visit the courts of Persia and Muscovy; Portuguese cannons blaze off coasts from Japan to Brazil; Spanish priests burn heretics in Mexico and Mindanao; Dutch bankers trade slaves in Africa and emeralds in Venezuela. Suddenly, Europeans are everywhere. For most other people, this is not good news. Even for some Europeans, the transition from medieval backwater to turbulent mainstream upsets the old order, with occasionally devastating results.

The road to the future opens through the past — and through the Italian city-states. By reviving the study of Greek and Roman learning, Tuscan visionaries advance scholarship and art beyond anything seen in the last 1,000 years. But no host of scholars, or library of manuscripts could have given the world the New Learning without Italian wealth. The first bankers in Christendom are Italians; now merchants, princes and Popes finance the works of art and science that propel this age. Without the patronage of the Medici, the Borgia, and their contemporaries, the virtuosos would labor in obscurity... if at all.

Italy mingles sunlight and shadow, wise rule and bloody-handed despotism like no other land. So let the mirror hand our journey in the heart of Italy....

### Tuscany and Italy

The smells are strong here — campfire smoke, ripe olives, sweat, middens, manure, roasting meat. Around the camp, soldiers prepare their guns. A luxury in this age, cannons are no longer mysteries; although dangerous to employ, the guns prove worth the effort to an army with skilled cannoneers. One such cannoneer examines an iron bombard. Beneath his beard, a pepper of black betrays the place where a gun once exploded, driving powder into his skin. Still, he's fortunate to be alive. Others are not so lucky.



The great bombard travels in two pieces, each on its own stout wagon. The gunners will load the breech piece with powder and shot, screw it to the muzzle, and fire a stone shot the size of a small wine barrel at a nearby castle's wall. When the gun has cooled, the gunners will unscrew the breech, swab out both pieces, then reload. Downhill, laborers work half-naked. Some dig a pit for the bombard; others shape logs cut from olive trees into timbers. These will make the frame that holds the bombard in place in the pit.

A man lies by the stump of an olive tree, his head bloodied. The olive tree was his, and he dared to complain. He'll live, though, and he should thank the saints that Milan does not want a war with Florence; otherwise, the farmer would be dead, and his village inflames. As the sun creeps toward the horizon, the diggers and carpenters light torches and continue their work. The flickering glow reveals the farmer's family, coming to carry him away. Darkness ends a day well spent. The master gunner knows that the bombard will be firing at dawn....

Rome was the old center of Europe, in antiquity and in medieval times. Even in this new era, the center of Europe has n't traveled far; as the Rebirth begins, Florentine merchants, princes and artisans set the example for the rest of Christendom. In the old days, the Church controlled kingdoms through holy threats and intrigues; while that is still true in this age, the Papacy no longer makes and unmake kings. Rather, the doges, dukes and dictators of the Italian states share the Vatican among themselves. Without a single king to unite them, these lords wage tiny wars with one another — sometimes with poisoned words and deadly weapons, other times with cannons, mercenaries and "reversals of fortune."

Real economic power in the mid-15th century rests with Venice, Milan and Florence. Venice (and to a lesser extent, Genoa and Pisa) built its prosperity on its fortunate location at the European end of the trade routes to and from the East. Venetian and Genoese merchants hold privileged positions in the Moslem ports of Syria, Egypt and the Black Sea; Venice even rules a maritime empire that extends to Crete and controls the Adriatic. Venetian and Genoese galleys take spices, gold and silk from the Levant and wallow across the familiar Mediterranean. Such luxuries sell in France, Spain and Germany for a considerable profit, fueling the Transcendent art and mercenary politics of Italy.

The riches from this trade and from its shipbuilding industry (Venetian yards can produce a fully rigged galley in less than three days) swell Venice's population to 200,000 souls, making it the largest city in Europe. Venice's competitors — Milan and Florence, and to a lesser extent Genoa and Naples — are only slightly smaller. Florence and Milan dominate the textile industry — a vitally important trade in an era when woolen cloth is Europe's

only reliable export. Florence's Medici bankers reap profits from European trade and control the best alum deposits in Italy, vital for tanning and cloth-dyeing. Italian cities also capably imitate and adopt foreign techniques: Egypt, which exported paper to Europe in the 11th century, now imports it from Italy. Lucca (near Florence) developed its own silk industry, and Pisan navigators perfected the compass. Italian merchants even imported their numbers. Arabic numerals replaced Roman ones in Italian account books in the 13th century. Long practice with Arabic numerals (and with double-entry bookkeeping, introduced by Fibonacci around the same time) makes Italians "natural clerks." These managerial skills are another valuable Italian export. Italian scholars, accountants and engineers hold important posts in the chanceries of every court in Europe.

Naples, the other great Italian city, shares the hot, sunny days and impossibly dark nights of its cousins, but not their political independence or industrial prosperity. The Neapolitan throne became entangled in contests between Aragon and France some 200 years ago; caught between pretenders, puppets and warring princes, Naples skirts the Rebirth of its cousin states — prosperous but uneasy, it echoes with screams in the night.

## Iberia (Spain and Portugal)

Aragon itself is much like Italy, a mountainous Mediterranean realm of bright sunlight and urban prosperity. Aragon's western neighbor Castile centers on a high plain supporting proud yeomen and parochial shepherds. Castile's ports, Seville and Bilbao, look out onto the stormy Atlantic rather than the calm Mediterranean. When Aragon and Castile unite in 1469, the resulting Kingdom of Spain pursues its destiny in both directions. When the Moors are finally expelled from Granada in 1492, the Kingdom of Spain is ready to take its place at the table of great nations. Till then, the grand castles and synagogues shelter infidels whose achievements mock their northern neighbors.

Portugal, Spain's smaller neighbor, has only one direction to go: seaward. By 1450, Portuguese navigators have rounded Cape Verde, the westernmost tip of Africa. Although her captains will never find the Christian "Kingdom of Prester John" they seek in Africa, they do expand European knowledge of the African coast (the interior will remain a mystery for four more centuries), and collect gold and slaves along the way. By the end of the century, Portugal and Spain will go so far as to divide the world between them in the Treaty of Tordesillas, brokered by the Spanish Borgia Pope Alexander VI; even then, the tiny population of Portugal (one and a half million people) is not enough to rule half the world, much less take on larger European powers.

## Intrigue

As prince, banker and cleric maneuver for power, their actions take on a decidedly unchristian tone. Gossip, favors, public humiliation, robbery, excommunication and assassination become common tools of the game. Many churches and manor houses have secret dungeons where people unfortunate enough to run afoul of a plot spend their final days. Any man (or woman) of means keeps a torturer on retainer.

Rewards for making — and keeping — the right alliances are grand: Wealth, social status, positions of influence, and sexual (or even magical) favors are common boons for good service. Most of the time, those services are fairly minor: spying on rivals, leaking secrets to listening ears, seducing and disgracing honorable folk, or diverting a rival's attentions while the plotter makes her move. Larger favors — labor, theft, murder or military service — occasionally come with the territory, however, and a "favored friend" might soon find himself called upon for tasks he never would have considered. Most intriguers rely on a system of debts and rewards to keep their "friends" loyal; a small task earns a great reward, which is used as a debt the next time the patron needs something. It's easy — *very* easy — to be seduced into a complex series of alliances, debts and loyalties, especially if you're ambitious, poor, desperate or all three.

Intrigue can be exceedingly profitable; it can also turn around very quickly. A patron might sell out his agents (or vice versa) if doing so seems wise; most intriguers use their allies as bargaining tokens, and trade them to other plotters when occasion warrants. Even a loyal patron or ally can betray that trust under torture, magical compulsion or disgrace, and anyone can simply be killed. A reversal of fortune can leave a conspirator or her allies out in the cold; from there, a rival may well offer another alliance — a "deal you can't refuse."

Italy's politics are rife with intrigue; Florence and Venice become the new Byzantiums. Across the continent, however, spies, toadies, diplomats and enforcers ply their trades in every court, chapel and tavern. No man or woman of consequence retains their power or wealth without some dabbling in shadow-politics; when magical steps onstage, the bargains get sweeter — and nastier. After all, witchcraft is a death sentence everywhere in Europe. Any sorcerer who dips her hand in intrigue risks exposure and the stake.

## Northern Europe

Look northward, now, to the snow-draped cottage of an English peasant farmer. As such places go, this hovel is better than many, built of fine-cut logs and sealed with whitewash. Beneath the snow, new thatch keeps out the worst of the cold. A wall provides a place for the livestock, and a hearth provides some heat and light. Bitter as the winter is, the family inside has other troubles at hand: A bailiff has come to claim the farmer's best cow as payment for a debt. In the doorway, armed men wait; to one side, a tight-lipped woman holds a child too thin to survive the winter. Without the cow, the family is doomed. The farmer tries to bargain with the bailiff, but the fatter man smiles. The wife is not too homely, and her chickens seem fat enough to make a winter meal. A bargain will be struck, but the price will be paid in tears.

Further east, a Muscovian nobleman holds court. The same snow falls outside his halls, but the folks here are used to harsh winters. Sleek wolfdogs eye the tables, but there are few scraps to be had tonight. The winter wolf is a stronger beast than they, and its hire will claim a thousand lives before the spring returns....

One can hardly speak of any of these lands without speaking of the others. For a century or more they have intertwined like a nest of snakes, in trade, war, and intrigue.

France, with its 15 million subjects, holds the population advantage. Rich in wine, coal, salt and grain, it also possesses a mild climate that makes it Europe's natural breadbasket. Paris, home to a population of 100,000, is a center of learning and intellectual life, and France controls the Rhone Valley trade routes between wealthy northern Italy and only slightly less wealthy Flanders. Like Spain, France combines natural access to the rich Mediterranean with an outward-looking coast on the stormy Atlantic. Unlike Spain, France has fluid boundaries; the congeries of medieval duchies, bishoprics and free cities that make up the Holy Roman Empire are tempting targets for French expansion east and north toward the Rhine.

On the map, the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" looks impressive. Its population equals that of France, and it stretches from the silver mines of Bohemia to the manufacturing cities of Flanders, and from the snowycrags of the Alps to the icy strand of the Baltic Sea. In reality, however, the Empire is a ramshackle collection of hugely independent-minded statelets. The Emperor must be elected by the regional nobles; he has less power than the duke of Saxony or the archbishop of Cologne, his nominal vassals.

The Empire's subjects rarely call themselves "Germans"; they refer to themselves as subjects of their local lords, or as freemen of their home towns. With the coming of the Protestant Reformation in 1517, religious turmoil shreds even the nominal unity of the Empire, turning German nights red with fire and blood.



All the important, states in the Empire are situated at its fringes: The Hanseatic League of merchant cities center on Liibeck in the north; the city-states of Flanders and the Netherlands center on Antwerp ("the Venice of the North") in the northwest; the fighting Swiss confederation sits in the south; the iron- and silver-rich Habsburg heartland of Austria is in the southeast, and the potentially rich but usually disorganized Kingdom of Bohemia is in the east. Brandenburg is a backwater province; Berlin will sit ignored in the icy rain for two centuries before its Hohenzollern masters matter to Europe.

Farther east still, forests stretch to infinity. In the short growing season and sandy soil of eastern Europe, most folk simply grow rye and hope for a late frost. The nobles jealously retain what little wealth and power there is for themselves. The kings of Poland and Hungary serve at the sufferance of their barons; both domains stretch across impressive, but empty, stretches of cold steppe and foggy forest. Both rulers battle foreigners on the borders, as well. The Lithuanians embraced Christianity and Poland in 1386, and together, Poland-Lithuania actually pushes back the Teutonic Knights of the Sword, who seized the Livonian marshes from the Pagan Prussians in the 13th century. The kings of Hungary have no such resources, and are forced to embrace Austrian domination themselves after a Turkish invasion in 1526.

For a brief, bloody moment, the Pagans tight hack. In the wilds of Lithuania, a warlord makes pacts with old gods to drive the Christians from his lands, then raises a horde to teed those gods with blood. For decades, that horde swirls through the Slavic lands; as the century reaches its halfway mark, however, the warlord's son, Tezghul, leads a demonic army of madmen and night-folk away from the Baltic Sea and into Germany itself. For several years, the horde battles both Turks and Germans until a Teutonic army ends Tezghul's venture forever.

Three powers on the northern flank of Europe will make their mark in future centuries: Sweden struggles to escape the crown of a newly energetic Denmark. In 1523, Swedish iron and lumber begin to secure this newly won independence. In time, she will take the Protestant cause in hand and establish a reputation for refinement and military strength; now, however, she simply broods in the cold and builds foundations for tomorrow.

In Muscovy (Russia), Grand Duke Ivan III marries a Byzantine princess in 1472 and plots the extraction of his cold realm from the decaying Mongol Khanate of the Golden Horde. With the aid of Venetian architects and Dutch gunsmiths, Ivan beautifies Moscow and expands Muscovy. His grandson Ivan IV will give himself the title of Tsar, or "Caesar," of All the Russias in 1547; history will give Ivan IV the title of "Terrible" for his

cruelties. The Courts of the Welfare shadowy, exotic things to most Europeans; cold and remote as the boyars of legend, these lands and their people remain fearsome mysteries.

England has suffered defeat in the Hundred Years' War; its expulsion from France is its expulsion from the affairs of Europe. A 30-year civil War of the Roses, a religious upheaval, and perennial difficulties with Scotland and Ireland intervene to distract first the Yorkist, then the Tudor, monarchs. Although London is one of Europe's great cities with 80,000 people, and English wool cloth remains a profitable export, a century will go by before Elizabeth I secures England's place among the great powers of Europe.

Even so, English navigators secure England's early place in the great expansion of the European horizon. John Cabot discovers Newfoundland in 1497, opening up the rich fisheries of the Grand Banks to sailors from Scotland to the Canaries. Richard Chancellor rounds the rip of Norway in 1553 searching for the Northeast Passage and access to the rich fur trade in the mysterious and frozen expanses of Russia. Even the familiar Indian Ocean yields new surprises as the Portuguese and Spanish chart the thousand Spice Islands that extend east from Java.

The greatest surprise of the age, however, is one that its discoverer fails to comprehend; the continent Christopher Columbus stumbles upon in 1492.

## "Here Be Monsters"

Along the Silk Road, a group of Chinese travelers bears the cold. Ten men, three women — an unusual combination for such a journey! — urge their horses through knee-deep snow. Wrapped in dyed leather and bright cloth, these emissaries stand out starkly against the white ground. One sings, another jokes with his companion, and two sneak a kiss when no one is looking. Despite the bitter chill, the travelers are ebullient; the road leads them to a Grand Convocation in a mysterious land. Who could resist such an adventure?

Far westward, a sailor clings to a frosty mast. Around him, the sea churns in icy whitecaps, roaring like lions in the tale of Daniel. Is this man also protected by the Lord? He'd like to think so, but with a mad captain, low rations and only cold wood and endless seas about him, this sailor wishes he were back in Castile....

The Italian, Columbus, sails for Spain after being rejected by Portugal. He dies believing that he has found India. Sailing in his wake, other explorers realize that the world is larger than anyone previously believed. In later years, the landfalls of Vespucci, Cahral and Carte-Real extend over 3,000 miles and show that Columbus' San Salvador was only an outcropping of a New World. Magellan's around-the-Earth journey in 1519 expands the world again: He sails from Tierra del Fuego to Guam without seeing land and learns firsthand just how vast the Pacific tally is.

On land, less exists to discover. Travelers have long known the rough geography of inner Asia. Marco Polo was

only the best known of the hundreds, if not thousands, of merchants and missionaries who journeyed across the deserts and over the mountain passes that make up the "Silk Road" from West to East. A Chinese Christian named Rabhan Sauma even made the far less-profitable reverse trip, on a diplomatic mission from Kublai Khan to Charles of Naples. The Moroccan scholar Ibn Battuta covered all the ground they did, and managed to squeeze in side trips to Zanzibar, Sumatra and Timbuktu between 1325 and 1349. Although isolated mountain kingdoms and deserted valleys remain obscure, any educated person from London to Loyang knows the litany of antique lands between them. The Turks perch on the west end of the Silk Road, and they conquer the holy city of Jerusalem along with Egypt in 1517. From the Carpathian mountains of Transylvania to the flat mud of the Persian Gulf, 25 million people dwell under Ottoman rule. The next stop eastward on the Silk Road is the Kingdom of Persia, a land of high mountain plateaus and tough cattlemen. Persian cities such as Tabriz or Isfahan are already famous for their sumptuous carpets — and frightening magi.

Beyond Persia, the Road splits. The south fork crosses the wastes of Khorassan and Afghanistan to India, where 100 million people live in a dizzying riot of lesser states dominated by the Moslem Sultanate of Delhi or, later, the expanding Mogul Empire. Only Vijayanagar in the southern hill country keeps Hindu independence alive. India's spices, gems, pepper and gold anchor the Silk Road's southern flank. Gujerati sailors from the western coast control the monsoon sea routes across the Indian Ocean until the Portuguese destroy their fleet in 1509.

To the north, legendary cities like Bokhara, Samarkand and Kashgar line the Road in shrinking oases. Caravans along this stretch pay heavy tolls for protection from bandit armies. This is Tartary, home to hard-riding horse nomads related to Huns, Turks and Mongols, Descendants of Genghis Khan still rule these reaches, as they do in Russia (as the Golden Horde), in Tibet through the lamaseries, and in Mongolia itself.

Finally, the Silk Road descends out of the dread Taklamakan Desert and into Cathuy (China) itself. Under the self-satisfied Ming Dynasty, Cathuy enjoys an undisputed position as the largest, richest, and most civilized nation on Earth. Although the Le Loi rebels of VietNam to the south reject imperial guidance, the wise I Dynasty of Korea in the northeast prospers under Chinese tutelage. Blessed with rich river valleys irrigating hundreds of thousands of farms, a trained and literate bureaucracy of mandarins open to any man who can pass the exams, and plentiful supplies of coal, iron and cotton, Cathuy needs nothing. Its 100 million people grow rice and venerate their ancestors. In an era of change, the Ming are determined, to hold fast to familiar ways.

Europeans vaguely know the names of two important islands east of China: Japan (labeled *Cipango* on Western maps) and Java. Japan in this era of *sengoku*, or struggle, oddly resembles Italy: a highly urbanized, literate population that

uses its scant resources wisely; filled with jealously independent lords fighting mercenary wars. Java, on the other hand, shares only the similarity of having jealous independent lords. Arab chieftains battle Hindu and Buddhist rajahs across the island, leaving its rich tropical storehouse of sandalwood, mahogany and spices for others to exploit.

European merchants — Portuguese and Spanish at first, then the Dutch and English — do so gladly. But looting or trading for such prizes does not satiate this new breed of explorer. The captains of the West are gripped with the common European fever for new things, new riches, new worlds. Galleons ply the Pacific searching for *Terra Incognita Australis*, the unknown southern continent. English, French, Dutch and Portuguese mercenary navigators roam the coast of North America in a quest for the Northwest Passage to Asia. By 1550, the Spanish are sending parties up the Colorado and down the Amazon following rumors of still more legendary kingdoms of gold, braving the curses of ancient gods, deadly fevers, and other dangers of the unknown world.

Even in the "known world," plenty of surprises lie in wait. Wolfpacks roam the Campagna, just a few miles south of Rome itself. Forests that have felt no human's ax still grow in southern France, much of Germany and practically everywhere north and east of Prague. The oldest cities hold terrors as old as mankind, and the deserts of Africa or the steppes of Asia shelter things even older. It is for good reason that Western cartographers fill the blank spaces of the New World, Asia and Africa with the words *hic sunt monstes*: here be monsters.

## Novus Ordo Aurum: Current Events

*It may be observed, that provinces amid the vicissitudes to which they are subject, pass from order into confusion, and afterward recur to a state of order again....*

— Niccolò Machiavelli, *History of Florence and of the Affairs of Italy*

**C**ome away from the cold lands and witness a fine spring day in the heart of France. Here, a count rides out to learn if his prize falcon has survived the winter with its hunter's heart intact. Several nobles would appreciate the gift of such a bird. Beside him rides a cardinal, who plainly covets the falcon as he would a fair woman (if his vows allowed such things!).

As the hawk soars, the men flatter each other with half-truths. The count would like some dispensations; the cardinal, some troops. An arrangement can be made, of course, if both men ply their patrons. By dusk, a deal is struck. The day's hawking goes well; the falcon even consents to take a mouse from the cardinal's gauntleted hand. By the end of the day, the gift of the falcon seals a pact....

At the beginning of the 15th century, an impartial observer would be hard-pressed to determine whether China or Islam would eventually dominate the world. At the end of the 16th century, she would be hard-pressed to explain how Europe could be *prevented* from eventually dominating the world. The seeds of that dominion, sowed over millennia, are harvested in this tumultuous age. The creation of *Europa Grandis*, its escape from its medieval swaddling clothes, and its first steps to Earthly dominion profoundly influence every society in the world. Europe reels against the winds of change — political, religious, economic and technological change. Its responses to those changes echo in gun battles in the South China Sea, in civilization-killing plagues in the Mississippi Valley, in suddenly bankrupt caravansaries in the Siberian steppe; and in log-walled slave pens at the slow-flowing mouth of Africa's Niger River.

## The Past

Europe was horn when Germanic warrior clans overturned the cified Roman imperium a thousand years ago. From this mingling of Teutonic martial allegiances and Roman legal formality emerged the feudal system, side by side with a Christian Church bureaucracy nearly identical to the old Roman one.

For a millennium, power swung between an organized Church (which lacked military might) and feudal kings (whose moral authority depended on the Church). In that tension, lesser barons and vampiric princes followed their ambitions, careless of their effects on the peace of God or of Europe. This political chaos left the balance of power in the hands of the Church, which grew as corrupt and autocratic as any unchallenged ruler does. When King Philip IV of France kidnapped Pope Boniface VIII in 1303 and held him in captivity at Avignon, Europe did not react with religious outrage. Rather, the European monarchs took heart from this triumph, and followed their dynastic desires without regard for Church opposition. Popular religious movements found new support in these newly independent kings who feel they don't need to rely on the Church. Claimants for the Papal throne became pawns in royal power plays.

This weakening of the medieval religious hierarchy preceded the collapse of the medieval economic system under the ravages of the Black Death in the mid-14th century. As peasants died like flies, medieval landlords were forced to grant new freedoms to independent towns, or to their own serfs. Thanks to the labor shortage, real wages increased and lords invested in labor-saving machinery. Barons who tried to reinstitute the old ways found themselves embroiled in peasant revolts. The death toll on knights and nobles in the new royal wars (the Hundred Years' War, especially) completed the disaster. Plague, war, famine and rebellion ended the Middle Ages. Fortunately, the medieval era had unwittingly forged the keys to a new order.

The first key was the serifs of Crusades that created the prosperity of the north Italian city-states. Thanks to the lucrative trade links developed during the Latin occupation of the East, cities like Venice, Genoa, Milan, Florence and Pisa grew as rich as any monarch. This wealth allowed them to buy mercenaries and field armies out of proportion to their small size. It also influenced the growth of cities elsewhere, especially in Flanders, which produced the wool that Italy traded to the East for spices and gold. These cities served as laboratories of government and religion outside the rural hierarchies of Pope and emperor. Their prosperity also allowed them to ride out the disastrous 14th century and emerge as the undisputed economic rulers of Europe: Suddenly, culture and religion began to follow the lead of urban merchants rather than illiterate nobles or corrupt and discredited bishops.

The Crusades also brought classical manuscripts and forgotten knowledge to European courts and libraries. The Arabs had spent millennia copying and adding to the works of Aristotle, Herodotus, Democritus and Pliny. The Crusaders took the profits from such intellectual labor as part of the spoils of war. The monastic system, and its extension into the great medieval universities, kept the learning of the ancients tenuously alive in Europe, and gave these new Arabic works a hearing that Europe, more firmly under Papal control, might have denied.

The final key was the kings themselves. The weakening of the barons and the Church gave the monarchs an opportunity to center both power and moral authority in their own courts. In France, for example, the nobility ceded the right of direct taxation to the king, strengthening his hand against the rival king of England. In Spain and Portugal, the Reconquista from the Moors similarly strengthened the monarchy. The Tudors broke the power of the barons after the Wars of the Roses in England. Even ramshackle Austria became a nation as Habsburg after Habsburg added to his personal lands.

## Cannons and Kings

The entrance of reliable metal cannons into mortal service makes the monarchies' power permanent. Only the royal courts can afford a siege train of modern artillery and the expensive specialists to operate it. They use that advantage well. Castles that took years to reduce with medieval siege techniques now fall in weeks or even days to artillery fire. Where royal ambitions clash (Flanders, the Rhineland, Italy) or where the barons' pleasure controls the royal purse (Germany, Poland), feudalism still reigns. Increasingly, however, even the richest of the free cities or duchies fall under the shadow of the new royal nation-states.

The duel for France is the first of these new national wars. England already enjoyed a surprisingly centralized monarchy thanks to the Norman Conquest, and kings like Henry II and Richard Coeur de Lion; the Hundred Years'

War forced France to develop similar institutions or be destroyed. By 1453, when the English are expelled from France, the dukes of Burgundy remain the only feudal rivals to the French crown. Burgundian chivalry proves to be no match for King Louis XI's cunning — or for his Swiss mercenary infantry. The fall and annexation of Burgundy leaves the French monarch supreme not only in France, but in western Europe.

French armies march the length of Italy in 1494, overturning the Florentine balance of power and demonstrating the superior might of the French nation-state. French ambitions in Italy soon conflict with newly unified Spain, and Ferdinand's armies expel the French in 1512, securing Spanish domination of the battlefield for the next 50 years. Spanish power seems to crest when, in 1519, the Spanish King Charles I, grandson of the king of Austria, bribes the German electors to make him Holy Roman Emperor. As Emperor Charles V, he theoretically controls Spain, Germany, Italy, Flanders, Austria and Bohemia, as well as much of the New World. In fact, his real power is restricted to Spain, Italy and Flanders; try as he might, Charles cannot knock France down. He has even less luck unifying Germany under his rule. By the time Charles abdicates in 1558, France has given up on Italy, but forced her way across the Moselle into the Rhineland.

The sudden birth of Spain is the product of four centuries of crusading mentality. Despite their differences, Castile and Aragon were fighting for their existence. They cooperate against the Moors in a way that the opportunistic Crusaders in the Holy Land never matched. When Ferdinand of Aragon marries Isabella of Castile in 1469, their joined energies create a vigorous united Kingdom of Spain, drive the Moors out completely in 1492, and build an astonishing era of Spanish dominance on the continent.

Although Islam is expelled from its 700-year foothold in western Europe, it makes gains on Christendom's other flank. The Turks have already smashed the Greeks and Serbians; under four gifted sultans they expand the *Dar al-Islam* over the rugged mountains of the Balkans and the steppes of Hungary and Ukraine. Only the fortunate death of Sultan Mehmed II halts the success of a Turkish landing in Otranto in 1480; bad weather defeats the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529. Despite these setbacks, the Turks drive Venice out of the Aegean in 1490, throw the crusading Knights of St. John off Rhodes in 1522, and conquer fellow Moslem scares from Algiers to Aden.

## The Lion, the Dragon and the Chain

In time, all Europe will fear "the fury of the Turk," thinking it a punishment from God for the divisions of the Reformation. Only the Persians halt the Turkish advance, standing fast between the rising Ottomans and the decaying remnants of Tamerlane's Moslem Mongol Khanate. Under their energetic Shah Ismail Safavi, Persia more

than holds its own, building a powerful Shi' empire that splits Islam much as Lutheranism splits Christendom. Farther east, Babur, a descendant of Tamerlane, turns his attention to India. With the fall of Delhi in 1527, he begins building an empire of his own, called the Mogul Empire in memory of his Mongol ancestry. Islam expands in the formerly Hindu and Buddhist East Indies as Arab traders and pirates from the great entrepot of Malacca conquer and convert the many kingdoms of Java, Sumatra and the Spice Islands.

Under Emperor Ying Tsung, China turns inward, rejecting the path to a maritime empire staked out by its Admiral Zheng He in the previous reign. The Ming ban the construction of oceangoing ships; when one is the Middle Kingdom, rich in all things, what does one need with foreign goods? New breeds of rice increase the number of farmers and the influence of provincial agricultural lords; trade is unsettling and, to the Confucian mind, parasitical. China's horizons shrink to the Mongol threat in the north and the new canals and dams in the south.

At the other end of the Portuguese eastern empire lies the gold and slave port of Elmina on the Guinea Coast. Gold and slaves (along with salt) also support the Islamic Empire of Songhay, centered on the grand city of Timbuktu. Arab merchants take slaves and gold to the east coast of Africa at ports like Zanzibar. The market for slaves drives the interior African kingdoms into a cycle of warfare and kidnapping: The native rulers of Abomey and Benin provide the European forts along the miasma! coast with human cargo from lesser tribes or enemy clans. More sophisticated kingdoms like Kongo and Monomatapa accept Portuguese suzerainty as the price for preventing their own populations' enslavement. Portuguese marines even help the Christian emperor of Ethiopia fight off Moslem slave traders in 1542.

The European encounter with the Americas has little of such charity in its chronicle. The Aztecs maintain a reign of terror over Mexico dependent on massive human sacrifices and slave labor until 1519, when the Spanish privateer Cortes overthrows their tyranny with the help of the Aztecs' former subjects. He then loots the countryside and levels the great city of Tenochtitlan as the Inquisition burns the histories and scriptures of all the Mexica. Similarly, the Inca theocracy rules Peru by mass resettlement and forced labor until Pizarro takes advantage of a civil war to conquer the Andes for Spain. Once silver is discovered at Potosi in 1546, the Spanish restore forced labor with a vengeance. The coming of the conquistadors also brings the greatest plagues ever seen: 90% of the Indian population of the Americas dies within a generation. Conquest, slavery and plague are nothing new in history, of course, but the speed with which these happen, and the scale they take is a black new mark on a golden New World.

## Novum Sidis: Arts and Sciences

*Besides the restoration of ancient learning, now almost complete, the invention of many fine new things, serving not only the needs but also the pleasure and adornment of life, has been reserved to this age.*

—Loys Le Roy, *On the Excellence of This Age*



er us look into Burgundy, land of rich living, where a confectioner's apprentices stagger down a hall, bearing his cake on their shoulders. For all its weight, the cake is simpler than its creator would usually send to the court. It merely shows a Burgundian knight in lull plate (wrought in sugar almost as hard as wood) riding away from a castle (each stone of the walls a sweet cake, tinted a different color) from whose battlements (gingerbread) a lady (yet more sugar) waves farewell.

Even a simple design, however, does not justify stinging on the ingredients. On the shoulders of the apprentices ride 12 dozen eggs, a whole barrel of sugar, another of honey and two of flour, to say nothing of cloves, cinnamon, pepper, saffron, ginger and powdered leeks. Two good fat hogs gave up the lard, and the platter on which the cake rides would make a fair jousting shield for a knight seven feet tall.

The cake is a wonder, no doubt about it. By the end of the night, the confectioner hopes to see another wonder — prompt payment. If the steward had any notion what decent ginger costs these days...

All around Europe, this is an age of discovery and change. Nor only new lands, but new ways of thinking and seeing take hold of the European imagination. The rest of the world, however, seems immune to this urge. The Islamic countries from Morocco to India enter a new phase of conservatism as puritanical new rulers call for traditional values. The success of Ottoman and Mogul arms seems to indicate that Allah agrees: *Let the infidels question Allah's world while we rule it!* Although education is sacred, religious orthodoxy stifles the experimentation of earlier days.

Cathay, of course, invented most of these so-called "new things" centuries ago. Confucian society discourages innovation for innovation's sake, and the peasant-descended Ming have no desire to return to the days of Mongol tolerance for outside influence. In the rightly guided Middle Kingdom, surely all is perfect under Heaven! Despite innovations like gunpowder, paper and clock works, the Chinese mind looks inward and sees order and prosperity. Improvement is wasteful and dangerous.

The threat of poverty and the Turks drive European minds outward. Even medieval cartography put the center of

the world in the East; there is no shame in foreign ways as long as they grant you some advantage over your neighbor. As the Papacy loses its hold, Europe loses its cohesive identity as one Empire of Christendom. The new national rivalries fan competition in ships, arms and even watermills. Europe's rigid class system ironically gives Europeans another advantage. Unlike Cathay, where any man who can pass a test can enter government service and hope to raise his family to the mandarin, the aristocracies of Europe remain closed. An ambitious European must make his own wealth.

### Logic, Art and Machinery

The painter has waited much of the day for the plaster on the wall to dry. This is the curse of creating a fresco so close to the water — the damp air makes everything dry so *slowly*. At least his apprentice, so easily distracted, has kept the pigments well sealed after mixing them. The lad has an eye for the women, but the women of Venice deserve their reputation. The painter recalls fondly a *meretrice* who spent three days with him, in return for a simple charcoal portrait.

*Bene!* The plaster is dry enough to at least take the charcoal. Staring at the wall, the artist seeks the point at which all the lines in the scene will converge. During his own apprenticeship, he attended a lecture by the Florentine master Uccello, who spoke of "perspective," a mathematical formula that allowed an artist to mimic life in ways no bygone painter could. *There*. He marks the point with charcoal; with the help of his apprentice and a long string, the master traces two of the three lines he knows he will need. He's about to start on the third when the apprentice points at the lengthening shadows on the floor. It's time to stop.

The older man laughs as the artists clean the room. Surely the lad has a lady waiting! Still, the boy has the right of it; candles are too risky to be worth the extra work time. By the time sunset sparkles across the waters of the port, the two artists have finished for the day. Tomorrow, the work begins anew....

The new European ideas draw from three wellsprings: the scholastic logic of Aquinas and his successors, Greek mathematics, and the tinkering tradition of the Italian and Flemish mill owners. In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas performed the heroic feat of reconciling Aristotelian logic with Catholic theology. After Aristotle became orthodox, university philosophers expanded on his logic, and in some cases, used it to overturn his physics. Mathematical illiteracy stymied further progress in physics, however. Medieval geometers and arithmeticians accomplished much, but remained below the levels of the Greeks (or the Arabs, who invented algebra in the 9th century based on Greek and Indian concepts). With the fall of Constantinople, Greek scholars in all fields took refuge in Italy.

Italian trade with the Byzantine Empire had been well established; the sudden influx of Greek thought in text and in person created an interest in all things Greek — espe-



daily mathematics and art. Suddenly, the enraptured Italians recall the motto of Plato's Academy: "Let no man ignorant of geometry enter here." The textile mills of northern Italy spun the last thread in this new tapestry of thought. The intense competition between cities for market share in cloth led to guilds of millwrights, designers and engineers with a shared tradition of pragmatic experiment. These craftsmen modified and tinkered with designs for millraces, looms, camshafts and anything else that would give their merchant patrons a leg up on the next city. Without training in logic or mathematics, these empirical observers practiced the first actual experimental science in the world, all in the name of the almighty ducal.

Fittingly, it is artists who bring all these things together. The architect-painter-goldsmith Filippo Brunelleschi, who builds Florence's Duomo Cathedral, has a builder's appreciation for experimentation and an artist's love of proportion. In an attempt to bring the grandeur of architecture into the other arts, Brunelleschi studies geometry; in 1413, he develops a series of mathematical ratios that enable him to truly "paint what he saw." His discovery of the laws of perspective add a new dimension to the flat world of medieval art. The influential Florentine politician and architect Leon Battista Alberti popularizes Brunelleschi's insight in *Della Pittura*; artists wishing to secure commissions from the Medici study it intensely. Perspective makes all the difference. Suddenly, art can imitate nature! The world can be captured on canvas, expressed in mathematics, and set down as it truly is! Artists need not paint the supernatural; the natural is finally within their grasp.

By 1478, Maestro Leonardo da Vinci adds mathematics to his art, and art to his experimentation. From a close study of cadavers, he paints more natural bodies while advancing the science of anatomy. From smooth curves and elegant lines, he creates hydraulic wheels, flying machines, pendulum clocks, canal systems, siege engines and a hundred other mysteries. Other virtuosos combine art, mathematics, logic and engineering: Gemma Frisius develops triangulation for surveyors; Tartaglia elaborates a theory of curves while studying ballistics; Nicolaus Copernicus adds mathematics to his mentor's metaphysical theories about the solar system, and discovers that the new ways of seeing are powerful enough to move the Earth itself. Writers and poets hail Leonardo, Copernicus and hundreds of others like them as new men for a new age: *filosofi geometra*, the "philosophers of geometry."

If perspective reveals the world anew, other Renaissance men make it possible to reveal a new world. The astronomer Regiomontanus (in his native German, Johann Muller) improves the astrolabe, introduces algebra to Germany, and writes the ephemeris used by Christopher Columbus. Other scholars at the court of Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal apply the new mathematics to the

problems of exploration. In 1442, Sagres shipwrights combine the triangular Arabic lateen sail with the northern square-rigger to invent the caravel. Ships can now lack against the wind and heat off the lee coast. Forty years later, Portuguese scholars use Jewish astronomy, Greek geometry and Arabic algebra to develop a means of taking latitude from the sun. Ships no longer need a coast. Portuguese navigators set new courses for the open ocean and cut travel times in half — after continuing the new methods with experiments in Guinea. Mating the caravel rig to a narrower cog hull creates the nao, ancestor of the galleon. Other improvements in naval architecture are less benign. By 1509, Portuguese engineers successfully mount wide gunports on a sailing ship and usher in the broadside and naval bombardment by decimating the Egyptian navy and leveling the city of Diu. Chinese junks might be superior to Iberian fighting naos, but there have been no oceangoing Chinese junks for generations. European ingenuity and ferocity rule the waves.

## Leeches, Steel and Paper

By contrast with shipbuilding, the great changes in medicine merely indicate how much catching up Europe has yet to do. In this age when Chinese doctors use anesthesia and understand the circulation of the blood, and when Arabic or Jewish physicians routinely clean and sterilize wounds, the European chiuurgeon works as a barber to bring in extra cash, keeping jars of leeches available to rebalance a patient's vital humours. The printing of the 11th-century medical texts of Avicenna of Baghdad in 1473 begins to open European eyes to the possibilities of decent medicine. Paracelsus' dabblings in alchemy do produce a number of useful chemical treatments for disease (as well as laudanum, in 1527). The hold of Galen's classical model on the mind of surgery (and clerical prohibitions on dissection) only breaks with the publication of Vesalkis' anatomy in 1543. (New techniques of copperplate engraving make the illustrations the most accurate ever rendered.) 16th-century chiuurgeons still consider Ambroise Pare a wild-eyed radical for suggesting that attar of roses and turpentine might make a better wound dressing than boiling oil, and that clamps stop bleeding more humanely than cauterisation by burning brands. (See "Modern Medicine," in Chapter VII.)

Perhaps part of the reason for neglecting the human body lies in the many new things that replace it. Looms, frames and cranks shafts mechanize weaving. The tool treadle and the stabilizing "flyer" do the same for spinning. These new spinning wheels increase the productivity of Italian (and later, English) textile mills. When Johann Turzo develops water-powered machines to drain mine shafts, another guild gets mechanical members. Miners have no problems getting jobs, however. Biringuccio and Agricola spend most of the early 16th century developing new silver mining techniques, increasing copper and iron yields (very

handy for the new cast-bronze and cast-iron cannon models coming off the engineers' drafting tables), and finding uses for former "waste" metals like mercury. European iron and silver production quintuples during this period without a single major new mine being opened. Sweating, but well-paid, workers load all that new iron into a revolutionary "high" blast furnace similar to 500-year old Chinese models, making cast iron and steel increasingly cheap.

Furnaces are not the only innovations to come from Cathay. This is also the great age for two other Chinese inventions: gunpowder and paper. Together, they make fireworks in China. In the hands of Europeans, they make history. Cannon have been used since the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, of course. "Hand cannons," small enough for a strong man or two to carry, date back to the 1300s. In the workshops of High Artisans, those innovations receive elaborate attention; Daedalean soldiers take those guns on the battlefield and test them to perfection-By 1470, the arquebus is in mortal hands too, and the infantry begins to get even for all those knightly cavalry charges.

Tactics evolve to keep up with weapons: The Spanish hammer the French at Cerignola in 1503, the first battle to feature massed firearm volleys. Leonardo designs an improved firearm action in 1508. His wheellock drags pyrite (one of those former waste minerals Agricola uncovers) across a gear, striking and sparking into a pan. Guns can now fire in the rain, or he kept ready to fire under a cloak. By 1518, wheellocks are so common that the Emperor is forced to ban their possession in Germany to prevent spontaneous gunplay. In the confused conditions of Reformation Germany, it is hard to tell whether the Imperial decree has any effect at all besides encouraging the invention of the pistol, which can be concealed in a bag.

Europeans know of paper from the Arabs, who tortured the secret out of a captured Chinese papermaker in A.D. 751. With the falling price of linen (and the invention of superior paper-presses around 1400), European paper becomes cheap and plentiful just as printing is in its infancy. Hundreds of tinkers experiment with ink mixtures, type alloys and press designs until Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz perfects a practical design in 1454. When 150 identical copies of Gutenberg's 42-line *Bible* come off the press, they spell doom for the medieval world in a way that not even gunpowder can march. Printing allows both true religion and heresy — equally undesirable things in the eyes of the Church — into the hands of the common man. Printing spreads new ideas, old ideas and the mixtures of the two that mark the age to every corner of the continent. By 1500, 35,000 titles and 20 million books are in print; only 40% have religious subjects. In less than 50 years, a handful of men have produced more books than all the copyists since the rise of Rome.

The elimination of scribes' mistakes or omissions creates textual criticism. For the first time, scholars in Barcelona,

Bruges or Bern can refer to identical words in exact locations within a text. By comparing manuscript copies, and fixing those comparisons in print, historians remove earlier copyists' errors. Just as perspective captures the true natural world, printing makes it possible to capture the true version of Homer or Aristotle — or the Bible. Allowing scholars access to Holy Writ turns out to be even worse than letting commoners read it; after comparing variant texts, Erasmus casts doubts on the Biblical truth of the Trinity, the authorship of the Apostles' Creed, and the temporal authority of the Pope. Printing makes science possible, as scholars in a hundred universities can check the same experiment and share their results. Suddenly a hundred — or a thousand — minds can turn to the solution of any problem from alchemy to engineering.

Combining the printing press and cheap paper drops the price of a book from that of a peasant's farm to that of a few pounds of beef. More people can afford books, so more people buy them and learn to read them. Standard type and the vast new supply of things to read also increase literacy. Printing allows the accumulation of private libraries, encouraging the individual study of many fields at once and cross-fertilizing the *filosofi geometra* of the Renaissance man.

## Humanitas, Civitas, Piety: Society

*See how in these days prelates and preachers are chained to the earth by the love of earthly things; the cure of souls is no longer their concern; they are content with the receipt of revenue; the preachers preach for the pleasure of princes....*

— Girolamo Savonarola, "Advent Sermon"



nee, the Church taught that God had ordained three classes of men. One class, the noble knights, ruled. A second, the clergy, prayed. A third, everyone else, worked.

If this simple scheme was ever true, that truth has changed. Knights are no longer the main strength on most battlefields -- ask the veterans of Agincourt, where English archers slaughtered French knights like pigs. Those who say that laymen should read and interpret Scripture in their native tongues still hear the dire name of "heretic," but their numbers grow in spite of sword and stake. "Work" may be anything from gathering brushwood for a bowl of porridge, to presiding over the affairs of a rich hanking house. As trade swells the merchants' coffers, a man — or even a woman! — might find many kinds of employment outside the fields.

Not everyone is so fortunate. Many common folk find this "Rebirth" as desolate as the previous ages. See the Scottish poacher, hidden under the hedge, a long knife in his hand. Par off, his wife awaits his return, a child at her breast



and two others laying silent. Rain-soaked, they shiver about a guttering fire. Father's errand, if it succeeds, will bring a single raw lamb, but anything is better than starvation.

In a more fortunate realm, a rich girl gazes through her window at a handsome laborer. His bulging arms and thick mane contrast with the gentle glow of his blue eyes. No highborn woman should look at a commoner thus, but the night is meant for such indiscretions. The girl combs her hair and imagines callused fingers running through it instead. Surely, a good confession will wash away such pleasurable sins....

## Splinters of God

Of all the changes and conflicts in this century, the common man (or at least the common European) sees religious rivalries as the most important divisions. In 1450, the Church is unified, if not monolithic; insulated, if not actually protected, from the holy ghazi warriors of Islam by a ring of Greek Orthodox kingdoms; and satisfied, if not secure, in its power over heretics, heathens and Jews. By 1550, Western Christendom is irretrievably shattered, the Turk hammers at the shores of Italy and the walls of Vienna, and learned Inquisitors are wrapped in persecutory paranoia against diabolism. Paganism and underground Jewry.

The obvious corruption and increasing political impotence of the Catholic Church calls for reform, from peasant churches in Bohemia to universities in Madrid. A series of church councils from 1411 to 1439 brought bishops and temporal authorities together to address the problems of the Church, but the sheer scale and divisiveness of the issues prevent progress. In the 15th century, the cause of reform seems deadlocked despite the will of Popes and princes. It takes one German priest protesting the dealing in indulgences (coupons for time off of Purgatory) to break the issue open, with 95 technical theses nailed to a provincial cathedral.

Martin Luther has three things going for him that previous reformers have lacked: a newly independent and powerful prince looking for a national issue, an almost inhuman degree of perseverance, and the printing press. Printed broadsides spread Luther's objections all over Europe, and in the ensuing fracas, his thought takes ever more radical flight. Soon, Luther's attacks spread beyond indulgences: He rejects Papal authority, deletes five sacraments from the liturgy, denies transubstantiation, and claims that nobody needs the approval of the Church to reach Heaven — faith in Jesus Christ is enough for salvation. When the emperor orders Luther to recant these heresies, he arrogantly refuses. The elector of Saxony, delighted to thwart the Habsburgs, grants Luther refuge. Under pressure from French armies in Italy and Turkish troops in Hungary, the empire neglects Luther for too long. By the time the Imperial armies march against the heretic, the power of the press has spread Lutheranism and Luther's German *Bible* to every corner of Europe. By 1555, the Holy Roman Emperor

will be forced to allow Protestantism to exist in Germany, although religious wary will continue for another century.

Of course, a movement that rejects orthodoxy could be expected to splinter itself. Huldrych Zwingli in Zurich, Johannes Calvin in Geneva, and Philipp Melancthon in Wittenberg ring changes on Luther's great theme of popular religion. Leaderless groups like the anarchic Anabaptists, millennium Melchiorites, and single-minded Unitarians spread popular theologies too radical even for Luther and his cohorts. Despite, or perhaps because of, this disorganization, Protestantism expands rapidly. By Luther's death in 1546, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Prussia, Livonia and two thirds of Germany are solidly Protestant. The Reformation makes rapid headway in the Upper Netherlands, and even in Catholic France and Bohemia.

The Protestant churches soon take on a nationalist character. The creation of the Anglican Church, however, is unusual even for national Protestantism. In a fit of pique at having his divorce blocked by the Pope, King Henry VIII of England simply declares the English Church separate from Rome in 1534, although the Anglican liturgy and theology remain virtually identical to Catholic doctrine. Even the Catholic churches are forced into a more national mode; the active role taken by the few Catholic monarchy demands it. The French Church, in particular, grows rapidly independent of the Papacy. The creation of the national churches is perhaps the most immediate evidence to the average person of the new national identity. If medieval people thought in general terms, of their town or manor and of the Kingdom of God, Renaissance Europeans begin to think in individual mid national terms, of their personal virtue (or wealth) and that of their country.

Nationalism also lies at the heart of the wars against minority religions. Deviance from the local orthodoxy is a license for the worst kinds of persecutions: Catholics (in Protestant countries), Protestants (in Catholic countries), Jews, Muslims and the remaining Pagans especially fall under immediate censure. The frenzy reaches particular ferocity as the dreaded Spanish Inquisition rises. In a fit of nationalist ecstasy, Ferdinand and Isabella slaughter the Muslims and decree that all Jews must leave Spain or be forcibly converted. The converted Jews, or *Marranos* as they are called, still become the special targets of the Inquisition for their alleged backsliding and crimes against *limpieza de sangre*, the "purity of blood." Torquemada's campaign against the Marranos becomes the first in history to demonize the Jewish race rather than the Jewish religion.

This religious struggle does not restrict itself to dueling monotheisms. Despite Christianity's influence, Pagan bonfires burn bright on lonely European hills— until the flames of the Inquisition burn brighter still. Driven by supernatural corruption and religious ecstasy, commoners and kings alike declare open war on "witches" in general and women in particular. The 1484 publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* ("Hammer of Witches"), a German witch-hunting text, sets

the greatest torch to the tinder. Although some groups — notably the Pagan mysticks gathered under the name *Verbena* — retaliate, many simply hide or flee. By the 1550s, however, there are few places left to hide; some towns jail or torch every woman they can find. The flames will burn for nearly 200 years, and consume over 2,000,000 lives.

## Women

Harlot. Witch. Muse. Companion. The role of the Renaissance woman is complex and ever-shifting. In the eyes of the Church, all Daughters of Eve are corrupt and inferior; practically demands a wider view, however, and women are, for most part, respected and loved so long as they appear virtuous.

"Appear" is the operative word; the moral codes of medieval Christianity are so rigid that no one actually lives up to them. Sermons caution against the "sensuality and unholy appetites" of the fairer sex, and chivalry elevates women to a lofty pedestal. Real women fall in between the extremes; on the farm, or in the court and workroom, they prove their worth by stepping outside the lines of decorum while maintaining a chaste and docile disposition. Social codes remain fairly strictly by later standards, but loosen considerably as the Rebirth progresses.

Even in the best of times, however, women are socially and legally inferior to men, traded through marriage and burdened by child-rearing. Some women rebel, either by embracing witchcraft and Pagan ways, masquerading as men, or risking Hell and disgrace as prostitutes and players. Others join the Church or manage fortunes in their husbands' names. Noble women have a great deal more leverage than peasants; some, like Queen Elizabeth, seize the reins of power and dare anyone to take them away. More often, however, women of means (like Lucrezia Borgia or Catherine De Medici) work through intermediaries, lovers, weak husbands and influential brothers. Such ladies must be shrewd, playing their docile roles while moving men like chess pawns around them.

As the Rebirth spreads, artists and philosophers exalt Woman in many forms; Mary-worship (reviled by Protestants but popular with Catholics) replaces the Pagan Mother; painters like Botticelli and Titian glorify the female body while writers like Isabella d'Este and Christine de Pizan demonstrate that women do, indeed, have minds. The most obvious break with the old ways happens with Joan of Arc; although she is burned as a witch, her charisma, spirituality and martial prowess dismantle the image of Woman as a weak, simple vassal to Man. In the light of the Renaissance, many women forsake the old roles. So long as they choose well, remain lucky, and play the part given to them, these Daughters of Eve make their own fortunes,

## Art Challenges Religion

Rivalry and intolerance are not new to the world's religions, of course. In one form or another, they have battled these enemies, and each other, for centuries. What Catholicism, at least, has never had to face before is *irreligion*. Ironically, the rediscovery of Catholicism's first enemy, Roman antiquity, provides the breeding ground for its newest: secularism. With the disintegration of Christendom and the rise of the nation-state, a philosophy emerges that tries to separate Church from state. Still in its infancy, the secular movement was horn from such diverse influences as the vernacular poetry of Dante (in popular Italian rather than Church Latin), the philosophy of William of Ockham (who separates nature from Divinity), and the increasing influence of classical Roman law. As merchants turn more and more of their thoughts to this world, they become more interested in representations of, and information about, that world. The development of perspective in art speeds this desire, and spreads it to other arts.

See the stage-bound peacock, a mask on his face and a bright codpiece on his loins. His voice, raised above the crowd, speaks fine Tuscan with a Spanish accent. His role, a boastful Harlequin, suits his agility but not his manner. The ladies in the hack of the crowd don't care; before dusk, the player will receive surreptitious notes for nighttime meetings. Ah, the Trickster's life is grand....

Drama grows from religious passion plays to passions of an Earthier nature. Traveling players, once furtive packs of vagabonds, receive a new "respectability," especially when an improvisational form called *Commedia Dell'Arte* spreads from Italy to other nations. With their increasing acceptance, the once-disreputable players gain access to courts, manors and even the Vatican; exiled politician Niccolò Machiavelli makes astir with his scandalous 1512 play *Mandragola*, in which a friar advises a virtuous wife to commit adultery. Pope Leo X enjoys it so much that he hires Machiavelli to produce a history of Italy. Machiavelli's greatest secular triumph, however, is his manual of practical politics, which advises the violation of Christian virtues if they interfere with governance and suggests the elimination of Church influence in government. No fool, Machiavelli does *not* allow publication of *The Prince* until 1533, five years after his death.

Machiavelli's secular government comes from his reading of Roman history, just as his secular drama originates in his reading of Roman comedies. He is by no means alone in his interests. All over Europe, the influx of printed books and Greek refugee scholars creates a vogue for things classical. Plato gains popularity as the new authors contrast his sweeping meditations on virtue with medieval Aristotelian logic-chopping. In 1440, Cosimo De Medici reopens the Platonic Academy, closed by the Emperor Justinian in A.D. 529, and staffs this Florentine incarnation with Greek experts. Greek texts on history, philosophy, architecture and magic flow from Florence into Europe. Poets begin invoking

the Muses and Apollo in imitation of the classical epics. As perspective allows painting and sculpture to restore their connection with nature, artists look to the great naturalist sculptures of the Greeks for inspiration. Paintings of Greek gods and Roman heroes join paintings of saints and prophets on the walls of connoisseurs. Even Biblical figures are painted in classical style, and artists emphasize the juicier stories over the moral ones. Most blasphemous, to pious eyes, is the glorification of Man over God. Though humanists still bend their knees at the Lord's throne, they do with a new pride in themselves. A Pagan joy in the human body replaces the medieval Catholic ethic of shame; dress manners and the arts celebrate pride and sensuality, and many people indulge.

Not that all virtues are abandoned (though many folk think so); in place of modesty and devotion, new virtues arise. The man of noble character (whether aristocrat, townsman or merchant) seeks the Roman virtue known as *humanitas*, or humanism. Humanism encompasses individual achievement, keenness of intellect and body, self-command and self-worth. It also emphasizes intelligence, art, literature, history and philosophy. Baldassare Casriglione's 1507 best-seller *The Book of the Courtier* advises the would-be gentleman to develop a ready wit, a strong arm, a graceful leg and an agreeable disposition. The influence of *humanitas* goes farther than courtly etiquette manuals, however. To a culture oppressed by centuries of plague, war and degeneracy, the reminder of a golden age comes as a bracing intellectual target and a new and glorious goal to aim for.

With the rediscovery of Roman and Greek histories comes a new perspective on history itself. Humanists reshape the past, not as Scriptural sermon, but as pragmatic archive. Historians resurrect the classical model of the Golden, Silver and Iron Ages of mankind, and rename the medieval period the "dark ages," when the "Gothic" barbarians extinguished the light of classical Rome. Soon, the dream of a new Golden Age takes shape. A new Europe, built on the model of the old and glorious one, swims in the vision of every educated or literate person — especially the rising stars within the secret Order of Reason, who champion *humanitas* and literally rewrite history to suit their purposes.

## The Salvation of Gold

Humanism strikes at the head of the medieval world as the new economy strikes at its heart. The lifeblood of medievalism was the peasantry. Their labor, and theirs alone, created the riches and sustained the power of bishop and lord alike. Mild famine meant poverty for all; severe famine meant death. Although this remains the rule in rural lands, the towns and cities nurture traders, craftsmen, scholars, specialty farmers and others who refuse to live and die by the sweat of their brow or the timing of the frost. Northern Italy escaped the medieval world in 1176, when a collection of townsmen routed the Imperial knights of Frederick Barbarossa. By the 15th century, it has begun to drag the rest of Europe with it. What can only be called "the

middle class" seizes Europe's heart. In the most advanced nations, prosperity no longer rests on armored knights and docile serfs, but on whirring looms and sound currency.

Trade and banking swell the coffers of Europe's mercantile classes. As the towns grow, the market for bulk grain grows. Landlords and farmers across the continent switch to profitable export crops rather than subsistence agriculture. Shippers now move raw flax, wool, wood and iron to the towns where the capacity of their mills has outaced their local supplies. Prices fall, further consolidating economies of scale. As the market expands, the new mines keep it flush with cash. Trade cannot flow without buyers and sellers, and the banks bring their Italian skills to the job of finding them.

Not long ago, moneylending was a sin best left to Jews and Moors; by the 15th century, many Italians have outgrown that sin (or purge it with generous gifts to the Church). The public bank comes into its own, first in Genoa in 1404 and then in Florence under the Medici. Soon Dutch and Flemish bankers join the game; in 1531, the Antwerp Stock Exchange opens and industrial capitalism is born.

The difference between the old and new age plays out in a tale of two kings: in 1343, when Edward III of England defaulted on his loans, he bankrupted the Bardi and Peruzzi banks of Florence. In 1519, when Charles I of Spain borrows bribe money from the Fugger bank to secure the Imperial crown, Jakob Fugger not only gets the money back with interest, but assumes control of the Austrian silver and Hungarian copper mines. The scale of the new banks increases with their power: The Medici hold 90,000 florins in capital in 1451; 90 years later, the Fugger banks hold over a million.

Societies change slowly, and agricultural societies are slower than most. Even by 1550, the overwhelming majority of the European population remains agricultural. The new economy and society catch both rural nobility and peasantry in a vise. Many yeomen hold their land on a fixed rent; as agricultural prices rise, rent becomes easier to pay. Real rents fall as actual costs rise, so many younger noble sons seek their fortune in the New World, in mercenary armies or in religious warfare. In other parts of Europe, the medieval system lasts long enough to allow the aristocracy to strike back, especially in eastern Europe, which has fewer towns, weaker kings and more aggressive lords. In 1511, the Polish boyars impose bonded serfdom just as it fades away in the West. Everywhere that nobles are strong and the towns weak, the pattern is the same: In Spain, Portugal, Naples, Sicily, the English Midlands and eastern Europe, the new times bring new repression,

In Germany, France, Flanders, northern Italy and southern England, however, the poor farmer is better off than ever. This new prosperity does not end dissatisfaction, of course; quite the opposite. The "revolt of rising expectations" fuels religious revival, commoner revolt and witch-burning. Peasant uprisings become a regular feature in central Europe; in rime, they lead to riots, small wars, slaughters and the eventual triumph of the nobility.

Set! the German blacksmith at his forge, bending metal into visor hinges with a large pair of pliers. This is apprentice work, hut the apprentices are gone. A riot is brewing, and they have gone to cast their lots in it. A pack of young wolves, fresh from the university, has seen fit to contest drinking rights at the Black Boar Inn. The sleek ratter's boys are not about to walk away from the challenge, so the forges grow cold today.

Stolen beer and youthful tempers swell the voices of the young men in the town square. Suddenly, a clash of metal joins the voices. The armorer sighs. He had hoped that matters would not reach this point. Putting his pliers aside, the blacksmith reaches for an iron bar....

Backlash takes other forms in the cities. In Florence, the visionary Girolamo Savonarola rejects not only the corruption of Catholicism, but the new arts and sciences of the humanists and their merchant benefactors. Calling for a "bonfire of the vanities" he destroys jewelry, cosmetics, wigs, literature and art in his attempt to impose ascetic Christianity on the heart of the Renaissance. His movement ends with his excommunication and burning in 1498, but the social forces he harnesses continue to build. Seven Thunders, prophets named for their thundering sermons and the trumpets of Final Judgment, declare that the End Times are near. Many folk believe, and a groundswell of puritanism washes across Europe. Rich manors are burned and landlords murdered before the year 1500 passes and the lever lades. Still, its echoes linger: Calvinism, Puritanism and a Papal upsurge provide a bloody counterpoint to *humanitas*. Though the new ideals never disappear, the coming centuries will see a battle between mind and spirit, passion and purity that continue into the next millennium.

## A Tide Across the World

European explorers, traders and missionaries spread this conflict worldwide. The Chinese repeatedly (and unsuccessfully) expel Western merchants; the Moslem chiefs of the Indian Ocean resist Portuguese naval power, fail and resort to piracy; the African kingdoms rise, prosper and tall with the rhythms of the European demand for slaves; the confederacies and empires of the Americas collapse in pestilence without ever understanding what hit them. Native chiefs from Malacca to Mali use German muskets to fight their wars and Venetian glass to line their mirrors. Not even the daily bread escapes unchanged: The Spanish introduce corn to China, the potato to Ireland, cattle to Mexico, chilies to India, and the yam to Africa.

Changes come with the arrival of European topsails over the horizon. But the changes within Europe are equally unpredicted and unplanned. Christendom's greatest minds set out to restore a golden age. What they actually create is an alchemical amalgam of gold and iron, of silver and steel: a Philosopher's Stone and a leaden musket ball in one. In attempting to reignite the embers of the dead past, they fan a flame that destroys their present and leaves all Europe squinting in the new light of Reason—and all the worlds squinting in the new light of Europe.

## A Brief Mortal Renaissance Chronology (1431-1550)

- **1431:** Joan of Arc burned at stake; Henry VI of England crowned king of France.
- **1431-47:** Pope Eugene IV.
- **1434:** Revolt in Rome. Pope Eugene IV flees to Florence. Florence cathedral completed.
- **1434-64:** Cosimo De Medici, ruler of Florence and patron of the arts.
- **1436:** English troops withdraw from Paris. Sigismund becomes king of Bohemia.
- **1437:** Fall of the House of Luxembourg. Albert V succeeds as king of Hungary, Bohemia and Germany. All Souls College founded in Oxford, England.
- **1440:** Platonic Academy founded in Florence. Johann Gutenberg perfects movable type printing.
- **1441:** Portuguese slave trade established,
- **1443:** Plague in England.
- **1447:** Palermo University founded.
- **1447-55:** Pope Nicholas V, renowned scholar.
- **1448-53:** Constantine XI, last Byzantine emperor.
- **1450:** Mercenary leader Francesco Sforza becomes duke of Milan. Vatican Library founded.
- **1451:** Glasgow University founded.
- **1451-81:** Mohammed II, the Conqueror, Ottoman sultan,
- **1451-1498:** Girolamo Savonarola, zealot reformer, Judgment prophet.
- **1452-93:** Frederick III, Holy Roman Emperor.
- **1452-1519:** Leonardo da Vinci, genius, artist, artisan magus; many patrons, no affiliations.
- **1453:** Constantinople falls to Turks — end of Byzantine Empire, Hundred Years' War (England and France) also ends in French victory. Peace of Lodi ends war between Venice and Milan; issues in relative peace between Italian states. Gutenberg *Bible* printed.
- **1455-1467:** Reign of Vlad the Impaler.
- **1455-85:** Wars of the Roses fought for English throne,
- **1456:** Trial of Joan of Arc annulled. Turks conquer Athens,
- **1458-64:** Pope Pius II, enemy of Church corruption.
- **1460:** Winchester cathedral completed.
- **1461-83:** Louis XI rules France.
- **1464-71:** Pope Paul II.
- **1464:** French royal mail service established.
- **1469-92:** Lorenzo De Medici rules Florence.
- **1470:** First French printing press set up at the Sorbonne, Paris.
- **1471-84:** Pope Sixtus IV.
- **1474:** William Caxton prints first book in English.
- **1474-1507:** Cesare Borgia, master of intrigue, model for *The Prince*.

- **1476:** Caxton sets up printing press at Westminster.
- **1477:** Habsburgs acquire Netherlands.
- **1478:** Spanish Inquisition begins persecution of Jews, Muslims and heretics. Giuliano De Medici murdered in Florence cathedral.
- **1479:** Spain united under Ferdinand and Isabella. Copenhagen University founded.
- **1480:** Lodovico Sforza seizes power in Milan.
- **1480-1519:** Lucrezia Borgia, *femme fatale* with a face of an angel and mind of a scholar.
- **1481-1512:** Bajazet II, Sultan of the Turks.
- **1482:** First great Renaissance villa is built for Pope Leo X. Peace of Arras (France and Habsburgs).
- **1484:** Papal bull condemns witchcraft. Inquisitors sent to Germany. Richard III reforms English law, trade, tax collection.
- **1484-92:** Pope Innocent VIII raises Vatican spending and taxation to an art.
- **1485:** Battle of Bosworth Field. Tudor dynasty established. Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*,
- **1485-95:** Ivan III brings Italian architects to Moscow,
- **1486:** Maximilian I elected king of Germany.
- **1487:** Bartolomeu Dias sails around Cape of Good Hope.
- **1489:** Plus (+) and minus (-) symbols come into use.
- **1490:** First orphanages in Italy and Holland. Ballet introduced at Italian courts.
- **1492:** Christopher Columbus reaches West Indies. Spain conquers Moorish Grenada. Torquemada orders Jews to convert or leave Spain. First terrestrial globe constructed. English Henry VII invades France.
- **1492-1503:** Rodrigo Borgia becomes infamous "Borgia Pope" Alexander VI, raises Papal corruption to all-time high.
- **1493:** Treaty of Demarcation divides New World between Spain and Portugal. *Nuremberg Chronicle* published, presents world history from Creation to present, Cesare Borgia appointed as cardinal.
- **1493-1519:** Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor.
- **1494:** Charles VIII of France invades Italy, deposes De Medici, seizes Rome. Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico*, a study of Kabbalism, published. King's College Aberdeen founded.
- **1495:** French capture Naples. Holy League defeated at Battle of Fornovo. Hieronymus Bosch paints *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Syphilis epidemic sweeps Europe.
- **1495-97:** Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*.
- **1496:** Santo Domingo founded. Jews expelled from Portugal.
- **1497:** John Cabot discovers Newfoundland. Famine in Florence.
- **1498:** Vasco da Gama reaches India. *Memoires* of Philippe de Commines, the "French Machiavelli."
- **1499:** Louis XII of France seizes Milan. Swiss achieve independence. Venetian fleet surrenders to Turks.
- **1500:** Beginning of High Renaissance. University of Valencia founded. Jakob Nufer (Swiss pig-gelder) performs

first Caesarean delivery. Regular postal service runs from Vienna to Brussels. Da Vinci designs the handgun (already in use by Daedaleans).

• **1501:** Peace of Trent (France and Emperor Maximilian I). Card games come into vogue across Europe. Papal bull decrees anti-Church book burning.

• **1501-04:** Michelangelo's David.

• **1502:** University of Wittenberg founded. Nuremberg Egg, the first watch, created.

• **1503:** Pope Pius III. Leonardo da Vinci paints *Mona Lisa*. Canterbury cathedral completed (begun 1070).

• **1503-1513:** Pope Julius II, "the Warrior Pope"; patron of Michelangelo, Raphael, crusader for Papal authority.

• **1504:** University of Santiago de Compostela founded. Venice proposes construction of Suez Canal. Regular postal service begins between Vienna, Brussels and Madrid.

• **1506:** Machiavelli creates Florentine militia.

• **1508-12:** Michelangelo paints ceiling of Sistine Chapel in Rome.

• **1509:** Pope Julius II excommunicates entire Venetian Republic. Persecution of Jews in Germany. Earthquake destroys Constantinople. Slave trade to New World first proposed. Henry VIII assumes English throne.

• **1511:** Holy League formed to repel French.

• **1512:** Nicolaus Copernicus' *Commentariolus* claims that Earth revolves around sun.

• **1513:** Treaty of Mechlin. Spain, England, Holy Roman Empire (HRE) and Pope agree to invade France. Vasco de Balboa discovers Pacific Ocean. Ponce de Leon discovers Florida.

• **1513-21:** Giovanni De Medici becomes Pope Leo X, enemy of Martin Luther.

• **1514:** First European sailing vessels reach China. House of Fugger authorised to sell papal indulgences in Germany. First nationalized factories in France.

• **1515:** Lateran Council demands Catholic authority over all books printed in Europe.

• **1517:** Raphael paints *The Transfiguration*. Martin Luther posts 95 Theses in Wittenberg. Coffee first appears in Europe. May Day riots in London.

• **1518:** Peace of London (accord between England, France, HRE, Pope, Spain). Barbary States of Algiers and Tunis founded. Royal College of Physicians founded in London.

• **1519-22:** Ferdinand Magellan circumnavigates world; he dies in 1521, but crew finishes journey.

• **1519-21:** Hernan Cortes conquers Aztecs.

• **1519-56:** Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.

• **1520:** Royal Library of France founded. Luther declared heretic and excommunicated.

• **1521:** Diet of Worms. Luther banned from HRE. Suleiman II, the Magnificent, rakes Belgrade. Silk manufactured in France.

• **1522:** Albrecht Dürer designs flying war machine.

• **1523:** Portuguese expelled from China.

• **1523-34:** Giulio De Medici becomes Pope Clement VII.

• **1525:** First use of muskets by Spanish infantry, Capuchin Order founded.

• **1527:** German Imperial troops sack Rome, kill over 4000, imprison Pope.

• **1528:** First manual on surgery *Die kleine Chirurgia* by Paracelsus. Plague hits England.

• **1529:** Turks besiege Vienna. Publication of *Kunstrecht Alchemie-buschlin*, manual of alchemy. Term "Protestants" coined.

• **1530:** Portuguese colonize Brazil. Spinning wheel, matches and workman's bench come into use in Europe.

• **1531:** Halley's comet ushers in proclamations of doom.

• **1532:** Machiavelli's *The Prince* published. Calvinist Reformation in France.

• **1533:** Francisco Pizarro conquers Incus. Henry VIII marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated.

• **1534:** Henry VIII breaks with Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther translates *Bible* into German.

• **1534-49:** Pope Paul III, foe of Henry VIII.

• **1535:** Jacques Cartier sails up St. Lawrence River. Sir Thomas More tried for treason and martyred.

• **1536:** Royal decree dissolves 367 religious houses in England. Catherine of Aragon dies; Anne Boleyn executed; Henry VIII marries Jane Seymour.

• **1537:** First Catholic hymnal appears. First conservatories of music in Naples (boys), Venice (girls). *Grosse Astronomie*, manual of astrology, published.

• **1538:** Titian paints *Verms of Urbino*.

• **1540:** Ignatius of Loyola founds Society of Jesus (Jesuits) to fight heresy. Hernando de Soto discovers Mississippi River. Henry VIII marries Anne of Cleves; later, he has marriage annulled, marries Catherine Howard.

• **1541:** Johannes Calvin founds "City of God" in Geneva, Henry VIII declared head of Irish Church. Calvinist Reformation in Scotland. Hernando de Soto discovers Mississippi River.

• **1542:** Queen Catherine Howard executed. First Europeans arrive in Japan. *De fabrica corporis humani*, manual of modern anatomy, published.

• **1543:** Henry VIII marries Catherine Parr. First Protestants burned at stake by Spanish Inquisition.

• **1545:** Council of Trent. Beginning of Counter-Reformation.

• **1546:** Construction begins on Louvre museum. First pharmacopoeia. Mercator asserts that Earth has magnetic pole.

• **1547:** First predictions of Nostradamus, French becomes official language of France (was Latin). Moscow destroyed by fire.

• **1548:** Hotel de Bourgogne (first roofed theatre) built in Paris. Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* published.

• **1550:** First European collection of fairy tales. Beginnings of early Baroque style in architecture. Sealing wax first used.

• **1550-55:** Pope Julius III.

# Bellum Magicarum: Shadow History

*The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall: the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall*

— Francis Bacon



et us see the shadowy side of the mirror, now — the places where ill deeds hide themselves. Hear the rumble of the thunder as we sweep through the night. Clouds part, and lightning plays across the wickedness below.

Secure behind a bolted door, a prince plots a friend's demise. The venom on the desk beside him was cheap, but it will serve. Practiced hands pen invitations to a party one week hence. Too had some guests will never leave.

Not far away, the witches dance, their skins slick with swear and rain. A mad piper calls the tune as bare feet hum the mud. The Christian lad hiding in the trees could be forgiven his terror, but never his lust — these women and their consorts must surely be the Devil's own. Faerie lire lights their eyes and the Old Gods laugh tonight.

The monk prays us he hears the irons. His victim sobs a prayer herself. Two voices, a single God. Nearby, the true heretic roils over a forge. The irons in his hands shape silver wings. As the victim screams, this Daedalus checks his work. Soon he will touch the heavens — and shall nor hill.

In candlelit splendor, the undead conspire. Too many of their own have fallen to the flames, and something must be done. Arguments rise from immortal throats. Inhuman passions simmer. Some call for a secret alliance, a *Camarilla*, to guard against the hunters. Others claim their curse as a birthright. God made them what they are; in their damnation, they do His work, and they will not hide.

So many secrets. So many tales.

The night is filled with them.

Shall we begin?

## The Ascension War

War between magi is nothing new. The Awakening carries with it the taint of arrogance and the conviction of absolute belief. Both are necessary parts of the Art. Kit they conspire to make magi their own worst enemies. While night-folk and mortals present hazards of their own, wizards seem bent on mutual destruction. It's as if moths bore their own fires, and tried to immolate each other with the flames.

With the foundation of the Order of Reason, however, battles become war. Infernal cults, mad Marauds, remple orders and magician's guilds had formed pacts or enmities

for centuries, hut never on so large a scale. The Convention of the White Tower, called in 1325, gathers High Artisans and defenders of the Christian Church from across the known world, gives them a single purpose, and unites them into one fellowship. Working slowly and across great distances, they do what no other order had ever achieved: They begin to weave a single system of magick and a paradigm to go with it, then declare war on magicians who threaten their order.

## The Garden and the Wyck

Order, change and chaos have always, been magick's companions. In the beginning, it is said, God Himself created the Heavens and Earth. When proud angels rebelled, He led His hosts against them, threw them down and created a Hell for punishment, When He crafted the first man and woman, God gave them dominion over the beasts and elements. His angels taught them great Arts—o even, as some tales say, gave their immortal spirits to the man and woman. In the First Garden, God raised the Tree or Knowledge and sealed great truths within it. Knowing that those truths burned like fire, He commanded both man and woman to avoid the Tree.

The man, Adam, was given mystick gifts of Naming and Command; the woman, Lilith, was granted Fertility and Intuition. (Some tales grant those talents to Eve, but many educated magi call Lilith the original Mother). In time, the woman rejected Adam's supremacy and fled the Garden in a rage. One night, she crept to the Tree and ate its fruit. Dazzled, she ran off into the night to experiment with her new powers. Outside the Garden, she met fallen angels, and learned of darker Arts.

The Lord was displeased, and dispatched three angels to keep Lilith from the Garden. He crafted a second woman, but Adam, seeing his mate made before him, could not love her. The Lord made a third companion, Eve, who as everyone knows ate the fruit from the Tree and seduced Adam to do like-wise. Enraged, God drove the humans from the Garden, revoked their immortality, and cursed them with pain.

But they remembered their Arts; in the wastes outside the Garden, demons tempted them with evil secrets. Adam and Eve refused, but in time, some of their children went to the devils or to Lilith, and learned Infernal magicks. Those secrets drove them mad, and they wandered into the wilderness, destroying whatever they found.

Pagans, as always, tell a different tale: To them, magick is a birthright of the gods. Some gods, fond of humans, gave the secrets of the Arts to them, made love to them, or incarnated Divine servants in the people's image. The first magi, called the *Wyck*, rose from these early blessings, taught lesser Arts to their cousins, and performed great miracles and evil deeds. The most exotic infidels, magi from faraway lands, have a hundred other stories — tales of mortal tricksters winning magick in games of chance, of gifts taught by

## Lost History

The ancient ties to the court of Thothmes are only legends by the 20th century. For Mage: The Ascension players, this means the mythic link between the Sacred Artisans and the Traditions is recorded only in the most obscure archives. Most of the accounts that suggest such a link have been lost, suppressed or dismissed.

Among the Council, only Nicodemus Mulhouse arid a handful of ancient Hermetics know the old tales. The Technocracy has completely purged such fantasies, of course; only the lost library of the Ksirafai (see Chapter V) contains those stories now, and even if they were found, no Technocrat worth the name would believe such nonsense.

As for the Sleeper lodges of Masonic and Rosicrucian repute, they hold only vague shadows of the truth. Many of the symbols are the same, of course, and the legends of their origins hint at the Thothmeic gathering. But by the 20th century, the most ancient Aits have been lost in a haze of misdirection, misunderstanding and pride.

What fools these mortals be.

ancestor-ghosts or beast-men, of immortal heroes who battled gods, and even of a simple harmony with Creation — a harmony that gives power as it removes the desire for it.

The first magi mastered many Arts; some built devices arid brewed potions while others beseeched the gods (spirits, angels and demons) for favors, or drew their magicks from inside themselves. Always, they discovered, there were things they could not do. Sooner or later, Divine punishment — a Scourge — broke their greatest spells. To avoid it, they made offerings, formed systems of magick, and taught the people around them to respect the rules they made. In time, some magi noticed the correlations among those rules, the beliefs (paradigms) of the people around them, and the severity of the Scourge. As wandering magicians gave way to mysttckal sects, those rules became practices and their tools became necessities. As sorcerers crossed Paths and goals, some formed friendships while others warred.

## Roots of the Rosy Cross

The great irony of the mysttckal conflict that will eventually be called the Ascension War is that the two greatest participants begin their fellowships at the same tables. While the earliest magi gathered small sects and trained one or two apprentices, it is whispered that the large societies that would someday cross swords originated under the Egyptian sun.

Look into the distant past, to a land all but forgotten now. Clouds hide the sky above a great stone temple. On a throne of gilded wood, a man chants in a musical tongue; his waist is wrapped in linens and his chest is dark and bare. Beside him sits



a handsome woman, older than he, hut beautiful nonetheless. Her bleached garments hide little more than his, and her hair is shorn like a man's. Both rulers wear the Pharaoh's double crown, and they preside over a gathering of magi.

Those magi swelter in the Egyptian heat; some are dark, others pale and still others see through slitted eyes. For many, this is not their home, but they attend at the request of the two great monarchs. Together they sing in a hundred languages; suddenly, the red rays of the sun break through dusky clouds, Surely, this is a blessing from the gods....

As legends tell it, a great king named Thothmes ("Born of Thoth") and his queen, Hatshepsut, assembled the greatest magi in their realm 1500 years before the coming of Christ. Among them, the two rulers summoned the masons of Babylon, the Hebrew architects, the priests of Isis and Osiris, and a thousand odd mysticks from the wilderness. Among these last, it is said, Thothmes found strange people from a land later called Cathay. Together, they crafted a fellowship of Sacred (High) Artisans who employed sacred geometry to mirror the journey of the soul, and a priesthood of healers and diviners who sought guidance from higher powers. Thothmes and Hatshepsut decreed nine Cornerstones to Creation, and divided their gathering into two lodges: the Reed of Thoth and the Cupbearers of Isis.

As all unions do, these guilds soon fell apart. Dissent, jealousy and rivalry quickly fractured Thothmes' achievements. Soon, a dozen orders preserved the secrets of the Cupbearers and the Reed — or perverted them. Some built the temple of Suleiman, known as Solomon the Wise; others transcribed the Kabbalah, invented gunpowder, built the Great Wall of Cathay and visited the infant Savior. Over millennia, the secrets of the Egyptian lodges found their way into mortal lore, or mingled with the teachings of other sects. Thousands of mystick orders descended from the original lodges, but many retained the original symbols, Arts and codes that had united them before. Among those symbols were the cross (intersection and salvation), the rose (Divine love and guidance) and the sun (purity and enlightenment): collectively, the Rosy Cross

Some of these later lodges pursued science as the ultimate Enlightenment; with formulae and devices, they bent Creation to their wills. Others embraced the symbols over the tools, and wove an elaborate Hermetic style from the ritual practices of Egyptian, Hebrew, Babylonian, Greek and Arabian Arts. The spreading influence of Greece, Rome, Carthage and Persia cast large paradigms across the western world, while a unified Cathay had a similar effect in Asia.

High Artisan sects - the Dalou'laoshi in Cathay, the Mt. Ossa Calyx in Greece, the Mokteshaf Al-Nour in Arabia and the Collegium Praecepti in Rome - formed to preserve the esoteric marriage of mystick science. When Christianity took hold, many sects altered their practices to honor the Savior. As Rome fell and Pagan practices displaced the more organized sects, the surviving lodges went underground.

## Midnight at the Tree of Knowledge

For Pagan magi, the following millennia was a golden age; for the People of the Book, the Christians, Jews and Muslims who followed the One God, it was a long fight in the dark. Chinese magicians settled into traditions of order and discipline; isolated from their former cousins, their Arts grew in different directions. When they met - which wasn't often — magi from East and West baffled each other.

Some insightful visionaries on either side of the world retained records of old exchanges of mysterious wizards and scientists who mastered useful Arts. When the Crusades and Mongol invasions brought High Artisans back into contact with each other, they reopened their vaults. Horrified by the chaos of the age, they conceived a plan to unite the whole world under one Order: an Order of Reason, where science and law replaced mystery and terror.

The plan took centuries to implement; in the meantime, mystery-practices thrived. Some sorcerers were kind, healing the sick, nurturing the land and teaching the people. Others were cruel, constructing strongholds, conspiring with devils and enslaving the mortals. Wars raged between sects, lone wizards and defenders of faith. As the Christian Church spread across Europe and the Muslim religion settled Africa, priest-magited their flocks and drove out demon-witches — or tried to, at least. Like the Artisans, High Magicians of the Hermetic philosophy combined their resources and Arts, founding an Order comprised of different Houses sharing a similar practice. This Order raised *Covenants*, communities where magi and mortals worked together for the good of all. Some Covenants prospered; others became excuses to annex the land and dominate the people.

Meanwhile, the un-Enlighteited covered in the shadows of sorcerers and night-folk; to them, *all* imagick was terror. They made their own charms against it and waited for the dawn.

## Mistridge

That dawn came with a blast sounded in southern France. When High Artisans brought down a corrupt Hermetic Covenant called Mistridge in 1210, they employed weapons that, by all accounts, were impossible: cannons. It would be decades before such weapons were allowed into mortal hands, but the gauntlet had been thrown down.

Not that everyone noticed; the greatest conflicts of the era came when Christian, Muslim, Pagan and Mongol fought each other over land and religion. Magi of each faith ran with the soldiers, conquering, defending or just trying to stay alive. Most sorcerers kept to themselves, or defended their families. Gypsies used their talents to shield their people, while wilderness magi kept the spirits in line. In desperation, some folk went mad or bartered their souls for mystick prowess. Pressed by the same forces that create mortal nations, various mystick practices became magical guilds. As tribes grew into kingdoms, sects grew into lodges — into traditions.

## Magick, Faith and Science

(See also Chapter V)

It's easy to see the conflict between magick, faith and science bailed down to a fight between the Council, the Elder of Reason, and the Seven Thundets and their Infernal opponents. Yet that same battle shakes the foundations of the two confederations, too. In these turbulent times "live and let live" is not a dictate of any god. Instead, many faiths call on their followers to kill, and kill and kill....

The Council of Nine comes together through a profound act of faith and vision; three enemies put aside a centuries-old quarrel and create a common sanctuary with followers of other creeds. This "harmony" is strained from the beginning, and it soon grows worse. Christian Choristers and Hermetics, heretics by the standards of their own religion, find themselves in even more heretical company — Pagans, Hindus, Muslims, Taoists, Buddhists and followers of gods no one's ever heard of. Bad enough to be shunned from good company, but to exile oneself into a fellowship of Satan's children? The Christian Choir loses many potential members over this dilemma, and the remaining members grow more militant about their beliefs as time goes on. Some even go so far as to join the very witch-hunters and Inquisitors the Council was formed to diffuse. As many Hermetics and Solificati gravitate toward science over faith, the Chorus leadership backs itself into a corner. Safe for the first time in hundreds of years, the Pagans quarrel with Christians. Firebrands among the Ahl-i-Batin remember the Crusades all too well, and some of them break the peace to "address" the invasions personally. The presence of the disconcerting Hindus (most of whom, to make things worse, are death cultists and lotus-eaters) and the other "heathen faiths" makes the situation explosive — often literally. Compared to the religious strife within the Traditions themselves, the threat from the Order of Reason is nothing.

### The Lodge Wars

Ironically, several of these lodges retained the old secrets of Thothmes' court, scattered or modified, but linked by common symbols. When both the Hermetic and High Artisan Orders came together, the cross, the rose and the sun became prominent symbols of their Arts.

After centuries of building its foundations, the visionary Artisans called their Order together. Like a cathedral, that Order was laid out by people who would never see its completion. Over time, lodges are established across Europe and into Asia. Sadly, the Crusades sever relations between the Muslim Artisans and their contemporaries; it will be centuries before the Arabian Mokereshaf Al-Nour gain a real presence in the Order, and by that time the cathedral is well underway. In 1325, a group of Artisan-priests kill a powerful solitary magus, purify her tower, and

The Order has its own problems, most importantly the division between the Cabal of Pure Thought and its fellow Conventions. The heretical Artificers' Convention not only accepts Muslims and Oriental craftsmen on their own terms, it draws its power from the idea that God's Creation is imperfect without the hand of man. The Hippocratic Circle reaches back to Pagan practices and accepts women with something resembling equality. The Celestial Masters supposedly follow Christ, but their odd Devices question the Bible itself. Worst of all are the proud peasant Craftmasons, who topple God's order and raise themselves up like the architects of Babal. Only the Void Seekers and the High Guild can be counted on to support the Cabal's policies, and even their members are suspect. Like priests who collaborate with merchant princes, Arabs and assassins, many Gabelhites justify their presence with the Conventions' eventual aim: Order over all. The other Conventions, naturally, consider themselves the equals, it not the superiors, of the Gabrielites. As time goes on, debates and duels within the Inner Circle will revolve more around science and less around religion. At this point, though, the rivalries between Christian, Muslim, Taoist and Jew get heated enough to spark battles within the Conventions — some academic, most otherwise.

Both sides suffer the slings and arrows of the Infernalisrs, Church, Seven Thunders and independent witch-hunters. To these dedicated faithful, a sorcerer is a sorcerer, no matter who he supposedly worships. To the pyre with all of them, and let God be the judge! For the next few centuries, the conflict between magick, faith and science rides on a tide of blood and ashes, and that tide washes through every magtckal society.

call their Convention. Soon, representatives gather from across the known world; because their protocols have already been established, they strike their pact in record time. The first order of business is unity; the second, a single Grand Science, based on the principles of nature and perfected by years of practice and invention; the third, the Enlightenment of the mortals through that same Great Science, *Ars Praedarus*; the fourth, the destruction of the night-creatures who keep those mortals in terror.

The third and fourth objectives prove harder to achieve than the first two. The masses are scattered, lust in fogs of superstition and greed. It will take a massive education effort to get them to accept the *Ars Praeclarus*, and that effort will take centuries to implement. As for the night-folk, demons and rival sorcerers, none of them seem ready to lie down and die. As the lodges send agents into the darkness, the other sorcerers, also gathered into

fellowships, chew them up and spit them out. The war begins in earnest, fought during plagues, conspiracies and open harries. Mortal folks are used as pawns; soon, some of them get wise and enter the fight on the own terms. The Grand Enlightenment bogs down, and God frowns on the chaos.

The Scourge deepens. Always present, it twists the efforts of magus and Artisan alike into weird treats and punishments. It's as if the Pagan Dame Fortune had taken over for God the Father; a sinful witch might reap a boon while a pious Christian burns in Infernal flames. The *Daedaleans*, who take the name in honor of the great Greek Artisan, take the brunt of this wild Scourge, and their efforts falter. Other methods — intrigue, invention and education — must suffice when High Science fails. To that end, the Order expands its lodges, teaching mortal artisans and scholars the basic principles of *Ars Praeclarus*. In time, imitators found their own societies, spreading a false gospel with the ancient symbols intact. The Rosy Cross and Masonic tools become figureheads for several dozen lodges — some *Daedalean*, some *Hermetic*, most fraudulent. True to form, these lodges go to war, and the night begins to burn.

## The Seer

Watch that boy run through the streets, chased by a horse offire. Behind them, Tuscan curses and the sizzle of burnt flesh poison the Florentine night. Fights are not unusual in this part of town, but the nature of this battle is. The weapons are dueling sorceries; the fighters, Masonic magicians.

A brusque gentleman in a bright silk doublet waxes his hands and murmurs in Latin. The fiery horse whinnies and turns to face the magus. Pawing the ground, the steed snorts brimstone; his flames crackle in the night. A wind rises behind the gentleman, swirling his hair and rippling his fine clothes. The stallion draws back as the apprentice cowers; that wind could extinguish the horse if the magus wills it so.

A dagger flies out of the shadows, thrown by an expert hand. It strikes the magus in the small of the back, and he falls. In a rush, the fiery horse tramples the man, then turns hack toward his apprentice. The boy flees, his master forgotten....

The mysticks have their own problems: Their magicks go wild, their people suffer, their dreams are plagued by dark prophecies and their enemies seem to be everywhere. In faraway lands, crops fail and sicknesses run rampant. Shamans, healers and truth-seekers strive to find the cause. In Europe, the hottest rivalries burn among Christian miracle-workers, Pagan holdovers and Hermetic Covenants. For centuries, they've fought each other. As the world changes underneath their feet, these rough

A holy man wreathed in clouds (if hashish presents an unlikely solution: The mysticks should stop fighting, band together and strive for something more than power. He's not the first to make this suggestion — a group of Arabian magi called a similar conference centuries ago, and a Persian wise man did the same in 1313. Neither effort lasted for long. Why should this one?

The seer's name is Sh'zar and he has a dark vision: a world dominated by iron warriors and Infernal creatures. Little by little, he convinces prominent sorcerers that his vision will become reality unless the various sects, lodges and solitary magi form a united Council. For decades, he goes unheard; in time, however, the growing Scourge and the Order of Reason convince several master magi of the seer's wisdom. Putting aside their past rivalries, they summon other sorcerers from across the world and create a meeting place — *Horizon* — in a land beyond the clouds. The old traditions become Traditions. The Grand Convocation begins.

And so the war is joined. Now scattered mysticks unity as the *Daedaleans* strive to save humanity. Among them both, we find magi whose distant ancestors formed bonds in *Thothmes'* court. The Rosy Cross has been bloodied. Magick, faith and science boil over a raging tire of a mystick and mortal Renaissance. Draw away from the mirror, now — it tells us nothing. We stand on the threshold of history. Shadows and fire, death and Rebirth. It's time for Judgment.

How will you fare?

## Timeline Note

*History is not a random sequence of unrelated events. Everything affects, and is affected by, everything else. This is never clear in the present. Only time can son out events. It is then, in perspective, that patterns emerge.*

— William Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*

History, like magick, is subjective. The following timeline charts important moments in the early Ascension War; it does not and cannot describe every notable person, place or event in magical history. As sources, like rumors, differ, many of the dates are approximate at best. Many of the events and figures are imaginary; many are not, and many still are both.

While this setting extends from the early 1400s to early 1500s, certain moments are especially crucial. The "Convocation Period" section details important moments in the Sorcerers Crusade era, as seen from the 20th century; "Future Fates" features critical events that may or may not take place up until 1500. Depending on when, where and how you orient your chronicle, your players may foretell, alter, avert or even cause such things to pass. The future is not set; what happens from this point on is up to you.

## A Magician's Timeline of Crucial Events

Note; Specific battles or events are italicized.

### Age of Legends

(All dates approximate, and B.C.)

- Prehistory: Legendary origins of the Arts. Primordial shamans, artisans, healers and witches assume initial concepts of magick — that it comes from greater entities, from within, or from bond between both.
- **4000:** Origins of Thanatoic and Ecstatic cults (India), and Akashic Brotherhood (Tibet or China).
- **3500:** Artisan-priests of Babylon discover sacred geometry and astrology.
- **3000:** "Yellow Emperor" Huang Ti and Queen Lo Tsu found mystical Chinese dynasties on similar principles.
- **2800:** Stonehenge built, seemingly by several magicians together.
- **2630-2610:** Imhotep, the "first true scientist." Revered by Daedaleans.
- **1960-1900:** Legendary career of Daedalus the Great.
- **1600-1100:** *Golden Age of Greek Magick*—Legends credit Medea, Circe, Orpheus, and dozens of others with great mystical powers. Philosopher Aretus writes basis of *Kitab al Alacir*.
- **1500-1480:** Hatshepsut and Thothmes III gather magi, Sacred Artisans; found Cupbearers of Isis, Reed of Thothmes.
- **1353:** Mentu-hetep calls together Sacred Congregation (original Celestial Chorus).
- **1220:** Moses leads Israelite Exodus, working many miracles.
- **965-937:** Suleiman (Solomon the Wise) raises temple and assembles many tenets of Hermetic Arts.
- **945-930:** The *10,000-Djinni Plague* — Malicious spirit hordes infest the Middle East. Solomon contains many; early Arab sorcerers capture or destroy the rest.
- **900-300:** *Himalayan Wars* — Misunderstanding between Akashic missionaries and Hindu magi sparks feud. Reincarnation Arts ensure that the feud is long and bitter. Ends through Akashic withdrawal and seclusion.
- **604-??:** Lao-Tse inspires Taoist alchemy and Arts, perhaps influenced by Akashic techniques.
- **580-200:** *Gulden Age of Greek Science* — Pythagoras (581-497), Hippocrates (460-377), Socrates (470-399), Plato (390-381), Praxagorus (360-335), Aristotle (384-322), Epicurus (340-271), Archimedes (287-212), and many others lay foundations for the *Sunatense Daedaleans* ("Summit"; est. 300). Western paradigm takes form.
- **564-494:** Gautama Buddha inspires new faith throughout India (later, Asia also).

• **560-200:** *Golden Age of Chinese Science* — Achievements of Kung Fu-tse (551-479), Lu Pan (420-391), Shang Yung 350-341), Mo-Tzu (300-241) and other masters culminates in reign of Shin-Huang-Ti (260-210), First Emperor of China and the patron of the Dalou'laoshi (later called the "Five Metal Dragons" or "Stone People," est. 200 B.C.). Cosmic order dominates Chinese paradigm.

• **545-400:** Cults of Hermes flourish in Greece, Italy, Egypt. Split between Aeouismatic and Mathematic factions sparks War of Hermes.

• **500 BC:** *Night of Fana* — Origin of Ahl-i-Batin.

• **496-480:** *Dragon River War* — Akashics battle Yi Han, the Five-ghost Emperor. Rivers literally incinerated by magicks; 10 years of drought, famine follow, touching off skirmishes with Dalou'laoshi, who come to help refugees.

• **400:** Hippocrates founds Cosian Circle.

• **400-100:** *War of Hermes* — Sects battle across Classical World. Many Mathematics join Daedaleans; Acousnmatics splinter, go underground, integrate lore from Arabs, druids, Gallic shamans, Mithraics, Kabhalists and Gnostics. Cults of Mercury eventually become strong enough to survive.

• **221:** Wu Lung ("Dragon Wizards") unite under Fu Xia. Soon they persecute peasant wizards, inadvertently angering Akashics and creating rival sects across China.

• **190-170:** *The Silk Accord* — Inspired by ancient testaments, Artisans from Europe and Asia travel between their native lands, establishing early silk trade and technology exchange. Sumitese Daedaleas signs pact with Dalou'laoshi in 170.

• **160-100:** *Burning Tiger War* — Akashics, Wu Lung and Dalou'laoshi savage each other. Devil-wizard Tau-tse raises demon army and slaughters magi on all sides before being banished by Akashic Masters Te Kwan and Zhen Ba.

• **150:** *Mt. Ossa Calyx* — Various societies of Greek philosopher-scientists gather to preserve the wisdom of the Classic Age. Pericles of Rhodes assassinates Modesto the Just, slanders him and assumes leadership of Calyx.

• **54-40:** *Romans invade Britain* - War between Celtic sorcerers and Roman legions. Great losses on both sides; druids retreat into wilderness and forge pacts with fae. War falters after Caesar's death, but rekindles later.

• **44:** After Caesar's assassination and deification, Lucius Casioli changes Mt. Ossa Calyx into the Collegium *Praecepti* — the Brotherhood of the Rule. Moves guild hall from Greece to Rome, names its craft *Ars Praeclarus*.

## Anno Domini

• **10 B.C.-A.D. 30:** Jesus of Nazareth. Son of God, considered a magician by heretics.

• **10B.C.-A.D. 400:** Hermetic Arts codified, culminating in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a 17-scroll document attributed to Hermes Trismegistus ("Thrice-Great Hermes"). Initially Pagan, Hermetic sorcerers gradually shift to Christianity.

• **25:** St. Delius, inspired by Christ, founds Messianic Voices.

• **43-120:** Celtic sorcerers rebel against Roman occupation. Effort suffers after Queen Boadicea is slain, rallies periodically, then reaches stalemate when Roman sorcerer Marcus Fulgurator wages Lightning Scourge.

• **64:** *Great Fire of Rome* — Flames spare Collegium Praecepti guild hall but destroy Hermetic Library Mercuris. Fights break out between factions. Christians blamed, resulting in purge of Messianic Voices.

• **118-121:** *The Lightning Scourge* — Roman Hermetics battle Celtic magi across lower Britain and northern France. Many magical beasts slain, Pursued into Scotland, Celts withdraw as Emperor Hadrian builds wall.

• **100-756:** *The Devil-king Age* — Succession of demonic sorcerer-sultans rise throughout Middle East. Various miracle-workers combat them, but new dynasties continue until the Prophet's armies bring the last one — Al-Malek Al-Majun Ibn Iblis — down.

• **235:** *Bleeding-of Silk* — Dispute over trade profits fractures Silk Accord pact. Collegium Praecepti and Dalou'laoshi end strained relations.

• **300-1300:** *Golden Age of Pagan Magick* — Legends abound of Celtic, Norse and Slavic sorcerers during this time. Christianity gradually undermines paradigm, but Old Gods bold sway for 1000 years.

• **313-320:** Emperor Constantine embraces Christianity in Rome. Messianic Voices rally, clash with Mithraic Singers for control within Rome. Riots and deadly plague result.

• **320:** *Revelation of the Pure Thought of God, as Revealed by the Archangel Gabriel, His Messenger* — Written by Claudius Oediticicus {a supporter of Constantine the Great}, this treatise details a one-world, one-God philosophy. Later that year, Claudius assembles Cabal of Pure Thought (Gabrielites).

• **389:** Great Library of Alexandria burned, purging records of Thothmes III, A lesser archive is destroyed in 415.

• **410:** *Sack of Rome* — Many magi perish. Collegium Praecepti hall demolished; guild broken into fragments, each bearing rescued lore. Messianic Voices, Gabrielites scatter, form small fellowships, begin to spread the Word of God. Hermetic sanctuaries sacked; survivors flee to Byzantium or northern Europe. Dark Ages begin.

• **450-537:** Legendary career of Merlin; ends in fall of Avalon.

• **460:** *Sebil-el-Mafouh Whash* — "Path of the Voracious Beast"; originally compiled by two Batini, tome details lore and strategics of the Internalist sects later called "Nephandi." Translated and expanded as the *Malleus Nefandorum* around 740.

• **500-550?:** To enlighten common people, Akashics construct several monasteries throughout Far East, and teach pilgrims their Arts. The most famous, Shaolin, soon gains grand reputation.

• **577:** Mi Yeoh, a rare female Dalou'laoshi Artisan, creates rocket weapons and cannons.

• **590-650:** Akashic monasteries anger Chinese Imperial Court. *Shaolin temple attacked*, 617-618; later rebuilt, ruined and rebuilt several times.

• **610-632:** Mohammd founds Islam. Various seers oppose him, but newly converted Batini masters (led by El-Assad-Al-Gabaar, "the Splendid Lion") aid his efforts.

• **630-1100:** *Golden Age of Islam*— Science and faith prosper together. Mokteshaf Al-Nour ("Collectors of Light") founded (700).

• **610-800:** Sheltered by Byzantium, various Artisan guilds resurrect Ars Praeclarus.

• **630-700:** Mad prophetess Aziza abd-Doud founds City of Wastes, clashes with Arabian sect of the Sacred Congregation. Before she dies, she foretells coming Crusades.

• **650:** Concerned by excessive Muslim zeal, Hazan I-Sabbah founds the Taftani ("Weavers"), a Persian/Arabian sect of High Magicians, to safeguard ancient ways (and keep djinni under control).

• **677:** Byzantine Artisan Augustus Daedalus reveals "Greek Fire."

• **700+:** Christian Church ascends throughout Europe, spreading faith and doctrine. Despite internal schisms and conflict with Greek Church, Vatican eventually assumes firm power base, Gabrielites, Messianic Voices and other sects work within Church to spread Word of God.

• **724:** *Sout-Al-Haraam* — Various magi invited to found Web of Faith by Batini emissary. Impressed, various sects join sacred places together and pool their mystick energy into network of Crays and mystick sanctuaries. Together, sects battle insane and Infernal sorcerers.

• **750-1200:** Web of Faith prospers, but is eventually broken by Crusades and internal wars.

• **756:** *Fall of Al-Malik Al-Majun Ibn Iblis* — Batini Dervish/Taftani alliance destroys Oasis of Eternal Bliss, ends Devil-king Age.

• **767,** Midwinter Night: *Pax Hermetica* — Twelve Hermetic magicians found original Houses of Hermes in Durenmar (now Duren, Westphalia).

• **800:** *Formation of Palatine Knights* — Christian sect of warrior-mysticks swears fealty to Charlemagne; related to both Gabrielites and Messianic Voices, this group provides a foundation for Templars Hospitalers and Celestial Chorus.

• **876:** *Conquest of Nemrut Dagi* — Order of Hermes takes Doissetep Covenant from Internalist necromancer. Later (891), Order moves Chantry from Turkey to Pyrenees.

• **997,** Summer: *Gathering of the Square* — German Artisan Wolfgang von Reismann calls Artisans and tradesmen from across Europe; they gather in Frankfurt and found the Craftsmasons.

• **1003-1012:** *Hermetic Schism War*—Houses Tremere and Flambeau exterminate druidic House Diedne.

• **1022:** Primus of I louse Tremere, with many followers, becomes a vampire. Founds undead clan under House name and conceals truth for 150 years. (This attests to lack of communication during that time.)

• **1067:** Founding of Mistridge.

• **1100-1300:** *Crusade Era* — Church and Gabrielite-influenced knightly orders wage various holy wars and inquisitions against Muslims, Pagans and heretic sects.

• **1118:** Sir Hugh de Paynes, King Baldwin II and Gabrielite Sir David De Bracy create Knights Templar. De Bracy links Templars to Cabal of Pure Thought. Ahl-i-Batin break contact with European allies.

• **1160?:** *Kitab al Alacir* resurfaces — Arabic Translation of ancient manuscript postulates that reality is malleable with correct science. Rediscovered in Moorish Spain, document provides foundations for House Golo (far later, Sons of Ether).

• **1171:** Lorenzo Golo founds Hermetic House Golo Ex Miscellanea.

• **1175-1178:** *Dragon Exodus*—Concerned by Church power, British Pagan magi open Paths of the Wyck to magical beasts.

• **1183-1190:** "*Robin Hood*" — Stephen Trevanus founds militant outlaw arm of Craftsmasons near Nottingham, England; makes war on local Church and magi.

• **1185:** Persecution of Jews results in formation of Lavim Knesset Yisroel ("Lions of the People of Israel"). Kabbalistic society of guardian magi.

• **1188-1193:** After clashes with Hermetic House Verditiis, Golo splits from Order. With Gabrielite Simon de Laurent, he founds Natural Philosopher's Guild. Laurent excommunicated, 1190; Guild fragments, 1193; members join Artisan guilds-

• **1195:** Lorenzo Golo creates balloon airship; dies when it explodes.

• **1200-1300:** Ecstatic and Thanatotic sects form loose fellowship, the *Anmda Diksham*, to protect old ways from Muslim invaders.

• **1201-1325:** *Massasa War* — Banishment of House Tremere begins long war; eventually ends due to attrition on both sides.

• **1206-1280:** Albertus Magnus; great scholar, alchemist, theologian.

• **1210, Spring:** *Craftmason Covenant* — Sick of Hermetic depredations, decimated by magical plagues, several trade and artisan guilds unite with Craftsmasons in southern France.

• **1210, Winter:** *Fall of Mistridge* — Craftsmasons attack with cannons. Siege begins; ends when Hermetic traitor (said to be Tremere warlock Grimgroth) opens secret passage into castle. Few magi escape. Considered official beginning of Ascension War.

• **1210-1266:** *Scourge of the Runes* — Massive armies (often led by Mongol shamans) ravage Asia, Europe and the



Middle East. Akashics, Dalou'laoshi, Taftani and Wu Lung decimated in fighting; take decades to recover old strength.

- 1214-1220: Dalou'laoshi guilds rediscover rocketry; use it against Mongols. Also develop man-bearing kites, create early flying machines.
- 1220-1294: Career of Artisan Roger Bacon.
- 1231: *Excommunicamus* — Inquisition officially declared. With help from Gabrielites and Messianic Voices, witch-hunts flourish.
- 1250: "*Golden Guild*" Alliance — After war with White Lion Guild (alchemists), three Ars Praeclarus fellowships — Golden Wheel, Golden Pyramid, Gold Coin — unite and swell Craftmason ranks.
- 1265: *The Mercy Schism* — Church-affiliated magi divide over Inquisitorial tortures; Messianic Voices declared heretical, many excommunicated or killed. Refugees flee Rome, go underground.
- 1267-1268: Artisan guilds war in England. *London Accord*, sponsored by Bacon, ends fighting.
- 1274-1281: *Kamikaze War*— Mongol and Japanese sorcerers wage spirit struggle across Sea of Japan. Akashics assist Japanese effort, establish ties with Shinto sects.
- 1300: Antonio Velio and Contessa Mariana Sabine found Celestial Masters. Giacomo del Barba finances Far East expeditions, reunites Dalou'laoshi with European guilds.
- 1310: On anniversary of Mistridge fall, Craftmason Council plans resurrection of Collegium Praecepti. Raymond d'Laval credited with plan, but inspiration supplied by his wife Catherine.
- 1312: Call goes out to Artisans worldwide; Dalou'laoshi sects invited. Due to Crusades, Muslim Mokteshaf Al-Nour are shunned, or refuse to participate.
- 1313: Templars betrayed, outlawed; survivors go underground, join Cabal of Pure Thought.
- 1313-1314: *The First Stamashii* — Thanatoic Sirdar Rustam calls magi from across India, Middle East and Europe to meet in Persia. Lays foundations for later Council of Nine.
- 1315: White Lion alchemist Le Due Luis Tristan de Varre founds Solificati. In honor of him, future Solificati leaders rake name "Luis."
- 1314-1320: *Foundation of Baerwald* — Templar Sir Garland of Laramay forswears Christianity, flees into Black Forest. Soon establishes Pagan freedom within Holy Roman Empire, mingles Arabian, Latin and Germanic Arts.
- 1320: Mama Musa, Emperor of Mali, opens kingdom to Muslim Artisans and scholars. Many European magi venture there, but are unwelcome. Even so, Mali's Dyula trade guild sends representatives to White Tower (1325).
- 1325, Feb. 16: Assassination of archmagus Yoassmy of Brittany; tales claim she ascended into Heaven as a huge bird.

- 1325, March 1: *Convention of the White Tower* begins — Yoassmy's tower converted into meeting place for Artisan. Soon, the Declaration of the *Ivory Tower* is ratified (March 25), and Order of Reason formalized. Afterward, representatives set up massive network between Europe, China, Middle East and Mali, governed by Inner Circle council. Foundation or consolidation of the Gabrielites, High Guild, Cosian (Hippocratic) Circle, Void Seekers, Celestial Masters, Craftsmasons, Artificers and Solificati.

- 1330, March 21-April 18: *Paris University Purge* — Assassination—by—Scourge of Andreas Litloff, bani Bonisagus, followed by pogrom. Cosians and Gabrielites hunt magicians, first in university, then in city. Purge ends when Hermetic Le Ictus Covenant is burned to ashes.

- 1330-1420: *Plague Years* — Vicious series of plagues rip Europe. Many mundane, some magickal, a few both. In retaliation, known magi are attacked, Covenants thrown down by Daedaleans and mortals alike.

- 1330-1500: "College Wars" — Order of Hermes and Order of Reason vie for great minds of Europe; both establish or infiltrate universities across continent, selecting promising pupils as apprentices or allies. Bloodshed occasional, but most conflict is academic and political.

- 1335: Solificati split from Order of Reason; hounded, they abandon guild halls and scatter.

- 1336: Realizing the need for covert agents, a shadowy association founds Ksirafai to implement and enforce dictates of the Inner Circle.

- 1340: Alexis of Venice founds *Locus Praesidii*, hidden center of Enlightened trade, healing and science.

- 1338: To safeguard German states, Gabrielite Gral Peter von Bell establishes Guild of the Starving Wolves (also called *Die Wulfgilde*), a knightly order with mystical powers and advanced weapons. Wulfgelt aids Germanic knights, builds several fortresses.

- 1345-1350?: *War of the Dust Witch* — Constant depredations by a sect of elemental sorcerers (Marauds?) based near the Kalahari Desert endanger trade and crops of Great Zimbabwe (southern Africa); in response, local mystics form the Ngoma and Madzimbabwe sects.

- 1356-1360: *Screaming Ghost Purge* — Dalou'laoshi and Wu Lung employ new innovations against Akashics; badly beaten, Akashics retreat to Mongolian and Tibetan mountains. This sparks over 100 years of secret warfare.

- 1376: Cosian Doktor Hans von Rottenfeld founds Brandenburg Krankenhaus, college of Enlightened medicine.

- 1380: Von Rottenfeld slain by gypsy curse; in response, Die Woiffgilde purges gypsies within Holy Roman Empire.

- 1387-1392: Celestial Masters resurrect Colo's airship designs, begin balloon prototypes. After many failures, working ships perfected.

- 1400-1405: *Profundum Expeditio* begins — Captain Bernardo Marzani ascends to Moon in airship Agamegnon. Returns to great acclaim in 1403. Later, ship explodes while carrying un-Awakened passengers. After conference, Celestial Masters decide to follow Marzani's example; secretly build Skyrigger fleet and train special crews for it.

- 1400-1435: Skirmishes between Order of Reason and local magi intensify; plagues, battles, mortal witch-hunts likewise worsen.

- 1420?: *Year of the Great Sickness* — Plague hits Zimbabwe, decimates population. Ngoma and Madzimbabwe blame each other, go to war. Truce negotiated by King Kola'a Ti sends Madzimbabwe into rural areas. Relations remain strained.

## The Convocation Period

- 1415?-1440: *Coming of the Sear* — Ecstatic prophet Sh'zar journeys from the Middle East to northern Europe, foretelling disaster. He goes from court to Covenant, but few magi listen. In time, six do — the three Divyas (Akrites, Tali and Kalas) and three Primi (Valoran, Nightshade and Baldric).

- 1416-1418: Bavarian Artisan Adolpus Gent invents clockwork tanks; deploys them against Papal armies and Holy Roman Emperor. From captured designs, Artificers and Craftsmasons add weapon to their arsenals.

- 1420-1445: *Lodge Wars of Tuscany* — Various guilds, all claiming to be "true Masons," fight throughout northern Italy. Some possess Solificati secrets, Hermetic ties or Craftmason affiliations, but most are simply mortal fellowships. Diplomat Luis takes charge of several feuding guilds and resurrects Solificati (1445) under Hermetic patronage.

- 1425: Appa Bloodax, Lithuanian Pagan chief, makes pact with demons, raises an Infernal army, terrorizes Lithuania and sires Tezghul the Insane (1428?).

- 1428-32: Joan of Arc divides Gabrielites; though not a mage, she seems touched by God. Open conflict demands intercession of other Conventions, Joan censured, sacrificed. Gillesde Rais, Joan's compatriot, quits in disgust; later turns his castle into Internalist haven. De Rais killed in 1440, but Chateau de Rais becomes powerful Infernal Cray.

- 1430-1432: Daedalean headquarters moved from Yoassmy's Tower to White Tower of Languedoc.

- 1435-1442: *Wyndgarte's March* — General Christopher Wyndgarde of the True Cross hunts sorcerers and fae allies across Great Britain. Midsummer Night, he attacks Pagan ritual outside Harrogate, England. Only Nightshade survives. Wyndgarde sweeps Britain until ambush outside Newry, Ireland, leaves his forces frozen solid. He dies at Nightshade's hands.

• 1438-1440: *The Long Red Night* — Trouble along the Silk Road lends to new conflict between Akashics and Hindu death-mysticks. Fearing new Himalayan Wars, both sides soon withdraw.

• 1439-1441: Plague ravages several African tribes and cities; visions foretell a giant white ghost foiling across the land. Rands of Madzimbabwe and Ngoma attack both each other and all newcomers.

• 1440: *Burning of Baerwald* — Gabrielites destroy Baerwald; Pagan survivors swear vengeance. Open war breaks out along Black Forest.

• 1440, New Year's: first *Mistridge Convocation* — Sh'zar, Valoran, Nightshade and Baldrick La Salle meet for first time in ruins of Mistridge, attended by retainers and fae allies. After long discussion, they decide to form Council, then depart to recruit others.

• 1441-1449: Mistridge attendees scatter; Nightshade journeys alone to America through Paths of the Wyck, returns with Star-of-Eagles and other Native Americans; Sh'zar, Valoran and Baldrick spread word from northern Europe to Middle East to Asia. After intense negotiations and debates, emissaries begin to arrive in France (1449).

• 1441-1446: Seeking cause of plagues, shamanness Niaoba (daughter of Kola'a Ti) stalks white ghost through the Mo-Mo Ken dreamlands. There, she encounters Star-of-Eagles. Both are nearly slain by white dream-ghost. Later, she meets Sh'zar and Ali-beh-shaar; seeking an end to plague, she decides to join their Convocation. With father's help, she strikes truce between Madzimbabwe, Ngoma and other sects; brings representatives to Europe (1448).

• 1442-1452: *Decade of the Hunt* - Pagan magi and fae stalk survivors of Wyndgarde's army, causing reign of terror across Britain.

• 1448, Spring-Summer: *Siege of Daissetep* — Don Terro Gonzaga of Aragon and Due Francis Nevers of Languedoc attack Covenant; after long battle, it falls. During fight, Hermetic magi (including young Porthos Fits-Empress) shift main keep into the Otherworlds. Cheated of their prize, Daedaleans massacre everyone left behind.

• 1449, July 14 - Aug. 20: *Second Mistridge Convocation, Battle of Flames* Assembly draws Craftmason and Artificer a ruck. Hermetic and Verbenadragon-riders clash with Daedalean war balloons while ground forces battle through mountains. Mysricks triumph, but many dragons die. Heavy losses on both sides.

• 1449-1456: *Construction of Horizon* - Convocationalists agree to create shared Realm in the Otherworlds; Primi travel to homelands, donate powerful sacred spaces, and weave mighty spells to create new and separate world for future sanctuary. Crays are consecrated and tied together (1452-53); founders battle demigod Urushlakhg'run in spirit world (1453).

• 1450, Spring: For Collegia Mercuris (university of Hermetic magic) transported to Otherworlds to avoid Mistridge's fate.

• 1450-1493: *The Vampyr Crusade*— Undead princes converge outside Thorns, England; encouraged by Tremere emissaries, they strike a pact uniting their families into "Camarilla." Younger vampires revolt across Europe, dragging many magi and philosopher-scientists into fight. House Tytalus briefly fragments, but holds together through Grand Convocation.

• 1450-1453: Tezghul the Insane leads horde out of Lithuania. Burns cities along Baitic Sea, founds Kupala Alka among ruins as monument to depravity. Other Pagan sects oppose horde and are slaughtered. Sickening ritual dedicates Blood Lake Cray to demon patrons.

• 1452: *Oath of Fire* — Angry Daedaleans pass resolution to punish vampires and magi "with fear and flame." Hunts begin in earnest.

• 1453-1475: Due Rivallon de Corbie, Honestus Resplenden of the Cabrielites, wages open war against Hermetics and Pagans across France.

• 1453: Verbenad establish underwater Chantry of Eska (North Sea), set up second Chantry near ruins of Baerwald.

• 1454: *Three Tests of Faith* - Horizon builders battle evil spirits and Infernal invaders to preserve their new Realm.

• 1455: Magical war in Vienna pits Cosians and High Guild against Hermetics and Kabbalists. Later, Gabrielites and Artificer troops besiege four Crays — Stonehenge, Lyonesse (Britain and France), Canyon of Qu-Dali and Artaxerxes' Court (both Persia). The latter is lost, but other three hold.

• 1456: *Great Horizon Festival* — April 30, "doors" to Horizon open to outside magi. Several pacts struck with visiting faeries. Niaoba marries Star-of-Eagles (Oct. 14), later bears two children.

• 1457-1466: *Grand Convocation of Traditions* - Huge, fractious gathering births the Nine Traditions. Politiicking, infighting, duels and outright war mark event. Many sects and fellowships either merge or drop out; Madzimbabwe join Thanatoic sect; Taftani, Ngoma and others attend, but refuse to be subsumed into existing groups. In anger, some Tradition magi declare such sorcerers Disparate — "separate and past."

• 1461: Void Seekers and Celestial Masters open secer Chantry Portus Crucis as base for seafaring and Sky rigger journeys.

• 1460-1472: Tezghul mauls Poland, Teutonic states. Despite battles with Die Wolffigilde and an alliance of Verbenad and Celestial Chorists, the Infernal horde pushes toward Berlin, creating Howling Waste.

• 1464: Niaoba assassinated by evil shaman.

• **1466 Summer Solstice:** *Resolutions & Protocols of the Nine Mystick Traditions* — Passed in Horizon Council chambers. Council becomes official. Foundation or consolidation of Akashic Brotherhood, Ahl-i-Balin (Batini), Chakravanti (Euthanatoi), Chorus Celestial, Dream-speakers, Houses (Order) or Hermes, Seers of Chronos (Sahajiya), Solificati and Verbena.

## Future Fates

• **1466-1470:** *March of the Nine* — Council passes the *Compact of Callias*, an accord that encourages inter-Tradition cabals to form. To celebrate (and rest) Compact, Council appoints nine representatives (one from each Tradition) as emissaries, enforcers and comrades. This First Cabal stands as testament to the solidarity of the Council and their future goodwill. From Horizon, they travel across the world, giving rise to many legends. Members: Fall Breeze (Akashics); Daud-Allah Abu Hisham (Batini); Cygnus Moro (Chakravanti); Sister Bemadette (Chorus); Walking Hawk (Dream-speakers); Louis DuMonte (Henneries); Akrites Salonikas (Seers); Heylel Teomim (Solificati) and Eloine (Verbena). (For portraits, see pages 122-138.)

• 1467-1469: Other "mixed" groups form in wake of First Cabal; most notable include the Circle of Seven, Drua'shi and Shadow People (Traditions); and the Legion de Triumph (led by Rivallon de Corhie), Iron Hounds, Artisans Circle and Healing Society (Daedaleans).

• 1467: *Destruction of Garoche* — First Cabal clashes with Legion de Triumph in French town; battle annihilates Garoche, inflames anti-magi sentiments.

• 1469: First Cabal bums Kupala Alka, banishes demons, but is not strong enough to oppose Tezghul directly.

• 1470-1474: *The Boiling Plague* — In wake of Tezghul's horde, a boil-sickness spreads across northeastern Europe. Victims die within days. Brandenburg Krankenhaus finds cure, and ends plague (1473-74).

• 1470, Spring: *The Great Betrayal* — Heylel betrays the Nine to Rivallon de Corbie, who assembles army. Iron Hounds and Legion de Triumph to meet them at Narhonne. Fall Breeze, Daud-Allah and DuMonte killed, along with three Iron Hounds and many soldiers; Akrites, Heylel escape; Moro, Bernadette, Walking Hawk and Eloine captured, tortured in Brienne Castle. Moro dies.

• 1470, Summer: Led by Akrites, Traditions demolish Brienne Castle; Heylel captured (or surrenders) soon afterward.

• **1470, Winter:** Great Betrayer sentenced to Gilgul and death. During trial, Solificati break with other Traditions, each other.

• 1471, Winter: Diplomat Luis assassinated by Solificati rival; without him, Tradition collapses, leaves vacant seat on Council. Some alchemists defect to Order of Reason; 12 are sheltered by Hermetic Order; most shun both and go into hiding alone. Remaining Traditions form Wards within Horizon, sequester themselves away from others.

• 1472, Winter: Iron Hounds harass and weaken Tezghul's forces. One by one, however, they are killed.

• 1472, **June 15-18;** *Battle of Harz* — Magistrates Roland Hoffmann and Georg der Tapfere lead Artificers, Cosians, Die Wolffgilde and huge mortal army against Tezghul. Effort succeeds, but at great cost. Tezghul slain, Hoffmann dies heroically.

• 1473, May 9: *Vigilance Day* — Inner Circle declares holiday to commemorate defeat of Tezghul and sacrifices of Iron Hounds. Celebrations held in Langudoc, London, Florence, Paris and Harz. Observations include prayer; display of arms and parades; and Artisan fairs, where new inventions are unveiled to mortals. Huge memorial statue erected outside White Tower.

• 1475: *War of Concordia* — Hearing of Traditions' distress, der Tapfere uncovers Horizon portals; leads huge offense through. They plunder and bum Horizon until an attempted siege of Council city Concordia breaks the effort.

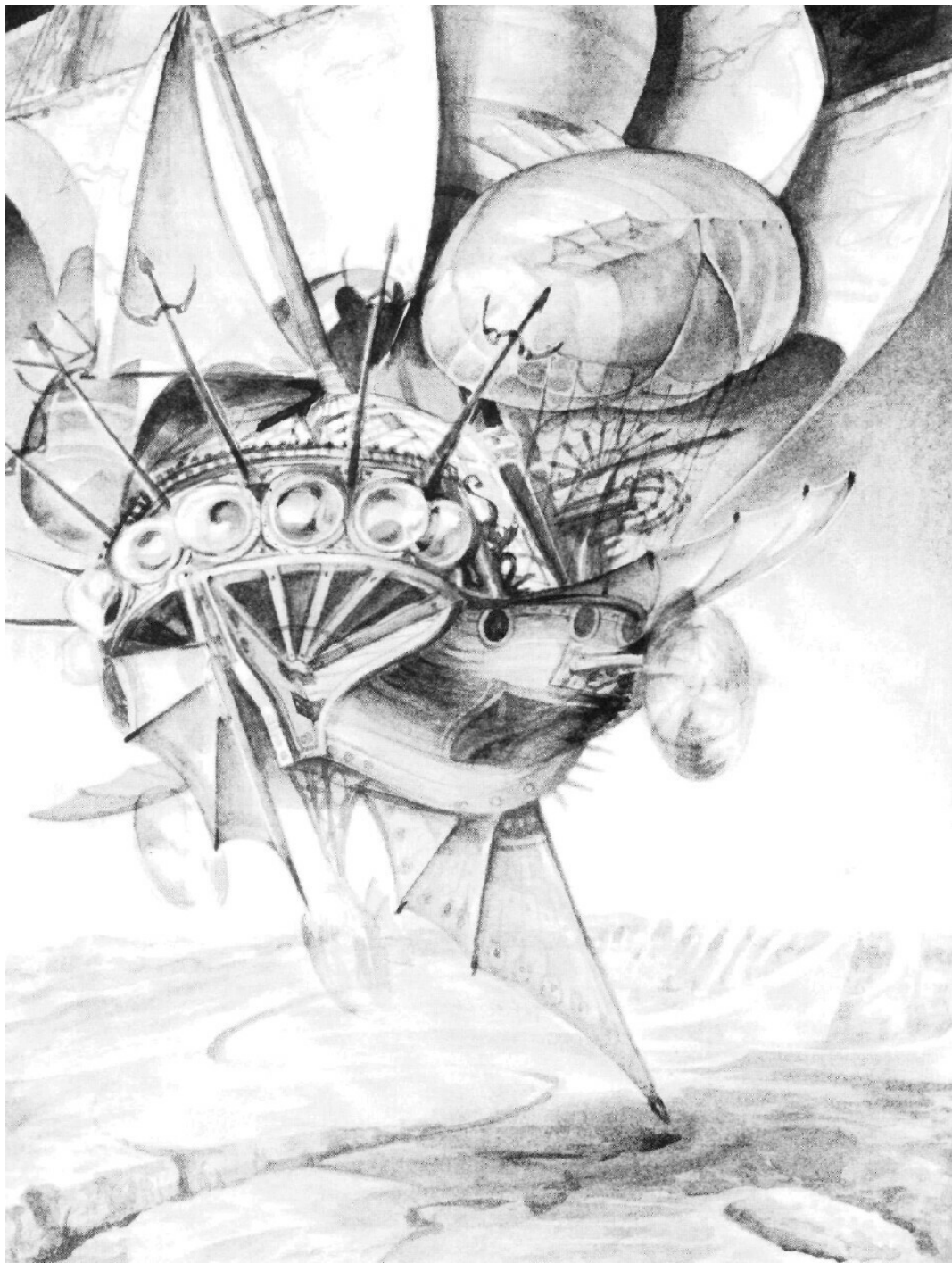
• 1480-1540: Dr. George (Johannes) Faustus; minor magus sets infamous example.

• 1482: Albertus Sentirium, Gabrielite Master, assassinated by magick. Retaliation ignites series of battles and purges. Badly mauled, Tradition magi withdraw into hiding, form secret societies. Ascension War quiets for a time.

• 1486: *Malleus Maleficarum* — Written and published by mortal Dominican Inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, this "Hammer of Witches" inflicts more damage than all battles of the War put together. Book fans fires across Europe. Although Gabrielites circulate the *Malleus*, many Daedaleans fall victim to resulting *Burning Times*. By the time witchfires die out in 1700s, millions of magi, mortals and night-folk have been slain.

• 1490-1501: *The Seven Thunders* — Spurred by Papal excesses and magickal battles, seven holy men raise a peasant crusade across Europe (see **Appendix** for details).

• 1500: Last 12 Solificati rename their sect The Children of Knowledge, but refuse to join the Council.





# Chapter III: Beyond the Mists

*Though we share this humble path, alone  
How fragile is the heart  
Oh give these clay feet wings to fly  
To touch the face of stars*  
— Loreena McKennitt, "Dante's Prayer"

## The Meeting

Agesa, preoccupied, walked back to the manor through the falling rain. She'd expected to be ill at ease watching Pagan Solstice fires. Her mentor still followed the old ways, while she believed true power came from the Lord's hand alone. But Agesa respected von Ulm's faith in (he land, as he never questioned her own strong convictions in the Savior, or Bartolomeo's passion for ritual and process. Different beliefs, many Paths, but united goals; these were the teachings the knight offered his proteges.

The young woman stopped at the von Ulm family cemetery, knelt for a moment and prayed for her mentor's family: his wife, two small sons, and Agesa's unfortunate predecessor, secretly buried on holy ground. Agesa had learned much in the months of her apprenticeship — not the least of which was that mercy and pity were more than just kind words spoken at Mass. Von Ulm was the most compassionate man she'd ever met, heathen or no.

A cry broke her reverie. A flash of distant lightning limned the graveyard. Squinting against the gloom, she noticed movement, and heard the sucking sounds of muddied feet. Grave-haunts! She whispered a prayer and backed slowly away from Lady Ulm's resting place.

Thunder cracked, startling the moving figure, causing it to slip and drop its burden with a wet thud. The resulting curse sounded human enough, so Agesa moved forward with a surge of anger. Robbers, come to loot her master's family. Not while she was around! "Show yourself," she shouted in the after-thunder silence, shaking wet hair from her eyes. "Defiler of graves! Thief!"

The smell of rotting meat rode on the wind. Agesa recoiled. A new burst of lightning revealed a young man, soaking wet and scrabbling to pull a rancid corpse from the muck. He stilled as he saw her, his hair wild and wet. "Forgive my trespass, good lady," he said. His voice was fair, his face almost so. "I mean no disrespect, but this cadaver may be of some use to me."

*Fury overrode fear. Here was one of the perverse corpse-students, profaning dead bodies for the sake of pride! She swallowed rising bile. "Some use?" she echoed. "Were you planning to lay her out on a table, cut her open and draw pictures of her innards?"*

*"No!" he cried. "This lady died of a blood poison; a young child in my village suffers the same. I would save him if I could."*

*"With a corpse? You're demented!"*

*"No," said the defiler, shaking his head. "Nut with a corpse, but with knowledge." He laid the body in the mud and spread his hands be/ore him. "M'lady, do you know the concept of prece-dent? If we can understand if hat came before, we may be able to affect what comes after. If I can isolate what poison killed this woman, perhaps I can save the boy."*

*Agnesa began to protest, but (he man sounded sincere enough. Von Ulm hail taught her to trust her intuition, and (his man seemed sane despite his activities. "A dying child, you say?" He nodded. After a moment, Agnesa replied: "Take me to him. I will ask the Lord's mercy."*

*"Ask what you like," replied the robber. "Voting Marc could use any help you might give." He lifted his rotting burden, wincing at the smell. "But if you're coming, do so quickly."*

*Agnesa smoothed wet hair from her eyes and bit her lip. After a moment, she followed.*

*They were not alone.*

## To Leave the World Behind...

Well met, cousin!

Now that you've had your fill of the imperfect world of man, come with me across the Mists. These are the lands that legends speak of, the places mortals long for hut cannot go. Once in a while, a careless shepherd might pass across, of course (especially on a night such as this!), but he's ill-equipped to make the journey. I'm well traveled (if I might be so hold) and a seasoned guide familiar with many cultures' lore. Trust me, and hopefully we'll survive.

First, strip off those smelly rags and join me at the fire. This is a sacred place and you won't want the city-stink to follow where you're going. Like Persephone at the gateway to the Underworld, we want to leave our mortal weight behind. It is, of course, *possible* to pass into these worlds encumbered, but far easier not to.

Now lift your head and close your eyes and feel the stirring wind. With the full moon bright above us, the passage will be easier, the paths through the Mists more clear. On moonless nights, the right tracks are harder to find and the spirits are more wary and treacherous. There are things where we're going, cousin; if you're feeling cautious, best to stay behind.

Now the moon is high, the rains descend arid the wind: make love to the rowan. It's a fine night to go a/walking, so rise and take my hand.

And do exactly as I tell you. The Otherworlds are no place for fools.

## Three Rings: Microcosm and Macrocosm

As above, so below. I trust you've heard the saying. In essence, it means: That which is in Heaven is reflected dimly on Earth; what transpires on the Earth is a ghost of Heaven. It also means that larger things hear ties to smaller things, and the other way around, as well. If you hope to understand magick, you'll have to understand what scholars call microcosm and macrocosm — the principle that small and large things resemble each other and are bound by that similarity.

What does this have to do with the Otherworlds? Only this: Our mortal world is like the skin of a man, stretched tight over a living Creation. Humours pulse within that skin and breezes caress its surface. At certain points, the humours dance close to the flesh; at others, they swirl around the bones. Sometimes, where there's a wound, they seep out, clot or even spray. When they do, the whole work! is ill.

Think of your body as a mirror of Creation and you'll understand its sanctity. The gods (or *God*, if you prefer) crafted this body as a reflection of their own bodies; we mirror the gods, and Creation mirrors us. Confused? Simply put, Creation is like a man's body; its arms reach high; its feet tread low, its heart pumps the humours, and its eyes see everywhere. The humours are like the elements and the organs keep the humours pure. Some of the places we'll visit are like the organs, others like the bones. This is why magick is best worked naked — or, at the very least, purified: the stale of the body echoes in your weavery. When you deal with the Otherworlds, that makes a great deal of difference.

Imagine your body as the spokes of a giant wheel. Around you, three rings spin: The first, *Penumbra*, reflects the mortal world, wrapped in Mists and lit by twilight; this is the breath of Earth. The second ring, *Veshaya*, reflects the dreams of gods, men and elements — the head, heart and humours of reality. The third ring, *Horizon*, binds them together and houses the I heavens — the soul of this world and the substance of the wheel. The shadow of *Horizon*, the *Contrarium*, rests inside the Earth arid houses the Hells and Underworld — the hones and bowels of Creation. Together, scholars call them *I'umbra*. *Haute*, or simply the *Umbra*. That name means "Shadow," but I think that dismissive title diminishes the truth. The Otherworlds are far more than shadows of us; indeed, we may be shadows of *them* instead!

We stand on the surface of the skin of the world; beneath us, the blood of Creation pumps; above us the vault of sky waits beyond our touch. To travel outward, we will leave this skin and float like smoke into the Mists.

## The Mists

*Hear me, my beloved; I beckon thee through waves of dream and in mine ears a voice whispers oceans of light and in thine eyes alone begins this journey of mine*

— Faith and the Muse, "The Dream of Macsen"



ong ago, our Earth was formed as a point between the Heavens and the Underworld. Like a man, it's imperfect but vital, a marketplace of Divine, Infernal and Earthly urges. The foggy borders of that marketplace swirl at the edge of sight, too faint to touch but real enough to see if you look hard enough.

Open your eyes now and see the Mists; they're more visible after sundown, but always there if you know how to look. Like the veils of Ignorance that shields the mortal mind from Creation's true scope, the Mists of Periphery cloak the Otherworlds. To reach them, you must walk into that fog with your eyes and soul wide open — just as you must pierce the Mists of Ignorance to Awaken into magick.

Where can you find the Mists? Everywhere, of course! They wind through the streets of Venice as readily as they sweep the English moors, though few people notice them in towns or cities. They *are* there, however; at night, they rise to their greatest potency, but they're still present by daylight,

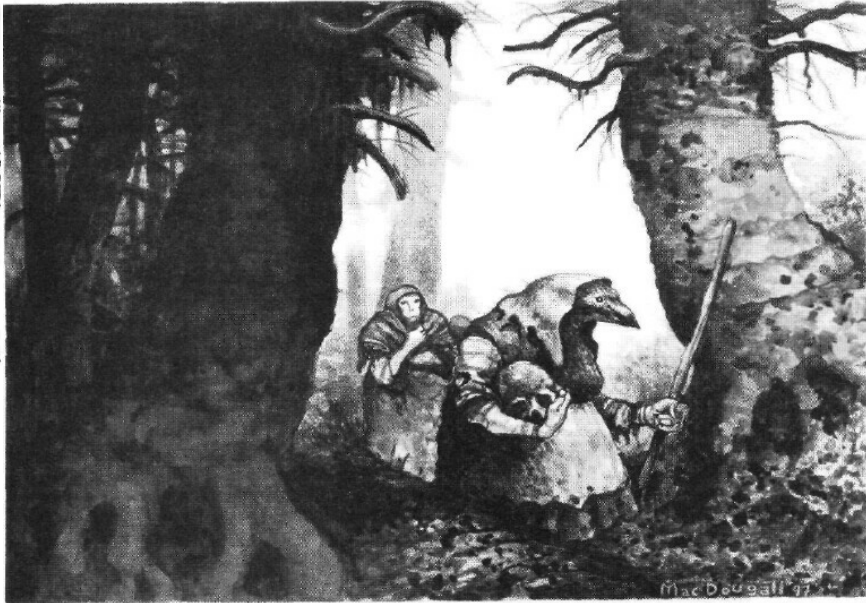
just harder to see. These Mists mark the threshold between mortal Earth and the Otherworlds, between the skin, the sky and the blood below. Any journey begins with them.

## The Periphery and Gauntlet

Before we enter the Mists, look around. Notice that faint glow, the sharp tang in the air, the brush of the wind, and the soil at your feet? So much more vivid than normal, don't you agree? This is what scholars term the *Periphery* and common folks simply call *awareness*. In this half-waking state, we sense Creation in a far more viral way; each sensation is a caress, and cannot be ignored.

In this state, you see things mortals never could; the soul colors that surround each living thing, the filigrees of magickal tides, and, of course, the billowing Mists which are invisible to un-Awakened eyes. Once, all people dwelt in this Periphery, until they fell from Grace and dimmed their eyes. When you master the simplest Arts, awareness returns. The first magicks you learn restore this sight to you.

Take my hand and walk with me toward the Mists; their shimmering veil seems cold, yet inviting. When you feel their icy kiss, you've *met the Gauntlet*, the barrier that keeps our worlds apart. Most times, that slender wall is impossible to pass unless you've mastered Spirit Arts; at certain places or certain times, however, even the dullest banker could walk right through and find himself in faerie.



## Mystick Pools and Crossroads

Such crossing-places are called *Regio, Crays* and *Shallowings*. Each has subtle differences: A *Regio* glows with the presence of the Otherworlds, but they remain out of mortal reach. A *Cray* forms a gateway between this world and the Others; the *Gauntlet* remains intact but thin, and passing through becomes far easier. *Mystick energy pools* in *Crays*, and often takes shape as *Toss*, or magical essence incarnate. All such places pulse with magical quickening; any visitor can sense the strangeness there.

A *Shallowing* is more a state than a place; sometimes the mortal world simply "shallows" — the *Gauntlet* slips away and any man or woman might pass through. *Crossroads*, *Grays*, *Regio* and certain holidays boast notorious *Shallowings*; the *Otherworlds* simply drift into this one. There are reasons why *Samhain*, *Beltane* and the full-moon cycle are powerful *Jays*, cousin — they're *Shallowing* occasions. At such times, the *mystick tides* draw hack and the spirits slip across. If you're abroad on such a night, you'd best be ready for adventure! On other days, like *Christ-mass* and *Easter*, the *Gauntlet* thickens and the *mystick pulse* dims. For *Christian folk*, those days are safe and happy — God grants respite from spirit terrors and strengthens His own folk.

You have heard of *Resonance*, true? Good! That principle is strong around the *Otherworlds*. Strong emotions or critical events cause *mystick pools* to rise, and those events leave traces on the land. A battlefield pulses with hatred and pain; a wedding glen, with laughter and affection. This clearing was the site or a great love lost; even at midsummer, it keeps a chill and melancholy air. I come here to remind myself that nothing is eternal.

Potent events leave powerful traces; brief ones touch the land but linger in small ways. Far from here, I am told, a warlord sacrificed a thousand people to dark gods; the place he did so, *Blood Lake*, is so defiled that you can sense it a hundred leagues away. In *Avalon's ruins* (yes, the tales are true!), strength and honor echo in the stones, even though the court tumbled down centuries ago. In places like this one, where a small hut potent thing has happened, you must be sensitive to feel the *Resonance*; even so, it's always there. When you pass across the *Gauntlet*, you can plainly see its traces.

## Passing Into the Mists

And how do we do that? There are three ways: You could eite a *trance*, leave your body behind and fly in *astral form*; you might learn the *Spirit Arts*, reweave the *Gauntlet* and walk on through; also, you might have another magus open a gateway, then follow behind her. The last, two ways are easier some places and times and far harder at others.

The first *Art* is tricky; most sorcerers cannot do it, and even those who can find it arduous. An *astral traveler* forsakes all tools and clothing, becomes a ghost and flies off, trailing a silver cord,

Her body remains behind, near death and vulnerable. She can cross a hundred leagues in no time at all, but it remains intangible; strength of mind replaces strength of body. When she returns, she often sleeps for days on end.

The second method, *Shadow-walking*, is the most common. You attune yourself to the *Otherworlds* and use your *Arts* to become like *ephemera* — spirit-stuff. The less you carry, the easier this becomes; as I said, it's possible for an armored knight to walk through the *Gauntlet*, but skyland walkers have a simpler time. Once on the other side, you glow like a will-o'-the-wisp, lit by the fire of life. If you've got the skill to do this, you may return from your travels at any time, none the worse for wear.

The third method is simplest; let another magus open a pathway, to return, however, you're dependent on her good graces — as you are on mine.

Now then... Shall we begin?

## The Inner Ring

*...when neither hour nor time of operation or invocation is specified, it is then much better to perform these experiments at night, swing that it is mare easy to the Spirits to appear in the peaceful silence of night than during the day. And... it should be done in a place hidden, removed, secret, convenient, and proper for such Art, where no man frequenteth or inhabiteth...*

— The Greater Key of Solomon, Book Two

## Old Roads: Paths of the Wyck

I'm about to entrust you with a secret — a secret withheld from the Christians and Romans who have terrorized our lands: Long ago, the *Wyck* wandered, cutting Paths through the *Otherworlds*. They left markings of those trails as legacies to us, and we, today, guard them jealously.

*Wyck* markings are invisible to mortal sight; to see them, let your senses wander to the *Periphery*, then look around. If you've had the proper training, the signs should become clear enough; follow them into the *Mists* and you'll discover a *Path*. See that odd-shaped knot on this ancient tree? It's a sign few can read and fewer understand. We who know the secrets can pick such markings out, find the doorways to the *Paths*, and step there from the mortal world without entering the *Penumbra*. When you learn the signs that lead to *Wyck Paths*, guard them well. Our enemies would love to find them.

The *Old Roads* lead everywhere you can imagine, and they contain neither breaks nor traffic. From time to time, you might encounter a magical beast, a ravine or a steep and jagged bill; a determined traveler, however, can cross from one end of the world to the other without fording rivers or seas. You can imagine how such byways could be useful — and how destructive they could be in the hands of a conqueror. By revealing this secret, I entrust you with a sacred charge. Neither gold nor torture is cause enough to betray it.

Not that the Paths are easy to navigate; quite the opposite, really — only an experienced witch should try. These Roads are *infinite*, cousin, and you can wander them forever if you're not careful. Creation is tar larger than any of us can conceive. Some Roads lead to London, others to Berlin, some to lands I've never seen, and still others lead to the stars themselves. The guides along this passage are trust, purity, imagination and intent; it is said that the Paths will lead you where you want to go only if you truly understand how to get there.

These Paths are not for everyone; even primal mysticks find them unsettling. Take my hand and walk with me; see what I mean? Gloom on either side, like a storm on the moors... swelling fog, aglow like twilight, so close that it hurts to draw a breath... ghostly wails in the distance, like a keening choir... treacherous soil and roots like the hands of thieves. This is a realm of neither flesh nor spirit; it touches everything but belongs to nothing. Watch out for the roots underfoot — these woods are anchors of Creation, world-trees in the truest sense. Magick and science are worthless on the Old Roads; we're in a place of the soul, not of mankind's tricks. Here, every sound is muted; every light becomes a haze. The Paths are cold, even in Arabia, and no sun ever shines upon them. On either side, the glowing Mists connect this realm to all the others. To reach your destination, you must brave the cold, close your eyes, enter the Mists and pray you step through in the right place.

The Old Roads present a test — a ruthless test. I've heard of magicians far greater than I who wandered off and never came home. When Nightshade and William Groth, the founders of our Tradition, went on their lonely walks, each went naked, solitary, armed with knives and faith alone. They traveled to places never heard of and brought back people never seen before. That is the true magick of the Paths: to cross beyond what you know and return to tell about it... assuming you return at all. The Old Roads demand courage, faith and vision. Without all three, a traveler is lost.

## The Penumbra

Let's leave the Paths and step full-tooted into the Mists. Don't worry, I won't let you go. Feel that cold bite? That's the Gauntlet. We're passing through now, and Shadow-walking, leaving the Paths behind.

As the Mists recede, look around. Recognize your home town/ *It does* look a bit different, doesn't it, lit by twilight and spirit-essence? Welcome to the Penumbra, the shadow-self of the mortal world — or perhaps the *real* world to the mortal shadow! Here, the truth within each man or place glistens like dew-wet web, daring you to see it as it is.

I spoke earlier of Crays and Regios: See them now in purer form. The battlefield is a cesspit of black rage, shot through with bolts of blood; the wedding glen shimmers with light, and echoes with ghostly tunes; the love-lost

clearing seems to weep, its branches bowed and wet with crystal tears. This is a world of living symbols; in mysrick places, those signs blaze like hot brands.

In lesser places, the symbols are fainter but still there. See the blacksmith's shop? Look closely and see the thick webs that make up its walls, all but invisible against the stone. Watch the shadows by the tavern and see demons of drunkenness and sloth capering near the door. Glance at the midwife's cottage and note the faint glow, like a candle by a sick child's bed. Trust me; you do not want to see your baron's manor! That sight I'll save till you're a stronger mage!

There's another secret at work here: What you see depends on what you *expect* to see. You and I look out across a nature landscape; an Artisan-magus would behold a lattice-work of shapes, glowing webs and holy patterns inscribed by the hand of his God; a necromancer (pardon my spit!) sees his heart's desire — a vista of living death, howling with ghosts and crumbling with decay. Three visions, one place; now you see why I called this the breath of our world.

## The Faerie Dreaming

The dreams of men shimmer in faerie, a land between the Penumbra and mortal world. Like the Paths of the Wyck, this *Dreaming* is a state unto itself, touched by all but belonging to none. Sadly, dreams are dark these days; hunger, war, plague and atrocity take solid shape when men close their eyes to sleep. Like demon-ghosts, those phantasms haunt a twisted form of the Penumbra — a reflection of the world as seen by madmen.

Disillusioned, the faerie hosts, guardians of the Dreaming, slammed their gates and boked them, even against their own kind, not so long ago. Oh, the fae-folk still exist on Earth, of course, but in stunted, poorer forms, changelings abandoned by their kin and left to wander a dim and tainted dreamscape. No wonder they're so angry....

Not every dreamscape is so hostile; in certain places favored by the kinder fae, *freeholds* glisten like tapestries of ice. Some are fortresses; others are glens; still others are endless fields with musical streams. The dark, unseelie fae prefer more sinister realms (haunted woods, bloody rivers and caverns deep below the earth). Those benighted hosts, however, are still faerie realms: vivid as an artist's palerme, seductive as a kiss and intoxicating as a barrel of wine.

Few magi enter the Dreaming without a faerie escort; the enchantments that open human eyes to it pass through the food and drink of changeling hosts — or through touches of a softer kind. Sullen as they can be sometimes, the fae still love romance; oftimes, they favor our kind with trysts and revels; the dancing, drinking and lovemaking of such communions can draw you into the faerie realm — for a while, at least. For a while....

That glowing ring not far from here marks a festival; I'd take you there, but we have a lot of traveling, still. Another time, perhaps. Come again into the Mists and we'll enter the second layer....



## The Middle Ring

*What in your substance, whereof are you made,  
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?*

— William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 15"

**S**pint-walking is more an art of intuition than of navigation; there are no boundaries, borders or landmarks, only currents of instinct. The Otherworlds have a structure, of course, but it's an ephemeral thing. When you're there, instinct becomes your lamp and familiarity your walking stick. A map of these worlds is worse than useless — it's a lie.

The brightest lamps couldn't pierce this Mist, hut the spirit-light of Moonpaths is made of stronger stuff. Look over there — that shining bridge is one such path; A Lunsprite is its guardian. Its bright expanse cuts through the gloaming, arcing off to who-knows-where. Beneath our feet, it would be smooth and cool, like walking in dew. A pity we cannot do so now, but I fear the Lune would he upset. I wonder where that Path would lake us!

Think of Moonpaths like the Old Roads, laid by moonbeams and presided over by servants of Lady Sky. To cross them, you must bargain with the spirits. Depending on the moon's phase, this may be easy or very, very treacherous: New-moon spirits are timid and eager to please, but full-moon ones love to fight. Seeing as how we're traveling by the full moon, it's best to avoid that Path tor now. I know a better one, anyway. Some other lime, however, that bridge could take you straight to a Court, Cray or Realm... assuming you'd want to visit.

## Courts and Aether Realms

What's A Court? Only the greatest of the Aether Realms! I know, I know, what's an Aether Realm? It's a place set apart from the swirling Mists, rising out of clouds or off forgotten paths, a place that half-mirrors the mortal world. I say "half-mirrors" because Aetherial Realms present a different spectacle. While our living world is dull and limited, an Aether achieves titanic scope. Each Aether is a world unto itself, nestled in the Middle Ring but as large as any kingdom. Within an Aether Realm, flesh is flesh, not spirit. The laws of such a place, however, are often strange by human standards, Castles rise leagues into the sky, water flows upward, trees are made of ice, and stars sing each other to sleep. Truly, these are the real domains of magick!

Some Realms are shaped by gods, others by wizards, and still others by events no one can control. The Old Gods dwell in musty places and trackless forests—Greek Olympus, the Valhalla of the Norsemen, even Tir-Na-Nog and the Pictish Ael; some witches I know are building a sanctuary where dragons and unicorns are safe from harm; one legendary Realm (a croft of Valhalla, I would imagine) summons the essence of War in all its forms, pitting soul against soul in eternal combat; others are simply *there*, not tied to any purpose beyond challenging the visitor.

By Christian reckoning, the Aethers are domains of Earth-bound angels and demons escaped from Hell. When God shaped Creation, He placed layers around the world, buffering the sanctity of Heaven from the corruption of Earth. Spirits nestled in these layers, making little half-worlds for themselves. A prophet once met said that when the last trumpets sound, the Aethers will be the stars that fall and the cups full of wrath that shall pour across the Earth. Such a lovely image, that!

For now, the Aethers float within the Middle Ring; you can reach them by Shadow-walking, or through magical gateways linking Earth to a given Realm. Many a Cray or Covenant has hidden doors that lead to an Aether; some wizards, notably the Hermetic ones, conduct a regular trade with Otherworldly spirits, and the Aethers become markets for their dealings. Not that such places are completely sealed to mortal folk; from time to time, a Shallowing rides through the Mist and binds an Aethereal Realm to the Earth. Such passages last only a short time, but in that time a mortal might come face to face with a legend.

## The Elemental Courts

Each of the elements has its own Court, built long before the birth of man. Within them, powerful spirits guide the destinies of men. As the Courts whirl within the Middle Ring, their passing shifts our humours and guides the Awakened Essence within us.

Step carefully — the hot stones will burn your feet! This path leads to the Citadel of Brass, the Fire-realm where anger, courage and purification glow. I've been there; it's uncomfortable, but cleaner than the Hells that employ a darker kind of fire. In the center of the Realm, a castle greater than all the palaces of England rises from a molten sea. Smoke ascends like a prayer to Heaven and salamanders—fire-spirits—scurry about twisting causeways.

Perhaps we should go to the Eternal Sea, where Water hides ancient secrets. Granted, we couldn't breathe without our magicks, but the ondines are gracious hosts so long as you don't depend on their goodwill, or take their games too seriously!

In the Earth-Womb, gnomes scuttle on their grumpy way, speaking so slowly that it might take a month for one to finish greeting you. Theirs is a dark world, occasionally lit by lava flows when Fire visits the Realm. The dust is thick enough to choke you, but the stability of the place is somewhat comforting.

I would rake you to the Sweeping Clouds, but I'm not sure you know how to fly. Without that Art, you'd be helpless in the Air Kingdom, borne about on restless winds until the sylphs and will-o'-the-wisps saw fit to let you fall. Believe me, it's a long fall!

Best, perhaps, if we simply come out here, near the Auspicious Forest, Wood is an element, you know, even if the alchemists don't see it that way. There's a Citadel of Iron, too, where the yundao meet, but those elementals — metal men with harsh tempers and lascivious appetites — are too violent for my tastes.

## Lesser Paradises

You seem tired. We'll stop for while. As we rest, look into the sky. Notice how the sun seems closer, the air more pure? The Christians would say we're in the Fifth Heaven, Realm of Mars and the Virtue of Fortitude. The angels, should we encounter them, will be hardy and aggressive. Best to be on your guard.

According to Christian reckoning, God set eight layers between Earth and its Horizon— Each layer corresponds to a virtue. Administered by lesser angels, these small paradises form hamlets for souls too pure for Purgatory (yes, we'll get to that!) but not enough for Heaven. I've heard that virtuous magi, struck by the Scourge, are sometimes carried here to rest, then returned when they're ready to descend to Earth again.

As I understand it, the First Heaven follows the moon, and shelters souls who require Fortitude; the Second joins Mercury and represents a thirst for Justice; the Third, Venus, is for true Lovers; the Fourth Realm, Prudence, mirrors the Sun; we're in the Fifth; the Sixth is for the Just, the Seventh, for Contemplatives (no danger of us going there!); the Eighth swims amid the stars, and is set aside for the Faithful and Charitable; the Ninth layer is what magi call the Horizon, the "first moving thing" that surrounds the Earth; finally, the most virtuous of all travelers might be allowed to glimpse the *Empyrean*, the Court of the Most High.

Personally, I've never met a magus pristine enough to he allowed that far, so I cannot attest to the truth of the tales. To me, these lesser paradises seem more like Annwynn, Vigrid or the Elysian Fields. If you're ready to travel again, though, I can lead you to a golden bridge I know of a bridge that leads to the Horizon itself.

## The Outer Ring

*O Muse, who do not wear around your brow  
the perishable leaf of Helicon,  
but up in heaven's happy-ringing choirs  
display your diadem of stars,  
oh, breathe celestial fire in my breast,  
ennoble this my song, and pardon me  
if I weave truth with fiction  
— Torquato Tasso, Gerasalemme Liberata*

## Horizon's Crown

That glittering band above us is the shell of Creation, the highest level of the Earthly Dominion and the end of our quest. Stretching off across Creation, it encompasses everything that exists and provides a seat for the stars, No ocean is so vast, no flame so bright, no forest so magnificent as this Divine Crown. Truly, this *Empyrean* must be the seat of gods.

Even here, however, travelers wander through, of times paying homage to the stars, occasionally carving thrones from the firmament of Heaven....

## Horizon Realms

Magi have never been a reverent lot; our power is on godly to allow us true humility. Even so, there are feats that make the pious tremble... like the creation of Horizon Realms, sanctuaries spun from the threads of Creation.

Recall the Aethereal Realms.' Horizon Realms are just like them. But whereas the Aethers occur on their own, Horizon Realms are crafted by powerful wizards who tear the essence from mighty Grays, weave it into worlds, then rend the Horizon to house those worlds and feed them with Primal Force. It's a huge, risky undertaking; the Scourge strikes down most of these proud sorcerers. Still, just as humans build cathedrals on the bodies of their fellows, so these wizards craft Horizon Realms. It's dangerous, but sometimes necessary, especially when witch-fires are kindled for you.

Such Realms are few, but terribly impressive. The mightiest is called "Horizon," named for the jewel that was cut to make it. When the Council of Nine Traditions needed a place to gather, Nightshade and the others decided to build a "temple in the sky." What they crafted is far more than a temple — it's a kingdom of magicians, wild and vast, offering safety to the Council and refuge to magical beasts. Brittany itself could not contain this Realm, which floats like a great ship on the hand of the Horizon.

There are, I have heard, other places like this: Doisetep, moved from its mountain ruins; Helekar, a Hindu palace of skulls; For Collegis Mercuris, a Hermetic magickal college; or Perseus Sanctum, a Skyrigger port...

What's a Skyrigger? I'll come to that soon enough... Suffice to say that Horizon Realms are not as uncommon as they once were, I'm not certain that is a good thing.

A Horizon Realm is an expression of hubris; still, that's natural enough. All magi want to be immortal; perhaps the Horizon Realms are reflections of their desires to become like the stars... or like the heroes among them.

## The Zodiac, Fragmenti and Vada

Legends speak of great travelers who followed the Old Paths into the sky itself. There, they became new stars and lit the skies with their glory. Now they inspire destiny in those of us still here on Earth. The scholars have another tale, of course: According to them, our world rests in the center of a sphere. The sun, moon, elements and planets spin within this sphere, circling the Earth like a constant wheel. Until that wheel stops, those heavenly objects balance our humours, light our nights and guide the hand of Lady Fortune.

Stars fill the essence of the Middle Ring, casting their influence down. The Essences within magi — the Furo, Castellum, Mare and Susurro — are guided by those stars. Moreover, the elements of magick (the Nine Arts) find their best expressions in the *Fragmenti* and the *Vada* — the reflections of those principles. Like stars, these bodies circle the world, wrapped in the Horizon's embrace.

*Fragmenti* are the homes of old and powerful gods who rule the Arts. Scholars call them by their Roman names: Mercury,

God of Connection; Pluto, God of Entropy; Mars, God of Forces; Venus, Goddess of Life; Jupiter, God of Matter; Neptune, God of the Mind; Luna, Goddess of the Prime; Uranus, God of Spirit; and Saturn, the Titan of Time. Some magi, with the permission of these gods, construct Covenants in the Realms. Most of us simply avoid them. These worlds, by all accounts, are hard to reach and harsh by human standards. While I have traveled to Life's Fragmentum, it's not a journey I'd suggest.

*Vada* are more ephemeral, Realms set in the shadows cast by *Fragmenti*. Like *Fragmenti*, each *Vada* corresponds to a mystic principle. Unlike *Fragmenti*, which resemble Earthly Realms with strange landscapes, the *Vada* are chaotic places, maelstroms of energy that can rip a magus apart. I know these places exist, but I have never met anyone who has traveled to a *Vada* and lived. Some folk say that the Seekings we undergo in pursuit of our Arts take us to these places; given the odd nature of these Otherworlds, though, it is a hard claim to prove — or deny.

## Contrarium: The Underworld

*This atlas is full of maps of Hell. It was used when Orpheus journeyed into the Underworld to find Eurydice, and the maps art scorched and charred by hellfire, and marked with the teeth-bites of Cerberus.*

— Chorus, *Prospero's Books*

The shadow-side of I leaven is the Contrarium, the Underworld — which we will not visit! According to the Christians, it leads downward from Purgatory to the nine Hells and finally to the Abyss at the core of the world, where their Devil is doomed to hold his court at the end of time.

We all know the tales of the Underworld — the court of Hel, the Horned God's forest, the Purgatory of souls too good for Hell but unsaved by Heaven. That place is real, Killing under the skin of the world and wrapped in eternal night. Its shadows lap onto the living world in the Penumbra (recall that necromancer find his vision of the Penumbra?), but swallow everything on their side of a swirling black Tempest — a dark mirror of the Mists surrounding the living world.

To venture into the Underworld, you'd best be dead, stupid, insanely powerful or all three. One sect of magi, the Aided Chakravanti, claim that passage to the Underworld sharpens their appreciation for life. Myself, I'd prefer a good Beltane dance! Still, you may want to travel downward someday; if you do, make certain to carry a token to remind you of the living world above, and avoid the Art of Entropy! In the Underworld, it truly calls forth demons.

In certain places, tunnels or chasms lead from the sunlit world to the Hells; there, you might wander until the ghosts show you the way to your goal — or devour you for trespassing! Between the lower depths and the higher Shadowlands, restless souls pass to and fro, wading through the Tempest — or swept away in it. Soon, you'll encounter the angry black storm that cuts upper Purgatory off from the cells of the dead. In the Lower Abyss, those unfortunate howl away their eternities in cages built of writhing soul-stuff. The real Hells wait below.

The Christian Word depicts a Hell of blazing pits and gnawing worms; more imaginative artists people Hell with bestial demons, gaping mouths and Infernal torments. These



things, too, are real, though I cannot say whether they're meant for *all* unchristian souls, bartered ones, or ones so evil that no other place would bear them. At the core of this Underworld, I'm told, a titanic pit, as wide across as the sea, awaits the day when the God of the Christians calls His people home, and hurls the Devil into darkness and flame. If this sounds appealing to you, then by all means, enjoy your travels. I'll not join your tool's errand!

Besides, I have one final secret: There may be worse things than even Hell....

## The Void of Heaven

The Church declares that the sky is a shell, arcing the heavens like some star-strewn cathedral vault. Outside that glorious ceiling, God's Court awaits the faithful. Beyond that, there is nothing.

I say it is not so.

Like their namesake, the Daedaleans task the sky with wings, yearning to touch the face of God. By the moonlight, I have seen their sky-ships rise and catch the wind. Their lamps glow like stars, then disappear. Most of the men disappear with them, but every so often, a crew returns with haunted eyes and madmen's tales. I've heard them gossip in the taverns, drunk on more than simple wine. Their accounts abound with titans, with angels and demonic things relighting the War in Heaven. Take one for a lover and he'll tell you of a Void so vast that all the oceans of the world are like raindrops in comparison. Drifting in

eternal night, the stars and lesser worlds yawn like empty vaults — or like rooms with devil sentinels.

A sailor (one of the Skyriggers I mentioned earlier) told me of a dusty red world with half-hidden ruins and skittering beasts. Clearly, the creatures had not built the monuments that my parambour beheld but they had their own talents all the same. In a frenzy, they stripped two men to bones and rent the skins of would-be saviors. My lover showed me his bites and they were unlike any I had ever seen.

The vault of Heaven is an illusion. The Horizon Crown is a ward that keeps at bay the monsters of a darker Hades. If Heaven waits beyond the worlds, it is a long, long way off.

It is a secret to these men, one they dare not reveal. To do so would bring them to the dungeon, to the stake, but worse still, to the realization that their Church is a lie. No wonder such men seem haunted! They yearned to behold God and found His absence instead. Only in the coils of a sweaty sheet or a crafted charm can they purge their minds of the Void beyond. In their own halls, such men stay silent. Only their dreams betray them.

Emptiness stirs hunger, you see, and the Daedaleans are gluttons for Enlightenment. They will have the truth, even if they must dare Hell and the Void to find it. Silently, they raise more ships to the sky in the hope one will find God. Their chronicles, I'll wager, they hide in oaken chests, or burn when the emptiness grows too great to bear.

Perhaps the stars return your gaze.

Think of that when you stare into the sky.

Come. Let's go home.

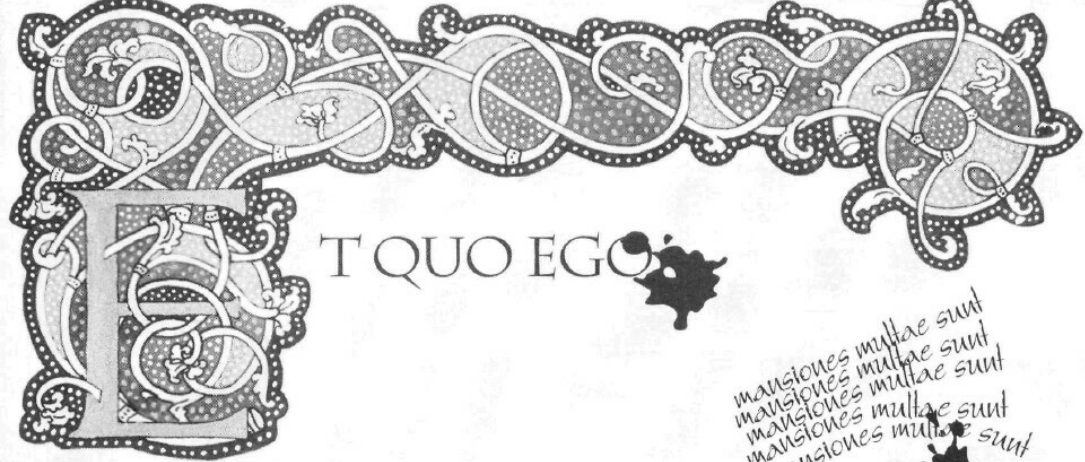


IN DOMO  
PATRIS MEI  
MANSIONES  
MULTAE SUNT

SI QUO MINUS DIXISSEM  
VOBIS QUIA VADO PARARE  
VOBIS LOCUM ET SI ABIERO  
ET PRAEPARAVERO VOBIS  
LOCUM ITERUM VENIO ET  
ACCIPIAM VOS AD ME IPSUM  
UT UBI SUM EGO ET VOS SITIS

BOOK II  
FAITH





Though I dare the stake to say it, I have seen the proof of this with my own eyes, and have heard the songs that praise him sung in many tongues.

Last night as I prayed, a voice came unto me, saying Am I Not Lord Of All? My eyes flew open to behold a grand hall. A piercing light rose from the shadows, flooding my room with fire and my heart with terror. In the glare, I saw a temple grander than all the palaces of the ancients. A mighty singing filled the halls.

I could not discern the words, for the swelling clamor was like unto the praise of Babel, set free from a single tongue and celebrating the liberator. I heard the chants of the Moors, the stingsong of the Infidels, the cant of the Jews and even, God help me, the howls of the Witch-folk. And all their songs were as music to the Lord.

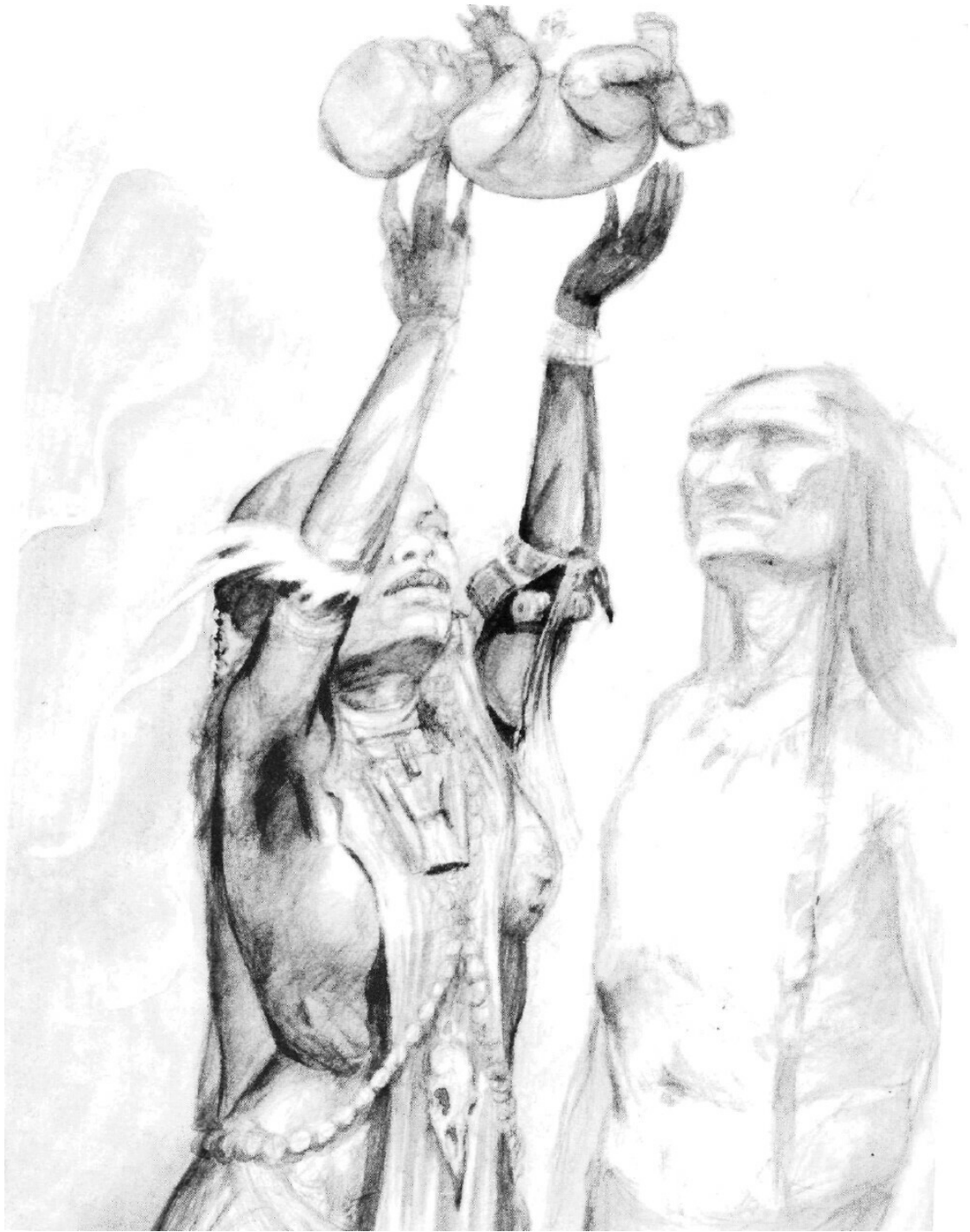
It is heresy, I know, but this is the vision I am granted.

Can such visions lie?

God help my poor soul. To walk away from Truth is to deny the Voice. To follow is to court the Burning Body or soul? What choice is this? I must join the song and dare the fire. But I do not do so easily.

By offering my heart to God, I am damned in the eyes of Man.

mansiones multae sunt  
mansiones multae sunt  
mansiones multae sunt  
mansiones multae sunt  
mansiones multae sunt  
my fathers home  
with many chambers





# Chapter IV: The Characters

*What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason!  
how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express  
and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension,  
how like a god!.. And yet, to me, what is this quintessence  
of dust?*

—Hamlet, Act II, Scene 2

## Lessons and Adversaries

*All around Agnesa lay crumbling scrolls, caged animals and elixirs in earthenware pottery. She ignored the body, now carefully dissected on a stained oak table. Instead, Agnesa knelt by the child, touching his forehead with the back of her hand. Fever wracked the small boy, and she smelled the stench of infection and death. Fingering her rosary, the young woman began a healing prayer.*

*The stranger wasted no time. He laid various bits of flesh from the corpse on a wooden palette, and daubed the remains with his liquids and potions. The palette sizzled, filling the peat cottage with foul smoke. Agnesa spared him a glance; the young man studied his specimens, and scribbled notes in a thick leather tome. His hand was steady and sure as he scanned old notes in the book.*

*"The woman died because the wound became poisonous," he muttered. "But what if I remove the source of the poison! And clean the wound with natural antiseptics, such as lion's foot, *Alchemilla vulgaris*? I believe the child will recover."*

*Agnesa stopped her song as he honed a knife against a whetstone. "You would cut the flesh of this boy?" she mapped. "If you want to cure him, ask the Lord to intervene!"*

*"The boy will recover quicker if you stop your wailing and help me," the stranger responded. He laid down his knife and mixed dried leaves and water in a cracked mug. "Mere, pour this on his wound. Cleanse it thoroughly." Agnesa stared at the man dumbly as he held out the potion. "Quickly! He will die despite your God and my science unless we make haste."*

*Agnesa gritted her teeth, took the concoction and poured it over the boy's wounded arm. She shuddered at the rot that bubbled forth. The stranger offered an encouraging nod as he approached with the knife.*

*"You have done well. Now, lady, he will need all your prayers while I work."*

*Agnesa closed her eyes and renewed her song.*

# Character Creation

*When godlike art has, with superior thought,  
The limbs and motions in idea conceived,  
A simple, form, in humble clay achieved,  
Is the first offering into being brought:  
Then stroke on stroke from out the living rock  
Its promised work the practiced chisel brings,  
And into life a form so graceful springs,  
That none can fear for it time's rudest shock.*  
—Michelangelo Buonarroti, "If Well Conceived"

To use magick, one must become magical. To Awaken, one must step out from the crowd and grasp destiny to her breast. A magus, therefore, is no mere "magician," but a creature of imagination, passion, power and vision. Accordingly, the mage's player should build her creation from the ground up. No random die rolls control your sorcerer's fate; she is what you make of her.

A magus is born in your imagination. The following systems determine what she can and cannot do in a general sense, but you supply the breath of life that turns the list of dots and labels into a character. The following chapter takes you through the creation process and shows you what to do with your magus as she progresses. Our rules, however, are cold, and dry; the spark of mystick creation comes from you.

(Note: A lot of the material in this chapter is based on the Storyteller System. Players who aren't familiar with those systems should check the "Basic Rules" section in Chapter VII before continuing.)

## Living Stone

Character creation is like a sculpture; you begin with the raw stone (the concept) shape it to your liking, then carve and polish the details until the character suits you. Character sculpting follows a simple step-by-step process, outlined in the Character Creation chart (page 114). The following "Traits" section describes each of the character elements in greater detail, but the process itself is easy.

As you sculpt, ask yourself *why*. Why does your character have the skills she possesses? Why are her Attributes weak or strong, and what effects do these aptitudes have on her life? By asking for answers behind the dots, you'll find that your mage takes shape on her own.

### Step One: Concept

Before you can say what your magus *does*, you should decide who she is. The simplest way to do that is to ask yourself "who," "why" and "how": Who was she before she Awakened? Why did she choose the life-path she follows;

was it chosen for her, or did she make most decisions for herself? How did she learn the things she knows? And how does she make her way in the world now? The answers can be found among the concepts you choose as raw stone.

- Some common *concepts* can be found in the **Character Creation** chart. Pick one that sounds intriguing and build on it from there. These aren't your only options, but they make good starting-places.

- The character's *magickal society* will tell you a lot about her; we tend to associate with people like ourselves. Your mage's society should reflect her nature, and it will affect her training, and the allies and resources at her disposal. Those societies can be found in the following chapter.

- The *Essence* of the mage's Mystick Self provides you with a blueprint for her desires. The demands of the Daemon tend to work their way into the sorcerer's personality, driving her in ways she may not understand.

- Aspects of a mage's personality come through as her *Nature* and *Demeanor* — the *Archetypes* that reflect her inner and outward temperament.

A character's *Nature* describes her core personality: what she wants, what she believes, and the methods she uses to fulfill her needs. When she acts according to those precepts, the sorcerer "refreshes" her Willpower points (see below). *Nature*, therefore, holds the key to the mage's confidence.

Her *Demeanor*, on the other hand, describes the face she shows to others. In the Dark Fantastic era, however, it isn't always a good idea to be honest. A wise sorcerer cloaks her motives behind a more "acceptable" persona — the *Demeanor Archetype*. Only close friends know the magus behind the mask.

Most of the time, a wizard will act as her *Demeanor* suggests; her true motivations, however, come from her hidden *Nature*. These *Traits* offer you guidelines for roleplaying, and suggest more specific *Attributes* and *Abilities*...

## Step Two: Attributes

These *Traits* reflect the mage's physical, social and mental aptitudes — the things she is, as opposed to the things she *knows*. Each *Trait* appears as a dot on the character sheet; each dot equals one 10-sided die, rolled when something important must be done. (See **Chapter VII**.)

More importantly, *Abilities* describe the way others see your character. Generally, the more dots she has, the better she is at a given *Ability*. Each character begins with a single dot (•) in each *Ability*; from there, you spend character points to raise the *Traits* to better levels. Three dots (•••) is pretty decent. Five dots (•••••) indicates the human maximum.

The nine *Abilities* are divided among *Physical*, *Social* and *Mental* categories. No one can be great at everything;

Mage assumes that each character is especially strong in one area (the primary group), competent in another (the *secondary* group) and weak in the third (the tertiary group). You get to spend seven Attribute points in the strongest group, five in the second and three in the weakest. Within each category, you may spend those points as you see fit. A brawny magus might have Physical as her primary group; a 4 Strength and 4 Stamina would leave her Dexterity pretty low at 2.

Your character's concept will probably suggest a pattern for her Attributes; Artificers and Guardians favor Physical Attributes, while Ksirafai and Sensualists tend to be more Socially inclined. If you're not happy with your initial Attributes, you may spend *freebie points* (see below) to raise them later.

### Step Three: Abilities

*Abilities* represent the Talents, Skills and Knowledges your magus has acquired throughout her life. The first group describes innate gifts, like an artist's eye; the second contains practiced skills, like archery; while the third reflects education, like vampiric secrets.

Like Attributes, Abilities are rated from • to •••••; Abilities, however, begin at zero. Your magus isn't good at everything — you have to choose her skills. Again, a good character concept helps; when you know the sorcerer's background, it's pretty easy to pick out her talents and training.

Also like Attributes, Abilities are divided into strong, medium and weak categories. This time, the primary group gets 13 points to start with, the secondary receives nine and the tertiary begins with *seven*. Within those groups, you may spend the points as you see fit — to a degree.

No Ability can start with a rating higher than 3. These Traits can be improved with freebie points, but are limited to 3 or less during your first pass through the character,

### Step Four: Advantages

Advantages are unique resources or abilities — the rewards of a fortunate life. They're not prioritized like Attributes and Abilities; each Advantage stands on its own, and you have a set number of points to divide among them. Like the other Traits, Advantages may be raised by spending freebie points on them.

- Backgrounds represent resources, allies or possessions under your character's control. Magi receive *seven* points to spend on Backgrounds during character creation.
- *Spheres* measure the sorcerer's control over the elements of Creation. Detailed in **Chapter VIII**, these Advantages reflect the mage's mystick knowledge and what she can do with that knowledge. Each sorcerer begins with six dots in her Spheres. These are spent however the player wishes to spend them, with two limitations: No Sphere rating can be higher than the character's Arete (see below), and no beginning mage can start with a Sphere rating higher than 3.



Most magi begin their "careers" with an *affinity* Sphere — an Art that reflects their basic temperament. More often than not, that Sphere has something to do with their Awakening and manifests itself in their personality; a witch with an affinity for Life, for example, is earthy and healthy, while an Artificer with a fondness for Forces is commanding and mercurial. In most cases, the affinity Sphere has the highest rating and marks the initial training of the mage.

- Some characters — usually mythic beasts or supernatural censors — have *Special Advantages* like wings, claws, flaming breath and so on. These Traits go well outside normal human abilities; they're not True Magick, but harness supernatural forces in a way that most people cannot. Few magi possess such Advantages — beginning sorcerers do *not receive any* points to spend this way — but many odd creatures do. (See sidebar.)

## Step Five: Finishing Touches

These final features cover the most personal aspects of your character — the ones that grow as a talented novice becomes a Magister.

- *Arete* measures the sorcerer's enlightened strength of will. A combination of confidence, understanding, wisdom and raw power, *Arete* makes a mage a mage.

Each Awakened character begins character creation with *one dot* in her *Arete* score; freebie points can raise the Trait from there, up to a beginning maximum of 3. (Beginning characters with high *Arete* grow too powerful too quickly.) All Sphere ratings must be equal to or lower than the sorcerer's *Arete*; a mage with *Arete* 2 cannot have Life 3. Unlike many other Traits, *Arete* is measured from one to 10, rather than one to five.

- *Willpower* rates a magician's self-control. Like *Arete*, *Willpower* is measured from one to 10. Unlike *Arete*, this Trait isn't limited in any way, and can be spent to give the mage an edge. (See "Willpower," page 107.) *Willpower* begins at 5 and can be raised with freebie points.

- *Quintessence* represents the amount of "stored" mystical energy the sorcerer possesses; *Scourge* reflects the "bad fortune" the mage has incurred through her actions. Both of these Traits are measured in a wheel on the character sheet. A new magus starts with a clean slate — no *Scourge* points and a *Quintessence* rating equal to the dots in her *Daemona* Background. *Quintessence* may be raised with freebie points; no one wants a higher *Scourge* rating!

- *Freebie* points allow you to further customize your character. You get 15 freebie points to spend, but be careful — different Traits cost different amounts (See page 115.) Also, remember that Spheres have a maximum rating of the mage's *Arete* or 3, whichever is less. Freebie points cannot buy new dots in anything; they may, however, raise Abilities above the three-dot limit.

## Alternate Characters

You don't *have* to play a magus in a Sorcerers Crusade chronicle; un-Awakened censors or Brethren, magical beasts and superior companions are options, too. Instead of Spheres and *Arete*, such characters begin with the following Traits:

- An un-Awakened companion—a mage's lover, sidekick, best friend, etc. — has no mystical powers, but makes up for the lack with some exceptional skills or position. Note that this character doesn't have to be the mage's inferior, and may actually "outrank" her. *Examples:* Little John, Moonglum, Tarma, Gabrielle. *Traits:* Attributes 6/4/3, Abilities 11/7/4, Backgrounds 5, Base Willpower 3, Freebie Points 21.

- A magical beast — unicorn, dragon, familiar, etc. — accompanies the mage(s) out of devotion, love, shared interests or other reasons. Despite the stereotypes, such beings are hardly "monsters"; they may or may not walk in human forms, but their concerns are as valid as any mystick's. *Exempts:* Ramodi, Warl, Puss in Boots, Aladdin's djinni. *Traits:* Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 11/7/4, Backgrounds 3, Base Willpower 5, Freebie Points 21, Special Advantages 6.

- A superior companion appears to be a normal human being, but possesses some mystical talent that reaches beyond mortal means. She's not a magus precisely, but stands head-and-shoulders above most folk. *Examples:* Baron Munchausen's companions, Sir Gwaine, Nimue, Eowyn. *Traits:* Attributes 6/4/3, Abilities 11/7/4, Backgrounds 5, Base Willpower 5, Freebie Points 21, Special Advantages 3.

See *Ascension's Right Hand* and *World of Darkness: The Bygone Bestiary* for character creation rules and Special Advantages.

## The Breath of Life

That takes care of the raw mechanics of character construction. A good character, however, is more than a list of dots and stats. To polish that sculpted figure, you'll probably want to describe a number of things about her — things that go beyond the points and Trait descriptions.

## Appearance

We tend to define things in visual terms. So what does your mystick look like? An Appearance Trait "rates" her attractiveness, but it doesn't describe the person's features. Is she short and muscular, tall and lean, heavyset, red-thin? What color is her hair, or are her eyes? How does her voice sound, and what sorts of gestures does she use? These answers will help you get a mental picture of your fictional self, and define, in many ways, how people react to her.

## Faith, Magickal Style and Tools

In the Renaissance, a person's beliefs are *extraordinarily* important. People are burned at the stake for worshipping the "wrong" gods, or for worshipping the "right" God in the wrong ways. Is your mystick Christian, Jewish, Pagan, Muslim? (There are few atheists in this setting.) Whose creed does she follow, and how fervent is she about it? Does she embrace science over mysticism, and if so, how deeply does that impact her behavior? Remember that a person whose faith sets her apart is asking for trouble. What does she believe, and how does her personality reflect it?

These questions follow our mage into the halls of power. Magick and religion makes strange bedfellows, and they often breed conflict. A 20th-century Hermetic magus might not think anything of sharing his Chantry with a Buddhist, a witch and a Catholic priest, but his 15th-century counterpart views the matter in an entirely different way!

Each mage's belief carries over into the mystick Arts, too; after all, magick takes intentions and faith and shapes them into effects. If your character employs magick, it helps to know how she does it. What does your mystick do to shape her Arts? What does she believe, and how does that belief guide her hands? The answers may be vitally important as your chronicle unfolds.

All magi have a *magickal styles and ritual tools* — the implements of the Great Arts. These tools direct your sorcerer's intentions and weave them into spells and rituals. Each practice has its own beliefs, style and instruments, and the various societies favor certain practices. (See **Chapters V and VIII**).

A novice mage surrounds herself with ritual instruments; a beginning character needs one tool for every Sphere she knows. A Verbena with three different Spheres, for example, would need to use at least three different ritual tools in her workings. She conducts these workings through a given style, which you choose when you create the character. This style reflects her beliefs, shapes her workings and describes her ritual tools. In time, a great magus may rise above her instruments. (See the "**Arete**" **Trait** **listing**.) Until then, some sort of ritual must be performed. (See the "**Magickal Styles**" section of **Chapter VIII** for a **number of options**.)

## Specialties

All Traits have certain *specialties* — elements of the skill or Art that a character could be particularly adept with (see "Traits"). Therefore, your character may choose one specialty for every Trait rating of four dots or more. A mage with four dots in Stealth, for instance, could specialize in muffling his armor — a specialty of "Armor" added to the Skill of Stealth. Specialties are good things to have. They reflect experience and give you an edge when the dice come down.

## Possessions

You may assume your character has a reasonable amount of gear and cash within easy reach. "Reasonable," naturally, depends on who your sorcerer is; a gypsy isn't likely to have a suit of field plate armor, but a wealthy knight probably does. Rather than accounting for each and every item in your character's possession, simply decide what she's carrying at any given time — and remember that people do not wander the countryside loaded down with gear! (**Really exotic gear might demand the Resources or Magickal Treasure Backgrounds; again, see "Traits."**)

## Quirks

What sorts of quirks does your magus have? Has she got a foul mouth? Does she smell like sheep dip? Is she in the habit of singing off-key until her companions want to strangle her? A good quirk gives a character a sense of identity, and offers the Storyteller something to play with, as well.

## Motivations

The most important roleplaying questions you can ask are: "what does my character want," "why does she want it," and "what will she do to get it?" Describe those motivations, and you give yourself a guidebook for your sorcerer's behavior.

People don't do things "just because"; even maniacs have their reasons, though they may seem arbitrary to everyone else. Motivations can range from simple wants ("I'm hungry and I wanna eat") to overall goals ("I want to rescue my daughter from the heathens") to lifetime obsessions ("I want to hum every book that contradicts: the Holy Scripture.") Most people have a driving goal, a couple of hang-ups and a never-ending supply of short-term wants.

Stories occur when one party wants something and another party wants something else; the drama comes in when both motivations clash. A good character will have motivations that light a fire under her — and under you, her player, too. Boring motivations make for boring games; exciting motivations, *powerful* motivations, *dangerous* motivations — now *those* forces create tales worth telling!

## Mortal Life

With rare exceptions, a magus is not born in a wizard's tower with a grimoire in one hand and a wand in the other. Before her Awakening, a sorcerer's just like any other person; afterward, she might be secretive, guarded, a hitfey, but otherwise mortal. Sorcerers have *lives* — loved ones, families, rivalries and professions. Those lives don't disappear when magick rears its head; quite the contrary — they often take on a whole new significance.

A magus walks a difficult road, balancing incredible power with secrecy and humanity. It's scary to be a magus in a world where "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" is a commandment followed with fire. When you create your mage, find out for yourself who she loves, who she hates, who she was before the Mists parted, and who she still pretends to be, if only to keep her hide intact.

## Craft Names, Titles and Shadow Names

To mark the beginning of their new lives, most sorcerers take on *craft* names after their Awakening or apprenticeship. By doing so, a sorcerer says, "I am not who I once was." Different practices have different ways of assigning names, but all of them have a common thread: The mystick is not known by her birth name, at least not among her mystick colleagues. Therefore, assign your character a name or title that denotes her magical identity. It could be simple: "Isabelle the White," or Hermetically complex: "Isabelle le Blanc, Fourth Guardian of the Setting Sun, Caller of the West Wind and Conciliator of Shadows, *Lacil Alhil l'adadd*" — depending on the society you choose. (See Chapter V.) That name, however, is vitally important, and should be used as a common name in mystick company.

## The Prelude

Now completed, your sculpture needs an audience. She needs a stage on which to take those first breaths and transform from a piece of rough-hewn rock into a character in a grand play.

Once you've ironed out the details, bring the completed mystick to your Storyteller, possibly with a short story of the mage's early days or a quick over-the-table discussion of her finer points. Before the play begins, your Storyteller may run a *prelude* — a solo story in which your mage enters the setting of the coming tale. In most cases, you'll play out the moment when the dull world slid away and the light of magick blazed forth in your character's life. (See the Prelude at the beginning of this book, for example.) Once you've set the game in motion, you and your character become one; what you say, she says. Welcome to the show.

Those first lines may bring out things you never expected; there's a world of difference between a collection of dots and a speaking character. If the Storyteller permits, you might be able to shift a few Traits around to suit the mage who emerges during the prelude, or to change your concept around somewhat. Maybe you'd planned to make a Verbena witch, but she came out more like a Hermetic instead. No matter — Mage is about change. Don't feel strapped into your initial concept if the mystick comes out differently in play.

## Character Questions

As we already discussed, it's helpful to figure out the important people and driving forces in your mage's life before the play begins. The more blanks you fill in beforehand, the better your image of the character will be. The more you ask "why," the more you discover about the role you've chosen to play. A few questions to consider include:

- How old am I? Where did I grow up, and how pleasant (or unpleasant) was my upbringing?
- Who do I love and why? Are my parents alive? Do I have brothers, sisters, lovers or children? Who are my best friends, and how did I meet them? Do they know what I am, or have I kept that part of myself hidden? Have I formed bonds with servants, consors or other magi, or have I remained aloof until now? What would I do if my loved ones were harmed?
- What kind of life am I used to? Did I grow up poor (a serf, slave, servant, vagabond), comfortable (a commoner, craftsman, clergy, lower nobility), or rich (merchant family, nobility, favored servant, royalty)? Do I still live that lifestyle, or has it changed for better or worse? If so, why? And am I proud of my old lifestyle, or ashamed of it?
- How did I learn what I know? Did I take an apprenticeship to a guildsman, a craftsman or a priest, or did my parents teach me? How many of my talents came from instruction, and how many came from my own activities?
- Who rules me? My family? My clan? My king? No one? Am I indebted to someone (a banker, a mentor, a lord), or am I poor but free?
- What is my faith, and how strong is it? How do I view God, the gods, the Adversary and all their servants? Do I attend services, belong to a sect, or practice my own faith alone? Have I suffered for what I believe, and if so, who persecuted me (and how do I feel about them now)?
- What do I value? Am I honest, or do I shift my morals when it's convenient? Are my principles rooted in religion, or do they come from my experiences and viewpoint?
- What are my life's goals? What does it take to change my mind? Do I trust in God and Fortune to guide me, or am I clearing my own path? What will I do to get what I want, and how ruthless can I become if denied?
- When did the Mists part for me? Was my Awakening traumatic, or did it happen over time? Was I guided, or did the Daemon blast me out of my old life? Did anyone help me, or did I go through it alone?
- How do I feel about my powers? Do I fear the fires of Hell, or urn I confident that I have a place in some Divine plan? Do I hide my Arts, or do I practice openly?
- How do others see me? Are they loving, afraid, suspicious or indifferent? Am I an outcast, either for my magick or for something else? If so, have I found a new home, or am I wandering?

• How do I work my magick? Which practice do I follow, and have I "customized" it to suit my needs? Ms that practiced tie to my upbringing, or has it grown out of my recent life? How does it reflect who I am and what I believe? If I change my beliefs (unlikely, but possible), will that change the way I perform my Arts? Might it make me forsake them altogether?

• How does the Daemon appear to me? Is it a phantom, an impulse or an individual? Do I get along with it, or do we fight? Does it frighten me, or have I come to accept it as a part of me? Do I even recognize it as a part of me, or do I view it as a god, demon, animal or human being? If I see it as a separate spirit, does that still make it a part of me at all?

• What, in my view, is a mage? Am I one? If so, how does that make me feel? What is my role in Creation, and am I prepared to play it, or do I stand alone and take what may come?

## Documentum: The Birth of Christina de Aeoli

*The sight of a fine human figure is above all things pleasing to us, wherefore I will first construct the right proportions of a man.*  
— Albrecht Durer



et's follow Rachele as she creates a mage. The Storyteller, Jean-Marc, tells her he'll be running an intrigue-laden rale set in the courts of Venice. Any character type is an option "sides" will be chosen once the game begins.

### Concept

Since the game features spying and secrecy, Rachele chooses it young Italian woman who's a master of disguise, seduction and assassination — an obvious Rogue with a redeeming streak hidden somewhere deep inside. Reading the "Magical Societies" chapter, she decides that a inenher of the mysterious Ksitrafi sounds like fun. Taking her lead from the swashbuckling heroes of a later age, Rachele selects a Sensualist Nature for her spy; since a lady of finch obvious appetites could hardly be considered proper, she tiers more like a Wail than a Temptress. Checking the Essences, the player decides that her spy is searching for something better; a Sussuro (Questing) Essence suits her well. An ephemeral name — Christina de Aeoli — sets the rone for the character to come.

### Attributes

Rachele finds herself in a dilemma: choose Physical as a primary focus and make a fast, strong killer, or concentrate on Social Attributes and let grace do what

strength cannot? She opts for the latter and puts Mental Attributes last. Christina will be fetching, fast and tough, but not particularly smart.

• Christina has seven dots to divide among her three Social Attributes — enough to buy some pretty formidable scores. Rachele decides to make her charismatic rather than gorgeous; a pretty face won't matter much behind those cloaks and disguises, anyway. Christina prefers to manipulate people's emotions, and can sweet-talk her way out of trouble. Thus, Rachele puts three dots into Charisma and another three into Manipulation, raising those scores to 4 each. The remaining dot goes into Appearance; with a rating of 2, Christina is about average — not remarkably pretty, but not homely, either.

• Next come the Physical Traits — five dots total. Since Christina seems more like a stealthy bladesmith than a brawler, Rachele puts three of those five dots into Dexterity, raising that Trait to 4. Christina's remaining two dots go into Strength; killing a man isn't easy, and she'll need to be strong to do it. This leaves the spy with a Stamina of 1 — not good. Perhaps, she's sickly and small. Rachele makes a note to consider the Trait later and moves on.

• Spies live by their wits; Rachele puts two of her remaining three dots into the Trait of the same name, making it a 3. Given Christina's profession, she ought to have at least a decent Perception rating; Rachele puts the last dot into that Trait (making it a 2) and reasons that her character sees the world in very simplistic terms; she isn't stupid *perse*, but thinks on a very superficial level. Her Intelligence 1 rating reflects this.

Notice how the choice of dots starts to shape the mage's personality. By rationalizing her character's strengths and deficiencies, Rachele has begun to fill in the sorcerer's methods and background.

### Abilities

Skills are important to a spy; thus, Rachele chooses that category as Christina's primary Ability group. Talents are pretty helpful, too, so that category comes next. Poor Christina — she comes off poorly in the Knowledge department.

• Stealth and Melee are all-important in this character's line of work. Rachele buys three dots in each before moving on. Since Christina specializes in winning people over, two dots in Etiquette seem like a good idea. Two dots in Riding make the spy an adequate horsewoman. So much for the obvious Skills.

Rachele wants her mage to be a specialist; hence, she moves on to the "Other Abilities" section and finds some ideal Skills: Acrobatics and Firearms. Two dots go into Firearms and one into Acrobatics, reflecting a working knowledge of both. With her high Dexterity, even a low Skill rating makes Christina fairly proficient. Thus, 13 points are spent.

• Rachele wants her character to stay alive; when choosing Talents, she puts three dots into Dodge before moving on to other things. Since this mage is a liar and a thief, Subterfuge (two dots) and Larceny (one dot) seem



important. Given her hazardous profession, Christina receives two dots in Alertness; a final dot in Seduction gives her an additional edge. Nine points down.

• It's always important to understand what people are saying. Rachele buys Christina two dots in Linguistics (French and Latin, plus a "default" knowledge of Tuscan, her native tongue). A dot in Academics reflects basic schooling, and two dots in Investigation helps her discover the things she needs to know. The basic Ability points are spent, but Rachele makes a note to come back to this section later. She's not satisfied yet.

## Advantages

• At heart, Christina is a loner. She doesn't trust people (go figure!) and has few friends. Nevertheless, Rachele decides to give her a point in the Allies Background — her contact Maurice. Since Rachele wants her character to move about in the shadows, she buys two dots worth of the Arcane Background. Most of her Background points, however, go into Daemon; Rachele has determined that Christina dreams of Saint Anthony battling demons. Sometimes, he asks for help, and the spy obliges. A final Background dot goes into Familiar; a white dove follows her around and occasionally gives her strength. Christina sees this as a gift from the Holy Spirit and accepts the dove's aid. Seven Background points are spent.

• Since dreams, secrets and shadows come up so frequently in Rachele's conception, the Spirit Sphere seems like a natural place for Christina to begin her mystick career. This affinity began with an ephemeral Awakening and carries through as a "second sight" (Spirit 1; see **Chapter VIII**) that allows the spy to see souls and spirits. Rachele holds on to the other five Sphere points until she decides on the mage's Arete. There'll have to be a compromise between mystick talent and mundane skills....

## Finishing Touches

The player elects to leave the mage's Willpower at its base rating of 5; that's good enough for now. With 15 freebie points to spend, she looks to Christina's Arete. Abilities are cheap. Arete is not. After a moment, Rachele decides to make her character a formidable spy but a beginning magician.

Rachele spends four freebies on Arete, raising it to 2; the Spheres, including those held "in reserve," end up like this: Spirit 2, Mind 2, Entropy 1 and Life 1. Christina has an aptitude for seeing things, but hasn't learned how to do much about them. Rachele returns to Christina's Abilities and deals out 10 points in quick succession; each additional Ability dot costs two freebie points, so Rachele buys five new dots total. Melee rises to 4, Acrobatics to 2, Alertness and Subterfuge to 3 each, and Dodge to 4. (With her low Stamina, Christina does not want to get hit!) The final freebie point buys the spy another Ally; Rachele defines this as a "floating" Ally, someone she happens to have on a string this week. The 15 freebie points are gone.

## Essences

*For the soule the bodie forme doth take;*

*For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make.*

— Edmund Spenser, "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie"

What is the color or temperament of a soul? To answer that question, many sorcerers look to the Essence — the personality of the Daemon. This Essence moves the Awakened in ways even they do not understand; most times, it simply colors their moods or picks their targets. Occasionally, though, it emerges as a full-blown Fate — as a destiny.

So what is Essence, precisely? That's the problem — there is no precise definition. Ask a dozen magi and you'll get a dozen answers (most of them incomprehensible). Most explanations favor one of two theories: That Essence is the lingering pull of a former life, conducted through an "old soul" on an eternal search for perfection, or that God guides all souls by using certain "signposts" related to the planets, the humours and the elements. Most European magi prefer the latter theory. The split between the two perspectives causes a lot of arguments (and the occasional duel) between magi who, in later years, might agree to disagree.

The Council has a real problem with the concept of Essence; while half the Traditions favor reincarnationalism, those groups are still the minority in the Christian West. Let those heathen Cathayans, Hindus, witches and shamans believe what they will — the Hermetics, Choristers and alchemists cannot and will not accept such foolishness! As *everyone* knows, God intends a single lifetime for each human being, and His hand suggests the Path each person takes! The Order of Reason has an easier time with the question; As far as the Daedaleans are concerned, Essence is the touch of the Divine Maker guiding His creations. Most independent sorcerers are equally divided; those from far-off lands accept the "old-soul" concept, while European and Middle Eastern magi regard Essence as the breath of God.

As the idea of Free Will grows and spreads, magi will discount the role of the Essence in their lives. In the Dark Fantastic era, however, the specter of predestination is pretty hard to shake. When someone seems "born" to a certain role, he's not likely to disagree — not as violently as a 20th-century person would, at any rate. The Essence, then, becomes a diagram of the soul — its temperament, goals and fate. Faced with its urge, many sorcerers comply.

Each Essence has a series of correspondences. By most beliefs, everything in Creation is connected by influences and interplays. Like so many other elements of occult theory, these correspondences disagree with each other. Some authorities swear the Furo Essence relates to male principles, while others consider it deeply female. The real difference comes in when Easterners and Westerners compare notes. By Taoist alchemy, the Pattern Essence is bound

Christina has several Traits at 4; Rachele, therefore, decides to choose a few specialties. For Charisma, she selects Charming; for Manipulation, she chooses Innocence, A Quick Dexterity specialty reflects uncanny speed, the better to use the Blades specialty with Melee and the Sidestep specialty for Dodge. In Christine's line of work, all these proficiencies will come in handy. She's a winning young lady with *very* quick reflexes!

Many aspects of Christina's personality have come together by the time Rachele tills in the details. The woman is young, thin and pale; despite her pallor, she's a pretty thing, with a quick wit and a radiant personality. Even so, she disappears quickly, fading from memory almost as though she was never there. Discarded by her mother at an early age, she grew up in the care of a kindly monk — a man who supplemented his meager income with shady deals and a bit of cutpurse. Passing his skills on to his foster daughter, he taught her to masquerade as a boy as well. Frustrated by her dreamy ways, he disciplined the girl harshly; in time, she ran away and took shelter with her friend Maurice, a tinker with some questionable connections.

"Father" had read the Bible to Christina every night, and regaled her with tales of the saints. One night, a saint came to visit her; when she awoke the next morning, the girl saw the world in a whole new light. A dove perched on her cot and followed her ever after. Since then, she's heard voices and seen visions; she tells no one, of course, but has been seeking a reason for these visitations. Maurice set her up with a "job" — a spying commission for a mysterious group that swears its loyalty to God and the prince. Now Christina watches for supernatural conspiracies and follows the voice of Saint Anthony. Though she isn't the most perceptive of individuals, Christina de Aeoli has begun to suspect she's a piece in a far larger game. Naturally, she wants to discover her true role — and to keep her back to the wall until it comes time to flee.

## Traits

*I am a man. I think nothing human is alien to me.*

— Leonardo da Vinci



As the mechanical foundations for your character, Traits describe what you can do and how well you do it. Remember, though, that your mage — *you*, by extension — is more than a collection of words and dots. These Traits come alive through your descriptions, roleplaying and motivations. They provide the stone and chisel; you provide the shape and polish.

Note: In this section, and many that follow it, "you" refers both to the character and the player. Making that distinction every time the subject comes up ("*You roll when your character does so-and-so...*") would get tiresome pretty quickly. Mage: The Ascension players should check out the following sections even if the Traits look familiar; there are many differences between the modern setting and the Sorcerers Crusade one.

to water; the French alchemist connects it to earth instead. In the long run, many magi will junk the correspondences and Latin names, or discount the entire Essence concept (as the Order of Reason later does). In this magical time, however, these correspondences are considered pretty important and, like the Essence urges, are taken seriously.

In game terms, Essence is a roleplaying tool. It helps you get a handle on the way your magician counterpart might act, and gives you a view of her Path. It's not an absolute commandment — if every Castellum magus acted the same way, the world would be pretty boring — but it'll give you an idea of what she might do, what she might want, how she might act and the Path she *might* follow to Ascension.

Essence also colors the appearance, goals and personality of the Daemon. (See the Background of the same name, page 107.) A Furo Daemon appears as a blazing devil driving its mage to a chaotic destiny; the Castellum, by contrast, looks calm and serene and urges the sorcerer to create great works. Swirling in the waters of her own mind, the wizard with a Mare Essence sees herself as a mermaid on a mysterious quest; the laughing Susurro magus, on the other hand, shuns house and home in favor of the open road. The various correspondences might show up during Seekings, appear alongside the Daemon, dictate the wizard's astrological birth sign, or shape his personality quirks. The Furo mage (a Leo) likes to play with fire and sleeps with her head pointing south; the Susurro (born under Aquarius) whistles all the time and has a twin brother. Other magi with the same urges behave differently. In short, the Essence can be as influential or insignificant as you want it to be.

(Historical Note: "What's your sign?" may be a joke in the late-20th century, but to the people of this age, astrology is considered a science. Even the hardheaded Daedalean take it fairly seriously, especially the Celestial Masters who *know* that the planets are far more than simple chunks of rock.)

Some theorists speculate that a fifth Essence, *Medius*, exists. Connected to the Sun, the center, Spirit, and (in Eastern thought) Earth, the *Medius* soul supposedly remains in balance and harmony with all things. Since such a sublime soul would be invisible to the more imperfect souls around it, no one can prove it exists. Perhaps the whole idea is simply a theory, or maybe this is the state all souls achieve when they Ascend....

## Castellum (Pattern)

Correspondences: Earth/Water, Atrabile, Male (sometimes Female); Signs: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn; Planets: Saturn, Mercury; Direction: North

Like the fortress for which he's named, the Castellum safeguards the land, building wondrous things where chaos once reigned. Comforting, ordered and meticulous, he weaves

webs of security. Without his influence, Creation would spiral into madness. The Daedalean ideal, this urge soothes pain, slays dragons and brings a wandering soul to peace.

Many Castellum spirits appear as castles, parents, angels and soothing rays of light. Although these Daemons work their mysticks hard, the promise of order and comfort makes all sacrifices worthwhile.

## Furo (Dynamic)

Correspondences: Fire, Phlegm, Female (sometimes Male); Signs: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius; Planets: Mars, Mercury; Direction: South

Riding the flames of change, the Furo Daemon drives a magus to strive, alter, tear down and create. Restless and capricious, she embodies the dynamic urge of chaos and wonder. Taken to an extreme, this Essence drives the Maraud who gibbers at the edge of the world; more often, she tantalizes a mystick with the promise of novelty and the thrill of rebellion.

Furo spirits resemble pi liars of flame, devils, whirlwinds and shadows. Always hungry, ever-curious, they're brilliant, inspiring and often frightening to behold.

## Mare (Primordial)

Correspondences: Water/Metal, Bile, Female; Signs: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces; Planets: Pluto, Jupiter; Direction: West

Deep as the endless waters, a Mare Essence keeps her silence, sweeping a magus into her depths with seductive waves and currents. Though her grace seems Devil-sent, this urge is older than time and more eldritch than Arcadia. Her chosen thrive on mysteries and carnal pleasures; in her womb, they birth a new Creation and watch the old one from afar.

Rich and strange, Mare Daemons often take the form of animals, Pagan gods and nature spirits. The magi they inspire have a knowing way about them and seem ancient, even if they're young.

## Susurro (Questing)

Correspondences: Air/Wood, Blood, Male; Signs: Gemini, Libra, Aquarius; Planets: Venus, Saturn; Direction: East

Blowing through a crossroads, the Susurro Daemon glides over worn paths and crumbled ruins. A questing soul, he leads a wizard on an endless journey past thickets of greed and snares of doubt. Bearing gifts of balance, calm and vision, this spirit has more focus than the wild Furo and more imagination than the rigid Castellum. Like the Mare, he flows past obstacles, but his works are more temperate and beneficial.

Heralds of a new day, Susurro Essences rarely take solid forms. Like the winds they resemble, these spirits arc-formless, relentless and ephemeral. Refreshing as they seem, such souls never rest. Their mages wander until death ends their journey.

## Nature and Demeanor

*I am frolicsome, I am easy*

*Good tempered and free*

*And I don't give a single pin, me buys*

*What the world thinks of me*

— "Saucy Sailor" (traditional)

A magus must be careful. One slip around the wrong people and he could be on his way to a very nasty question-and-answer session. To guard themselves, the Awakened don masks (Demeanors) that shield their true selves (their *Natures*). Sorcerers aren't the only ones who do this, of course; we all do, to some extent. Not all magi pretend to be someone they aren't, either; some act the same around everyone, and damned be the consequences! The following *Archetypes*, however, reflect a fraction of the masks our counterparts adopt.

A wizard's Nature is his true self; it offers a few of his motives and views, and helps refresh his willpower trait. Should he ever embark on the Path of Gold, his Nature will offer you a few clues about the goals and stumbling blocks on that road. (See the strengths and weaknesses of each Archetype.) Demeanor is simpler: This is the face most people see. If your mage is forthright, that Demeanor might mirror his Nature; if he's got something to hide (and most magi do), it may be wildly different. Christina de Aeoli, for example, is hardly the person she appears to be.

The following Archetypes aren't "character classes," nor are they the only options you can choose. Feel free to make up appropriate Natures or Demeanors if none of the ones below suits your vision. Dozens of other Archetypes can be found in the rulebooks and players guides for the other World of Darkness games. This list is only a shadow of the possibilities.

## Architect

You are a designer and a creator. Nothing is as important to you as a lasting legacy, and you devote your life to establishing something of worth. You might be a stonemason, an architect or a planner; perhaps you work on a more abstract level, working out theories, principles and laws. Maybe you're even laying the foundations for the Traditions, or hold the Order of Reason together. Whatever your skills, they help you leave a mark on the world.

Strength comes through such Purpose; most people are content to live their lives; you're determined to make improvements.

That Drive could be your downfall, though. Obsessed with plans and toil, you miss Creation's most pleasant diversions — love, beauty, sleep.... A work ethic is a noble thing, but you carry it to an extreme.

— Regain a Willpower point or two when you make some lasting contribution to the world (build a home, pass a law, clear a road, write a book, etc.).

## Benefactor

You have wealth — why not share it? This bounty might flow from material riches, a good heart, insight or position; you could give it away out of religious conviction, cultural expectations, love or simple generosity. In any case, you make a point of giving to others what you could hoard for yourself instead.

Generosity provides strength in many ways; first of all, it's nice to be needed. When people are grateful, you feel good, and they often remember you afterward as well. Social standing, religious blessings and good feelings reward benevolent souls. Such things give comfort in adversity.

Every once in a while, some Resentment inevitably rises in your heart. Why can't everyone do what you do? Why can't people appreciate your largesse? Why does it seem as though you're the only one giving everything away? Depending on events, this irritation could overwhelm your better urges, turning generosity into a grudge.

— Regain Willpower when you help someone who really needs it with something only you can provide.

## Guardian

In this hostile world, the strong must protect the weak. Did God Himself not command as much? You might act out of duty and love, or defend your lord, faith and family. The weapons you choose could be physical (sword, spell and machine) mental or even spiritual. All around, the just are besieged by horrors and calamities. You cannot simply stand by and watch it happen.

Strength is, in fact, your strength. You were born with some talent — physical or otherwise — that gave you an edge over others; it is your duty to use it for the good of all (or at least on your loved ones' behalf).

Rage may undo you if you're not careful. It's hard to use yourself as a shield without getting angry with the attackers — or occasionally resenting those under your protection. Even the calmest soul may grow disgusted, and in a moment of anger, destroy all that she defends.

— Regain a point of Willpower when you successfully shield some worthy parry from great harm.

## Martyr

You would rather die than renounce your beliefs. You would rather give than take. You're never one to allow others to go without, preferring to share what little you have. From your sacrifices, others may prosper. What more could anyone want?

Your strength is your **Devotion**. By setting an example for others, you uphold the tenets of your faith, or ease the suffering the world is heir to. In a way, all magi are martyrs; they give up "normal" lives to become the heralds of change.

Self-Sacrifice is well and good if you can walk away from it and give of yourself again later. In this violent age, it's all too easy to throw your life away. If you do that, however, the world will be poorer for the waste.

— Regain Willpower if you stand up for your beliefs in the face of immediate danger, or when you go without something so that others may partake of it.

## Renunciate

For whatever reason, you left behind someone or something that was very important to you. Was it a family, an arcane order, a religious fellowship? Whatever it may have been, you no longer want any part of it — even when it comes back to haunt you (which it often does).

You've got reasons for leaving; you've also got some nagging tie to that old life that just won't go away. Denounce anything that reminds you of your past, but be ready for a backlash. Whatever you might like to believe, that forsaken lifestyle still shapes your values, reactions and desires.

Determination is your prime strength. Somehow, you found the courage to move beyond something you held dear. The choice wasn't easy, but you stuck by it. That strength of purpose often carries you through had times.

Guilt is your weakness. Despite everything, you still feel as if you belong where you once were. Occasionally, the temptation to return haunts you. You're not always sure that what you want is right.

— Regain a point of Willpower when you shake aside something or someone who reminds you of your former life, and do so without consequences. Before the chronicle begins, work out the details of your prior association, the reasons you left and the nagging items that won't go away. Someone you abandoned might be just around the corner....

## Sage

You're a very wise and learned person. Although the name implies age and experience, it could be that you're just extraordinarily precocious. Either way, you know a great deal and give the impression of solid common sense. People come to you for advice, and it often pleases you to give it.

**Learning** is a great tool — it's what separates us from the lower animals. It's also your greatest strength. Hungry for knowledge, you pore through books, scrolls and archives on an eternal quest for trivia. If you choose this Archetype, be ready to spend plenty of points on Knowledge Abilities; to you, life is a school and class is always in session.

Your wisdom is often handicapped, however, by Distance. To you, everything is abstract; to others, you seem remote, impassive, clinical. While it seems to strengthen your objectivity, this trait cuts you off from your surroundings. To progress, you'll have to find something more meaningful than mere knowledge.

— Regain Willpower when you counsel a needy person, help someone through your vast reserves of knowledge, or uncover some obscure bit of lore.

## Sensualist

Sensation is a drug for you. Nothing in the world is better than a life drunk like fine wine and savored like a lover's caress. You revel in everything you do and everything you feel. Careering from experience to experience, you take just enough time to soak in each tiny sensation before sweeping off to find another thrill.

*Joie de vivre* (love of life) drives your spirit, and nothing can dampen it. The world is full of intoxicating pleasures and entrancing impressions, but nothing lasts forever; your goal, therefore, is to take life by the throat and leave it gasping on the ground.

Other people call you Irresponsible, Reckless and Childish, but at least you're not dead to the world like *they* are! Life is a ride, love is a gamble and common sense is an excuse to stay home. There'll be plenty of time to sleep when you're dead.

— Regain a point of Willpower each time you discover, experience and savor some new, exciting sensation and live to tell about it. (*Note:* The more you do, the harder it becomes to find something novel.)

## Supplicat

In the service of some other entity (a god, angel, spirit or demon) you ply your trade. Perhaps you worship the being to which you're pledged; more likely, you have either entered into a bargain with it or plan to do so at some point in the future. Whatever the circumstances, you're a loyal follower of your Otherworldly patron. His will be done, as it were.

Dedication is your strength; in the name of your patron, you can literally move mountains. Your duty may be a secret one; perhaps you follow some forbidden deity, or serve an angel from amidst a darker flock. You and your Storyteller should define exactly which entity you serve (or at least what you *believe* the patron to be), your reasons for doing so, the cost of not doing so, and the eventual reward you hope to get out of the bargain.

You are, however, Insignificant compared to your patron; your personality, wants and needs are nothing next to your cause (or so you believe, at least). Until you can assert yourself amid your duties, you will always be a pawn — a *powerful* pawn, perhaps, but a cipher compared to your glorious lord.

— Regain a Willpower point or two when you advance the aims of your chosen benefactor without endangering yourself in the process.

## Theorist

No one can explain everything, but you *try*. God knows. Each enigma is a challenge for you, a chance to prove some new or beloved theory. Perhaps you have some great insight focused through dozens of interconnected ideas; maybe you have a single grand theory that, if it could only be proven, would rock the foundations of the world. Perhaps you've *already* proven your theory, and the magick you possess

springs from the answer. Whatever concept you might embrace, never miss a chance to either espouse your theory, or concoct a new one that fits in with your existing ideas.

This **Grand Idea** is your consuming passion, and it drives all other needs before it. Nothing can stop you from discovering the truth! Naturally, you should formulate your grand idea, establish its perimeters and describe it to your Storyteller before the tale begins. This Archetype assumes a character with some wild, esoteric philosophy and the means to prove it, if only in his own mind.

Unfortunately, this Obsession blinds you to everything else around you. To Ascend, you must either satisfy your passion or put it aside in favor of other things,

— Regain a point of Willpower whenever some observation based on your theory comes to pass. Note that this should involve an exotic (yet coherent) set of ideas that lead to a conclusion; a simple "See! My theory is that vampires feed on blood and he just proved it! Gimmie my Willpower!" will not be sufficient.

## Trickster

There is wisdom in the antics of a fool. You are that fool, though your tricks may be less than obvious. You may not be so much a clown as a Devil's advocate, pursuing the left-hand path in order to teach others a lesson. By undermining established order, logic and faith, you provoke others to see beyond their narrow concerns — and you have a good time doing so!

**Freedom** is your strength; without the constraints that bind so many others, you rise above the common folk and all their worries. Nothing holds you but your own morality — if that!

**Contrariness** is your greatest fault. No matter what the "sensible" choice might be, you'll usually do the opposite. This is dangerous. People don't trust you either, and often with good reason. Given the chance, you'll lead them astray just to make a point. To survive and prosper, you'll need to find a middle ground. Trickster gods get the innards kicked out of them regularly, and you're far less than a god.

## Waif

You appear to be lost, discarded and probably an orphan. People pity you whether you want them to or not. It's often very useful to be taken care of this way, but it can be irritating, too.

Your strength is your apparent **Innocence**; true or not, this impression grants you leeway few people enjoy. If you are truly an innocent, God grants you a certain amount of fortune. You may never be taken seriously, but you will be taken care of.

Your weakness is just that: **Weakness**. Until you learn to stand on your own, shrug off pity, and assert yourself, you'll be doomed to the role of a child — pitiable, delicate and, in many ways, contemptible. To survive, you must be strong.

— Regain a point of Willpower when you stand on your own and accomplish something without help.



## General Abilities

*A great miracle, Asclepius is a man.*

— Hermes Tristegmistus

Must people have access to knowing these basic Traits; hence, they're the Abilities given on the character sheet. Rarer Abilities can be found in the following section.

## Specialties and Variations

For each Attribute or Ability rated four or higher, you may select a *specialty* for your character. These "modifiers" reflect something in which your mystick is particularly skilled, like being Charming (Manipulation), using Knives (Melee), or understanding Pagan Wisdom (Occult).

When you've got a specialty, you may re-roll any "10's" that come up when that specialty comes into play (flirting with a countess, perhaps, or holding a knife to her throat). You can keep the success the "10" originally indicated, but get to try for another success, too. So long as you continue rolling "10's," you can continue rolling for that tear. Only one specialty may be chosen per Trait.

Some Traits have *variations* instead of specialties. In these cases, the Trait includes many different disciplines in a related field (like Anatomy, Biology and Mathematics under the heading of Science). Each of these disciplines must be purchased like a new Trait, and costs the usual number of points.

## Physical

A common Primary group in this rough-and-tumble world, Physical Traits denote raw strength, agility and hardiness. More often than not, such talents are fairly obvious to those who see the character.

## Strength

This Trait ranks physical power, including the ability to move heavy items and inflict damage. Generally, a character with a high Strength rating will be bigger and brawnier than someone with a lower rating. Use your Strength when attempting any sort of jump or leap. In melee combat, you usually add your Strength rating to your Dice Pool to determine damage.

**Suggested Specialties:** Massive, Lean, Blacksmith's Muscles, Powerful, Solid

- Poor: You can lift 40 lbs.
- Average: You can lift 100 lbs.
- Good: You can lift 250 lbs.
- Exceptional: You can lift 400 lbs.
- Outstanding: You can lift 650 lbs.

## Dexterity

Speed, reflexes, grace and coordination come through a high Dexterity rating. Low Dexterity people tend to fumble and stumble, while their more agile fellows seem limber and sure-footed.

**Suggested Specialties:** Cat-like, Lightning Reflexes, Nimble, Perfect Balance, Light Touch, Smooth

- Poor: Graceful as a bull.
- Average: Sure hand and steady eye.
- Good: A supple lad or lass.
- Exceptional: Smooth as the wind.
- Outstanding: Surely you are kin to cats.

## Stamina

When sickness, fatigue or injury threaten, your Stamina decides your condition. Hardy folks wave such distractions away, while more sickly ones need to rest or recuperate. When you take damage, this Trait helps you "soak it up." (See "The Art of War," Chapter VII.)

**Suggested Specialties:** Healthy, Tenacious, Hardy, Tireless, Tough, Will to Live

- Poor: Frail and sickly.
- Average: Often healthy, sometimes not.
- Good: A Highlands constitution.
- Exceptional: Sturdy as an ox.
- Outstanding: Last one standing.

## Social

Social graces are a necessity in the intrigue-laden Renaissance. These innate gifts reflect your looks, charm and instincts. Low Traits denote a buffoon; high ones, a master of men.

## Charisma

Are you charming, likable, a boon companion or merely tolerable? This Trait measures your impression, your force of personality. Unlike Manipulation (below), Charisma measures your innate charm (or lack thereof).

**Suggested Specialties:** Eloquent, Confident, Sophisticated, Gracious, Sensual, Innocent, Pious, Captivating, Regal

- Poor: An oaf.
- Average: A likable chap.
- Good: A confidante.
- Exceptional: A leader.
- Outstanding: A king or prophet.

## Manipulation

Are you good at getting your way? This Trait will tell. A reflection of your talent for tricking, seducing, charming or otherwise influencing people, Manipulation allows you to tilt the opinions of friends and foes alike. It's best to be careful when doing this, however; anger, in this age, can take drastic forms.

**Suggested Specialties:** Bewitching, Dazzling, Inspiring, Impressive, Persuasive, Ingratiating, Charming, Devious

- Poor: "Go away, dullard."
- Average: "Hmm... Worth consideration."

- Good: "There is wisdom in what you say."
- Exceptional: "By your command, M'lord."
- Outstanding: "I'll shall follow ye to the ends o' the Earth!"

## Appearance

Beauty wears a thousand faces, from the vulnerability of a highborn girl to a savage Pagan mien. This Trait reflects raw attractiveness and measures first impressions, going beyond the merely physical to encompass a gentle smile, a gracious laugh, a smoldering stare, or any other compelling features.

**Suggested Specialties:** Dashing, Alluring, Bold, Fair, Sensual, Adorable, Roguish, Wanton, Innocent, Wild

- **Poor:** Quasimodo.
- **Average:** A handsome ploughman.
- **Good:** A bonny village lass.
- **Exceptional:** Young King Henry.
- **Outstanding:** Guinevere reborn.

## Mental

This is an age of great minds and brilliant thinkers. With these Traits (which measure cleverness, memory, learning and imagination), you may take your place alongside the masters... or muddle along in their wake.

## Perception

Are you aware of your surroundings, or do you stumble through manure? This Trait covers awareness and imagination, from instinct to physical senses. Some people, especially children, see everything with wondering clarity; others watch their backs for the inevitable knife. Whatever your reason, your overall intuition is judged by this Trait.

Perception goes beyond sensory impression. A mage with a high rating can catch subtleties in someone's demeanor, grasp the intent behind a work of art, or overhear the snapping twig that indicates an ambush. Characters on the run will need high Perceptions to survive.

**Suggested Specialties:** Keen Senses, Uncanny Insight, Clear-Sighted, Astute, Watchful, Intuitive, Feral

- **Poor:** Hmm...?
- **Average:** A grasp of the obvious.
- **Good:** A sharp mind for details.
- **Exceptional:** Subtle things become clear as day.
- **Outstanding:** Nothing escapes your vision.

## Intelligence

This Trait measures your raw mental acuity — memory, judgment, reasoning, understanding and critical thinking. The pillar of Reason, the Intelligence Trait reflects clarity of thought and a grasp of facts. A character with a high

**Intelligence** Trait has very sophisticated thought patterns; she can analyze many levels of an argument, and discern truth from lies. A low rating denotes a dull mind — not stupid, necessarily, but blind to the complexities of life.

**Suggested Specialties:** Brilliance, Craftiness, Creativity, Pragmatism, Bardic Memory, Insight, Genius

- **Poor:** Village simpleton.
- **Average:** Average peasant.
- **Good:** Venetian scholar.
- **Exceptional:** Isabella d'Este.
- **Outstanding:** The Great Leonardo.

## Wits

Some people live by their wits — or die for want of them. This Trait measures your talent for thinking quickly and clearly. A shrewd, sharp magus would have a pretty high rating, while a dullard would have a low one (duh). Your combat reflexes (see "Initiative" in Chapter VII) depend on Wits. Your ability to hop from one situation to the next, likewise, depends on your cleverness.

**Suggested Specialties:** Crafty, Cunning, Survivor's Reflex, Jumpy, Sharp, Calm Focus, Raw Instinct

- **Poor:** Not the brightest wick in the candleabra.
- **Average:** Sharp enough to see a tumble coming.
- **Good:** A traveling player.
- **Exceptional:** A successful spy.
- **Outstanding:** Renyard the Fox.

## Talents

Everyone is born with certain abilities. These Traits reflect innate gifts, as opposed to learned skills.

## Alertness

Whether in the wilds or in the high court, you maintain a sense of your surroundings. You've learned to keep an eye open in every direction and expect the unexpected. Seldom are you taken by surprise.

- **Novice:** A band of chugs would not escape your notice.
- **Practiced:** It takes a clever thief to get past you.
- **Competent:** You know if you're being followed.
- **Master:** You know you're being followed, who's following you, and how many of them there are.
- **Legend:** You know when a colorless, odorless and tasteless substance has been added to your wine.

**Possessed by:** Thieves, Beggars, Sergeants, Hunters, Assassins, Guards

Specialties: Snares, Ambuscades, Woods, Towns, High Courts, Assassinations

## Artist

In the Renaissance, art reaches new heights of refinement and sophistication. This Talent reflects your innate gift, learned skill and a working knowledge of your craft. Creating works of art is time-consuming, but in this setting it's a sure way to win Influence, fame and favors. (See "Dramatic Systems," Chapter VII.) With this Trait, you choose an artistic discipline and give your passion form. Each discipline must be taken separately; understanding sculpture won't help you sing.

- Novice: Crude but talented.
- Practiced: An adequate apprentice.
- Competent: The average professional.
- Muster: On commission from nobles, kings and clergy.
- Legend: Michaelangelo, Donatella, maybe even the Maestro himself

**Possessed by:** Painters, Sculptors, Patrons, Dilettantes, Performers

**Variations:** Embroidery, Painting, Musical Composition, Sculpture, Poetry

## Athletics

Climbing cliffs, leaping chasms and hurling cabers are your bread and butter. Perhaps you're a sportsman, or simply a hardy lad (or lass). You excel at the rough-and-tumble, whether the "sport" involves rules, reams or simple survival.

- Novice: You rarely humiliate yourself.
- Practiced: People competing against you swallowhard.
- Competent: You're a hero in your village.
- Mister: You're the toast of market days and fairs for miles around.
- Legend: Even your opponents cannot help but appreciate the grace with which you defeat them.

**Possessed by:** Performers, Children, Squires, Champions, Messengers, Jesters

**Specialties:** Climbing, Juggling, Swimming, Local Sports, Hurlled Objects, Stamina, Head For Rules, Cheating

## Awareness

You possess an affinity with the unseen world. Things that slip by most folks — especially mystickal tilings — prickle your scalp. While this talent is most common among sorcerers, some mortals are unusually perceptive. Awareness is limited to nearby activity; you couldn't sense something 10 leagues away, hut could pick up on nearby occurrences.



- Novice: You can tell how people feel.
- Practiced: You're a hunch is usually right.
- Competent: The colors of the soul — auras — become clear when you look for them.
- Master: You see all manner of spirits and night-folk.
- Legend: You commune with the Otherworlds.

**Possessed by:** Gypsies, Midwives, Hermits, Priests, Witch-hunters, Madmen

**Specialties:** Animals, Talismans, Spirits, Auras, Danger, Night-folk

## Brawl

Your bare hands are weapons. Kicking, punching, scratching, biting, and grappling all come easily to you.

- Novice: The local ruffians practice on you.
- Practiced: The local ruffians leave you alone.
- Competent: You *are* the local ruffians.
- Master: You can knock a man out with one punch.
- Legend: Nobles hire you to train their sons.

**Possessed by:** Bullyrags, Brigands, Knights, Pugilists, Peasants

**Specialties:** Grappling, Boxing, Armlocks, Pub Frays, Group Fights, Drunken Brawling

## Dodge

Nimble minx! When trouble comes, you're already gone. The best way to avoid pain is to get out of its way.

- Novice: You can usually avoid a fast-moving horse.
- Practiced: With warning, you can usually find cover.
- Competent: You can sidestep rocks, clods of dirt, or anything else that might be thrown your way.
- Master: Archers cannot pin you down.
- Legend: You can walk through a battle unscathed.

**Possessed by:** Squires, Akashic Brothers, Servants, Thieves, Reconnoiters

**Specialties:** Leaping, Rolling, Ducking, Eluding, Blocking, Martial Arts, Fencing

## Expression

You're good at getting your point across. Maybe you're a master orator, a poet or a good leader. Regardless, you know how to make others listen and learn. With passion, eloquence and commitment, you leave a lasting mark.

- Novice: Folks pay attention—sometimes.
- Practiced: You communicate well.

- Competent: Debates usually swing in your favor.

- Master: You have the tabled Silver Tongue.

- Legend: Fame precedes you wherever you travel.

**Possessed by:** Priests, Troubadours, Leaders, Traveling Friars, Prioresse, Bards

**Specialties:** Preaching, Writing, Poetry, Wooing, Leadership, Commands, Debates

## Instruction

Teaching is your forte. With inspiring words, cohesive examples or sheer stubbornness, you *make* people learn things. A cornerstone of the apprenticeship process, this Talent passes your expertise down to willing students.

In game terms, any Skill or Knowledge you possess can be taught to another character with a bit of schooling. (Talents are inborn and cannot be passed on this way.) For every month spent teaching your pupil, roll your Manipulation + Instruction (difficulty 11 minus your student's Intelligence; a pupil with Intelligence 3 would be difficulty 8). Each success saves the student one experience point he normally would have spent acquiring the Trait; even with your aid, the other player will have to spend at least one experience point. Still, the "savings" are worth a little extra work. (See the **Library and Mentor Backgrounds** for details.) Naturally, you cannot teach what you do not know; the Traits you pass on cannot exceed the teacher's own ratings. An instructor with Occult 3, for instance, can't teach her student to reach Occult 4.

No one can be eternally brilliant; a bored student might have to spend a Willpower point (Storyteller's discretion) to concentrate on his studies, especially if there are other events afoot. Long lessons can wear an apprentice down, and instruction that lasts longer than two months might force the issue. The Dark Fantastic era is less distracting than our own, but every pupil has his limits.

- Novice: You can expound upon simple principles.
- Practiced: You're an adequate tutor for children or young people.
- Competent: You could teach at a small university or monastic school.
- Master: Students praise you as an excellent instructor who makes the most complex subjects accessible.
- Legend: You are a teacher of unsurpassed skill and passion; students leave your classes with a profound understanding of the subject.

**Possessed by:** Scholars, Daedaleans, Professors, Hermetics, Students, Monks

**Specialties:** Specific Skills or Knowledges, Specific Subjects, Society Specialties

## Intimidation

Some people kill with blades; you kill with a glance. When it suits you, this serpent's glance — or some other, less-subtle tactic — assures that you will not be forgotten. Let lesser mortals bargain or wheedle to get their ways; you understand the power of a forceful personality!

- Novice: Scornful child.
- Practiced; Tavern bruiser.
- Competent: The stranger in the corner.
- Master: War-hardened veteran.
- Legend: Gesare Borgia.

**Possessed by:** Nobles, Knights, Men-at-Arms, Rogues, Courtesans, Mentors, Inquisitors

**Specialties:** Quiet Command, Violence, Threats, Condescending, Air of Royalty, Withering Glance

## Larceny

You know how to steal — no mean feat in a land where getting caught means mutilation or worse. Since criminals tend to stick together, you probably know others of your kind, and understand their shady ways. The street patois makes sense to you, and you know how to find the lairs of thieves. A character with Larceny blends in with the underside of society, and knows a few tricks of the trade — purse-cutting, beggary, mugging and hiding.

Many "shady" activities can be reflected with a simple Attribute + Larceny roll; cutting a purse or drugging a drink would be Dexterity + Larceny; bluffing a mark would be Manipulation or Charisma + Larceny; moving a seal from one document to another would be Intelligence + Larceny, while locating a hidden cache would be Perception + Larceny. Most tasks have difficulties of 7 or 8; some are easier, others are far harder,

- Novice: Lowlife.
- Practiced: Street urchin.
- Competent: Gypsy.
- Master: A seasoned — and surviving — member of the underworld aristocracy.
- Legend: King of thieves.

**Possessed by:** Traveling Players, Street Children, Veterans, Beggars, Vagabonds

**Specialties:** Street Slang, Robbery, Spying, Trickery, Forgery, Criminal Underground

## Subterfuge

You're a tricky bastard. Skilled in deceit, you can get away with murder while picking up clues from your next victim in the process. This knack goes beyond simple lying; you can judge another person's honesty (or lack of same) by her body language while keeping your own motives deeply shadowed.

- Novice: You tie easily find well.
- Practiced: In many transactions, the edge is yours.
- Competent: You could woo three suitors at once.
- Master: A grand Italian spy.
- Legend: Rodrigo Borgia.

**Possessed by:** Spies, Courtiers, Merchants, Criminals, Hermetic Masters

**Specialties:** Church Politics, Courtier, Feigned Innocence, Gossip, Fast Talk

## Skills

Practice makes perfection — or skill, at the very least. These Traits come through learning and experience, molding raw talent into proficiency.

## Animal Ken

You possess an affinity for the beasts of field and farm. While others struggle with God's lesser creatures, you train or befriend them with ease. This gift may come from a natural talent or from hard-won training, and extends to many forms of mythic beast as well.

- Novice: You can befriend domesticated animals.
- Practiced: You can teach a dog or horse some simple tricks.
- Competent: Professional animal trainer.
- Master: Wild beasts obey your commands.
- Legend: A true son or daughter of Saint Francis.

**Possessed by:** Falconers, Knights, Verbena, Stablehands, Farmers, Hermits

**Specialties:** Dogs, Raptors, Magical Beasts, Farm Animals, Bears, Wolves, Cats, Small Forest Creatures

## Archery

In many ways, archers are the single most important factor in a large battle. The English longbow is changing the face of world politics, rendering knights in heavy armor virtually obsolete. Entire armies can be massacred by a small group of skilled archers, and you possess that skill.

- Novice: Yokel.
- Practiced: Poacher.
- Competent: Forester or bandit.
- Master: Elite longbowman.
- Legend: William Tell.

**Possessed by:** Yeoman, Court Archers, Huntsmen, Poachers, Native Americans

**Specialties:** Targets, Hunting, Crossbows, Battle, Flaming Arrows, Trick Shots

## Crafts

A catch-all Ability reflecting your profession and the skills that go with it. A blacksmith, for example, knows how to use his hammer to shape various implements. He also understands the smelting points of various ores and could judge fine workmanship over bad. Many people know at least one Craft, and some have several. Each Craft must be purchased as a separate Skill.

- Novice: Young apprentice.
- Practiced: Knowledgeable but inexperienced.
- Competent: Professional craftsman.
- Master: Specialist.
- Legend: Grand artisan.

**Possessed by:** Alchemists, Witches, Artificers, Craftsmen, any other skilled worker

**Variations:** Armory, Blacksmithing, Brewing/Distillery, Carpentry, Coachman, Farming, Fletching, Forestry, Glass Blowing, Jewelry-making, Leathercraft, Seamanship, Stoneworking

## Etiquette

You possess impeccable manners, and conduct yourself with grace and style in a myriad of social circumstances. An essential skill for diplomatic engagements, romantic interludes and deadly intrigue, Etiquette varies tremendously from place to place. Fine manners in Paris may be gauche in Florence and prissy in Suffolk. Still, you have a talent for picking up social graces in a hurry, and employing them to gtxxj effect.

- Novice: You know what a fork is and can use it.
- Practiced: You have learned the secret of the napkin.
- Competent: You conduct yourself well in speech and dress at any social function in your own country.
- Master: Whether entertaining foreign dignitaries or visiting a peasant's church, your grace and style command respect.
- Legend: From Cathay to the Highlands, your impeccable manners make you a treasured guest.

**Possessed by:** Nuns, Ksirafai, Tradition Masters, High Lords and Ladies, Prioresses, Ambitious Merchants, Manticples

**Specialties:** Courtly Manners, Foreign Customs, Dining, Social Functions

## Leadership

People look to you to take charge. With firm voice and unflappable calm, you give orders and retain grace under stress. Leadership is more than a steady hand in battle, however; a good commander understands tact, strategy and timing. Com-

bined with Charisma and Manipulation, your Skill tuns the tide in many conflicts — military and otherwise.

- Novice: You can lead a hunting party.
- Practiced: You're the unofficial spokesman for the group.
- Competent: Others look to you for guidance.
- Master: You inspire large numbers of people to do great (or terrible) things.
- Legend: You could be the new Pope, a king, or the leader of an insurrection.

**Possessed by:** Nobility, Kings and Queens, Knights, Mother Superiors, Bishops, Captains, Diplomats, Soldiers

**Specialties:** Military, Commands, Nobility, Rouse, Threat, Diversion, Matters of Faith

## Meditation

In some parts of the world, meditation is an essential part of magick. Those who understand its techniques can put themselves into trances, screen out distractions and soothe their jangled sensibilities. Dozens of practices — Tai Chi, yoga, Tantrik arts, ascetic Christian meditation, and others — employ trance states as avenues to Divine insight.

To meditate, you need something to meditate *about*; most practices emphasize deep breathing, prayer, personal reflection and tools like incense and chanting. Meditating successfully allows you to perform the following tasks: Make up for lost sleep (Stamina + Meditation, difficulty 8; each success equals one hour of sleep); enter a death-like trance (Stamina + Meditation, difficulty 9; each success allows you to go one day without sustenance); or gain insight into some puzzle or enigma (Intelligence + Meditation, difficulty 9; each success lowers the difficulty of an Enigma's roll by one).

- Novice: You can focus your thoughts under stress.
- Practiced: You can achieve peace within yourself.
- Competent: Even under bad conditions, you can achieve a state of calm.
- Master: It takes a war to distract you.
- Legend: When necessary, you can become the calm center of any storm.

**Possessed by:** Batini, Seers of Chronos, Dreamspeakers, Monks, Akashics, Chakravanti

**Specialties:** Zen, Tantra, Yoga, Visionquesting, Prayer, Waking Dreams

## Melee

Common fighting involves weapons of all kinds. This Skill reflects an aptitude for anything from blades to clubs to polearms to furniture — any hand-held weapon that cuts, stabs or crushes. Unlike Fencing (pages 197-198), this craft isn't fancy, merely practical.

- Novice: You've seen a knife in use.
- Practiced: Peasant militia.
- Competent: Typical knight or mercenary.
- Master: An artist of the battlefield.
- Legend: An Arthurian knight reborn.

**Possessed by:** Knights, Soldiers, Thieves, Witch-hunters, Militia

**Specialties:** Polearms, Swords, Axes, Tavern Fighting, Improvised Weapons

## Research

All seekers of knowledge must learn how to find information. This Skill allows a character to locate the resources he needs to further his studies. Such information exists in monastic libraries, private collections, oral tribal litanies, and in nature itself.

- Novice: You know where and how to look for things.
- Practiced: The local archives and wise folk are familiar enough.
- Competent: You're familiar with many of the libraries in your region, and have contacts in several counties.
- Master: You know the contents of numerous libraries in Europe and have contacts in distant parts of the world.
- Legend: You own many extremely rare texts, know a host of tribal litanies, and possess a well-stocked apothecary.

**Possessed by:** Acolytes, Scholars, Apothecaries, Alchemists, Scribes

**Specialties:** Oral Tradition, Theology, Classical Texts, Foreign Texts, Herbiology, Forbidden Lore, Magickal Lore, Secrets

## Riding

People who don't know how to ride a beast of burden (and many people do not) must walk. You are not one of this sad majority; rather, you understand the feeding, care and handling of various creatures. Some of the wilder varieties (griffins and dragons) might be strange to you, but with time, you could master one easier than another man might.

- Novice: You know how to groom, feed and saddle a horse.
- Practiced: You can walk, trot, canter, or gallop a fairly tame horse under good conditions.
- Competent: You can ride in battle, carry messages long distances, and hunt from horseback.
- Master: A savage beast is a minor challenge.
- Legend: No mount is too strange for you to master, given time.

**Possessed by:** Knights, Squires, Grooms, Huntsmen, Nobles

**Specialties:** War, Endurance, Hunting, Training, Odd Mounts (elephants, tigers, etc.). Flying Mounts, Magickal Creatures

## Stealth

Sometimes, it's a very good thing to be quiet. With this Skill, you can slip past all observers, slink through shadows, and generally move without alerting others. Sneaking attempts are rolled against others' Perception (see "Dramatic Systems," Chapter VII) and depend largely upon the terrain and circumstances.

- Novice: You can sneak past your husband at night.
- Practiced: Shadows are your friends.
- Competent: You're an accomplished hunter.
- Master: You can move silently through underbrush.
- Legend: A wolf pack could not hear you approach.

**Possessed by:** Hunters, Spies, Thieves, Adulterers, Ksirafai

**Specialties:** Armor: Barefooted, Woodland, Concealment, Blending Into Shadows

## Survival

You can live off the land. A character with this Skill can hunt, find or build shelter, gauge weather and discern fresh plants and water from had. An urban variant allows a city-smart character to literally live in the streets. In forest environments, your Stealth Trait is limited to the dots in your Survival Trait.

- Novice: You can hunt without embarrassment.
- Practiced: You can survive a few days in the woods.
- Competent: An experienced forester.
- Master: Neither wind nor weather bother you.
- Legend: Animals are less wild than yourself.

**Possessed by:** Hunters, Foresters, Verbena, Shamans, Bandits, Pilgrims

**Specialties:** Urban, Tracking, Hunting Parties, Plants, Weather, Deserts, Mountains, Winter

## Knowledges

If you want to debate with kings, you'd best hone up on the topics of conversation. Knowledges are essential Traits for magi. They reflect things you *study*, rather than the things you know or practice.



## Academics

Although this is a somewhat literate age, many folk cannot read. This Ability reflects some degree of schooling — you can read Latin plus your native language and, perhaps, German or Tuscan (Italian), add figures and discuss philosophy. Education is highly regarded in this era; a well-schooled man is to be commended, and an educated woman, while strange, makes a valuable wife.

- **Dabblers:** You can speak Latin and write (a bit), do basic math and recite the names of the philosophers.
- **Students:** Latin is like a second tongue, and you may write it as well. Advanced mathematics are no mystery, and you can sound educated enough when you must.
- **Scholars:** You know Latin and Greek, understand math and basic sciences, and comprehend many of the principles of philosophy, government and the arts.
- **Masters:** You could teach at a university, and can debate politics, art or philosophy anywhere in Europe.
- **Virtuosos:** You're one of the great minds of an educated age.

**Possessed by:** Guildsmen, Ranking Clerics, Hermetic Wizards, Scholars, Administrators, Hermits, World Travelers, Vampires

**Specialties:** The Classics, The Arts, Literacy, Calligraphy, Mathematics, Metaphysics, Philosophy

## Culture

If you understand culture, you can predict how people will behave — a useful skill when you want something from a foreigner. A wellspring of beliefs, mores, taboos and politics, culture presents the portrait of a people. Those with the proper learning can master those secrets.

Sadly, Renaissance sources are somewhat... fanciful... when it comes to other cultures; most people bear huge prejudices against "heathens," and they bring those preconceptions with them to the table and the page. Most written sources are wildly misinformed, and even the best of them are skewed. To really learn about a culture, you'll have to spend time with the people — and accept them with a very open mind. Thus, this Knowledge is far more limited than its later counterparts.

- **Dabblers:** You know a few names from far-off lands.
- **Students:** Folktales give you a muddled picture of the truth.
- **Scholars:** Though your perceptions are a bit off, you manage to understand most broad foreign concepts.
- **Masters:** You pick up on foreign customs quickly.

- Virtuoso: A seasoned Traveler with a host of inaccurate lore about many different lands.

**Possessed by:** Courtiers, Diplomats, Sailors, Explorers, Scholars

**Specialties:** Religions, Regions, Sailor's Tales, Foreign Courts, Manners, Taboos, Sexuality, Art, Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Cathayan, Turkish, Moorish, Heathen, The Edges of the World

## Enigmas

You understand the totally mysterious. Through a combination of insight, trivia and intuition, you can piece together seemingly meaningless images or words. Riddles, puzzles, cryptograms and codes present less of a problem than they might to an average mind, and natural mysteries (like the Paths of the Wyck) make sense to you.

- Dabblor: You can win a local riddle contest.
- Student: Uncommon symbols are clear to you.
- Scholar: Stumping hards is your favorite pastime.
- Master: You could write an alchemical treatise.
- Virtuoso: No mystery remains closed to you for very long.

**Possessed by:** Scholars, Sages, Philosophers, Alchemists, Shamans, Bards, Weird Old Folk

**Specialties:** Riddles, Logic, Theology, Spirits, Paths of the Wyck, Symbols, Arcane Lore, Alchemy

## Investigation

With a handful of clues, you can come to a meaningful conclusion. Such hints might include tracks or disturbed underbrush (for hunting), motives and bloodstains (crime), allegories and nuances (scholarship), or innuendoes and alliances (politics). Your conclusion might not necessarily be correct, but it's a beginning. Most people cannot get that far.

- Dabblor: Clever child.
- Student: Hunter.
- Scholar: Hunter of men.
- Master: Sheriff or Inquisitor.
- Virtuoso: Brother Cadafael.

**Possessed by:** Thieves, Constabulary, Inquisitors, Monks, Theologians, Hunters, Poachers

**Specialties:** Reconnaissance, Tracking, Scripture, Confessions, Classical Writings, Crime, Rumor

## Law

God decreed an order to Creation. Consequently, you have made the law your passion. You know its intricacies and can recite them at will. Obviously, different states have different laws; each town, it seems, has some arcane code. Your learning, however, has taught you the common strains behind most laws, and the classic principles of the Ancients.

- Dabblor: City watchman.
- Student: Local sheriff.
- Scholar: Court bailiff or priest.
- Master: Legal genius.
- Virtuoso: Lawgiver.

**Possessed by:** Priests, Constables, High Clergy, Nobility, Heretics, Council Members, Facilitators, Guildsmen

**Specialties:** Classical Laws, Local Codes, Religion, Sacred Vows, Witchcraft, Heresy, Common Law, Arcane Principles, High Courts, Magickal Laws, Trade, Weaseling

## Linguistics

The wise man understands many tongues — especially if he's a magus in the Grand Convocation, or a Daedalean Facilitator. Linguistics involves more than rote memorization, words or phrases; it's the ability to understand the basic structure of communication, recognize and mimic accents or vernacular speech, and fathom the effect of language on thought.

- Dabblor: You speak one additional language.
- Student: You speak two additional languages.
- Scholar: You speak three additional languages.
- Master: You speak four to six additional languages.
- Virtuoso: You speak more than six additional languages.

**Possessed by:** Diplomats, Scribes, Monks, Priests, Council Magi, Nobles, Ladies

**Variations:** Greek, Latin, Aztec, Maya, Egyptian, Turkish, Moorish, Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, (various Asian), (various European), (various Indian), (various African and American Tribal)

## Lore

There are many secrets to be found in the night. You may have been lucky — or unlucky — enough to learn just how extensive these societies of the night have become. The Kindred, the Garou, the Changing Breeds, ghost factions, the faerie courts, and, of course, the Awakened Ones — lurk just out of mortal sight. This Trait allows you to discover just enough about these creatures to be dangerous — to them, and to yourself!

You're assumed to know the goings-on within your own society for free. Additional groups — werewolves, faeries, the Order of Reason, etc. — must be purchased separately. Without this Trait, you *don't* know the ins and outs of the budding Camarilla, Council Politics, the Shadow Court, or anything else. These secrets must be pried from the darkness, and the darkness isn't always willing to share...

- Dabblor: "It is said that vampires have an organized society."
- Student: "The vampires all belong to some clan called 'Camarilla.'"

- Scholar "The Kindred divide themselves into warring factions within a so-called 'Camarilla.'"
- Master: "Kindred clans go by many names. Shall I explain them to you?"
- Virtuoso: "Good sirrah, I *know* a Brujah when I see him!"

**Possessed by:** Nosy Wizards, Inquisitors, Night-spies, Hermetic Sorcerers, Gypsies

**Variations:** Each being has a separate Lore; most have several types (Camarilla, Sabbat, alternate bloodlines, etc.)

## Medicine

Despite the vaunted claims of surgeons, Renaissance medicine is appallingly primitive. (See the "Modern Medicine" sidebar, Chapter VII.) Nevertheless, you can patch someone together on a battlefield, soothe a fever, or deliver a child. This skill may reflect European physician training, midwifery, Arabian medicine or the mysterious healing arts of the East-

- Dabbler: You can bandage wounds.
- Student: You can bleed someone with little risk.
- Scholar: Minor wounds and sicknesses are not beyond your care.
- Master: Your patients usually survive.
- Virtuoso: You understand new and radical techniques, and can use them with skill.

**Possessed by:** Midwives, Herbalists, Physicians, Cosians, Shamans, Barbers, Military Surgeons

**Specialties:** Herbal Remedies, Magical Healing, Anatomy, Battleground Medicine, Plagues, Arabian Techniques, Chinese Techniques

## Metaphysics

These disciplines contain clues to the mysteries of the universe. Knowledge of one of the metaphysical sciences includes a history of the field and a basic understanding of the symbolism, language, lore and mysteries associated with it. Some sciences (like alchemy) may concentrate on producing specific, tangible results; this Knowledge Trait reflects theoretical understanding, not the additional skills you may need to put it to use (like Chemistry, Mathematics, Crafts, etc.). Still, it's a beginning, a stepping stone to greater things.

A number of disciplines fall within this category. These include:

- **Alchemy:** This is the method of transmuting metals to higher states, and a metaphor for the transformation of the human soul. Through a series of arcane procedures, the alchemist perfects a base element, transforming it into something wonderful.
- **Astrology:** The method of divining the influence the heavens have on the Earth, particularly *on* human personalities.

• **Celestiology and Demonology:** The study of angels and/or demons, including their areas of influence, courts, duties, hierarchies, summoning rituals and weaknesses. It is an exceedingly dangerous discipline to learn for several reasons; these studies open one to the influences and temptations of Hell (even with the best of intentions), and Inquisitors often search for scholars with such secrets.

• **Gematria:** The method of divining hidden meaning from names and words, particularly by converting words into their numerical equivalents. It is often used in conjunction with sacred texts, particularly the Bible, Kabbalah and Qur'an.

• **Numerology:** This is the science of determining the essence of an object or name by reducing it to its numerical meaning. In numerology, everything is a number, and this number is a key to understanding Creation and the magician's role in it.

• **Sacred Geometry:** This discipline is the method of divining secret knowledge from the dimensions and shapes of man-made or natural structures, including the human form. The builders of the pyramids, the Aztec and Mayan temples and the Gothic cathedrals are said to have been masters of sacred geometry.

• **Stone Lore:** To the mystick, all things contain magical energy, spiritual properties or both. This discipline covers the essences of different stones, gems and minerals, and proves useful in jewelry-making, earth rites, elemental bargains and Talisman creation.

- Dabbler: You understand very basic concepts.
- Student: You've had some instruction in the field.
- Scholar: You've got a comprehensive grasp of the discipline.
- Master: You know things that are not written.
- Virtuoso: You are a master of hidden things and arcane lore.

**Possessed by:** Hermetic Sorcerers, High Magicians, Kabbalists, Arabian Mystics

**Variations:** See above

## Occult

You know the ways of the Invisible World, and can reel off endless accounts from folklore and arcane texts to hack up your suspicions. This knowledge has little to do with the actual practice of magic *per se*, but reflects a familiarity with curses, enchantments, forbidden lore, ancient legends and hidden esoterics. Some of what you know is true, much is false, and a good deal of it is both.

- Dabbler: You've heard a few tales.
- Student: Grandmother told you things....
- Scholar: A student of unhallowed arts.
- Master: You know more truth than false hoixi.
- Virtuoso: All too close to the fire.

Possessed by: Witch-hunters, Witches, Vampires, Pagans, Old Wives

Specialties: Pagan Wisdom, Cults, Warding Rites, Folk Tales, Ancient Esoterica, Symbols, Far-off Lands

## Science

A necessity for members of the Order of Reason. To you, Creation has solid underpinnings, provable facts with which you can move the world. Your disciplines (which must be purchased separately) may include metallurgy, advanced mathematics, astronomy, anatomy and many other sciences. Naturally, your understanding differs considerably from 20th-century methodologies, and contains a fair amount of what would later be called "superstition." Still, it's a beginning....

- Dabbler: Apprentice to a monk or scholar.
- Student: An educated young fellow.
- Scholar: A serious student.
- Master: You can design your own inventions and make grand leaps of understanding.
- Virtuoso: You could argue with Leonardo himself.

Possessed by: Alchemists, Engineers, Artificers, Craftsmasons, Scholars, Astronomers, Architects, Monks

Variations: Astronomy, Anatomy, Botany, Biology, Navigation, Cartography, Mathematics, Metallurgy, Engineering

## Other Abilities

The following Abilities are a bit too specialized to be widely available; nevertheless, they're fairly important to certain magical styles and practitioners. In game terms, these Trails function like any other; simply mark the appropriate listing in the "Other Abilities" section of the sheet if your character possesses any of them.

## Talents

### Dancing

You move with a grace that belies your mortal state. Perhaps you've been trained in the courts of the nobility; more likely, you learned the craft in a traveling show or sharpened a talent for capering 'round the fire. No matter — you draw admiring glances and envious stares whenever the music takes you.

- Novice: Beltane reveler.
- Practiced: Trained dancer.
- Competent: Professional performer.
- Master: Salome.
- Legend: Divine grace with:-) devil's touch.

Possessed by: Seers of Chronos, Verbena, Traveling Players, Courtiers

Specialties: Folk Dances, Improvisational, Courtyl, Ceremonial

## Intrigue

You're a born plotter, well-versed in power, trickery and beholdance. Depending on your upbringing and morals, you could be a spy, a shrewd trader or nobility. You might justify your expertise as "the best way to get things done"; no matter — you're a crafty sort. This Talent also allows you to glean truth from rumor, and to discern the true powers from the pretenders.

- Novice: Gossip.
- Practiced: Deal-maker.
- Competent: Bishop, trader or lower nobility.
- Master: You've lived long enough to laugh about it.
- Legend: Machiavelli.

Possessed by: Ksirafai, Nobles, Royalty, Hermetic Wizards, Council Primi, Spies, Courtiers

Specialties: Nobility, Church, Finance, Mystical Intrigue, Secret Societies, Observation, Wit and Threat

## Invention

You have a knack for creating things (engines, clockworks, strange devices, etc.). An Intelligence + Invention roll allows you to design new and wondrous objects (building those objects is another thing entirely; see "Art and Science," Chapter VII) that surpass anything invented before. This Talent often draws both admiration and suspicion; after all, no man can be too innovative without acquiring a reputation — and trouble.

- Novice: A few of your scribbles look promising.
- Practiced: Hmm... That just might work....
- Competent: When constructed, your devices occasionally function.
- Master: Artisans come to you for advice and inspiration.
- Legend: Da Vinci the Younger.

Possessed by: Artificers, Craftsmasons, Mad Geniuses

Specialties: Weaponry, Vehicles, Labor-saving devices, Toys

## Logic

Debate is another form of fencing; in its own way, logic is more powerful than a blade. You excel with this particular weapon, wrapping your opponents in conundrums and obscure facts. An innate faculty for reason and counterpoint makes your arguments hard to refute. In the end, your rhetoric may lay the foundations for the future-

- Novice: You could win a family quarrel.
- Practiced: People have a hard time contradicting you.
- Competent: You've studied the techniques of formal debate.
- Master: Socrates would have his hands full.

- Legend: Facts are putty and reason is your potter's wheel.

**Possessed by:** Orators, Theologians, Philosophers, Writers, Council Founders

**Specialties:** Scripture, Classics, Morality, Art, Science, Metaphysics, Magick, Public Debate, Dissembling, Trickery, Emotional Appeals, Traps

## Seduction

Love (or its illusion) is yours to command. All the finer points of wooing, from courtly manners to crude whoring, are a child's play. The better you are, the harder they fall — men, women, anyone you want.

- Novice: Handsome lad (or lass).
- Practiced: Traveling player.
- Competent: The talk of the social circle.
- Master: A walking scandal - but so desirable!
- Legend: Vows break when you approach.

**Possessed by:** Rakes, Wenches, Seers of Chronos, Ksirafai  
**Specialties:** Wit, Wanton, Innuendo, Courtly Wooing, Temptation, Innocent Guise

## Singing

A prerequisite for the Choeur Celeste, this Talent grants you a fine singing voice and the wit to use it. This may be a practiced skill or a natural grace; either way, you have an inborn gift for song-

- Novice: Milkmaid.
- Practiced: Troubadour.
- Competent: Chorister.
- Master: Bard.
- Legend: The Lord has blessed you with an angel's voice.

**Possessed by:** Chorus Magi, Traveling Players, Court Performers, Shepherds and Milkmaids

**Specialties:** Raw Talent, Religious, Chanting, Plain-song, Ecstatic, Folk

## Skills

### Acrobatics

Tumbling, leaping, pratfalls — you're a regular clown! An essential skill for many traveling troupes, especially those which specialize in comedy. Under more serious conditions, you may have learned your techniques as part of a martial art, or honed them to survive childhood. For each Acrobatics dot you possess, you may ignore one Health Level's worth of falling damage. Thus, a mage with Acrobatics 4 can fall up to 30 feet without harm.

- Novice: Child.
- Practiced: Village tumbler.
- Competent: Professional clown.

- Master: Chinese acrobat.
- Legend: They call you an ape behind your back.

**Possessed by:** Akashics, Seers of Chronos, Traveling Players, Acrobats, Catfolk, Swashbucklers

**Specialties:** Martial Art, Pratfalls, Natural Agility, Roguery

## Artillerist

The devastating specialty of the Artifices and Craftsmasons. You know how to design, construct and employ huge weapons of war, and have a talent for making things explode. At lower levels, this is a very hazardous knack; the expression "Hoist with his own petard" refers to an artillerist's tendency to blow himself to bits! (See "The Art of War.") Story tellers may wish to restrict this Skill to characters who have an unusual background or affiliation — its secrets are closely guarded!

- Novice: Dangerous to be around...
- Practiced: Apprentice.
- Competent: Cannoneer.
- Master: Artisan.
- Legend: The toast of warlords everywhere.

**Possessed by:** Cannoneers, Sappers, Artificers, Craftsmasons, Monster-hunters

**Specialties:** Hand Cannons, New Designs, Field Artillery, Sieges, Fireworks, Daedalean Inventions

## Do

An exotic art from the faraway mountains, Do allows a mortal man to shatter stone, leap like an animal, and dodge a master Bowman. Only the Akashic Brothers and their closest friends know this skill, a skill that frightens most Europeans with its alien movements and devastating power.

Do ("the Way") is more than a fighting style; it encompasses a highly disciplined state of being. Those who understand it are careful, reflective and often distant to others; when they act, they do so with force, purpose and finality. The skill channels a person's ultimate potential through a rigorous series of rituals, meditations, movements (*katas*) and exercises. One does not learn Do, one assumes Do. That assumption carries over into diet, grace and temperament.

In game terms, Do allows a character to use advanced fighting maneuvers (see "The Art of War," and "Magickal Styles" in Chapter VIII) and channel magick through her skill. Beginning characters may only purchase one or two dots in Do, and Storytellers should restrict its use to Akashic mages — it's far too esoteric to lie common, even in the Far East. (Historically, martial arts are closely guarded secrets in this era; common folk were not taught such secrets for several centuries.) As a student of the art progresses, she adds an "animal name" to her title. These names, which are used only among other Akashics, signify steps in the student's enlightenment. When the practitioner roaches a stare she can fairly call "human," she has learned how to use her body's ultimate potential.

- Insect (grasshopper, mantis, ant, etc.): You have been initiated into the teachings of the Way, and have learned the proper methods of breathing, diet and exercise.
- Reptile (snake, lizard, etc.): You have begun to understand your body, mind and soul as a single unit, and have become one with that unit.
- Four-legged Animal (tiger, dog, horse): Calling upon the hidden energy within allows you to perform amazing feats.
- Two-legged Animal (ape, bear, monkey): There is great power racing through every living being. You understand how to use that power better than most.
- True Humanity: A Master of Enlightenment. Your mind is at peace; you know that all things may be created or destroyed by one who understands the Way. By this point, you no longer concern yourself with what *am* be done, but rather with what *should* be done.

**Possessed by:** Akashic Magi

**Specialties:** External (forceful) Style, Internal (meditative) Style

## Fencing

A new and fascinating art, this swordcraft differs from the usual hackery of the knight or man-at-arms. Most common in Italy and Spain, fencers use thin, sharp blades against each other in dizzying contests. A skilled fencer is a dangerous man (or woman) whose craft seems all the more romantic for its rarity. (See "The Art of War" for fencing systems and maneuvers.)

- Novice: Talented oaf.
- Practiced: Fiery young gentleman.
- Competent: A skillful weaver of steel.
- Master: Bladesmaster.
- Legend: Tybalt, King of Cats.

**Possessed by:** Italian Gentlemen, Rakes, Sophisticates, Spanish Bladesmen, Spies

**Specialties:** Florentine (two blades), Sabers, Dirty Tricks, Fancy Stunts

## Firearms

A rare and precious skill, Firearms allows you to employ handguns. You can load, clean, fire and repair matchlocks, arquebuses, hackbutts, hand cannons and even the rare wheellocks. To a point, this skill compensates for the guns' innate inaccuracy.

- Novice: Apprentice.
- Practiced: Expensive mercenary.
- Competent: Experienced gunman.
- Master: Death with a firm and steady hand.
- Legend: A terror with gunpowder.

**Possessed by:** Artificers, Craftsmasons, High-paid Mercenaries, Monster-hunters

**Specialties:** Arquebuses, Hackbutts, Hand Cannons

## Torture

Pain is a part of life, especially in the Renaissance. You merely specialize in inflicting that pain for a just and worthy cause (so you would claim, anyway), while keeping your victim alive through the process. A specialty of witch-hunters, spies, mercenaries and royal aides, the art of excruciation is a common skill in these troubled times.

- Novice: You can hurt people.
- Practiced: You understand several exotic interrogation techniques.
- Competent: The *Malleus Maleficarum* is your bedtime reading-
- Master: No information stays hidden from you for long.
- Legend: You are an artist in suffering. Cries of horror are your accolades and death comes when you allow it to.

**Possessed by:** Inquisitors, Court Torturers, Sadists, Mercenaries, Low Clergy, Witch-hunters, Verbena

**Specialties:** Heresy, Military, Machines, Magickal, Exquisite Pain, Public Shows

## Knowledges

### Cosmology

Beyond the mortal vale lies a teeming Otherworlds you understand its passages and byways. While many mysticks of this age understand that the shadow-world is *there*, few comprehend its secrets. You do understand, though, and can navigate through the Mists with less trouble than most travelers would have.

- You've been through the Gauntlet once or twice.
- Given a trail, you can find your way around without offending the spirits too much.
- The Otherworlds are strange, but not too unfamiliar.
- You're at home among the spirit-folk.
- Are you human, spirit or both?

**Possessed by:** Shamans, Verbena, Necromancers, Hermetic Masters, Celestial Masters

**Specialties:** Visionwalking, Spirit Paths, Umbrود Protocols, Underworld, Heavens, Hells, Nature Spirits, Astral Reaches

### Hearth Wisdom

Yours is the common wisdom — tales and lore filled with forgotten insights, simple cures and homespun good sense. Sophisticated city folk might dismiss you as a heathen, but they do not understand the things you know.

While this Trait is in no way magical, it can teach you the weaknesses of various supernatural creatures. A successful Hearth Wisdom roll should offer helpful insights into

supernatural threats and give you some idea about how to deal with them. The effectiveness of the insights are up to the Storyteller, but in general, the more successes you win, the better the information you receive.

Hearth Wisdom can also be used for simple medical remedies. It isn't as potent as either the Herbalism or the Medicine skills, but the cure should have some nominal effect.

This Knowledge isn't a library of exact facts. Rather, it's a collection — often oral, never written down — of tales and maxims, anecdotes and advice that shed light on a number of subjects. It can frustrate the hell out of people who come to you searching for advice. Still, as you know well, good things come to those who wait.

- Insightful: You've learned a few bits of lore here and there.
- Clever: You recognize traces of the Hidden World.
- Knowledgeable: People come to you for advice and minor cures.
- Learned: You're a fountain of lore from your own culture, and have heard tales from other lands as well. You can spot a supernatural being with a successful Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7) if you can get close enough, and you know its weaknesses.

••••• Wise: Well-versed in the folklore of your region, you also know many of the ancestral secrets of far-off lands (Cathay, perhaps, or Great Zimbabwe). Noble folk might dismiss you by day, but at night, they travel from all around to take your council.

**Possessed by:** Wise Folk, Pagans, Sages, Archivists, Hermits

**Specialties:** Northern European, Native American, Eastern European, Gypsy, South Asian, East Asian, Mediterranean

## Herbalism

There is magic in plants; you understand how to find it, refine it and use it. This Ability grants you a working knowledge of plants, their uses, their significance and their effects on the human body. You know how to recognize them, where to find them and how to grow and prepare them.

- Dabbler: Pulled plants for Grandmother.
- Student: Studied with a wise woman or medicine man.
- Scholar: Accomplished herbalist.
- Master: Mistress of cures, master of remedies.
- Virtuoso: A walking mandrake root.

**Possessed by:** Verbena, Witches, Gypsies, Cosians, Wise Folk, Shamans, Hunters

**Specialties:** Poisons, Home Remedies, Food, Harvesting, Magical Plants, Symbolism



## Moneylending

"Usury" is something good Christians do nor do; nevertheless, for society to prosper, someone must handle the filthy lucre. That's your job, and you're good at it. From interest-lending to high finance, from bookkeeping to figure-bouncing, you understand the tricks and techniques of trade, banking and accounting.

- Dabblers: Street vender.
- Student: A banker's apprentice.
- Scholar: Practiced financier.
- Master: Merchant prince.
- Virtuoso: A friend to counts and kings,

**Possessed by:** Tradesmen, Guildsmen, Moneylenders, Merchants

**Specialties:** Jewish Networks, Italian Finance, Loansharking, International Commerce, Exploration Lending, Speculation, Fraud, Royalty

## Poisons

You have a working knowledge of toxins both magical and mundane. Many deadly concoctions are natural herbs and venoms, but some have been created by those such as yourself. You may concoct, analyze, identify and sometimes neutralize many deadly recipes. The better you are, the more you understand. (See "Poisons" in Chapter VII.)

- Dabblers: Nasty old woman.
- Student: Herbalist with a bad streak.
- Scholar: Court spy.
- Master: Lucrezia Borgina.
- Virtuoso: No one this good *has* a reputation.

**Possessed by:** Plotters, Spies, Witches, Ksirafai, Assassins

**Specialties:** Herbs, Court Poisons, Venom, Exotic Types, Magical Brews, Antidotes

## Secret Code Language

It's often essential to keep secrets and communicate quietly. Many occult societies use private code languages — from hand sigas and flower codes to heraldry and arcane gibberish — to pass information to the right people while keeping it out of the wrong hands. These codes are extraordinarily difficult to learn unless you belong to the society in question; those groups certainly frown on teaching such secrets to outsiders, and may hunt down anyone who learns — or teaches — their sensitive codes to trespassers.

Secret Codes are purchased like languages; each dot reflects an additional form of communication. Your Storyteller may demand a good reason for knowing a Secret Code Language, and may restrict you from purchasing more than one.

**Possessed by:** Spies, Batini, Verbena, Hermetics, Ksirafai, Rogues, Craftsmasons, Akashics, Artists

**Varieties:** Thieves' Cants, Catholic Codes, Intriguers' Lingo, Hermetic Lore, Alchemical Symbols, Witches Watchwords, Language of Flowers, Numerological Codes, Painting Symbols, and many more

## Backgrounds

*I am but a gatherer and disposer of other men's stuff.*

— Sir Henry Wotton



These resources don't appear from nothing; they rise from your life experiences and might fall the same way. When you choose your Backgrounds, create reasons and past histories for everything you have. Who are your Allies?

Where did you get that Magical Treasure? How did your Spies infiltrate the Vatican? The answers will tell you — and your Storyteller — new and interesting things about your magical counterpart.

Backgrounds may be rolled in conjunction with other Traits; a good Manipulation + Allies roll, for example, could get your friends fired up about a cause. Unlike other Traits, you cannot raise Background ratings with experience points, although your Storyteller may raise them for you in lieu of experience points. (See "Experience.")

(Note: The 20th-century Dream Background isn't appropriate to the Dark Fantastic setting and has been excluded for that reason. Many other Backgrounds differ from their latter-day counterparts.)

## Allies

It's always good to have friends, and you've got several without knowing. They may be mortal consors, animal companions, nighr-folk or even totem spirits, but in any case, they're fairly reliable — and helpful, to boot.

Allies should be characters in their own right, with wants, needs, personalities and agendas. They might be loyal enough to die for you, but they won't do it for nothing. The "cost" of their friendship (are they family, lovers, drinking buddies?) can drag you into a scrape just when you thought life was going smoothly for a change. Friendship is a double-edged sword, and nothing comes for free.

Each dot in this Background gives you one additional Ally, or increases the power of an existing one. Thus, five dots may reflect five moderately powerful friends, or one or two extraordinary ones. They need not be human. Many sorcerers number magical beasts, ghosts and other weird beings among their loved ones.

- One Ally of moderate strength.
- Two friends, or a fairly powerful one.
- Three stout fellows, or one or two superhuman friends.
- Four followers, or a really grand mate.
- Five Allies, or a smaller but more powerful group.

## Arcane

A master of the mystick arts can hide in plain sight. Shadows slide around her. Crowds swallow her. No one seems to remember this odd person — not her lord, not her parents, not even the villagers in the town she grew up in. Her features slip away like old dreams.

This Advantage lets you "slide away" from view and memory. While it won't actually make you invisible or help you in combat situations, it will make you extremely hard to trace. Somehow, things just *happen* to cover your tracks. In game terms, the Arcane Background adds its rating to your Stealth attempts and subtracts the same amount from any Perception or Investigation Dice Pools that others use to find you. If you wish, you may "dampen" the effect and "appear" in plain sight.

- An elusive soul,
- A face quickly forgotten.
- A master of misdirection.
- A needle in a haystack.
- Who?

## Covenant

Most sorcerers keep to themselves these days; still, those who want to keep their heads join fellowships called *Covenants*, pool their resources and watch each others' backs. You belong to such a group, and reap the benefits — and the headaches — of such exclusive company.

A Covenant (or *Chantry*) may be many things: a wizards' castle, a holy glen, a temple, a traveling show, an Otherworldly Realm — the only constants needed are a cooperating sect of magi, a meeting place and an official charter of fellowship. In this age, such places are few; most magi tend their own hearths. Although mystick fellowships are not new, official Covenants are a Hermetic idea. The Craftsmasons "adopted" the concept in the mid-1200s and built the Order of Reason around it. Hence, magi on both sides of that particular fence form Covenants for mutual benefit.

This Background reflects your standing in an established Covenant, or helps you create one of your own:

- Since characters start as beginning magi, your membership in an *existing* Covenant will be limited. You'll be protected by more powerful wizards, but they'll expect services from you in return — chores, alliances, favors, apprenticeships, etc. Smaller Covenants expect less of their members, but offer less influence and security. In game terms, your rating determines the power of the Chantry you belong to, not your importance therein,

- Building your own Chantry is always an option; land is plentiful and materials are easy to come by. Establishing a fellowship entails a lot of work and responsibility (recruiting and paying the help, enforcing the charter, defending your allies, etc.), but for many sorcerers, it's the best way to go. In game terms, the Background rating gives you a few "construction points"; you pool those points with other characters to determine the size and power of your Covenant.

Tiny Band	10-20 point pool
Fellowship	21-30 point pool
Average Covenant	31-70 point pool
Stronghold	71-100 point pool
Legendary Chantry	101+ point pool

Naturally, the pool depends on group cooperation; if the cabal fragments, the points are lost and the Covenant falls — unless circumstances allow the remaining characters to "make up the difference" with some extra experience points or story-related resources.

(*Note:* An old **Mage**: The Ascension book included a "build-your-own-Chantry" system, but that set of rules has since been discarded. A troupe that owns **The Book of Chantries** may adopt that system, but you should consider it an option, not a necessity. A forthcoming supplement, *Castles and Covenants*, will cover magickal strongholds in more detail.)

- One "pool point," or membership in a tiny Covenant (a wagon or cottage, like the Lickspittle Fellowship).
- Two "pool points," or membership in a fellowship (a small keep or manor house with servants, like Lord Cabot's Grange).
- Three "pool points," or membership in an average Covenant (a castle or small Horizon Realm; the Tower Nocturna).
- Four "pool points," or membership in a huge Chantry (a demesne, a castle with many servants and consors; Brandenburg Krankenhaus).
- Five "pool points," or membership in a legendary Chantry (Doissetep or The While Tower).

## Cray

In this magickal time, places of power — often called Crays — are plentiful. Around these mystick wellsprings, raw Creation flows in shimmering pools or coalesces into solid Quintessence — Tass. With this Background, you have a Cray within easy reach, and may tap its benefits.

A Cray may take many forms: a sacred grove, a holy sanctuary, the workshop of a master artisan, the unhalloved ground at an especially foul crossroads.... Common features include an emotional or mystick significance, a history of odd occurrences, and a regular flow of Primal Energy. While any place can provide a stirring-ground of Quintessence, Crays form where the Fifth Essence gathers — along the seams of the Tapestry, so to speak.

Derived from a corruption, of the Gaelic *Cridhe* ("kree," or "heart"), a Cray lets you absorb raw Quintessence through your Daemon (see **that listing**) or gather up solid Tass for later use. The Background dots rate the wellspring's power. Like a Covenant, a Cray's rating can be pooled to reflect a common-law site, and the Tass can be stored (although it fades with in a month or two if not used). The Cray's "owners" must refine the Tass from some mundane form — tree bark, pond water, blood, even paint —

before it can be used. This requires a Prime 3 spell (see Chapter VIII) that "boils" the Tass down to its essential energies. In story terms, an alchemist refines base materials, a witch cooks a brew, or a Craftmason shapes quarried rock into cornerstones. At the end of the process, the Quintessence is tree for use.

Werewolves hold sacred grounds they call *caerns*; for all intents and purposes, these are Crays of great strength and formidable protection. Trespassing on one is grounds for butchery, but that fact doesn't stop magi from doing just that when things are desperate. Wolf-held or not, Crays radiate a powerful tingling sensation laced with the Resonance of the area. Plague-yards make a visitor feel sick, while virgin glens engender soothing tranquillity. Wizards often wage bitter wars over powerful Crays, so the spring you own today might be the place you die tomorrow....

- Five Quintessence per week, or a Level One caern.
- Ten Quintessence per week, or a Level Two caern.
- Fifteen Quintessence per week, or a Level Three caern.
- Twenty Quintessence per week, or a Level Four caern.
- Twenty-five Quintessence per week, or a Level Five caern.

## Daemon

As Chapter I describes, the Daemon (or *Avatar*) forms the seat of the Mystick Self. In plain game terms, this Trait measures the strength of that inner genius. The higher the rating, the more powerful the Daemon, and the greater its influence in your life. A weak Daemon might manifest as hunches and soft voices, while a five-point one would appear as real as any human being (at least in the eyes of the mage — few others can see the Mystick Self).

All Awakened Ones have their own Daemons; thus, each magus character should have at least one point in this Background. The rating denotes three things: the "reality" of the Inner Self, the strength of its Essence (see "Essences"), and the Primal Force — the Quintessence — it can store. The first two cases come through in roleplaying and Storytelling; a powerful Daemon may almost literally drag its mage through Hell, as the spirits in the *Prelude* do. The third attribute comes through the amount of Quintessence you can store within yourself. (See "Quintessence," page 108.)

For the latter, assume that you can automatically absorb one point of Quintessence for every dot in the Daemon rating when you meditate for at least one hour in a Cray (Perception + Meditation, difficulty 7). This amount cannot exceed the Daemon rating. You may also spend one point of Quintessence to aid a magical working for every point in your Daemon Trait, (A mage with Daemon 3 could spend three points per turn, for instance.) This energy flows from within, and cannot be channeled, used or shared with another magus unless you choose to sacrifice some part of your essence to do it. (See the *Heart's Blood* spell, Chapter VIII.)

- A slight tugging; one point of Quintessence.
- Faint voices or dreams; two points of Quintessence.
- Disconcerting manifestations; three points of Quintessence.
- A powerful spirit with real personality; four points of Quintessence.
- A dazzling apparition, as real as any man; five points of Quintessence.

## Destiny

This is a time when heroes rise to greatness. In this setting, a mage's fate impacts upon her standing, her willpower and her identity. Destiny pulls you from the ranks of the mundane and thrusts you into the spotlight of the gods. Your Destiny might not be immediately apparent, but a sense of greatness follows you: strangers prophecy your coming; people draw away when you appear. They seek your favor, or try to kill you. Other magi will judge you not only by how you act, but by how they feel you *should* act. Thus, Destiny is a two-edged sword — a Sword of Damocles, no less! Someday, that blade will fall....

In story terms, things *happen* to you; there isn't a particular roll or effect, you simply appear to be the focus for Dame Fortune. In game terms, this Background adds a certain weight and influence to your actions, even if you're new to Awakened society. Moreover, it helps you refresh your Willpower pool. After all, heroes don't die in stupid ways — *memorable* ways, perhaps, but not ignominious ones. When your Willpower runs low, this sense of Destiny kicks in, driving you to legendary feats. Once per story, you may renew your Willpower pool with a Destiny roll. Each success (difficulty 8) refreshes one point of spent Willpower; three successes, for example, would renew three points. This bonus does *not* grant you points over your normal Willpower rating, although you might (with Storyteller's approval) add your Destiny rating to your Willpower pool for one especially important roll (once per story, if that often) that seems appropriate for your eventual fate.

- Someone of consequence; roll one die.
- Bound to be important; roll two dice.
- Kissed by Fate; roll three dice.
- Touched by Divine (or Infernal) hands; roll four dice.
- A Chosen One; roll five dice.

## Familiar

You've got a mystickal "pet" — an intelligent creature of spirit-made-matter magically bonded to you. Just as that familiar is bound to you, however, you are bound to it — powerfully so.

Different groups have different familiars. Verbena often take cats or owls as companions, while Dreamspeaker familiars resemble eagles, hawks, wolves or snakes. Some Artificers build clockwork pets, while Cosians craft theirs out of living creatures. Although the Church considers a familiar a sure sign

of Lucifer's favor, sonic saints have been known to attract doves, white horses and, occasionally unicorns. Infernalists, of course, favor comely servitors or malignant little imps.

Where do they come from? God only knows. According to most tales, a familiar forms from a wandering spirit; given flesh by magical Arts or unholy commands, the companion appears at the mage's behest. More often than not, a summoning ceremony is essential; occasionally, though, the familiar rakes flesh and joins its new "master" at some appropriate time (during a ritual, after a dream, just before some crucial undertaking) of its own free will. Although it might appear to be a normal animal at first, such a being is never ordinary. It will guide you over mystical and mundane obstacles, reach you secret lore, perform errands or other services and consume the worst ravages of the Scourge. Whether it's Hell-bound or Heaven-sent, this creature makes a useful friend. In return, the familiar feeds on its mage's Quintessence, soaking up energy from its master's presence, earing Tass or suckling Quintessence from a hidden "witch's teat."

"The Feast of Nettles" — a common term for Scourge-eating — is perhaps the familiar's greatest boon. Every so often, your companion can draw the wild mystick currents into itself. What it does with them remains a mystery, but in any case, a Feast removes the threat of an impending backlash. The Scourge manifests as a swirling cloud; the familiar sucks it down, then falls into a trance for a day or two. If the familiar tries to inhale too much Scourge, however, the shock kills the beast. The cloud explodes inside the Feaster's stomach, gutting the poor wretch where it stands.

Each companion has its own personality; the Storyteller takes the creature on as a player character and runs it for all she's worth. The Background rating determines the strength of the familiar, the information it can teach you, the Scourge it can consume, and the amount of Quintessence it must eat per week. (Note: A high-rank creature can be smaller than the suggested size.) If it's not well kept, the creature may get aggravated and cause trouble, or simply leave. If a familiar break., its bond, you lose all the Background benefits. A mage whose familiar dies immediately loses two Quintessence points per Background dot, in addition to all the other good stuff.

- Your pet's pretty small (bullfrog-sized or smaller). It can consume one three-point Scourge backlash per story, and knows a few pieces of information. Requires one point of Quintessence per week.
- A hawk-sized companion; the familiar can eat one five-point backlash per story and understands some noteworthy lore. Requires two points of Quintessence per week.
- As big as a wolf; your companion can Feast on two five-point backlashes or a single 10-point one per story and knows a great deal about esoteric subjects. Requires three points of Quintessence per week.

••••

Roughly the mass of a human being; this familiar devours 15 points of Scourge in a single story, and may be considered a one-dot Mentor for study purposes. Requires four points of Quintessence per week.

•••••

A mighty companion — horse-sized or so, possessing powers of its own. This beast can eat up to 20 points of Scourge per week, and has a vast wealth of information, equivalent to a two-dot Mentor. Requires five points of Quintessence per week and a lot of loyalty!

## Influence

You command respect among mortals. Perhaps you're a lord or lady; maybe you've got spies everywhere, or have merchants beholden to your favors. Regardless, when you talk, folks obey — or else!

This Background lets you manipulate other peoples' affairs and gives you some measure of public graciousness. Hosts seat you at the top of the table, servants announce your presence and lords prepare feasts fit your honor. In game terms, it also allows you to bully information from people (Intelligence + Influence), tilt aliairs in your favor (Manipulation + Influence) or woo well-placed members of the court Of Church (Charisma or Appearance + Influence). Depending on the nature of your power, you might work from afar through agents, or personally through reputation. (Also see the "Dramatic Systems" section of Chapter VII.)

- A noted commoner.
- You have several well-placed friends, a minor title, or both.
- Though you may have a title, your influence extends beyond mere rank.
- You possess a high title, a grand reputation, a vast network or all three.
- Title, lands, fame and connections all rolled into one.

## Library

A rare and precious thing in the Dark Fantastic age (the printing press is only a few decades old and most books are hand-scribed), this Background reflects a store of knowledge within easy reach. This may be a room filled with books and scrolls, a private archivist, or even a loved one among the bards or wise folk. In any case, a true Library allows you access to many different subjects and allows you time to study them. Beware, however; when the pious come calling, books are often the first thing in the fire!

In game terms, such study helps you save experience points. (See that listing later this chapter.) Rolling your Library Background rating against difficulty 8 allows you to save one experience point per success. You have to spend at least one point no matter how well you toll; it takes at least one week to research your subject this way, and only one roll is allowed when you spend the experience.

There is a catch to this belief: In this age, knowledge is limited. Many subjects — and many Traits — are beyond the scope of the average Library. Raising the Cosmology Knowledge would be easy in a monastery archive, but close to impossible in an Irish village. Some Traits, like the Sciences, are so obscure that many libraries cannot help you raise their ratings at all. The Arts you pursue — and the society you favor — have a lot to do with the subjects you can research. An Artificer would have a pretty easy time learning the Anatomy Science, but a Lower-bound German warlock would have to learn by trial and error. His library isn't likely to be so useful! Ultimately, the Storyteller determines what can and cannot be found among the stacks. A mage without the right kind of Library may have to go elsewhere, or learn from his mentor instead.

- A handful of boob or scrolls.
- A small collection of works on several subjects.
- Several rare books and perhaps a small archive of common lore.
- A room filled with books covering many different subjects.
- A veritable hoard of earthly wisdom — small by 20th-century standards, but vast by the archives of the time.

## Magickal Treasure

You possess an item of power — some object or device imbued with genius — when the chronicle begins. This is a tricky Background that, while appropriate, could be abused by certain players. Thus, it depends on the Storyteller's good graces and the needs of the plot; if he wants, that Storyteller may deny this Background to player characters.

Magickal Treasures take a multitude of forms, from the witch's flying broomstick to the spirit-blessed murder spear to the Titan's Armor in an Artificer's forge. Regardless of its composition, a Treasure contains the essence of magick; it is not a mere tool, it allows a magus (and certain mortals) to utilize its unique powers. Though not as common as folklore would have us believe, such items are the stock-in-trade of craft-magi, witches and many shamans. In the early Ascension War, these tools are weapons *par excellence* — and are Treated with the respect they're due.

Talismans ate the magickal items of lore — the potions, wands or weapons that channel unearthly forces. These Treasures have spells woven into them by powerful wizards, and usually radiate a mystickal glimmer.

Fetishes work differently; their magick comes through the power of a spirit bound with in the object, history terms, these treasures have personality, and occasionally act up



when their "owner" disrespects them. Assume that when the Quintessence is used up, the spirit departs. Fetishes cannot be "refreshed."

*Devices* are magical machines — true wonders in the Dark Fantastic age created with a spark of genius. Puzzles to most mysticks, these Treasures usually require at least one dot in Science (or an appropriate Craft) to use; a witch might be able to employ a suit of armor once she got into it, but a flying machine would be impossible to understand! Because so many of them contradict the current beliefs, Devices are often vulgar, and reap the whirlwind when the Scourge comes down.

In game terms, a Treasure has built-in magical Effects. (See **Chapter VIII**.) Any character with an Awakened Daemon, the Awareness Talent, or both can employ those spells as if she were a mage. The Effects are limited by the Background rating in three ways:

- The Sphere Rank cannot exceed the Background dots. (A three-dot magick candle can't have a Rank Four spell hound into it.)
- The Treasure may contain one spell per dot, no more. (The candle can have three spells total.)
- The spell can employ one Sphere per dot in its spells. (If the candle's Effect uses three Spheres, it could have only one-power. If it had three powers, each could use only one Sphere.)

Because of its power, the Treasure costs two Background points for every dot in the rating. Our magic candle-casts six Background points, not three.

Every magical item has an "Arete" of its own. When the spell goes off, you roll this "Arete" as if it were any other magical working. (Again, see **Chapter VIII**.) Most Treasures have one point of "Arete" for every dot in the Background rating; an optional rule allows you to purchase one additional "Arete" dot for another Background point, if our candle had an "Arete" of 5, it would cost eight Background points.

Our treasure also has a Quintessence reserve — normally five point per point of "Arete." Thus, our candle contains 15 Quintessence, which it literally burns as it melts. Every time the item gets used, it expends a Quintessence point or two (or more, sometimes), until the reserve is gone. In many cases, a treasure, like a blessed scepter, may be "refreshed" with a Prime 3-based spell. Some artifacts, like our candle, are destroyed by use, and must either be replaced or bought as a set. Another optional rule allows you to buy one expendable Treasure — an arrow, candle, etc. — for every point of Quintessence in the reserve. Perhaps we get 15 candles for eight Background points, rather than one. Each candle burns once, then melts when the magick ends, and cannot be replaced or restored.

A Magical Treasure casts spells with its own "Arete," not the mage's; a Scourge backlash usually damages the user, but really big ones demolish the Treasure, too (Storyteller's option). This happens a lot with the Order of Reason's Devices, which crash or explode at unpredictable times.

(**Chapter VIII** includes creation rules for Magical Treasures; several examples of all three types can be found in the Appendix.)

- A weak item (2 points, Arete 1, Quintessence 5).
- A helpful Treasure (4 points, Arete 2, Quintessence 10).
- A significant object (6 points, Arete 3, Quintessence 15).
- A Treasure of great worth (8 points, Arete 4, Quintessence 20).
- A powerful artifact (10 points, Arete 5, Quintessence 25).

## Mentor

A foundation of most magical societies, the mentor-apprentice relationship gives benefits and responsibilities to both parties. In story terms, your mentor (small "m") is a teacher, elder, master and, occasionally, friend. Unlike the casual relationships of later days, this bond isn't very democratic — he tells you what to do, you either do it or face the consequences. Some mentors are kindly, others stern, but none of them brook disobedience.

In game terms, the Background rating determines two things: the mentor's accessibility and his standing in your society. That standing may be based on sheer power, but more often it comes from respect and influence. In the wild politics of the Council and the Byzantine intrigues of the Order of Reason, these two factors can mean a world of difference to the apprentice. A helpful mentor gets involved; he speaks on your behalf, gets you audiences, and passes on helpful lore. A powerful mentor is just that; he can get you out of bad predicaments and intercede when other tongues fall silent. Either one can be demanding, requiring chores, devotions and favors just when you want to be left alone. More importantly, he expects you to behave with honor; your deeds, good and bad, reflect on him.

Like the Library Background, a Mentor (capital "M") Background can help you save experience points when you're raising Traits. (See the other listing.) Also like a Library, the Mentor can only teach you what he knows. A master without Life Arts cannot help you raise your Life rating, though he may be essential if you want to learn Life at all.

Like an Ally, your mentor has his own priorities, personality and goals. He's not just a collection of dots, but a magus in his own right! As a Storyteller character, the mentor comes and goes as he pleases and sets his own agendas. Let time and tale determine what he does!

- Unimportant or distant teacher.
- Helpful but eccentric teacher.
- Good and notable patron.
- Wise and respected mentor.
- Powerful or influential master.

## Resources

Simply put, you've got cash or power. Perhaps you inherited property or a tide; maybe you're a merchant or a wealthy scholar; quite possibly, you stole it all, or created it through magical means. Such activities are not nearly as difficult now as they will be someday.

Wealth is not what it is in the 20th century; most people have little coinage and measure their worth in goods. Before the game begins, decide what you own and how you got it — is it cash, property or lead-crafted gold? Unless you're a wastrel, most of your expenses involve food, clothing, shelter and taxes. Taxes are by far the heaviest burden; these days, the Church demands great tribute, and most people pay it. Lords and kings exact their share (and then some!), and the common folk are left with little to spare. Still, there are rich families in this setting, particularly in the Tuscan cities. A mage with such ties need never go hungry.

- Beggar's resources — enough to live on, but you're always in debt.
- Peasant; you can feed and clothe your family, own a few animals and a small cottage, and still keep a little left over for incidentals.
- Rich commoner; you've got a cottage and possess property of your own. Occasionally, you have money to spare, and can purchase indulgences like armor or fine food.
- One of the rising middle class; you own a manor, animals, slaves and many luxury goods. If liquidated, you would have a pocket full of silver and gold — enough to live on for some time.
- Wealthy; you possess goods, people, beasts and land. Your parties — and you probably throw them often — attract peers to your table, and you feed them well. Silver and gold cross your palms often, and your clothes are fine and stylish.

## Sanctum

Every magician needs a place in which to work. This Background grants you a secret workshop of some size, stocked with the necessary tools and materials — herbs, wards, ritual instruments, cauldrons, fireplaces, braziers, reference books, smithery and forge — whatever your practice might require.

Although hidden from mortal view, this sanctuary exists in the material world. Often (but not always) attached to your dwelling, this literally sacred place might be an alchemical laboratory, a secluded grove, a garden, an armory, a tower or even a simple basement with hidden cupboards. Within your Sanctum, you effectively have an Arcane raring (see the Background of the same name); this won't help if your experiment blows the laboratory to pieces, but it will suppress the pyrotechnics of the average ritual. Assume that any workings that don't involve major destruction are "quieted" by the wards around your Sanctum. Those wards keep tres-

passers at bay, too; unwelcome visitors (including Otherworldly ones) must make Willpower rolls (difficulty = Sanctum rating + 3) to approach the area. Still, the place remains subject to the normal laws of physics; fires, explosions, floods, battles and lightning strikes will wreck a Sanctum, devastating the stock and dispelling any wards or securities you've placed around the area.

- A small area, wine-cellar sized, stocked with a few essential items. Arcane rating: 1
- A decent space, the size of a large yard, with a number of useful tools and ingredients kept in easy reach. Arcane rating: 1
- A spacious area, the size of a small cottage, stocked with food, a good selection of tools and materials, and a small reference library. Arcane rating: 2
- You're the envy of your associates; a manor-sized space containing enough esoteric, materials, occult works and ritual spaces to host a small, active coven. Arcane rating: 2
- A tower, small castle or large manor house holds your trove — anything short of the virtually impossible is within reach. You'll still have to leave the nest to acquire really esoteric materials (dragon's blood, unique grimoires, etc.), but almost anything else is right where you need it. Arcane rating: 3

## Spies

You've got informers on your payroll. Perhaps they're monks disgusted with the Vatican, carrion birds in the cemeteries, or paid agents among the merchant families. Like Allies, these folks lend you aid; unlike Allies, they're not particularly loyal, and may turn against you unless they're well paid — and sometimes even then! Intrigue is a treacherous business.

In game terms, your Spies Background allows you to funnel information in and out of otherwise-secure places (Intelligence + Spies); skewer your targets with rumors and bribes (Manipulation + Spies); send messages or receive invitations from influential people (Charisma + Spies); or notice ominous developments before they strike (Perception + Spies). Naturally, these insights don't occur without effort; you have to sustain your contacts, tap them for information, plan meetings, make visits and watch your back. Networks run both ways, and chances are your informers are on someone else's payroll, too.

- One or two spies in an auspicious area (a single merchant's house, a monastery).
- Four to six informants in a single guarded place (a prince's court) or several smaller ones.
- A handful of agents in a variety of hard-to-reach places.

- Infiltrators in a whole sphere of business (shipping) or a really secure location (the Vatican chambers).
- You've got eyes, ears and mouths everywhere you want.

## Merits and Flaws (Optional)

These optional Traits allow you to "customize" your magus with some helpful knacks that don't really fall under the usual headings. Purchased with freebie points during character creation, Merits and Flaws provide story hooks and complications both beneficial and baneful.

Merits give you an edge, and cost freebie points. You may buy as many Merits as you like, but cannot exceed your usual freebie point total. *Flaws* reflect quirks; they actually give you new freebie points, but you cannot gain more than seven additional points this way. Those points can't be used to raise your *Arete* above 3, by the way. They must be spent on other things. A wise Storyteller will make sure your *Flaws* come into play, too.

As optional rules. Merits and Flaws go beyond the space available in this book; one Merit and one Flaw, however, are essential to this setting: True Faith and Echoes. As two halves of the same coin, they reflect the power common belief has on magicians. Many additional Merits and Flaws can be found in *Crusade Lore* (the Storyteller screen and supplement book), or *The Book of Shadows* (the players guide for Mage: The Ascension).

### True Faith (7 pt. Merit)

True Faith (with a capital "F") is in short supply, even in these religious times. A powerful force of belief, such Faith reflects a pure, unblemished conviction in one's chosen deity. Though associated with Christianity, it's not exclusive to die Church. Pagans, Jews, Muslims and devotees of other creeds have powerful beliefs, too. Indeed, with the corruption in the Vatican, many Renaissance Catholics despair. Soon, that doubt and anger will give rise to a new kind of Christianity — the various tonis of Protestantism. Now, however, it merely erodes the faith of the people and the clergy. It takes a pure soul to have True Faith, and truth be told, most souls are not that pure.

In game terms, True Faith is a *Numina* — a Special Advantage that even mortals can purchase. Such Faith allows a common man to ward off vampires, deflect magickal spells and sense the presence of the ungodly. Although you can purchase it at a cost of seven points per dot, True Faith cannot be raised with experience points afterward. It takes good roleplaying and in-character dedication to maintain a Faith rating, and even more to increase it. Obviously, the higher the rating, the greater the character's devotion to her religion and its tenets.

Each dor of Faith gives you one die of countermagic (see Chapter VIII) in addition to its other effects. Most people with Faith possess shining gold auras, although some

beliefs carry other colors. (Pagans often shine green or red; Infernalists glow greenish-bluck and shamans "wear" a shadowy totem figure.)

Mages may buy True Faith — it's especially appropriate for Chorists, Gabrielites, Dreamspeakers, Verbena and Infernalists (yes, faith in the Devil counts), all of whom sacrifice a great deal for their beliefs. The innate countermagic adds to the sorcerer's usual total. Faith is *expensive*, however; a magus with even a dot in Faith is a weaker magician. As the Word of God says, no one can serve two masters.

- You may drive away vampires with a prayer (Faith roll; difficulty = vampire's Willpower); Infernalists\* feel uneasy in your presence. One die of countermagic.
- You can sense magick as if you have Awareness 2. Your prayers may cause a vampire or Infernalist physical pain. Two dice of countermagic.
- With the insight of your Faith, you may sense vampires, magi, demons or other ungodly creatures\*. This isn't an instant "witch detector," but an innate "feel" for corruption. Night-folk feel uncomfortable in your presence unless they share your beliefs. Three dice of countermagic.
- Vampires cannot turn you into a ghoul; a magus attempting to use Mind Arts against you raises his difficulty by two. Your touch may burn powerful representatives of opposing creeds (Faith roll, difficulty 7; one aggravated Health Level persucence); and your prayers can harm your enemies (no roll. Storyteller's option). Four dice of countermagic.
- A living saint; unholy foes fall to the ground in anguish when you pray at them (enemies must spend a Willpower point to remain nearby), and you can make them burn as well. Any Awakened being feels uneasy around you, and many avoid you whenever possible. Five dice of countermagic.

\* Or powerful followers of another religion — angels, demons, saints, priests, etc. — and magi with the Echoes Flaw.

### Echoes: (1-5 pt. Flaw)

Folklore harms you. From the earliest human societies, people have feared mages — and have developed ways of dealing with your kind! For some reason (probably related to the power of belief), the traditional superstitions apply to you wherever you go. Deep inside, you may believe that you are some unclean thing, or perhaps that pact with outside powers came with certain strings attached.

The cost of the Flaw determines the severity and frequency of the "echoes." Low-cost Flaws cause minor inconveniences, while more "worthwhile" ones leave you open to a host of problems.

• 1 pt. — Very Minor: Slight manifestations of no real consequence. Milk sours in your presence; bread will not rise; a slight scent of sulfur follows in your wake.

• 2 pts. — Mild: The echoes become inconvenient. Dogs growl and horses sweat when you're around; your gaze causes flowers to sag; you must be invited into a house, and cannot enter without some form of welcome.

• 3 pts. — Noticeable: To a trained occultist, you're pretty obvious. Religious symbols distract you; holy ground repulses you; church bells break your concentration (perhaps requiring a Willpower roll, difficulty 8, to keep a spell from falling apart); the wind blows cold as you pass.

• 4 pts. — Distracting: You begin to stand out, even among normal folks. Your powers may be disturbed (see above) by people who understand folk "counterspells" like prayers and warding signs; you cannot pass a hex symbol, a line of salt or a holy threshold; your shadow moves of its own accord; you do not cast reflections in silvered glass.

• 5 pts. — Severe: Reality shifts when you're around, even when you don't want it to. You will not sink in water; psychically sensitive people may go into fits or convulsions nearby; animals flee your presence if they can, and small ones may even drop dead; a person who knows folk cures can harm you by casting salt in your face, driving nails into your footprints, burning a lock of your hair, etc. (Contested Willpower rolls, difficulty 6; if you lose, you take one Health Level in unsoakable damage for each success your opponent scores.)

## Arete

*Tempt me no more; for I  
Have known the lightning's hour,  
The poet's inward pride,  
The certainty of power.*

— Cecil Day-Lewis, "The Magnetic Mountain"



Arete (pronounced AIR-i-tay) is the foundation of the mystick's power — the enlightened will. Through it, the magus directs Creation's magical dance. Such awareness might slowly rise from ignorance, or may explode into a sudden flood of understanding. It's not unusual for a mystick to acquire a lot of Arete (one to three dots) during her Awakening. Progressing from there, however, is a laborious road.

Literally the inner genius, Arete makes a magus what she is. A combination of enlightenment, experience, insight and sheer will, it defies easy categorization. Each practice sees it a hit differently, and few call Arete by that name at all. To the Craftsmasons, Arete is the Divine spark guided by understanding; to the witch, it's the surging of the gods within; the priest sees it as the blazing touch of Divinity, while the Eastern mystick finds his balance

among the elements, dharma and his consciousness. All these views and many others are correct, and boil down to the same essential thing.

In game terms, Arete lets you manipulate reality. The higher your rank, the greater your mystick strength. Every dot of Arete gives you one die to roll for magical workings. (See **Chapter VIII**.) As a mage's Arete rises, her power does likewise.

Mage is more about growth and challenge than about raw power; consequently, a beginning character's Arete cannot be higher than 3. Raising magical consciousness also demands more than experience and study; in most cases (Storyteller's option), you'll have to go on an inner quest before you can add to your Arete score. (See "Seekings" in **Chapter I** and **this chapter**.) Experience points alone cannot raise this Trait unless your Storyteller decides to concentrate on the material over the mystickal.

x	Un-Awakened
.	Eyes Just Opened
..	Talented
...	Novice
....	Disciplined
.....	Commanding
.....	Aware
.....	Wise
.....	Enlightened
.....	Visionary
.....	Transcendent

## Game Effects of Arete

• Your Arete rating indicates the maximum amount of dice you can roll to perform a magical feat. If you don't understand reality very well, you can't do much with it.

• You may not possess Sphere ratings higher than your Arete rating, unless the latter has been lowered through loss of Willpower. (See below.) In this case, you've still got the knowledge, but lack the ability to use it.

• The greatest magi learn that will is the only thing you truly need. Until that point, sorcerers are bound to the tools and practices that define their understanding. At the highest levels of Arete, however, a magus can throw away the instruments of her Art. At Arete 7, she can "buy off three tools; for every point above the seventh, she may discard three additional tools, until she reaches Arete 10, at which time she may command Creation with sheer will alone.

• Magick demands confidence. If your permanent Willpower rating drops below your Arete score, your magick Dice Pool is limited to your Willpower rating until you make up the difference. If Caesario's Willpower dropped to three dots while his Arete was 4, he couldn't use that last dot (or his Rank Four Spheres) until he bought his Willpower back to 4 or better. The understanding is there, but the mystickal will is not.

# Willpower

*He that would govern others, first should be the master of himself.*

— Philip Massinger, *The Bondsman*



efore a wizard can progress in the Arts, she must first grow strong. Without will, there is no magick; oh, it exists, hut it's our of your hands. To the magician, willpower is the gift that separates man from the beasts. Animals and spirits simply accept their lot in life; humans with sufficient will can change it.

Personal will is a new and exciting concept in the Dark Funrasric world; the phrase "I think, therefore I am" is over a century in the future. As a magus, you sow the seeds of that idea now, and you reap the harvest, too. It is a marvelous thing to be free — *costly*, hut marvelous nonetheless.

In game terms, Willpower is handy in all kinds of situations: You roll it under stress, spend it to push yourself beyond endurance, use it to prevent magickal disasters and refresh it when you reassert yourself. When some task demands a superhuman effort, you can spend Willpower to accomplish it — but be careful! After a while, your Willpower Pool might run dry, leaving you (or more specifically, your character) broken and exhausted.

Unlike many Traits, Willpower has two scores: Your *permanent rating* — the squares on the character sheet — stays consistent; (his represents a character's overall confidence. The temporary *Willpower Pool* — the circles go up and down. When you spend a Willpower point, you remove it from the Pool; the rating stays the same. Really severe circumstances — like torture and failed Seekings — can burn permanent Willpower, though. When that happens, the magus has to rebuild her confidence from the ground up. That can take months, years or a lifetime....

Willpower is used as the difficulty of many kinds of rolls, too. Sleepers use their Pool as the difficulty, but mages use their permanent rating instead.

- Weak
- Timid
- Unassertive
- Diffident
- Certain
- Confident
- Strong
- Controlled
- Iron-willed
- Unshakable



## Using Willpower

- By spending a Willpower point, you can get one automatic success in an action. You may use only one point per turn this way, but doing so grants a single guaranteed success. During extended actions, this can make a lot of difference. Only Awakened beings can use their Willpower this way; mortals cannot.

- By rolling her Willpower, a character may resist the effects of Mind magick. The difficulty for such rolls is usually 6. (See "**Dodging and Resistance**," **Chapter VIII**.) Botching such a roll might cost a temporary Willpower point, depending on the Effect she was trying to resist.

- When a mystick rolls a botch during a magick casting, she can avert the worst effects of a Scourge backlash. This isn't a cheap dodge — the feat costs a Willpower point and a previously rolled success, and still results in failure — but by willing the worst *not* to happen, the mage may escape disaster. This only works once per casting; an Effect that is botched twice automatically causes a backlash.

- A point of Willpower can also dispel Madness. (See "**The Scourge**," **Chapter VIII**.) This requires a roll as well, but neutralizes one Scourge point in the process. Only one point per game session (or per day, if you prefer) can be spent this way.

- Some urges are too strong to ignore. When a character faces an irresistible impulse ("Run!!!"), she can spend a Willpower point to stand firm. If the situation continues, though, she may have to continue spending Willpower to keep the reins in hand. This can get nasty if the problem lasts longer than the character's Willpower Pool... and torturers are notorious for their patience.

## Losing Willpower (Optional)

Everybody's got a breaking point. After a while, severe shocks can shatter even the strongest walls. This doesn't happen often, but when it does, a character loses permanent Willpower points (the squares). Until he can buy them back with experience points and roleplaying, those points are gone for good. This optional rule is left to the Storyteller's discretion, but shouldn't be abused. We recommend that no trauma reduce a mage's Willpower rating by more than two points, total. Mages are not sissies.

- A magus who receives a strong shock (a severe Mind attack, a personal disaster or a Scourging) when his Willpower Pool sits at one or below loses one permanent point from his rating.

- Prolonged emotional trauma (torture, heartbreak, a disastrous Seeking, etc.) may cause the character to lose a permanent Willpower point. This should only happen during especially bad incidents.

## Regaining Willpower

Confidence ebbs and swells. When your character gets a chance to restore his confidence, he can replenish his Willpower Pool, returning it to its normal level:

- At the end of a story (not a game session), the characters regain all the Willpower they spent during the tale. If the story ended on an uncertain note, the Storyteller may limit this amount until some way of restoring their faith has been found.

- If a mage achieves some kind of special success (discovering a new land, destroying a nemesis, finding some lost lore, etc.), the victory might restore a point or two.

- When she acts according to her Nature (see "Archetypes"), she may regain one or two Willpower. (This assumes good roleplaying; simply saying, "I beat people up until I get my Willpower back" is a big no.)

- A magus with a great Destiny (see **that Background**) can boost her confidence when she really needs to. Fate has plans for her!

- For simplicity's sake, each character can just recover one Willpower every morning when they wake up — a new day gives one renewed purpose. This only works once per day.

## Quintessence and Scourging

*Our Quintessence is as incorruptible as heaven.*

— *The Book of Quinte Essence* (anonymous)



A above, so below. A mage's body is a reflection of his spirit, and the balance of Quintessence and Scourging within his body offers a clue to the state of his soul. Focus on "right behavior," and your body and soul remain pure; squander yourself on carelessness and folly, and you'll pay the penalty. (See **Chapters I and VIII**.)

These two Traits oppose each other across a 20-space wheel; Quintessence points are filled in from the left-hand marker going clockwise, while Scourging blocks out spaces counterclockwise from the same point. If the two ratings overlap, Quintessence loses.

Scourge points wipe away Quintessence points if the two meet somewhere on the wheel. If, for example, a mage with 14 Quintessence and five Scourge gets Scourged for three more points, those last two points displace the first two Quintessence points. The opposite does not occur; if a wizard with 12 Scourge and six Quintessence absorbs three more Quintessence, only two of those new points go on the wheel. The other is lost.

Because these ratings might overlap on the track, we recommend that you fill each type of rating with a different mark, i.e., Quintessence with checks and Scourge with "x's."

## Quintessence

• A mage refines Prime Force through his Daemon Background or Prime magick, or by absorbing it from a Cray or Tass. The Daemon rating represents the maximum amount of Quintessence he can soak up per turn through any means.

• You can spend Quintessence to reduce the difficulty of a magick roll. (See Chapter VIII.) For each point spent this way, lower your casting difficulty number by one, to a maximum of -3.

• Absorbing a Cray's energy into your Daemon requires a Perception + Meditation roll (difficulty 7), up to the limit of your Daemon rating. Channeling more Quintessence from a Cray requires a Prime 1 spell; getting it from Tass demands Prime 3. A Master of this force can draw Quintessence from anywhere with a vain Prime 5 spell. Each success equals one point of Quintessence absorbed.

• Quintessence is usually — but not always — invisible. When huge spells shift it around, strange things happen; cold winds blow, candles flicker and bystanders feel an aching in their bones. Characters with the Awareness Trait can sense Quintessence "in motion" (Perception + Awareness; difficulty 6 to 10, depending on the incident). Magi in the spirit world can spot truly strong sources of Quintessence — including people with high ratings — by their luminous glow. Strong Resonance colors that glow with appropriate hues. (See Chapter VIII.)

• Magicks that shunt large amounts of Quintessence around are never casual; such Arts twist the fabric of reality itself. Consider "large amounts" to be disturbances involving more than five points in a turn. Really large shifts, involving 10 points or more, or really violent channelings, can actually be seen by the mortal eye as bright ribbons, floods or explosions. These manifestations are *always* vain.

## The Scourge

It takes a certain amount of hubris to juggle with Creation; the more severe the juggling, the larger the risk. Full rules for magick and the Scourge can be found in Chapter VIII.

• A mage's Scourge rating makes up his Scourge Pool. Each point on the wheel, combined with any points he has just incurred, becomes one die in a backlash Dice Pool. Storytellers roll this pool when things go horribly wrong.

• Given time, the Scourge fades. A magus with less than 10 Scourge points can "bleed them off at a rate of one point per week, *assuming he performs no magick during that time*. If he has more than 10 points stored up, something has to give. Sooner or later, things *will* go wrong somehow. Should our magus make it to Scourge 20 without incident (unlikely), he may either go eternally mad or go out in a spectacular catastrophe.

## Health

*When the Devil sees that a man is weak, he strikes him with a hatchet in order to make him fall into sin; but if he sees that he is strong, he then strikes him with an ax.*

— Girolama Savonarola

(See also "Mortality," Chapter VII)



ounds, sickness and other conditions affect the Health Trait. Whenever something injures your mage, you subtract Health Levels to reflect the damage. Healthy characters have eight Levels to lose; each one lost penalizes that person by subtracting from his Dice Pools. The more injury a character sustains, the worse his condition. If the penalty exceeds that person's Dice Pool, he's helpless.

Arete rolls are the exception to this. A Crippled mage can still call upon his powers. Only when he goes to Incapacitated or below does he take magick roll penalties. Even if the damage is healed, pain or other trauma may remain. While this need not subtract from Dice Pools, the player should keep his mage's injuries in mind, even after they heal.

It's worth noting that magi are mortal; without magical aid, they're as susceptible to sickness, injury and death as any other human being. Truly severe attacks (called **aggravated damage**; see Chapter VII) cannot be soaked without some powerful Life-based spell. Fire, werebeast claws and the fangs of undead corpses can end a mystick's career with great and final haste. Beware!

## Character Progress

*Halfway along the journey of our life,  
Having strayed from the right path and lost it,  
I awoke to find myself in a dark wood.*

— Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*



ver time, the statue you've made (your character) will begin to move. It's inevitable — as agents of change, magi transform themselves and their world simply by existing. A callow apprentice becomes a cocky sorcerer in a blink of the Devil's eye; in time, he might Ascend to the Zenith or Fall into the thorns of temptation and sin. The Path he walks will follow him, and the echoes of his passing will linger for years, decades or centuries to come.

Every magus, regardless of culture or practice, passes through four stages: **Awareness**, **Instruction**, **Conflict** and **Resolution**. Chapter I describes the pitfalls and possibilities, and your own private drama will bear them out. A handful of systems and guidelines reflect those four stages; while many of them are optional, all are worth perusing, if only for suggestions of the challenges to come.

## Awareness

Imagine yourself in a foggy wood: Roots reach out to trip you. Strange sounds echo just out of sight. Chill winds raise goose flesh on your arms. There's a presence in the night, but you can't see it. It's stalking you, but there's not a damned thing you can do about it. Dame Fortune's coins clink on the verge of perception; your purse is empty, but you've got a feeling it won't be for long.

Welcome to the world of the un-Awakened mage. Too aware to be blind, she staggers through an eldritch wood. At this stage, our magus holds a guttering candle and watches the shadows swirling out of reach. Most sorcerers have terrible dreams and uncanny visitations just before Awakening. Some aspiring folk seek out awareness, but for many sorcerers, magick is a birthright, not a study. Sheltering her meager flame, the searcher feeds it with knowledge, secrets and devotion. If she's truly daring, she might cast it away, open her eyes wide and stride boldly into the night.

The Awakening cuts through this gloaming; the shades hurst into sudden clarity, or deepen into solid form. Some Awakenings are violent, slaps from the Otherworlds; others steal upon a mage like a fog. Perhaps she has a tutor leading her through the Mists (like Renaud in the Prelude), perhaps she simply muddles her way through (like Melusine). Either way, the Awakening parts the Mists and exposes the Path. The woods are still dangerous — more hazardous than ever, in fact — but at least our mage has some idea where to go.

## The Affinity Sphere (Optional)

More often than not, the incident or study that brings on the Awakening resonates throughout the sorcerer's life. An important moment — a deadly fire, an encounter with the spirit world, etc. — can leave its mark in the mage's Arts. This moment forges a link between the sorcerer, her personality and her powers — a link that never fades.

In Mage, a magus is a reflection of other powers; those powers reflect her in return. In game terms, this creates an *affinity Sphere* — the first and most important magickal element in a mystick arsenal. When you're building your character, that Sphere is the first one you place; when you're establishing her personality, keep that Sphere in mind. Regardless of the culture she comes from or the style she prefers, your character's affinity Sphere ought to add a few twists and quirks to her concept. Note that while the societies given in the next chapter all feature "affinity Sphere" listings, you don't have to go by the book. At this early point, the Traditions and Conventions are still discovering who they are; in later days, those societies will train their initiates with a "group Sphere"; now, however, affinities are suggestions, not commandments. Your road is clear.

In roleplaying terms, an affinity Sphere manifests in several ways; it may trigger the Awakening (like the nun "adopted" by Forces when she Awakens during a storm), indicate personality quirks (like the Spirit talent that guides a dreamy mystick), reflect study (like the Matter-trained blacksmith who schools his apprentices in Matter, too), or personify the god or spirit your mage follows (for a priestess of Venus, Life is a natural "first step"). Since a wizard is, by extension, magickal, it makes sense that the Art he masters should play some part in his personality.

As a rule, the affinity Sphere ought to have the highest rating. When (if) your magus discards her ritual tools (see "Arete"), the affinity Sphere makes a good place to start. You also could count some aspect of that affinity as a specialty (see "Traits") if the Storyteller allows; the storm-nun, for example, might count "Storm-magick" as a Forces specialty, and re-roll any "10s" that come up during weather-related castings. This option offers the character a hit of an edge and adds new roleplaying possibilities. An affinity Sphere is also cheaper to raise with experience points. (See the Experience Costs chart.) This reflects the bond between the magus and her first love — her first Art.

## Wild Talent (Optional)

During an intense Awakening, a magus might display a *wild talent* — a sudden, uncontrollable power that transcends her later skills. Depending on the story and circumstances, such talents might include uncanny perceptions (like Renaud's visions), a potent inspiration (like the artisan who wakes up one morning and builds a miraculous Device), or an unexpected burst of raw power (like the village girl who, when attacked, burns her would-be rapists to cinders).

Such powers surge up just before or during the Awakening; dramatically, they surprise the future magus as much as anyone else, and usually cause a lot of trouble before the magickal training takes over. In game terms, such powers occur at the Storyteller's whim, and are *completely outside* the player's control. For a very brief time (a scene or two), the character commands abilities far above her later Arete and Spheres. That command, however, is more instinctive than deliberate. The player may want to do something, but the Storyteller decides what happens and how. A crisis forces the mage to reach into herself and the magick bursts forth. Wild talent makes an ideal prelude hook: At the beginning of the tale, your character is a normal person; by the end, she is forever changed.

## Instruction

Magick may be the natural way of man, but you've still got to learn how to use it. Even in cultures where magick is common, the Sorcerer's Path is not. It's far too easy to wander off into the brambles if you lack training and experience. To avoid an early death, a mage needs to learn what she is and what she can do.

## Apprenticeship

When curiosity and insight give way to instruction, the would-be magus must find a tutor. Sometimes, like Kalid, that teacher comes of his own accord; perhaps he notices the student's potential, or ends up stuck with her as part of a bargain or vow. Or maybe our aspiring wizard seeks the mentor out and offers herself as his apprentice, or enters an arcane order that grooms several students at once. In this age, it's not unlikely that desperate circumstances — war, famine, forced marriage — brought master and pupil together by chance. Whatever the story behind the apprenticeship — and there *should* be a story there — the young mage conscripts the services of a teacher.

The Instruction Skill and Mentor Background cover the system side of apprenticeship (pages 20, 121 and 140); the dramatic side of the bond, however, is far more important. No matter what kind of apprenticeship our young mage undergoes, the experience will shape the magus she becomes.

In the Dark Fantastic era, mystick instruction is demanding; with eager pupils on one side and rival sects and angry churchmen on the other, a mentor must be choosy. He'll assume a parental role in a sorcerer's life, and may even demand life-or-death dominion over her. Once a wizard takes on a student, he becomes responsible for her actions; her disgraces become his, and in magickal society, that's a heavy charge. An aspiring magus is going to have to prove her worth, and that could take months or years of service. For her part, the student becomes the "child" of her instructor; the mentor may be kindly, abusive, insightful or distracted, but his actions *will* impact on the pupil's view of magick. Even after they part company — if they do — the master's shadow looms across his student's life in a dozen different ways.

At the beginning of the chronicle, your mage might still be under her mentor's care; if not, she may be recently released and dealing with her new life as an independent magus. Even then, however, the lessons and traumas of apprenticeship follow her; doubtless, her teacher has friends, enemies, allies and loved ones who'll be interested in the new pupil. Is there some lingering spite from another apprentice? A would-be lover who noticed the pupil during her tutelage? A crusty old master who wants to destroy all that the teacher has made? Most of these questions remain in the Storyteller's hands, but they're worth considering when your magus walks on-stage. The master-student relationship is one of the most significant events a mage will ever know.

## The Daemon

A mentor of a different kind, the Daemon, provides instruction from within. In the beginning, it nags the aspirant toward a crisis that will throw open the doors of

mystick insight; after that, it lures, frightens, seduces or guides the magician along her Path. Depending on the Essence of the spirit (see "Essences"), the beliefs of the mage and the circumstances of the chronicle, the relationship between the sorcerer and her guardian soul may be comforting, confusing or downright terrifying. (See the Prelude.)

As the sorcerer progresses, the Daemon leads her on a semi-guided tour of her life. At crisis points, it inspires a *Seeking* — a symbolic journey through the mage's soul. Conflicts and obstacles rise out of these Mists like mountains; to go beyond them, the aspirant must confront them to the Daemon's satisfaction. The spirit, then, becomes a taskmaster under the Storyteller's control, a guardian at the watchtower of magick.

## Awarding Experience and Raising Backgrounds

The Storyteller should award his players one automatic experience point per game session, plus an additional point for the following examples of good play:

- Learning from some new experience.
- Noticing an important clue or taking some unusual action that worked.
- Achieving a great triumph (defeating an arch-enemy, discovering a vital secret, saving someone, gaining a new ally, consummating a romance, etc.).
- Showing great wisdom, restraint or vision, especially when doing so leads to victory.
- Exceptional roleplaying (acting out a crisis, improvising good dialogue, getting the troupe fired up about the game, etc.).
- Playing in character, even when doing so put the character at risk.
- Acting heroically, *especially* if the deed put the character at risk.

As a rule, assign from one to four experience points per session, with the upper limit being reserved for really kick-ass sessions and roleplaying. Don't be afraid to ask the troupe's opinion of the story and their part in it; the tale is a group effort, after all.

Occasionally, a dot or two in a Background will seem more appropriate than experience points. If Caesario the Fool makes a friend inside the Medici family, for example, you might give his player a dot in Allies or Spies. A whole cabal might receive some shared Background dots if that seems appropriate. In general, limit new Background dots to one point per player per session, unless the situation demands a really generous "bonus" (Caesario wins a pile of gold, so his player raises his Resources from 0 to 3). And don't forget: Backgrounds always come with strings attached.

in system terms, the Daemon Background rating measures the power of the Mystick Self; that rating isn't set, however — a Daemon could grow stronger or weaker over the course of a chronicle. As it waxes and wanes, the guiding personality may grow more intrusive or disappear completely. The interplay between mage and Daemon can provide a whole new level for the story, so it's a good idea to decide the nature and appearance of your character's "inner magus." You might leave the choice to your Storyteller, too, and let him surprise you with the Daemon's "demands." In this age, it's entirely possible that your magus sees the Daemon as a separate entity — an angel, a tempter, etc. — and acts accordingly. In game terms, however, the Daemon is an aspect of the mage — both "characters" are one.

## Conflict

Magicians do not study their way to grace. Instead, they confront obstacles both within and without. From her early stumblings up the Path of Thorns, our magus gains confidence, skill and vision. The journey changes her, just as she changes the world, and several of those changes are worth going into....

## Seekings (Optional)

Ideally, a wizard embarks on Seekings to learn more about her Arts and herself. Sitting in a library may teach you facts, but they cannot grant the vision to move the world with those facts. That insight comes partly through life experiences and partly through reflection. The manifestations of that reflection take a mage literally out of her skin and send her into symbolic landscapes.

In later days, it will be said that Seekings occur in the mind, that a mystick never actually Leaves her body, but goes deep inside her subconscious. In this age, however, the Seeking is very much an Otherworldly journey. Guardian spirits or totem animals whisk the sorcerer into a personal Purgatory where obstacles are met... and hopefully defeated.

**Chapters I and VI** go into more detail about this mystick journey. Depending on your troupe's preferences, you might play out a Seeking whenever you want to raise your mage's Arete, or discard the idea and simply let experience take care of the learning process.

## Experience Points

As the play continues, the characters gain *experience*. points — character points that allow you to improve your sorcerer's Traits. The "prices" vary considerably and can be found on the Experience Cost chart.

People don't get better at something without study and practice; each time you raise a Trait, tell the Storyteller what your character has been doing to improve herself. Raising Stealth, for instance, might involve a

month or so of practice under various conditions — tiptoeing on squeaky floors, stalking deer, etc. Many skills require some sort of tutor, if only to tell you where to find the knowledge you're after.

Magick *always* involves study, practice and experimentation. To raise a Sphere (or learn a new one), your sorcerer must find a teacher of the *same practice* and study with him for a while. In later days, mysticks may learn to "cross-train" each other on common Arts. Now, however, it's a rare sorcerer who'll even admit that other orders practice legitimate magick. The isolation and prejudice of the time makes it near-impossible to train with someone of a different belief. The Council and Conventions are doing what they can to alleviate this problem; some visionaries have discovered common ground among the Spheres of Creation. For the most part, however, a magus needs to study with her own kind before she can advance in her Arts. Such learning takes at least one month per Sphere level at the lower ranks (1-3), and possibly a year or more per level for the higher ones (4-6).

Traits don't raise themselves. As you spend experience points in "real-time," set aside some "game-time" between stories while your character finds resources and betters herself, then add the increased Trait to your sheet afterward.

## Hubris

Pride is one of the Seven Deadly Sins, and magi have it in spades. That colossal sin inspires fear, which in turn inspires witch-hunts. Wizards aspire to the mantle of Divinity; in the process, they often endanger the mortals at their feet — and their own souls. The Order of Reason rose from the ashes of a corrupt Covenant; ironically, it later corrupts itself. There's a lesson in that — one every magus should learn.

Hubris warps a wizard's Arts and actions. A pride-filled magus isn't much different from a power-gamer; neither one aspires to anything higher than domination. A proud sorcerer grows careless, endangering his surroundings and leading himself to the edge of a precipice. After a while, his magick reflects his "dark side"; demons caper in the shadows as he whips up storms, and angels weep. Sooner or later, he'll get careless, and things will begin to go wrong.

Pride isn't something you can define with a Trait; it isn't always bad, either. To a point, a magus *must* be proud — Creation will not obey a coward. Problems arise when magick goes to the sorcerer's head, when he loses his beliefs in a haze of power. It happens to everybody; the trick is to make it a roleplaying experience — to lead your character up to the precipice without stepping over it, or to hurl him off the cliff and piny out the aftermath. (See Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.)

**Chapter VI** covers the Storytelling side of hubris; as a player, you can show the temptations of pride through good roleplaying. **The Sorcerers Crusade** doesn't have to be a morality play, of course, but there's a wealth of drama in the lure of pride.



## Nature, Demeanor, Arete and Willpower

People change, sometimes drastically. The sorcerer who started her journey as a tempestuous loner might acquire a quiet strength that displaces the old anger. In story terms, you should be open to the idea of change. As you fulfill motivations or watch them slide away, alter your mage's expectations and assign her new motivations — goals based on the ongoing story.

In game terms, characters sometimes shift personality Archetypes; a Waif could become a Guardian at heart once she finds a cause to champion. Changing Demeanor is easy; Your character simply behaves differently. Nature is harder — a change that drastic ought to rise out of some intense role playing, especially if it's a big shift (a Martyr becoming a Renunciate, for instance). People in this era tend to believe they're tared to their lot; rebelling against it is possible, but wrenching. Insanity might twist Archetypes around, too, especially if the mage's Nature played some part in "catching" the madness.

Hopefully, a magician elevates herself as she learns her Arts; that change usually plays hell with her perspective, though. As the character's Arete rises, her priorities and goals do likewise. Sometimes, the sorcerer loses Arete, and her vision stumbles. That kind of drop is akin to tossing a sleeping princess into a hermit's hovel; when she awakens, she needs to find her way home again.

Victory can make a man giddy; tragedy can bum him to the ground. When a permanent Willpower rating rises or falls, the effects should shake the character. A mage flushed with confidence ought to swagger; a broken one will stammer and cry. The "Traits" section details the rules, but the role playing comes from you. Experience points only suggest the real story.

## Resolution

So what happens? Does Prospero cast his books aside? Does Joan rise in ro eternity, orders Faustus damn himself to Hell? The Path of Thorns bears that name for a reason; it's a prickly journey from apprentice to archmage, and few sorcerers survive the trip. The risk, however, makes the game worthwhile.

Sages speak of the Path of Gold and of the Ascension glittering at the end of that Path. On a lower level, the Zenith offers raw power and endless wisdom. And then there's the cliff, and the Fall below. Supposedly, all magi aspire to Ascension whether they realize it or not, but in this day and age, no one can be certain. The Council and the Conventions have both made a higher ideal their priority, but each side seems far from its lofty goals. In the meantime, each individual magus chooses his or her road. Some Ascend 10 the heavens and join the gods or saints; others attain great power, Fall to the Adversary or lose themselves in eternal servitude.

At the top of the mountain, three ends await: Power, Transcendence and Destruction. Which one will you choose?

I'll bet that choice makes for one hell of a story....

## Character Creation Process

- **Step One: Character Concept** (see *Options*, below)  
*Choose* Concept, Society, Essence, Nature and Demeanor  
*Decide* style of magick, beliefs and personal history
- **Step Two: Select Attributes**  
*Prioritise the three categories:* Physical, Social, Mental (7/5/3)  
*Choose Physical Traits:* Strength, Stamina, Dexterity  
*Choose Social Traits:* Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance  
*Choose Mental Traits:* Perception, Intelligence, Wits
- **Step Three: Select Attributes** (see below)  
*Prioritize the three categories:* Talents, Skills, Knowledge  
*Choose Talents, Skills, Knowledge* (13/9/5)  
No Attribute higher than 3 at this stage
- **Step Four: Select Advantages** (see *Options*, below)  
*Choose Backgrounds* (7), *Spheres* (6)
- **Step Five: Finishing Touches**  
*Record* Arete (1), Willpower (5)  
*Spend* Freebie Points (15)

## Options Concepts

(See also "Antagonists" in the Appendix.)

- **Artist:** Sculptor, painter, singer, architect, poet, patron, writer
- **Bastard:** Vengeful child, loyal brother/sister, disinherited child, family aide, lost son/daughter
- **Clergy:** Bishop, priest, friar, pardoner, nun, Inquisitor, monk, missionary
- **Courtier:** Diplomat, spy, bailiff, courtesan, facilitator, proxy
- **Craftsman:** Blacksmith, artisan, mapmaker, tailor, physician, midwife, stonemason, farmer, groom, shepherd, tinker, shoemaker, brewer, innkeeper
- **Explorer:** Sailor, Skyrigger, navigator, impressed (unwilling) seaman, stowaway, emissary, rich traveler
- **Heretic:** Pagan, shaman, false prophet, Muslim, atheist, renunciate, Sephardim, Martano, Protestant/Catholic
- **Merchant:** Merchant prince, pardoner, adventuresome trader, peddler, appraiser, accountant
- **Nobility:** Prince(ss), lady, count/countess, lord, knight, spoiled child, sheik, sultan, chief
- **Scholar:** Sage, wise one, theorist, philosopher, Classics scholar, monk, scientist, professor
- **Servant:** Mistress, nurse, groom, cook, scullery maid, manservant, lady in waiting, courier, assassin
- **Soldier:** Enforcer, mercenary, knight, squire, martial artist, kxyguard, artilleryman, archer, conquistador, defender of the faith
- **Stranger:** Tribesman (African or American), Oriental traveler, Arabian visitor, heathen, hermit, Moor
- **Swashbuckler:** Adventurer, fop, rake, rogue, wench, elite guardsman, sellsword
- **Vagabond:** Traveling player, beggar, thief, camp follower, gypsy, war-scarred veteran

- **Castellum:** Fortresses of order, such urges slay dragons within and without.
- **Furo:** Dragons of the soul, these fiery Essences seek Divinity in chaos.
- **Mare:** Deep as the sea, these primordial souls set their roots in nature and eternity.
- **Sussuro:** Laughing winds bound on an endless quest.

## Archetypes (Nature & Demeanor)

- Architect:** You leave a legacy behind.
- Benefactor:** Wealth is worth nothing unless you share it.
- Guardian:** Your strength is others' defense.
- Martyr:** Self-sacrifice is your pleasure and conviction.
- Renunciate:** Shadowed by an old life, you try to come to terms with the present.
- Sage:** Learning is your meat, drink and breath.
- Sensualist:** Life is a banquet for those who truly devour it.
- Supplicant:** You serve a greater being; its will is your own.
- Theorist:** Great ideas burn within you.
- Trickster:** Nothing is sacred, and nojest is greater than life itself.
- Waif:** A lost child, you get all that others can give you.

## Societies

(See also *Chapter V*.)

- **The Disparate:** Independent magi who follow their own Paths.

### *The Council of Traditions*

- **Ahl-i-Batin:** Weavers of the Web of Faith, these Arabian mysticks seek unity for all.
- **Akashic Brotherhood:** Visitors from faraway lands with devastating mental and martial arts.
- **Chakravanti/Euthanatoi:** Forbidding mysticks riding the Wheel of death and rebirth.
- **Choor Celeste:** Christian heretics united by God's song and the call of a greater faith.
- **Dream-speakers:** Shamans from unknown lands, united by their insight into the spirit ways.
- **Order of Hermes:** Proud wizards with elaborate protocols and mighty Arts.
- **Seers of Chronos:** Bizarre visionaries, known for their carnal appetites and transcendent prophecies.
- **Solificati:** Wealthy alchemists pursuing the Great Art — to refine base matter into perfect spirit.
- **Verbena:** Hunters and hunted, these witches preserve their Pagan faiths.

### *The Order of Reason*

- **Artificers:** Master craftsmen united by mechanical creativity.
- **Cabal of Pure Thought:** True believers seeking one world under God.
- **Celestial Masters:** Skymasters charting and exploring the heavens... and beyond.

- **Craftsmasons:** Hard-working folk with ancient secrets and iron will.
- **High Guild:** Nothing happens without money; these Grand Financiers *make* things happen.
- **Hippocratic Circle:** Masters of the healing arts and living flesh.
- **Ksiraifai:** A group that doesn't exist, these intriguers set the Order's plans in motion.
- **Void Seekers:** Explorers with an eye to the eternal horizon.

## General Abilities

- **Talents:** Alertness, Artist, Athletics, Awareness, Brawl, Dodge, Expression, Instruction, Intimidation, Larceny, Subterfuge
- **Skills:** Animal Ken, Archery, Crafts, Etiquette, Leadership, Meditation, Melee, Research, Riding, Stealth, Survival
- **Knowledge:** Academies, Culture, Enigmas, Investigation, Law, Linguistics, Lore, Medicine, Metaphysics, Occult, Science

## Other Abilities

- **Talents:** Dancing, Intrigue, Invention, Logic, Seduction, Singing
- **Skills:** Acrobatics, Artillerist, Do, Fencing, Firearms, Torture
- **Knowledge:** Cosmology, Hearth Wisdom, Herbalism, Moneylending, Poisons, Secret Code Language

## Backgrounds

- **Allies:** Your companions, from mortal acolytes to supernatural beings.
- **Arcane:** A mystical ability to avoid attention.
- **Covenant:** Your cabal's meeting place; it may be a place you own or a fellowship you belong to.
- **Cray:** A nearby wellspring of Quintessence.
- **Daemon:** Your mystick sell; this Trait reflects the power and personality of that "other half."
- **Destiny:** Some mages are destined to do great things — or die in great ways.
- **Familiar:** A magicalk companion with some special talents.
- **Influence:** Your status in the mortal world.
- **Library:** A repository of magicalk knowledge and helpful lore.
- **Magickal Treasure:** A powerful item is in your possession.
- **Mentor:** Your master, teacher and guardian.
- **Resources:** Your access to cash and property.
- **Sanctum:** A space you have set for yourself; your place of power.
- **Spies:** An information network you control.

## Spheres

(See also **Chapter VIII**.)

- **Connection:** Undersigning the ties Between people and places.
- **Entropy:** Mastery of Fate, Fortune and Decay.
- **Forces:** Command over the elements.

- **Life:** An insight into living things.
- **Matter:** A grasp of cold matter and solid materials.
- **Mind:** A key to the workings of the mind.
- **Prime:** Command over Quintessence, the cornerstone of the universe.
- **Spirit:** Insight into the spirit world and its many aspects and inhabitants.
- **Time:** An understanding of past, present, future and the roads between them.

## Merits and Flaws

(See also *Crusade Lore* and *The Book of Shadows*.)

- **True Faith** (cost 7+): With piousness and faith, you perform miracles.
- **Echoes** (adds 1-5 freebie points): Folklore can harm you — and does!

## Freebie Points

Trait	Cost
Attributes	5 per dot
Abilities	2 per dot
Backgrounds	1 per dot
Merits & Flaws	(variable)
Arete	4 per dot
Willpower	1 per dot
Spheres	7 per dot
Quintessence	1 point per four dots

## Experience Costs

Trait	Cost
New Ability	3
New Sphere	10
Willpower	current rating
Knowledge	current rating
Talents and Skills	current rating x 2
Attributes	current rating x 4
Affinity Sphere	current rating x 7
Other Spheres	current rating x 8
Arete	current rating x 8

## Health Levels

Bruised	No action penalties.
Hurt	-1 Mildly hurt; movement isn't hindered.
Injured	-1 Minor injuries; little hindrance to movement.
Wounded	-2 Character cannot run, but can still walk.
Mauled	-2 Badly injured; character can only hobble about.
Crippled	-5 Severely injured; character can only crawl.
Incapacitated	Completely incapable of movement. An Incapacitated mage is very close to death. If he loses one more Health Level, he dies.





# Chapter V: The Players

*I am not so very eager to belong to a definite school of thought; I am striving for truth.*

— Dante Alighieri

## The Tryst

*A sleepless night had passed, Agnesa's throat felt parched from her constant prayers. But as dawn lit the cottage, the child fell into a healing sleep. Karel, the stranger from the graveyard, finally saw in to his weariness and slumped against the wall.*

*"He will live," said Karel, smiling wearily, "though he will bear a deep scar all his life from where I excised the poisoned wound. He may well live to a ripe old age." Agnesa dropped her eyes, ashamed for her anger against this man. While she had prayed, Karel had acted, and done so wisely. In Agnesa's silence, Karel spoke again: "Listen to me, m'lady. I want to meet again. Our convictions may differ, but our goals are the same. Why must we be enemies? I would gladly teach you healing if you will lend to me the skills I lack: the arts of mercy and pity. How can I 'do no harm' without them?"*

*Agnesa came straight to the point. "If you believe in science and reason, how can you still believe in God? How can your laws explain magic, which we both know to be as real as we are?"*

*"I do accept that God exists," he replied, "but I also believe that man must take control of his own destiny. Can you truly say that slavery is just, or that it is wrong to discover cures for disease, or that we should not build devices to make the day's work a little lighter?"*

*She had no reply.*

*On the long road home, she finally nodded her agreement. There were enemies enough in the world without making more when there was no need.*

*In the stable, Bartolomeo curried his coal-black stallion. As Agnesa entered, her "brother" stared at her coldly, not uttering a word.*

*A long winter was just beginning.*

## War Along the Path

Magi, like kings, always want their way. Confronted with "heretical" practices, many sorcerers try to convert subvert or destroy their "rivals." This is an intolerant age, and even Enlightened folk fear the stranger beside them. Sometimes, that's a good idea. The night holds many enemies. Other times, though, fear breeds war. Now is one of those times.

The truth of magick — that all Paths lead to the same peak — is obscured by fogs of orthodoxy. "If you're not with me," cries the traveler, "you're against me." As the Mists darken and the storm rolls in, however, that traveler might reach out to his old foes. There is, after all, strength in numbers. Hence, many sects join hands in the darkness. Their unions create two confederations — the Order of Reason and the Council of Nine — that face off against each other. Those who refuse to join either circle are left outside.

In future years, the rivalry will grow bitter. Now, both fellowships are unsteady, uncertain. The Order is growing stronger quickly, but the Council's sorcerers have centuries of tradition on their side. Those traditions, however, keep the old sects at arms' length. To survive the coining storm, new Traditions must replace old ones. A new ideal — Ascension — must replace the old greed. A new Council must replace the old rivalries, or all those traditions (and Traditions) will be swept away.

Good luck. It's going to be a long night.

## Common Ground

Despite their rivalries, all mystickal societies have a few things in common:

- The members share a common faith, or at least a common ideal.
- The group has established protocols, initiations, a hierarchy and a goal.
- The sorcerers embrace some common style — shamanism, witchcraft, etc. — as an expression of their beliefs and ideals.
- Everyone works toward a common goal (at least in theory), and shares common enemies (often lots of them).

Even so, each magus is an *individual*. In a world where so many people define themselves as small parts of a larger plan, the Awakened are simply themselves. No matter which society a wizard joins, he is, first and foremost, a magus.

It's also vitally important to remember that societies are not monolithic entities — they're groups of individuals working together. Within a society's ranks, hundreds or even thousands of people — each with his own agenda, personality and motivations — come together. Certain generalizations apply, but each magus is, at heart, his own person. A Chorister can be greedy and hateful; a Verbena could be shy and timid; an Artificer might be afraid of fire. Wizards are people, and people do not come in identical sets.

Incidentally, individuals often work together, even if they belong to groups that hate each other. Friendship might be a bit problematic, but given enough motivation, anyone can ally themselves with anyone else (for a while, at least).

Bearing that in mind, we can approach the various mystickal societies as fellowships with certain things in common. To make life easier for everyone, each listing follows a similar format:

**Introduction:** An overview of the group and its general history and goals.

**Philosophy:** The society's general view of life, magick and Creation.

**Tools and Style:** While each magus practices her own specialties, most societies form around a similar approach to magick. This listing reflects the teachings, preferences and tools associated with the group. These descriptions are *not* exclusive, simply common, and do not restrict a magus to the options listed.

**Organization:** Some societies are fairly informal; others practice strict hierarchies and chains of command. This section reflects the group's overall makeup and coherence.

**Primus (or Maximi):** The official leader(s) of the society.

**Initiation:** Some groups come to you; others demand a rigorous test for membership. This section shows how most members join.

**Daemon:** No two magi define their "inner guide" the same way; still, most groups have a general idea about it.

**Affinities:** Some groups, by their overall temperament, attract people who specialize in certain Arts. This listing describes the fellowship's master Sphere and the element that suits it best.

**Followers:** The sorts of mortals who are drawn to service or companionship.

**Concepts:** Common professions and personalities within the society. A good starting point for player characters.

**Stereotypes:** Most societies feel their way is best. These views present common (mis)conceptions they hold about other notable groups.

Note that most of the historical events mentioned in the group descriptions can be found on the "Magician's Timeline" in Chapter II.

## Middle Paths: The Disparate

Some people simply wish to be left alone. Others belong to small sects, but want nothing to do with larger conflicts. The largest group of magicians in this world is not a group at all, but the vast body of mystick sorcerers who wish to remain apart.

Most Awakened Ones crave their own destinies. Many attend the nine-year deliberation, make alliances or leave other groups behind; a vast majority, though, gather into tiny sects or simply stay home. Called "Disparates," these independent sorcerers find themselves in a crofter's dilemma: When armies arrive at your farm and want to fight over it, you have four options: hide, flee, join an army or die.

For the moment, most Disparates keep their independence. In time, however, the larger conflict overwhelms the average sorcerer. As societies become nation-states, the solitaries in their path must either join, step aside or be swept into the furrows for the next harvest. The Ascension War itself claims many lives; the witch-fires and wars that crackle through the next two centuries consume others; those Disparate who survive the torch, spell and blade fall to hubris and night-folk conspiracies. With this purge, the spirit of magick falters; like a candle drowned in wax, it gutters and fades.

Over time, many "Crafts" emerge and prosper. Disparate societies and isolated sects, these organizations inspire the newer generations of magi. As the Order of Reason and mortal explorers reach across the world, they turn over the soil and prepare a new harvest. In their wake, the Crafts rise like angry ants disturbed in their nests. By the late-20th century, the Path of Thorns will see many new travelers who reject the Council and Conventions. The legacy of the Disparate never really dies.

## The Council of the Nine Mystick Traditions

*Time has not changed my ancient faith;  
the bond is still us tight as I tied it then;  
nor has the bitter fruit, that I ever gather  
made the high cause less precious to my heart.*

- Victoria Colonna, "Love Poem IV"

### Unite or Die

It is Judgment Day.

The signs have been coming for decades: the rise of a monolithic Order; the invention of strange new machines; the ravages of plagues and wars that have left most countries desolate. Change is in the air; even in lands that have never seen a white man, people sense the coming storm. When it breaks — which it has begun to do — every man and woman will need somewhere to run and someone to cling to.

Dreams and prophecies have foretold this day. The voices crying in the wilderness, so long ignored, have begun to make sense. Before that tempest roars down, many magi feel, a shelter must be constructed. A final stand must be prepared. The shelter: Horizon, the world beyond the clouds. The final stand: The Council of the Nine Mystick Traditions.

That word — Traditions — is vital. If anything is to survive the storm, it must be rooted in the ancient ways. Although many or the setts that now join hands are new confederations, the faiths they preserve reach into antiquity. New Paths must be charted, but to prosper, they must lead back to familiar roads — and forward toward new ideals.

The wizards are not blameless. Judgment Day has come, in part, because of magely pride. The fires kindling in town squares and Covenant ruins were sparked by the depredations of wizards who grew too powerful. They had governed like tyrants, and now everyone reaps the harvest. During the long years of the Convocation, the loudest, wisest voices cry (or a return to the Path of Gold, for a higher goal than survival or conquest, for Ascension, the highest purpose of a mage.

Now the Awakened gather. From across a world too vast for any chart, they come in packs. Here, a stern cabal of Hermetic judges confers in Latin; over there, a band of dark-skinned strangers hold themselves proud in the presence of the unknown; in the corner, wild-eyed men and women share scandalous communions; in the air, dragons soar, ferrying their companions on urgent missions. The Convocation is a fair of wonders, but those wonders share a grim certainty: Judgment Day is here — now — and everyone must unite to face it — or die.

Her 10 a rich legacy, a Council magus draws her faith from a well hundreds of years old. Perhaps her ancestors trained it) Tibetan monasteries, gathered vervain by mid-



summer moonlight, or sang hymns to the Savior while His Holy Spirit echoed in their homes. To join the Council's mission, a sorcerer must believe in its cause: Co preserve the Old Ways through dedication and harmony. The task is immense and seemingly impossible — no gathering this diverse has ever succeeded. To endure, each Council magus must put her personal fears and judgments aside, hold tight to her faith and greet the unknown with outstretched hands. In an era infamous for its intolerance, this is a most remarkable feat.

It's not easy. Although most Traditions are just coming together now, every group has some ax to grind with the others. Christians, Pagans, Muslims and necromancers share ancient hatreds; Hindus hear no love for their Islamic conquerors, and the rivalry between Akashics and Thanatoics still simmers. Diverse peoples from far-off lands are lumped together in awkward confederations that stir new animosities, and many wizards simply say, "to bell with it" and walk away. Those who remain are tested in a crucible of faith and war. Their beliefs are strong, their commitment driven by a sense that the new way must prevail.

It's Judgment Day — Genesis for most Traditions, and Revelations for the world of magic. The outcome is anythin' but certain.

## Spheres of Influence

- **Covenants:** The Order of Hermes has the largest established power base in Europe. For 500 years, these magi have maintained an organized Tribunal, constructed strongholds and ruled as princes of private realms. Despite rivalries with other sects (including each other), the urban lodges and rural castles of the Order command vast resources and respect. They also make very obvious targets; the Lodge Wars and University Purges have weakened the Hermetic establishment, and intermittent conflicts with vampires drain the Order of vitality. Covenants are falling, but those that remain are powerful indeed.

- **The Church:** Heretics by Church standards, the Christian magi of the Chorus and Solificati have allies and debtors scattered throughout God's lands. Their fellowships may have been renounced by the Pope, but their faith and charity win many friends, from chapel-bound peasants to ranking clergy.

- **Pagan Enclaves:** The Verbena have a cause; The preservation of the Old Religions. Many rural people remember the Harvest Gods and magical charms that succeed when Christian prayer seems to fail; others simply don't want robe converted. Still others are fleeing witch-hunters or the hordes of Tezghul the Insane. To these holdouts, witch-folk offer sanctuary and comfort. In return, the Pagans reward them with loyal service and covert assistance — especially in Britain, where the Decade of the Hunt takes bloody reprisal for Wyndgarde's March.

- **Magical Beasts:** Wondrous creatures are dying, hunted by Daedaleans and mortals, or faltering from strange maladies. Verbena, Akashics and Dream-speakers find themselves in a weird alliance to save as many of these creatures as they can. Their "rescue missions" pit them against monster-hunters, the elements and the beasts themselves (who rarely want help from humans). Occasionally, a magical beast will return the favor, riding into battle or hunting enemies for its "friends."

- **The Fae:** Hermetics and witch-folk have old ties to the Kindly Ones. Although relations have not been — and are not now — always cordial, many changelings recognize the enemies they share with wizards. In Britain, in Mistridge, in Baerwald and the Slavic forests, dream-folk stand beside magi; truces like the Glastonbury Compact and the Call of the Goat (see Isle of the Mighty and Cult of Ecstasy) illustrate such twilight alliances.

- **Courts and Commoners:** Magick is a grand tool, and those who understand it are often revered. Many is the nobleman who dares the stake to secure a wizard's services; many is the commoner who recalls the herbalist who saved his wife, or the alchemist who slipped him a bit of gold. Mortals can be fickle, but they can be devoted, too. Although their aid is secretive at best, those favors can make all the difference....

- **Outcasts:** For those with nothing much to lose, the chance to help a wizard seems attractive indeed. Thieves, gypsies, traveling players and mercenaries are often glad to lend a hand to a magical friend. While their favors are suspect, these folk can be surprisingly devoted — and very helpful — to a magus who treats them well.

- **Horizon and Doissetep:** Two of the most powerful Covenants in Creation, these places provide refuge for weary magi. Secure in Otherworldly Realms, these strongholds withstand constant attacks and shelter endless diplomacy. The Council assemblies in Horizon, where its chosen number, nine, lends an auspicious air to the proceedings. Hermetics control Doissetep, but open its gates to other Traditions. Despite the Byzantine intrigues that taint each Realm's existence, these pillars of strength bear the brunt of the storm.

## Ranks

Coming, as they do, from many different cultures, the magi of the nine Traditions rarely agree on the titles the Council bestows. Those titles, based on Church and Hermetic ranks, prove awkward for fellowships with histories of their own to call upon. Most sects have certain designations they prefer to the "official" names; the latter titles appear in Council records and inter-Tradition gatherings, but rarely elsewhere.

- **Servant:** A common mortal follower. Depending on the skill of the servant and the temperament of his Tradition, he could be called "grog," "acolyte," "brother" or "friend." Some followers serve out of religious devotion, others feudal obligation, and still others out of affection.

Like a peasant, the average servant is considered a vassal of his magus; she is responsible for his behavior and well being.

- **Consort:** Although un-Awakened, the consort possesses some skill, position or talent that sets her apart from a mere "servant." Some consors are simply good fighters or skilled craftsmen; others are magical beasts, lesser sorcerers or night-folk with some tie to the magus they "serve."

- **Apprentice:** When a would-be magus begins her training, she receives this title — and all the duties that go with it. Unlike the Order of Reason, the Council has no formal "apprenticeship policy." Some mentors school their charges for five to 10 years, others for a single season. Under Council law, however, an apprentice is her mentor's "property" for the length of her instruction. Her deeds are the teacher's deeds, and she has few legal rights or obligations. An apprentice may or may not be Awakened during her early instruction, hut graduation demands magickal skill.

- **Discipulus (male)/Discipula (female):** A new magus, stilt learning hut freed of apprenticeship, becomes a "disciple" of the Arts. With the religious foundation of magickal practices, the title is not inappropriate; still, many Pagans shun it, ifonly because of its Church affiliations. A Discipula is responsible for her own actions, and may be challenged as an independent magus.

- **Adeptus:** A sorcerer who has proven her mettle assumes the title "Adeptus"; other magi consider her a competent judge of magick and politics. Some will seek her out as an ally, others as an enemy. Most Council magicians qualify as Adepti, and share full rights, respect and responsibility under Council law.

- **Legatus:** With so many different factions to pacify, each Tradition needs several skillful diplomats. No matter who he serves, a Legatus understands many tongues, Council politics, and diplomacy. His savvy and popularity count formore than his magickal talents, but he always keeps a few tricks ready.

- **Magister/Magistra:** A master magus, possessed of great knowledge and prowess, can make her own bargains. Most Magistri demonstrate impressive powers, but others prefer to let politesse speak in place of might.

- **Magister Mundi:** An archmage, well versed in all the Arts and incredibly powerful, may be called by this title. Many Traditions, however, consider the distinction unnecessary.

- **Primus:** Each of the Tradition founders goes by the title "The First." Several of these sorcerers actually rank below Magister Mundi in terms of power, hut possess the charisma and savvy to lead their respective sects.

- **Cabal:** A group rather than a rank, "cabal" refers to several magi working together as an extended family. Although many cabals feature a single Tradition, the Compact of Callias encourages cooperation between different sects.

- **Covenant:** Originally based on the Hermetic model, these mystick sanctuaries are soon called **Chantries** (from "an altar for prayers") instead. Depending on the size and

power of the group (or groups) that establish it, a Covenant can be a cottage, a castle or a gigantic Horizon Realm.

- **Deaconus:** A rarely used title, "Deacon" refers to one of the founding members of a Covenant.

## Future Fate

*Oh mechanicall victories, oh base conquest.*

— Montaigne, *Essays*

Judgment Day begins with fire, climaxes with tears, and staggers itself into a 500-year war. Despite a long winter of betrayals, schisms and losing battles, the faith burning at the Council's heart carries it through till summer.

The Council's first grand gesture, the March of the Nine, is problematic. While these emissaries of goodwill bring many allies to the Traditions' doors, they make some costly mistakes. An entire French town is leveled in a fight, spurring a colossal witchhunt. Two members — or is it three? — share an ill-fated romance. Worst of all, the First Cabal is betrayed by one of its own — the Solificato — and dragged down by Daedalean forces. In a moment of misguided loyalty, many Solificati stand alongside their chosen one, alienating the entire Council. The remainder quit the Tradition, join Hermetic Houses or the Order of Reason, form a new Disparate group (the Children of Knowledge; see Book of Crafts), or strike out on their own. The murder of the Solificati Primus dissolves the Tradition, and nine becomes eight — a less auspicious number than nine.

From there, things turn downward. Relations deteriorate between the Dream-speakers and their white cousins; as the Eras of Expedition, Conquest and Empire roll through their lands, many shamans quit the Council in disgust. Witchhunts ravage the Verbena and Chakravanti. Hermetic Houses rise and fall while science and reason give birth to the Industrial Revolution and the Age of Revolt. Ironically, the latter gives the Traditions a chance to rebuild. As industrialization feeds poverty and war, the mortals look back to old faiths and arcane secrets, Magick blooms again — in different forms, but vital nonetheless. The addition of two new Traditions softens the blow when the Ahl-i-Batin quit the Council and disappear.

As "Reason" becomes the new faith, its opposite — madness — thrives as well. Infernal sects, always present, blossom into a huge, sickening flower: The Nephandi. This "Voracious Beast" swells from a scattering of cults to a worldwide infestation. The Marauds, once isolated whirlwinds, scream across the world, gathering strength as the years go by. The Order of Reason, once devoted to its goals, becomes a bloated Technocracy. By the time the Traditions regain their feet, the world has grown darker, the War more devastating. Still, through it all, the ideal of Ascension has gathered strength, too. Five hundred years after the Ascension War begins, a new Judgment Day finds the Council with new tools, allies and purpose.

As always, that future is uncertain. But hope remains.

## Ahl-i-Batin (Batini)

The wind speaks. Sometimes in a lover's whisper, other times, in a sirocco scream. Like the wind, the Ahl-i-Batin seem formless, invisible and elemental, And like the wind, they speak in many voices.

Masters of Connection, these mysticks cross great distances with ease. During the Crusades, Batini assassins truck down kings; now their diplomats smooth ruffled feathers while their warriors make more permanent truces. When need be, these magi emerge, perform their duties, then vanish.

Batini ties to the Council run deep: Long ago, mysterious invitations summoned dozens of magi together. In the home of an Arabian merchant, the guests laid the plans for the Web of Faith. Eventually, they realized their host was a minor sorcerer acting on behalf of a larger fellowship: the Hidden Ones, whose name — Ahl-i-Batin — means "subtle" and "interior."

Behind that elusive name lies a common tie to each of the other groups. Five hundred years before Christ, arcane warfare led to a bizarre union. A war-weary Akashic group stumbled across an Ecstatic dance; joining it, one of their members suddenly bonded with an Ecstatic, creating a two-faced entity called the *Khwaja al-Akbar*. In a rapid series of revelations, he announced the Doctrine of Unity, wherein all the pieces of Divinity were to be brought back together into a single, ineffable whole. Warparties from other sects interrupted this "Night of Fana." The resulting battle turned a fertile plain into a wasteland. The Ahl-i-Batin had been born.

After that night, the survivors became mirages. Melding their old Arts with the arcane revelations of the *Khwaja al-Akbar*, they transcended mortal space. In the well between time and distance, the Batini discovered Mount Qaf, the heart of Creation. There, they built the citadel *Sihir Maqamut* and forged a fellowship bond by a telepathic network — the *Naffas Allah*, or "Breath of God." Over several centuries, the Batini spread across the Middle East, sowing wisdom among the warring tribes.

In their travels Subtle Ones crossed swords with *Whash* (Marauds), *Magouh Douidi* (Nephandi) and other, secular toes. To prevail, Batini employed disguise, stealth and misdirection. Their invitation to the other groups gave them allies. Soon, Islam gave them purpose.

## CHAPTER V: THE PLAYERS

Undoubtedly, the Web of Faith provided a cradle for the later Convocation. Through emissaries, teachers and occasional assassins, the Subtle Ones now guide the fractious Traditions toward the Unity spoken of by the Khwaja al-Akbar. Despite the group's efforts, most European magi remain ignorant of the Batini; those who know of them at all consider them heretical Muslims. Although Batini eagerly embrace Mohammed's faith — a Divine extension of their own doctrine — the group remains hidden behind veils of secrecy. The uncanny powers of Fana are like abominations to most children of the Prophet, so the Batini remain "subtle" to this day.

As individuals, Batini are often charming, hard-working folk. The word "sorcerer" is an insult to them, but most will tolerate "magus." The average Subtle One calls himself a *khiawat* — a silence. This strange appellation refers both to the mindspeech the Batini prefer, and to the silence before a grand revelation. In that silence, Allah whispers to the Enlightened Ones, and that whisper carries like the wind.

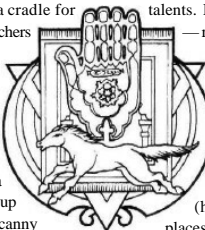
Philosophy: Wisdom comes not from seclusion, but from experience. Schooling is vital, but maturity moreso. Most *Murids* (experienced magi) have mastered Mind well enough to achieve a profound empathy for other people. Combined with his travels, studies and doctrine, a *khiawat* mirrors the concept of Unity in himself.

Unity lies at the core of our belief. Divinity slumbers within all people, even unbelievers. All things are connected by Allah; with His help, we pull the connections a little closer. *Sabr* — perseverance — strengthens wise men, and generosity makes them virtuous.

(Sadly, the Crusades and Reconquista mock the Doctrine of Unity- Surely Allah never intended *this!* Faced with ignorance and treachery, Subtle Ones teach when they can and kill when they must. The eternal comfort "*La ilaha. ilia 'llah*" — "There is no God hut Allah" — is never far from their lips.)

**Style and Tools:** Magick is Allah's gift to His *muttaqi* (devoted servants). A *Murid* performs his miracles through prayers, meditation, chants and music. Esoteric mathematics break the chains of preconception, and dance frees the mind and body. Some *khiwati* practice alchemy, but even these folks prize spiritual riches over material ones.

**Organization:** Some Batini avoid subtlety; dressed in finery from various cultures, they delight in Arabian splendor. Subtle *khiwati* disguise themselves and hide their mystick



talents. Despite preconceptions, many Batini are women — respected, if not equal, members of the fellowship.

These take the titles *shaykha*, and favor divination and storytelling.

Most Batini are Muriels, magi of limited insight. Gathered into *khanaqahs* (lodges), they tend to Earthly affairs. Truly wise *khiwati* attain *Murshid* status, and travel on to the Otherworldly Mt. Qaf. Back home, *shaykhs* (high-ranking Murids) maintain *harrams*, resting places for weary magi. Each member of the *khanaqah* takes his or her title from a household chore (the Baker, the Cupbearer, etc.). The Breath of God connects them all, and allows Batini to commune across great distances.

**Primum:** Ali-beh-shaar represents his Tradition, but makes it plain that lie speaks on behalf of greater *Murshids*. This "hidden leadership" does not make Batini popular with other magi, who wonder at the Subtle Ones' true loyalty.

**Initiation:** A *Murid* tests a promising recruit's *sabr* through irritating questions, enigmas and apparent contradictions. If the pupil perseveres, he is brought before the *khanaqah*, questioned, and perhaps initiated. Afterward, he becomes a "child" to his "family" and begins a seven-year instruction. When he finishes that, he is accepted as a *Murid*.

**Daemon:** The *Bos* (Reed) guides a seeker back to the ponds atop Mt. Qaf. Until it returns, the Reed whistles plaintively, mourning its separation from the Whole.

**Affinities:** Connection, Mind and Earrh.

**Followers:** Moorish refugees, Arab traders, wandering wise men, harem dancers, slaves, farmers, family members

**Concepts:** Physician, tradesman, scholar, houri, alchemist, defender of the faith

### Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** Blood has been spilled between us that cannot be forgotten; still, in the name of Unity, all Allah's children must be endured, if not loved. If we refuse to shelter each other, the storm will sweep us all away.

**Daedaleans:** Their words are wise, but their ways are blood and dust.

**Infernalists:** Sup with Iblis (Satan) and you shall burn.

**Disparates:** Oases are few and far between. Wander off if you will, but do riot blame me when you perish.

**Marauds:** No desert wind is as harsh as the dreams of the mad.

I'd rather offer my hand than my sword blade.  
Which will you take, I wonder?

## Akashic Brotherhood

All dungs pass away, Only the soul lives, forever, passing from one vessel to the next in an endless Wheel of Dhrama. Who can say where the next life will lead? The Akashic Brothers find the root of their Arts in such observations; unlike Christians, these exotic magi believe that each life is one of many — and spend those lives perfecting the soul for its return to the Wheel.

Not that they don't believe in Hell; in the Pits of Harmony, one's sins are stripped away through exquisite agonies. To avoid such torments, the Brothers practice an equally exquisite Art — one created in an ancient village named Meru. Through mastery of body, mind and soul, these magi ascend from crippled mortals to splendid immortals — inheritors of the Do ("Way") that man has lost.

The Brotherhood's Path began in Meru, the "first village" built high in the mountains of the East. There the grand spirits Dragon, Tiger and Phoenix instructed the people in the Way of Harmonious Living, Perils were many; to protect themselves, the *Meru'ai* shaped Do into mighty war-arts. When Meru passed away, as all things do, its descendants wandered oft into the world or built strongholds high above it, and continued to refine Do. Though these "Brothers of Meru" separated, their minds returned to a single pool, a shared remnant of their bygone home.

That Pool of Mem deepened as ages passed. Brothers who had never met in person still knew each other, and those who died left their remembrances in the spiritual waters. Like carp, the Brothers swam in this Pool before, during and after each lite. There, they washed away the terrors of Hell. As the children of Meru spread across the eastern lands, the Waters of Meru formed a mystic connection between them.

Several of these magi - now called *Akashi* tor their reverence for Akasha, the primal living revelation — wandered south, reaching and learning as they went. As their wisdom grew, their arrogance did likewise. In time, they earned the name "Warring Fists." Those who disagreed with their teachings fell before their Arts. Soon a terrible war with Thanatoic sects stained the Pool.

Brothers died, remembered their deaths and avenged them in the next life. The Way of Harmony became the Way of Destruction. By the time the *Akashi* withdrew, hundreds of years and thousands of lives had passed. Determined to avoid such things in the future, most Brothers entered seclusion and set their minds toward finding peace.



Peace has proven hard to find. Rival sects have risen, and they fall upon Brothers like angry dragons whenever possible. Thanks in the Long Red Night (a recent revival of the ancient war), tensions with the Thanatocists are as fresh as new wounds. And now there are the foreigners, with their bad smells and worse manners! Despite it all, the Warring Fists have tamed their rage: mingling Do with the faiths of Buddha, Lao Tzu and Master Kung, they perfect their bodies, spirits and minds. Still, every man has a breaking point. As the Ascension War stirs the waters of the Pool, the Akashic Brothers contemplate an answer.

Now a handful of "Walkers" (emissaries) travels to the Council. Each one is a brave soul with formidable Arts, curious eyes and indomitable spirit. It is no easy thing to journey so far — nor to enter another man's war. An Akashic Walker combines spiritual mastery with remarkable martial prowess. From the Pool's well of lore, he learns enough skills to survive in this bitter new world. He faces daunting obstacles, though — strange languages, stranger customs, rude companions and people who tear his "demon's eyes." Drawing a deep breath, he turns himself inward, seeks the Pool's soothing waters and tries to overcome the illusions that surround him.

**Philosophy:** The world is a dancing shadow, a veil of pain for those who cannot see beyond it. All things can Awaken, though many refuse; guide those who seem ready and keep watch for those who are not.

The Way flows through moderation. Preserve health, transcend selfishness and reach beyond limits. Do wells up from (the balance of elements; when you do not expect it, the Way will come. Until that time, prepare yourself. Water will not remain in a cracked vessel.

**Style:** The Do practitioner's fearsome strength, uncanny awareness and unshakable courage are fruits from the tree of spiritual perfection. Ideally, his harmony with Drahma's Wheel allows him to flow beyond Self and Other, entering the shared waters of the "all-mind/no-mind" where each being dwells. By doing so, a Brother senses emotions, reads minds, sends thoughts to distant places, or leaves his body behind.

That body is a cup; the soul is water. The stronger the cup, the more it holds. Thus, a Brother exercises his body constantly. His empathy for others translates into compassion for all beings, even his enemies. A well-trained Brother seeks to reform his opponents. Violence is a last resort.

Organization: Independent retreats across the East shelter countless Akashic schools — *Xiudaoyuan*. The Waters of Meru



connect them all, allowing a master in Zhongguo (China) to confer with one in Choson (Korea). Although most Xiudaoyuan separate men ("Yellow Doors") and women ("Red Doors"), both sexes receive nearly identical training. In each retreat, an aged abbot and several deputies (the "revered elders") wield ultimate authority. The few Walkers in Europe have no formal organization, but follow a chain of respect based on seniority.

**Primus:** Wu Jin speaks for the Brotherhood in the Council, but makes it plain that he is nor its leader; in essence, each Brother leads himself.

**Initiation:** Brotherhood begins with training; even the mightiest magus is considered a child when she begins training. The initiate must convince a master to teach her; if successful, she must observe a code of behavior called the *Noble Precepts*, which advises the initiate to avoid harmful speech, needless killing, intoxicants and sexual misconduct. Taking the name "Brother" — which all people are, regardless of sex — the initiate begins the arduous Way. She is tested constantly, and maybe sent away if found wanting. Eventually, the master decides whether or not the Brother deserves to enter the Tradition. If she does, an exquisite rite welcomes her into the Pool.

**Daemon:** Dragon, Phoenix and Tiger guide most Brothers, but some find direction from astral masters or elemental spirits.

**Affinities:** Mind and Water.

**Followers:** Oriental travelers, Akashic acolytes (craftsmen, families, un-Awakened initiates, warrior censors)

**Concepts:** Diplomat, weapons-master, sage, student of foreign Arts, translator, young apprentice, vengeance-minded warrior

## Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** As odd a garden as I have ever seen. Some conduct grand rituals; others raise songs to their gods, and still others conceal darker motives. The death-cultists among them give off an evil stink, but the Way hums in their bones. Drahma has laid a twisting path for us all, but great lessons flow from such things.

**Daedaleans:** The Stone Dragons have a cruel hire, one they have used on us once too often. I have teeth, too, and will gladly use them if I must.

**Infernalists:** The Pit of Harmony holds great treasures for them.

**Desparates:** An arrow (lies straighter than a rock.

**Marauds:** Burned rice with a poisoned grain.

Be slow to anger. Haste and pride cloud clear sight.

## Chakravanti (Euthanatoi)

As everyone knows, a crossroad is the surest path to the Underworld. So it's fitting that a crossroad of four diverse cultures led to the Thanatoic Tradition: the uncanny Chakravanti, or Euthanatoi, who watch over the Arts of mortality.

Like leaves from an autumn tree, these magi guard the moment between life and death. Heretical reincarnationists, they see Creation as a spinning Wheel of Death and Re-birth. When something — or someone — interferes with the Wheel's motion, the obstacle should be removed. The method of removal may be as simple as a kind word or as final as murder. No other Tradition inspires as much dread as the Chakravanti. Even the sweetest among them seems, to others, like a demon from Hell.

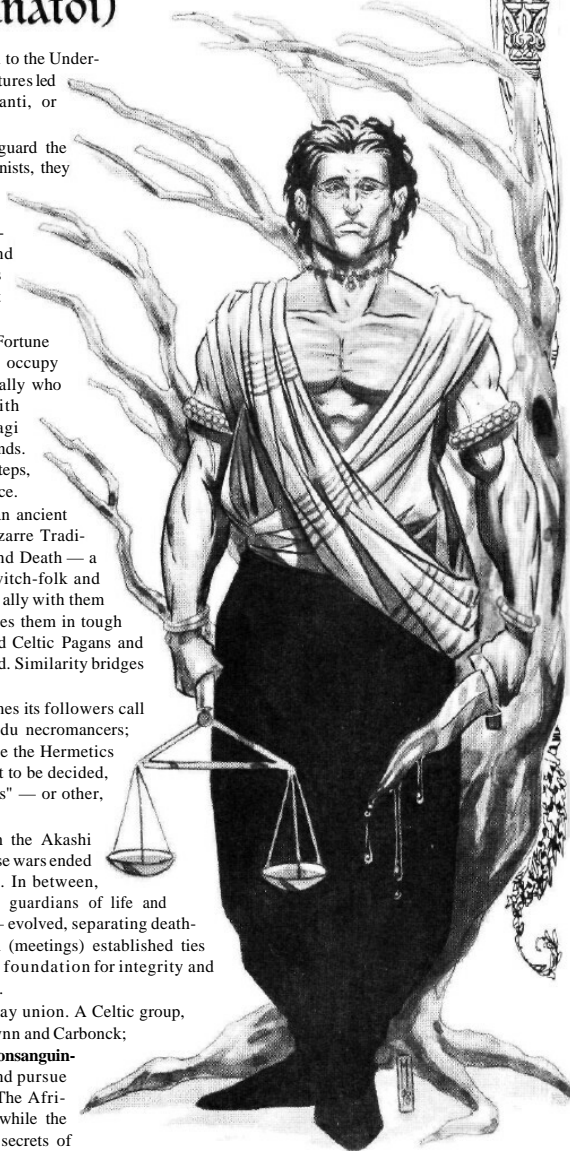
Why are they present at all? Because death and Fortune hold fascinating power. More to the point, they occupy important places in God's plan. Better to have an ally who understands and respects death than one who toys with it. No one doubts the sincerity and insight these magi display, and none can question the power in their hands. So long as the Keepers of the Wheel measure their steps, the other Traditions grudgingly accept their presence.

Allies help. The Hindu part of the sect shares an ancient bond with the Seers of Chronos; together, these bizarre Traditions command the Arts of Time, Sight, Fortune and Death — a combination the Council cannot do without. The witch-folk and shamans, while uncertain of the necromancers, often ally with them as well; a mutual respect for cycles and spirits places them in tough agreement. The other parts of the sect — Greek and Celtic Pagans and the mysterious Madzimbabwe — complete the bond. Similarity bridges the four Traditions, willingly or otherwise.

Even the group's name is controversial; sometimes its followers call themselves *Chakravanti*, the old name for the Hindu necromancers; their brethren often use Euthanatoi instead, a name the Hermetics prefer because of its Greek origins. The issue has yet to be decided, so most magi simply call them "The Hooded Ones" — or other, darker names.

The name-calling began centuries ago, when the Akashi waged 600 years of war with several Hindu seers; those wars ended long before Christ's birth, but began again recently. In between, these "children of plagues" set themselves up as guardians of life and ministers of Fortune. A rigid code — the *Chodana* — evolved, separating death-fanatics from their wiser cousins. Several Samashti (meetings) established ties between the Hindus and other Thanatoics, and laid a foundation for integrity and cooperation that has carried the Tradition thus far.

Those Thanatoic sects comprise an odd four-way union. A Celtic group, the Aided, preserves the Pagan mysteries of Annwynn and Carbonck; three Hindu sects (the *Natatapas*, *Lhaxsmists* and *Consanguinity of Eternal Joy*) comprise the largest faction, and pursue war, healing, luck, and necromancy respectively. The African Madzimbabwe cure plagues and tend ghosts, while the small but vocal **Pomegranate Deme** retains the secrets of



Persephone, Hades and classical Greek philosophy. United by the Scholars of the Wheel (archivists who track past incarnations), these diverse primpers find common ground at the crossing of death and rebirth.

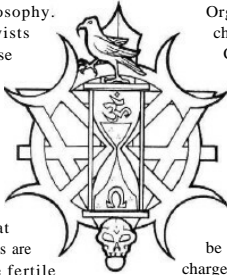
Like all crossroads, this Tradition is uneasy. Death exerts a fascinating pull — *Jhor* (see page 236) — that few sorcerers can resist; walls of language, culture and practice divide the different sects, and their companions are hostile at best. A Chakravati must walk very, very carefully. His magicks are not to be regarded lightly. Still, there are fertile Arts to be mined from the corpse-yard. A Euthanatos believes that Death and Luck follow the same spin; with a steady hand on the Wheel, a magus can turn ill Fortune into good.

Despite the dark image they share, most Chakravanti are generous to a fault. Many of the smartest and kindest wizards in the Convocation belong to this Tradition. Their sect demands responsibility and foresight. It rewards carelessness harshly. To dwell at the crossroad, a magus must be honest, perceptive and wise. This uncanny fellowship provides a strong hand at the Council's rudder and a vigilant watch on the moment of death.

**Philosophy:** All things die, and all shall be reborn. You need only look at the crops to know this is true. All life carries death and new life inside. The secret to understanding this is to observe them both.

Ghosts surround us; listen to the wind and hear their voices. They are the souls stuck on the Wheel of rebirth. Best to free them and end their suffering. Good fortune rides on that Wheel, too, for those who understand how to spin it properly — and with reverence.

**Tools and Style:** Kinship with Fate makes a Hooded One master of it. A practiced Euthanatos may commune with ghosts, cure or breed disease and decay, crumble stone and twist Fate's threads to suit his purposes. His tools depend on his sect: Celts favor Pagan rituals; Africans prefer prayer, paint and corpse-parts; Hindus employ a frightening variety of self-tortures, purifications, ordeals and designs; Greeks pepper elaborate rites with fruits, dust, chants and sacrifice. All sects use weapons and symbols of mortality.



**Organization:** Each sect uses its own hierarchies; as a rule, the Tradition accepts the usual Council ranks, but on a simpler level: *Shravaka* (apprentice), *Chakravat/Euthanatos* (magus), *Acarya* (teacher) and *Rimposhe* (Magister). Elders are obeyed without question, but rarely act without consulting their fellows. The Scholars of the Wheel serve as the group's "head council."

**Primus:** Chalech.

**Initiation:** All Chakravanti must die and be reborn — literally. An Acarya brings his charge back from the far edge of death (where she Awakens), then schools her in the Arts and Chodana, often with visions of past lives.

The Chodana code is essential: Briefly, it decrees a belief in reincarnation, entropy and the unity of all things; a duty to ease suffering, deny excess, practice mercy and purity the self; and the necessity of death before initiation. Euthanatoi are carefully trained and watched by elders. Those who stray are cut down.

**Daemon:** Depending on her faith, a Euthanatos might see her *Atman* as Shiva, Kali, Persephone, Hades, Annwynn, Dame Fortune or some simple but potent animal spirit.

**Affinities:** Entropy, Spirit and Earth.

**Followers:** Ghosts, grieving relatives, animals, physicians, beggars

**Concepts:** Healer, guardian, merchant, assassin, spy, ghost-tender, necromancer

## Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** While we stand in brilliant company, their fears blind them to the truths that seem so plain to us. Only Sahajjya and our witch-cousins understand the Wheel as we do; the Warring Hands know its name, but cannot comprehend its spin.

**Daedaleans:** To dig a grave for the world and call it a bed is foolishness.

**Internalists:** We stand on the brink of darkness; they leap into it, and must be purged.

**Disparates:** Go your ways, cousins. I force no one to follow my road.

**Marauds:** Pity the Mad Ones; they have died standing up, and have forgotten to fall.

No man is more corrupt than one who knows death  
and cares nothing for life.

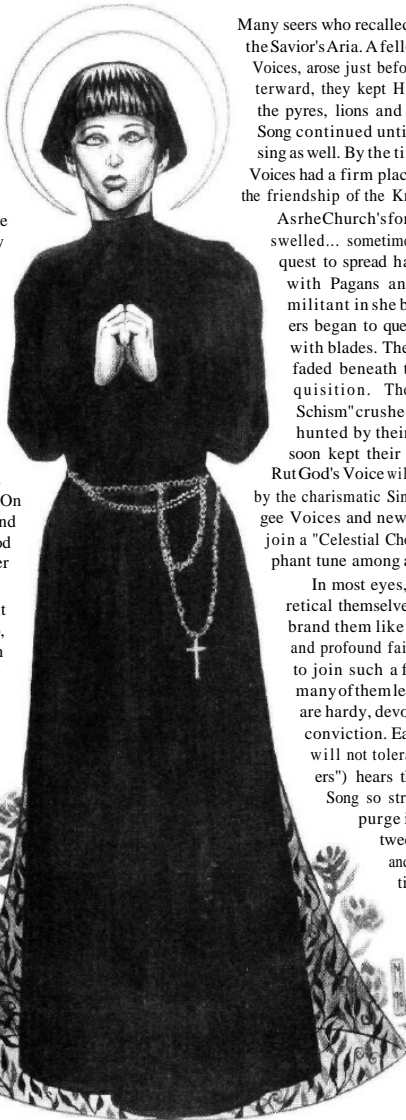
## Chœur Céleste (Celestial Chorus)

No sound is more transcendent than the voices of man and God in harmony. Transported by communion, an imperfect human song rises like a wind and becomes a chime in the music of the spheres. How malignant, then, to hear that song drowned out by the clink of coins and the rustle of vestments. The song is broken like a thief on the wheel, and its notes turn bitter. The true Singers of the Lord are appalled by this clamor, and they bear light into the darkness, sometimes with candles, sometimes with brands.

The Song began with Creation. As God Sang forth the first notes, the Earth, heavens, angels and each living thing added their voices. That Divine Song swelled to a crescendo, and afterward all things rested. But Lucifer added dissonance and his voice coiled about the base of Creation. In the Garden, Adam and Eve joined the Lord each day in song. On the night of the Fall, they ceased to sing, and the world became darker thereafter. God still loves the world, but Creation no longer sings back to Him.

But the Song never ended. To hear it is to Awaken. All Choristers have done so, and their mission is to compose a hymn that will bring all voices back to harmony — *quickly!* Choristers hear a new Song in the background — a Final Dirge. Before its notes crack the pillars of Heaven, the Singers will unite Awakened voices and return the world to harmony.

It's a dangerous task, one that began when the Egyptian magus Mentu-hetep called a gathering. Many magi had heard the First Song's echoes, but few had listened. With those who had, Mentu-hetep created the Sacred Congregation, then sent them back into the world. That world had little use for them; until Jesus Sang above the din. Creation rang with dissonance,



Many seers who recalled the First Song joined the Savior's Aria. A fellowship, the Messianic Voices, arose just before His crucifixion; afterward, they kept His Song alive. Despite the pyres, lions and other torments, their Song continued until an emperor began to sing as well. By the time Rome collapsed, the Voices had a firm place in its Church — and the friendship of the Knights of Gabriel.

As the Church's fortunes grew, the Voices swelled... sometimes with pride. In their quest to spread harmony, they clashed with Pagans and wizards. Although militant at the beginning, some Singers began to question an Aria written with blades. Their song wavered, then faded beneath the screams of the inquisition. The resulting "Mercy Schism" crushed the Messianic Voices; hunted by their former cousins, they soon kept their songs to themselves. But God's Voice will not be denied. United by the charismatic Singer Valoran, the refugee Voices and newly Awakened Singers join a "Celestial Chorus" raising its triumphant tune among a company of heretics.

In most eyes, rye Choristers are heretical themselves. Their mystick ways brand them like hot irons. Only vision and profound faith could bring a person to join such a fellowship, and indeed many of them leave. Those whose main are hardy, devout souls, glowing with conviction. Each of these magi (they will not tolerate being called "sorcerers") hears the echoes of rue First Song so strongly that no fire can purge it. Given the choice between a decaying Church and a vital new congregation, the Singers prefer the latter. Jesus, after all, ministered to whores and tax collectors; most Choristers would rather surround themselves with honest sinners than saintly hypocrites,

## CHAPTER V: THE PLAYERS

The Chorus provides a voice of conscience, reverence and charity in a Council filled with rage and spite. Not that these folk are meek — it takes a strong man to stand before the gates of Hell and sing! A Celestial Chorister is an outlaw before the Church and an enemy before many of his companions. It would be far easier to simply slink to the shadows of the Church and hide his lamp under a basket, but the light burns so brightly that he cannot turn away. Torn between faith, tear and the undeniable Voice of Cod, he sharpens his pitch, fills his lungs and sings to his immortal soul.

**Philosophy:** Our Father has many voices — when you hear Him in another's song, you cannot turn a deaf ear. Thar Song may swell from the throat of a Moor, an artisan, even a witch-woman; words are unimportant when faith is there. The Final Dirge is growing like thunder in the distance. Soon it will drown us all unless we sing together.

Courage must be your refrain — the courage of Daniel in the lions' den or Christ on Calvary. The Lord's Song was never sweet or easy, but with His Grace it will drive away the very flames of Hell.

**Tools and Style:** Song, Ore and prayer focus the power of God. As they heal the sick, grow the crops and call down fire from on high, these mysticks blaze with heavenly glory. Like saints, Choristers often manifest halos and rays of sunlight when they work their Arts; mortals, seeing such displays, often fall to their knees with awe. In game terms, most Celestial miracles are casual; no other sect commands the same reverence from the common folk.

The price is devotion: Although each Singer suffers from doubts and lapses, his faith must be titanic. Like a cathedral vault, a Chorister's vision reaches an exalted place most humans never see. Without profound conviction, his Arts — and his fellowship — would be impossible.

**Organization:** Several Council ranks come from Valoran's suggestions; thus, the Chorus uses them with-

out complaint. The *Tribunal Miscracordium* (Mercy Tribunal) addresses policy for the Tradition; Valoran heads that Tribunal, but does not dominate it unless necessary.

**Primus:** Valoran (the "secret name" of a French bishop).

**Initiation:** While some Choristers come from the clergy, most are simply common folk who experience overwhelming visions. A person dazzled by such insight might find her way to other like-minded souls, or to some holy place or hook. From a mentor, she learns secret lore. Initiation features seven sacred vows, each of which is enforceable by death: Silence, Charity, Mercy, Reverence, Reflection, Holy Labor and Enlightenment.

**Daemon:** No Chorister would use this word to describe the angels, saints or Divine voices who guide him.

**Affinities:** Prime, Forces and Air.

**Followers:** Clergy, worshippers, bodyguards, church goers, the sick

**Concepts:** Holy hermit, priest, Church reformer, clerical reumnciate, healer, scholar, knight, innocent, fallen person redeemed by faith

### Stereotypes

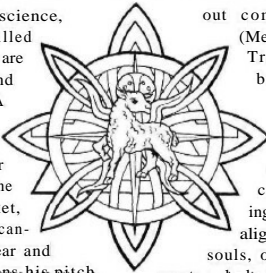
**Council Magi:** We sing before a Council of wolves, but perhaps we can ease their appetites by reminding them of the Song we all share.

**Daedaleans:** Oh, groan, Prometheus! The eagle of Pride-tears at your liver as Reason chains you to a stone. Even I cannot set you free — you must rise of your own accord.

**Infernalists:** We must choke the Final Dirge in their throats.

**Disparates:** Voices crying in the wilderness. Let us comfort them.

**Marauds:** Cod blinds the proud with insight. Pray you do not join their company.



See my lamp. Hear my voice.  
Please — the Last Hour is near....

## Dream-Speakers

To Europeans, dreams come from inspiration, a visit from Queen Ma bestowing some half-remembered treasure. To the shaman who journeys half-way across the world to stand in the Council, that dream is reality, a doorway to a higher plane where the gods speak directly to man. In the place between them, the Dream-speakers build their lodges and draw their symbols. No other fellowship understands the spirit-ways like these strange folk do.

The saga of the Dream-kin is new, yet ancient. In the earliest days, men and women knew the Iwa as well as they knew each other. Animals spoke, ghosts walked and the elements themselves offered gifts to the wise. Pride and ignorance shattered this world, however, and the Dreaming Ways were lost to all but a handful of people. As most men toiled in the hot sun or savage jungles, the cleverest ones walked into the Dream and kept the old promises. To their mortal friends, these people died but returned with odd and terrible secrets; to the Iwa, those shamans had been reborn to the true Path of Humanity — a Dreaming Way that stirred insight, respect and frightening powers.

Most shamans kept themselves apart; even among the smallest tribes, these mysticks carved a solitary road. Every so often, a pupil would be called and an elder would teach him; otherwise, the medicine men and clever women tended quiet fires, gathering only when it was necessary.

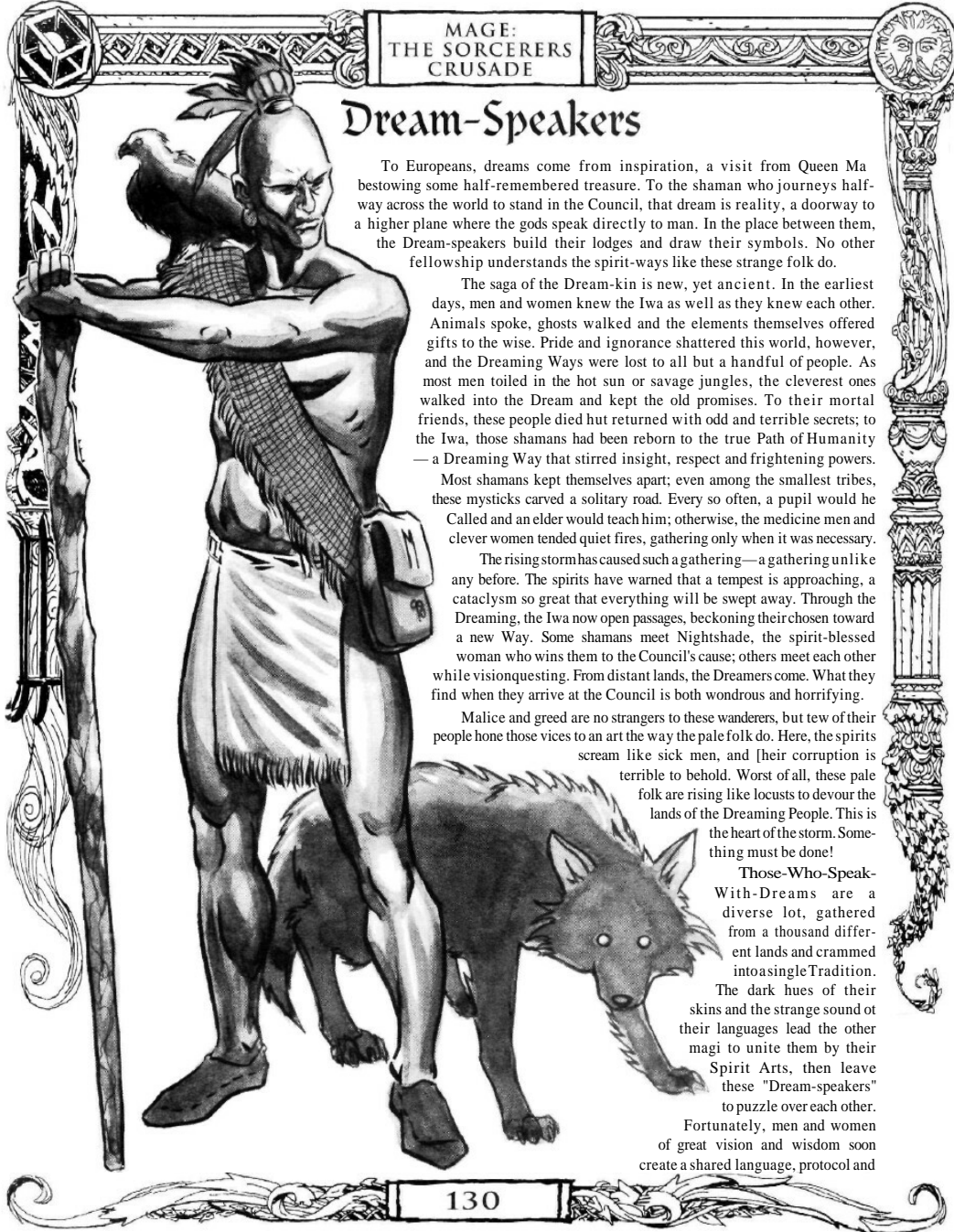
The rising storm has caused such a gathering—a gathering unlike any before. The spirits have warned that a tempest is approaching, a cataclysm so great that everything will be swept away. Through the Dreaming, the Iwa now open passages, beckoning their chosen toward a new Way. Some shamans meet Nightshade, the spirit-blessed woman who wins them to the Council's cause; others meet each other while visionquesting. From distant lands, the Dreamers come. What they find when they arrive at the Council is both wondrous and horrifying.

Malice and greed are no strangers to these wanderers, but few of their people hone those vices to an art the pale folk do. Here, the spirits scream like sick men, and [their corruption is terrible to behold. Worst of all, these pale folk are rising like locusts to devour the lands of the Dreaming People. This is the heart of the storm. Something must be done!

Those-Who-Speak-With-Dreams are a diverse lot, gathered from a thousand different lands and crammed into single Tradition.

The dark hues of their skins and the strange sound of their languages lead the other magi to unite them by their Spirit Arts, then leave these "Dream-speakers" to puzzle over each other.

Fortunately, men and women of great vision and wisdom soon create a shared language, protocol and



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a purpose. This effort rakes years, however, and leaves many Dream-speakers angry and ashamed. None are happy with the current state of affairs. The old Dream has grown bitter; a new vision must hold it together.

All Dream-speakers are united by vision; a man who has not truly walked the Dreampaths has now Awakened. Each of them has sacrificed great things — family, health, safety, comfort — for the "privilege" of creating this grand Council. Some shamans come from Africa's jungles, mountains or endless plains; the forests of the New World send their children to the pale lands years before Columbia "discovers" them. One odd group comes from a place no one has ever heard of, a place where the Dream and the mortal world are one. Pale Northmen give "shamans" their European name. The Spirit Tradition embraces them all and figures out how to live with them later.

Each shaman is a walking dead man; like a Chakravat, this medicine man has died and been reborn — symbolically if not literally. He may be friendly, curious, sullen or warlike; he might laugh, speak in riddles or talk plainly. Above all else, he holds the Iwa sacred, reveres his friends and wishes he were home.

**Philosophy:** This world is alive, and richer than you could imagine. The Dream helps you understand it better. You should never think that you see it all. The spirits are infinite, as are we all.

They're tricky, too; spirits tempt you with power. Do not answer them then. A man or woman who has been Called to a vision can avoid their snares and walk the Good Road of respect and harmony. None of us asked for what we have become, but we endure it gladly if our sacrifice will keep our people from harm.

**Tools and Style:** The Spirit Arts are not "magick" - magick is a deadly trick. Medicine is the Way of Touching; it heals, alters and sometimes harms. Even a warlike Dream-speaker shows reverence to the spirits, however; to him, they are masters, not servants.

With ordeals, invocations, trance-states and offering, the Dream-kin commune with spirits of nature. Many adopt totem animals, which they often befriend or even become. The exotic flavor of this Tradition comes through its simple yet powerful rites, its primal fashions and its respect for the living Earth. As

they transcend the material world, these magi kiss the spirits and walk among the Otherworlds.

**Organization:** Dream-speakers shun Council titles and often remain with familiar folk.

Around their own fires, the shamans prize youngsters, respect accomplished visionquesters and revere elders. As of yet, they have no common titles for such folk — one simply recognizes a person worth respecting.

Most disputes are handled by discussion before a council of elders; each party gets to speak, and the elders decide afterward. Punishments are usually light, but betrayal or corruption are sure death sentences.

**Primi:** Star-of-Eagles and Naioba share marriage, children and leadership of the Tradition until Naioba's death.

**Initiation:** A shaman is Called; a powerful vision ends his former life. From there, he undergoes a ritual "death" and receives instruction from an elder. During that rite, spirits challenge him constantly; if he does well, they soon adopt him into the Dreaming Fellowship, Membership in the Tradition is fairly easy to attain after that.

**Daemon:** Ancestors and totem animals inspire Dream-speakers to advance along the Good Road.

**Affinities:** Spirit and Fire.

**Follower:** Families, allies (often Pagans or farmers), escaped slaves

**Concepts:** Diplomat, warrior, healer, craftsman, shape-changer, curious stranger, distrusting skeptic, hero of her people

### Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** Brothers and sisters, shut your mouths and leave my tent. You malign what you do not understand and pollute what you know. I see wisdom in your eyes, but your mouths speak foolishness. For my peoples' sake, I remain with you, but do not try to bend me to your ways!

**Daedaleans:** Long ago, the Dreaming Place was surrendered from our world; we are the walking doorways to that Place, and we will not suffer it to be tainted further.

**Infernalists:** These Vision-mockers poison the World with their breath. I would see them burned in their own Hells.

**Disparates:** Run away as fast as you can, cousins!

**Marauds:** These folk are trapped on the far side of the Dream. They are dangerous, but deserve pity, not hatred.

If you have seen a vision, hold it proudly to your heart;  
it is worth whatever you have given up for it.

## Order of Hermes

A crack of thunder heralds the arrival of *Magus Rex*, the High Magician who commands the richest Arts of sorcery. For over 500 years, the Houses of Hermes have reigned as the supreme magickal order of Europe. Now barbarians batter the doors of the mighty Covenants, and the wildest of them appear to be the Hermetics' own allies. How did things reach this state?

Various Hermetic guilds crawled from the ruins of Rome: They fought until two visionaries struck the *Pax Hermetica* and established an Order of 12 distinct *Collegia* (Houses). Like the Council it foreshadowed, this Order laid out protocols, terminology, titles and social discourse. Thus solidified, the Houses went on to shape magickal thought throughout Europe.

Originally, the Order of Hermes was a confederation of 12 Houses united by the Code of Hermes, shared Arts and *Enochian*, a secret magickal language. A mixture of Egyptian Arts, Hebrew secrets, Gnostic concepts and Creek philosophy and science, the Hermetic style of magick stressed scholarship, craft and sheer will. The key to Hermetic thought is perseverance; a man or woman with enough insight, wit and will could literally move Creation, which is precisely what the High Magicians did....

Until Mistridge,

No one gave it much thought at the time. It was neither the first nor last Covenant to fall. Most Hermetics were too busy worrying about vampires (who had corrupted House Tremere some years before) or rival magi (in the Church and Pagan lands) to bother with the upstart Craftsmasons. It was a fatal oversight. By the time the Order of Reason began its purge, the Hermetics presented a large — and overconfident — target. More than any other group, they have felt the cannons' hear and the lash of the Scourge. This unbecoming circumstance led a previously unremarkable master named Baldric LaSalle to end hostilities with the witch-folk and Christian Singers. With the approval of the *Judicium Hermes* (Tribunal of Hermes), He began a project that would culminate in the Grand Convocation — a project impossible without the resources and influence of the Hermetic Order.

To unite such disparate sects under Hermetic leadership, the Order propounds the Spheres and ranks. But though the new Traditions accept this scheme, they ungratefully deny the Order its rightful authority. In place of a Council led by the 12 Houses and their Tribunal, the other sects now demand a single Tradition comprised of all 12 Houses in one — and an *equal* one, at that! No subject causes more strife, begins more duels and provokes more intrigue than the consolidation of the Hermetic Houses. Master LaSalle, laureled though



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he is, has earned many enemies among the Houses for his scheme. Although the wizards appreciate their allies and encourage the stimulating trade in ideas and Arts, there is tradition to be considered. The Houses of Hermes were the first among many — and many wizards plan to keep it that way!

Privately, some Hermetics wonder if joining the Order of Reason might be feasible— After all, both Orders require discipline, discretion, scholarship and a passion for understanding; both believe a small elite must guide and protect the masses. Though this idea rouses bitter arguments, quite a few Hermetics want to "improve the Daedaleans from within" or at least approach them from a position of strength. Strength, after all, is the mark of a magus — strength of will, strength of mind and strength of purpose.

Even now, the Hermetic Order commands tremendous power: vast fortunes; strong ties to merchants and academia; the greatest archives; best organization; most potent allies and the most powerful Covenant in existence — Doissetp. While some Hermetics sense that their star is fading, most view the future as just one more challenge in a life filled with challenges. The Order will prevail!

**Philosophy:** Challenge defines the magus. A true wizard does not shrink from difficulties — he embraces them, transcends them and overcomes them with his Arts and wisdom. As above, so below. Glorious is the worker who knows this, who speaks Heaven down upon Earth and lifts Earth up unto Heaven, and who thereby occupies the void between. He can truly call himself Awakened.

**Tools and Style:** A dazzlingly complex Art of signs, sigils, correspondences, pacts, languages, riles and incantations greets one who would learn the Hermetic Mysteries. The intricate rituals that define High Magick sharpen the mind and craft bonds between things that cannot be shattered easily. A master of such Arts weaves grand magicks — elemental commands, spirit-summonings, storms of fire and castles of ice — as well as subtler enchantments — charms, scryings, translations and the like.

Hermetic doctrine teaches magick in three stages: *goetia* (minor rituals), *theurgia* (union with godforms) and *magia* (High Magick). Through obscure texts and complex rituals, the willworker develops insight into the realm of pure thought, then transforms herself through its principles. This endless process is arcane, dangerous and secret. Those who seek these truths must prove themselves through scholarship, politicking and luck.



Organization: Different Colligium specialize in different fields: **Bonisagus** (research), **Flambeau** (warfare), **Mercere** (communication), **Quaesitor** (law and security), **Tytalus** (recruitment) and **Verditius** (Magickal Treasures). The seventh Collegium, **Ex Miscellanea**, exists as a diverse catch-all group of four smaller Houses: **Criamon** (seers), **Jerbiton** (art), **Merinita** (the fae) and **Bjornaer** (animal-mysticks, now joining the Verbena).

All Collegia prize discipline, formality, secrecy and rigid hierarchy. The *Code of Hermes* and its Peripheral *Corrigenda* dictate proper behavior, forms of address, certamen procedures and every other imaginable form of interaction. The Council ranks follow a simpler version of the Hermetic mode (five titles instead of 10).

**Primus:** In Council, Magister LaSalle represents the Order; however, he answers to a *Judicium* Hermes composed of masters from all Houses.

**Initiation:** Universities provide most of the Order's recruits. Likely students undergo hidden tests of memory, wit and insight. Recruits spend a year in a College Covenant, then serve an apprenticeship that lasts several years. After rising through three apprentice degrees (*Neophyte*, *Zelator*, *Practicus*), the apprentice faces an unexpected crisis that provides a final test; formal initiation follows success.

**Daemon:** Angelic hosts, heraldic beasts and ghostly mentors provide extra tutoring for a Hermetic magus.

**Affinities:** Forces, Matter, Mind and Fire.

**Followers:** Scholars, merchants, nobility, Covenant servants, magical beasts, mercenary troops, spies

**Concepts:** Young wizard, rake, spy, artist, scholar, elemental master, judge, noble-

### Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** An assembly of High Arts and Low, the like of which no man has ever seen! (Too bad they're such ungrateful bastards!)

**Daedaleans:** A puzzle: vital, to be sure, and guided by good purpose. Their Arts, however, are brimstone and cold steel. Trust them not, but don't discount them.

**Infernalists:** A babbling rabble of would-be magi. Let them roar, their own behinds!

**Disparates:** Pah!

**Marauds:** So far into Twilight these *demensigo* that the earth itself quails beneath their feet.

Be bold, generous and proud, ye scions of the griffin!  
Ours is a magnificent Order, and it's weathered  
harsher storms than this!

## Seers of Chronos (Sahajjiya)

To Awaken, you must leap from mortal perceptions to immortal ones. And no magus understands perceptions and their alteration like the Seers of Chronos. Named for the titan of time, these eccentric sorcerers give the fig to mores and preconceptions. Fear is the first thing shed when a Sahajjiya arrives; other things — inhibitions, clothing, sanity — often follow.

Church and society revile the body; passions are man's legacy from the Fall, Seers — or *Sahajjiya* (roughly, "Naturals"), as many call themselves — believe the opposite. By their bizarre logic, even the darkest passions are Divine. Through them, a person might glimpse Creation as if she were a god. From this exalted perspective, a magus can see the endless weave that ties all things together. Creation, to Seers, is a living thing, one they claim to love — often in the most carnal ways possible! To open this Path to godhood, the Seers indulge in every vice imaginable — a practice that puts them one step higher than demons in the estimation of most companions (and one step lower than angels among those who wish to enjoy such license).

The so-called Ecstasies occupy an odd place in the Council. Dismaying as their practices are, the Seers share gifts of prophecy, hindsight and empathy that no other sect can match. It was their greatest master, Sh'zar, who called for the gathering; his close companions, the three Divyas Tali, Akrites and Kalas, helped assemble the magi. Although their fellowship is extraordinarily loose, Seers number in the hundreds. Even the least of them can glimpse the recent past or future, and their masters can literally move time — a feat most wizards consider impossible! So despite their evil reputation (or sometimes because of it), the Sahajjiya always seem to end up at the high end of the table.

Like most magi, Seers claim to have inherited the oldest magickal Arts. Their sects can be traced with certainty back to ancient India and Greece, where mad Tantrikas, Maenads and siddhu danced across the night. Not surprisingly, their kind share a long friendship with the Chakravanti; Sh'zar is instrumental to that Tradition's acceptance. Until very recently, however, the Ecstasies themselves were hardly a "sect" at all; their devotees congregated in tiny groups, but never made much effort to unite — until the Seer.

If tales are to be believed, Sh'zar has lived many lifetimes, and has done more in one than most men could do in five. With awesome powers of persuasion and foresight, he is said to have traveled the known world. Devoted to peace, he has defeated many a warlike sect with charisma, eloquence and prodigious clouds of hashish.

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Although renowned for his prophecies, his greatest Art consists of bonding several people together. By sharing love and pain, he convinces many folk to share one and avoid causing the other. His followers favor this method over open violence, and often create empathic "punishment wheels," joining a tormentor to his victim in order to display the pain he caused. Despite Sh'zar's ideals embodied in the *Code, of Ananda*, the Ecstatic commandments — some of his followers are exceedingly dangerous.

When "passion" becomes the key to godhood, even the greatest magus is taxed to watch over his flock.

As prophets, master Seers have the unenviable ability to see what lies ahead. During the Great Betrayal, they will be disgraced; a hook by Tali Eos, *The Nine Sacred Passions*, will redeem them somewhat, but Ecstasies will be regarded with hostility forever after. Despite the dark prophecy, these magi passionately seize the future, kiss it and move on.

A demon to some, a mad saint to others, the Sahajiya glows with inner fire. Even away from her vices, she's abnormally perceptive, eloquent and often well educated. She defends her Arts with logic so complex, yet simple, that master Hermetics are left sputtering. To her, boundaries of morality, form, and time are illusions. When you cease to believe in them, they turn away and allow you to Awaken.

**Philosophy:** The world is a living thing. It weeps, it sings, it loves, it destroys, all without restraint, Creation is too vast for mortal vision. We take it as a lover and join its eternal joy and pain. Passion is a Divine birthright, and it sets our feet to that Path.

But never forget that each man makes tipples on the sea. To love the world, you must shun malice and carelessness. There is enough pain in the world as things are; to create more is to spit in the face of your lover, then laugh at her tears.

**Tools and Style:** The Path of Passion has many roads. Some Ecstasies are veritable incubi and succubi, while others surround themselves with drink and drugs. Most Ecstasies dance, sing and meditate in strange postures, and a few forswear all vices and punish themselves in flesh-warping ways. Some do it all, and let passions ride in as they will.

When an Ecstatic's spells take form, the world seems to spin, melt and fade; a wild vision takes its place — a godsland whirling to the tune of Shiva and Kali. She sees past and future, communes with spirits, reads emotions, alters her

body (with strength, speed, healing or even pain) and senses *everything* with inhuman acuity. Occasionally, she shares....

**Organization:** Despite its seemingly non-existent nature, this Cult of Chronos practices tribal organization, Sects of Hindu Tantrikas, Muslim apostates, Christian heretics, African medicine folk and Pagans of Greek, Celtic and Norse descent all follow their ancestral ways, breeding them with other sects to produce a demented hybrid. Sh'zar and his *Divyas* (masters) preside over the lot, enforcing their proverbs: the *Code of Ananda*.

That Code provides morality and stability to the mob. The Code declares that all things are miraculous; encourages accountability for one's actions, and tor the healing of old wounds; protects mortals from forced Enlightenment; denies the inevitability of prophecy; declares punishment for one who harms another; admits the existence of fear, but withdraws its power; and tells Seers to avoid anger and nourish humor.

**Primus:** Sh'zar the Seer.

**Initiation:** Each Sahajiya has her life ripped out from beneath her by a powerful vision; from there, she's often taught the Path of Passion by a mentor who gives her a sacred bond of trust (*Diksham*), connecting them across time and distance. Depending on the sect, her final initiation could be easy or perilous.

**Daemon:** Gods of passion, trickster spirits, and even future selves manifest to guide a Seer.

**Affinities:** Mind, Time and Water.

**Followers:** (Would-be) lovers, sycophants, artists, philosophers, scholars

**Concepts:** Libertine, dancer, traveling player, prophet, madman, poet

### Stereotypes

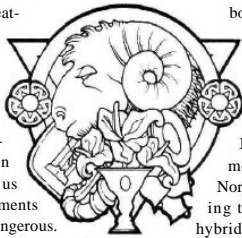
**Council Magi:** Your eyes are hook-blind, friends. Come feel the sunshine and truly *see* the sun.

**Daedaleans:** Their future is a steely fist and whirling screams of smoke,

**Infernalists:** Pain comes with life, but to make *all* life pain is an abomination.

**Disparates:** Kiss me and go your way.

**Marauds:** No stars shine brighter than those who have set themselves alight.



A temple's sanctity is in its soul, not in its stones.

## Solificati

An Awakened person wears a crown. Like the halo of a saint, this glittering coronet displays God's favor. To win that crown, a magus must look past false appearances, muster the Art of Transformation and refine himself from clay to gold.

Alchemy, the Transformation Art, concerns the ascension of base material to an exalted state. Mortal "puffers" try to turn lead to gold, but the true alchemist wants to transform himself. While this quest involves material disciplines, those refinements are baby steps on the Royal Road. Solificati alchemists take their name from the crown of mastery. These "Crown'd Ones" wear their achievements proudly — too proudly for some tastes — but they have that right. The road to their ranks is long arid torturous, beset by dragons of greed, ignorance and material instability. The fire of genius can become a torch (or an explosion) all too easily.

That Path begins in the Cup of Isis, with the Arts of Hatshepsut, who powdered her cheeks with gold she made from sand. Glowing like the sun, she taught her best students how to refine the glittering dust. Just as the humble sand becomes pure gold, she taught, the basest pupil could, through wisdom, become a magician — and more. To protect her secrets, she hid them in esoteric hieroglyphs — pictures so symbolic that even master scribes could not decipher them. The queen passed the secrets to 10 other most trusted Cupbearers, bidding the magi to perfect themselves along with the sand.

Naturally, those secrets spread to less trustworthy lips. Hatshepsut's lore soon mingled with the discoveries of Taoist magicians, Hermetic wizards, Jewish rabbis, pagan oracles and Christian mystics, breeding a strange Art that could damn or divinify with equal success. To those who pursued alchemy with greedy intents, the Curse of Gold turned their fortune to ruin; to those who sought the Royal Road of self-perfection, alchemy granted wealth, Enlightenment and immortality.

Along the way, alchemists refined marvelous cures, magnificent ores and a language of symbols so ornate and complex that even its masters only half-understood it. A group of those masters, the White Lion Guild, joined several High Artisan sects; this auspicious "Golden Guild" alliance boosted the Craftsmasons from a collection of lodges to a full-scale Order. Shortly afterward, White Lion Duc Luis de Varre united his guild with several other alchemical schools. Dubbing the result "the Crown'd Ones," he helped establish the Order of Reason.

It was not to last. The alchemists, used to self-sufficiency, rebelled at "interference" from other Conventions. The Solificati walked out of the Order soon after its foundation, and rapidly disintegrated into squabbling factions. A series of internecine wars resulted — wars that ended when Diplomat Luis led the Crown'd Ones back to the Royal Road. Now a Tradition, the Solificati retain their independence while working toward a larger goal.

To outsiders, a Solificati seems arrogant and self-absorbed. Her research appears more important than social graces, and she often speaks in riddles and searches for hidden meanings. If she's remotely competent, this magus surrounds herself with worldly goods — which she doesn't seem to care about. Behind that shell, however, the alchemist is a seer struggling with her own blindness. To her, the world is a lapeslry of symbols, tantalizing in its complexity, yet simple if you know where and how to look. Her enigmatic ways are a challenge to others: *See beyond the obvious. Reach past your limits. Crack the serpent's egg and cut yourself on Ouroboros' teeth. Only then can you call yourself "magus."*

**Philosophy:** Magick is a symbol for self-refinement. While it bestows great powers, those trinkets are nothing compared to the spiritual process. Everything in Creation is part of that process (the stars, the minerals, the spirits, the beasts), and is a reflection of a cosmic truth; every item has a higher state. The world is organic, caked with baseness that, when smelted away, reveals Divinity. That smelting presents the greatest challenge; it requires wisdom, education, intuition and a balance between inner and outer elements.

Perfection of one breeds perfection for all. Material things are ultimately hollow. One must be generous as the swan, honorable as the flame and valiant as the lion. The true Philosopher's Stone is not a stone at all— it is the spirit that lives forever.

**Tools and Style:** Unlike the Hermetics they resemble, most Solificati are calm and patient. In laboratories overflowing with books, burners, astrological charts and strange chemicals, they transform mundane matter into wondrous objects. Lead into gold is only the beginning. Their potions, dusts, True Metals and strange fires are less intimidating than the wild storms of their Hermetic friends, but used wisely, they can be equally effective. Mishandled, they breed catastrophe.

Those toys are a dumb-show, however; the true magick appears in the expanded awareness, perceptions and faculty that a good alchemist achieves. His senses, mind and endurance reach superhuman levels; he can see into the past or future, heal himself, even read thoughts and emotions. The magus becomes his own focus; so long as he can concentrate on his experiments, his senses sharpen. Some Crown'd Ones actually become *rebi*— hermaphrodites that meld male and female aspects into a perfect whole. The

Tradition's handpicked emissary in the First Cabal is one such rebi, formed from two magi into one.

**Organization:** Diplomate Luis avoids the errors of the past. His Solificati are left largely to their own devices. These days, an alchemist is judged by her achievements and insight, not her ranking in some paltry hierarchy. Apprenticeship is essential, but after graduation, each Crown'd One is equal — provided she can prove her worth. Disputes are often left to the magi to settle (preferably by certamen, not murder). Scandalously enough, this Tradition reveres male and female equally. Insight is more important to them than decorum.

**Primus:** Diplomats Luis de Estes.

**Initiation:** Convincing a good alchemist to train you is difficult enough; the endless tests, labors and lessons that come with that training drive out all but the most dedicated seekers. Many apprenticeships last five to 10 years; in that time, the "egg" (apprentice) learns the most common symbols, but must figure the rest out for himself. Few alchemical texts feature writing — pictures and a few cryptic references are all an egg has to learn by. If he Awakens, he might be taken into the formal fellowship — or he might not. Most eggs don't know what they have joined until they've been chosen to join it.

**Daemon:** Magical beasts, animals and zodiac signs lead a merry dance along the Royal Road.

**Affinities:** Matter and Earth.

**Followers:** Rich patrons, artists, aspiring alchemists, recipients of generosity

**Concepts:** Mysterious stranger, apothecary, monk, astrologer, painter, noble, ne'er-do-well

## Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** Oh, the Lions of Hermes are worthy bedfellows, and the Desert Winds shimmer like gold, but the rest of these fops are embers in grease. Perhaps the Ethiopes have secrets to share....

**Daedaleans:** Their stony towers weigh heavily upon one's heart.

**Infernalists:** Dragon's Hood is wine for these fellows. May it rot out their maggoty guts!

**Disparates:** Who am I to chastise sparks for fleeing from the fire?

**Marauds:** Broken thread makes bitter tapestries.

Lift yourself above the dust if you would turn it to gold.

## Verbena

The Old! Gods are not dead, nor are their followers. Despite the spread of Christianity, the woods and mountains still shelter Pagan ways. Even most Christian folk know enough to respect the Old Gods. Who knows when they — or their servants — may be watching."

But now those servants are besieged by the army of God. Once tolerated, the Pagans have become symbols of everything the Church forbids. As witch-hunters scour the countryside, a coalition of Pagans — the Verbena — rises to meet the threat. With bloody Arts and savage ways, these children of Brigid, Odin, Freyja and the rest gather around fires to invoke the coming night. When darkness tails, they teach their young and destroy their rivals with the passion of their warlike forbears.

In the dawn of time, Verbena say, the primordial Wyck rode the currents of Creation. Gaels incarnate, they taught magic to the first sorcerers. Stories call them *Tuatha De Dannann*, *Aesir*, *Vanir*, *Bogatyr*s.... Their names are not as important as their legacy. In addition to their magic, these demigods created the Old Roads, and left their descendants signs by which to travel them. Other magi have different opinions, and call Verbena spawn of Lilith or whores of Eve — the tainted offspring of sin.

Although heirs to the oldest mystick secrets, the Verbena are a new fellowship. Until recently, scattered Pagan sects tended the old tires alone. As witch-hunters and demonic cults swelled, however, the Pagans were forced further and further into the darkness. Things are changing. When two Inquisitors, General Wyndgarde and Baron Ulrich, attack Pagan strongholds in England and the Black Forest, the survivors form a vengeful fellowship. Two charismatic sorcerers, Nightshade of Harrowgate and William Groth of Baerwald, construct their sect from Celtic, Slavic, Norse and Pagan practices.

During the early Convocation years, Nightshade and Groth meet with representatives of the Chorus and Hermetic Order; soon, they meet each other. Through a Greac Rite, they embody Thor and Brigid and form a life-bond. After establishing a core sect with British and German Pagans, they gather allies from distant lands. Forsaking everything but a pair of knives, these brave magi venture off through the Paths of the Wyck. William going east and Nightshade going west. In time, Nightshade comes home with magi from unknown lands (North America); Groth perishes in the Far East, but Akashic Brothers return in his place. With help from refugees escaping Tezghul, Nightshade establishes a new Tradition from the Old Religions.

Like the herb for which they're named, Verbena are masters of healing, foresight and purification. Not that many of their rivals would swear to that — only the Chakravanti and Seers generate the controversy that these Pagans do. The hatred between the witches, the Hermetics (who once exterminated House Diedne, a druidic sect with ties to Nightshade's folk) and the Choristers is well known. These uneasy allies see the Tradition's darker side — the hedonistic shapeshifters who dance naked under the moon, spilling blood for banished deities. To the witches, however, life is a sacred. It is to be enjoyed. It is not a fallen state to be atoned for. Pain, joy, hatred, ecstasy, birth, death, song and prayer — these are spokes in an eternal wheel. Verbena celebrate the brightest and darkest aspects of Creation, and their deities epitomize the passion and valor the witch-folk so respect.

These magi revere the cycle of seasons, too. Each turning is a holiday, each harvest a blessing. Sex is a communion, the melding of male and female and the beginning of life. Blood is the water of immortality, the sap of the World Tree. Birth is the scream of new creation and death is the seed of things to come.

Like their gods, Verbena can be ruthless. Each coven-ground has a tree, and that tree is nourished with blood from live sacrifices and the witches' own veins. Yet honesty, compassion and generosity are prime Pagan virtues, too. A Verbena is loyal to her friends, remorseless to her enemies, defiant in her manner and courageous in her Arts. No sect, as a rule, breeds better friends or bitterer enemies.

**Philosophy:** Magick flows from the union of inner and outer Divinity. Creation is sacred, the body likewise; like a child, power emerges when the two are joined. The cycle of seasons echoes the cycle of life — from birth to death to rebirth. Passion is the pulse of Awakening and sacrifice — especially self-sacrifice — is the greatest gift you can offer. Nothing comes without a price, and all things, good or ill, return threefold. If you would grasp the fire, prepare to be burned by it; but better to be consumed by Creation's flames than to stand coldly and watch them from afar.

**Tools and Style:** No other Tradition understands life the way the witch-folk do; they swim in its waters from the moment of Awakening. To bridge the gap between flesh, spirit and the elements, Verbena use fire, herbs, blood and concoctions. The open air provides their sanctuary and the moon blesses their celebrations. To stay close to the earth, most Verbena go barefooted and perform their Arts skyclad (nude), even in the harshest weather. The circle — symbol of eternal unity — becomes their Cross, and the tree — symbol of the living world — marks their cathedral.

**Organization:** Until recently, these magi practiced in small groups or alone; under Nightshade and Groth, they've banded together. Still, they shun Council titles and mock those who consider rank important.

The witch-folk *do* have ranks, of course: A coven, made up of 13, nine, seven or three, takes the Covenant's place. Each coven features two seniors (a priest and a priestess) who lead the rites and maintain order. Most disputes are resolved by debate, but some feature ordeals, combat or both. The Sabbats — Imbolg (Feb. 2), Beltane (May. 1), Lughnasadh (Aug. 1) and Samhain (Oct. 31) — provide great celebrations, as do Midsummer and Midwinter. While men make up a good portion of this Tradition, no other sect is more closely identified with women — wild, dangerous women.

**Primus:** Nightshade of Harrowgate.

**Initiation:** Each initiate must undergo a ritual death and rebirth. She is harshly tested, and must swear blood oaths before acceptance. Once reborn, the witch is whipped while spirits look on. Her blood seals the oaths.

**Daemon:** Verbena often see the Old Gods, but some are led by animal guides instead.

**Affinities:** Life and Water.

**Followers:** Fanners, families, bidden Pagans, herbalists, huntsmen

**Concepts:** Hermit, firebrand, herbalist, shapeshifter, healer, forester

## Stereotypes

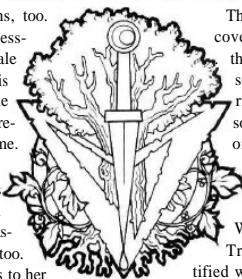
**Council Magi:** Swallow your pride and extend your hand — these folk may be strange allies, but we all share a common foe.

**Daedaleans:** I'd sooner drink my own heart's blood than watch you turn this world to steel and paper.

**Infernalists:** They rebel against the Church by worshipping its opposite. A perverse slave, though, is still a slave.

**Disparates:** Tend your gardens well, cousin. The storm is upon us.

**Marauds:** Sages with the hearts of wolves and the minds of children.



The World Tree has more branches than your Cross —  
and far deeper roots!

## The Order of Reason

... God the Father, the supreme architect, had already built this cosmic home we behold, the most sacred temple of His godhead, by the laws of His mysterious wisdom.... But, when the work was finished, the Craftsman kept wishing that there were someone to ponder the plan of so great a work, to love, its beauty, and to wonder at its vastness. Therefore... He finally look thought concerning the creation of man.

— Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, "Oration, on the Dignity of Man"

## Assistance Most Rare

Without tools and philosophy, man is a fallen angel. To remain worthy of God's trust, a person must reach out to the sacred patterns left by God, embrace them and illuminate them for others. Because those ideals were corrupted by a sea of greed and sin, God has withdrawn His favor; to the Daedalean magus, the Grand Design He left behind is the key to salvation.

When the earliest Sacred Artisans uncovered the secrets of fire, languages, agriculture and trade, humanity moved beyond supplication and hope; while others stood in the tain and begged God for help, craftsmen and kings answered their prayers, a Sacred Artisan does not place himself above God, but takes up the Lord's tools and becomes His apprentice. The Grand Design, therefore, is a sacred trust.

It's also pretty cool, especially by the wretched standards most people endure. A Daedalean character is on a mission; to help himself, he carries guns, slender swords and marvelous machines; he ministers to the sick with mighty potions and flies through the air in glider wings or hot-air balloons. By medieval standards, what he does should not work. But it does... quite well.

No one epitomizes the spirit of the Renaissance like a Daedalean magus, Knowledgeable, sophisticated, dedicated and restless, he or she steps boldly out of the Middle Ages and holds a lamp to illuminate the Path. To this virtuoso, God crafted His Creation by precise rules and calculations. To understand them is to enter God's workshop and join Him at the craft.

## Spheres of Influence

- **The Arts:** Artistic sophistication is the goal of all aspiring gentlefolk; thus, the humanities — philosophy, literature, logic and the fine arts — are breeding grounds for new ideas. By working allegories, symbols and classical ideals into their work, Daedaleans of all persuasions entrance their audience and spread their message. That audience is hungry, especially among both the newly rich and the titled nobility.

- **Courts:** With their wealth, sophistication and innovative ideas, many Guildsmen are welcomed by monarchs and merchants alike. This allows the Order to influence policy (openly and covertly) across the known world.

- **The Church:** Staunch allies of the Catholic Church, the Gabrielites find themselves fractured during the Lute Reformation; until then, however, this Convention rides into battle, constructs hospitals, hunts witches and sways the Vatican with open purses, bared blades, peerless theology and, of course, miracles.

- **Lodges:** On the local level, skilled tradesmen flock to build cities and seaports; there, Craftsmasons, Artificers and Seekers establish lodges, where they spread the gospel of good work, teach advanced techniques, and carouse after hours. Every lodge combines sanctuary, school and tavern; this appealing combination makes it a natural magnet for working folk.

- **Secret Societies:** During the Dark Ages, Artisans had to keep low profiles and preserve their skills. Their lodges remain covert to this day; after all, wisdom has many enemies. While the Ksirafai are the real masters of intrigue, the Craftmasons, Gabrielites, High Guild and Celestial Masters work through a variety of secret societies — the "true" Masons, Templars and Orders of the Rosy Cross so revered by would-be occultists.

- **Universities:** The battlegrounds for new ideas; some lodges operate within established universities, while others are universities themselves.

## Ranks

The Order's hierarchy is fairly strict. Although it's possible to buy yourself a title, you'd better to ready and able to prove your worth! Daedaleans do not tolerate fools or incompetents — the Great Ideal is too important to be for sale.

- **Brother/Sister:** As yet un-Enlightened, the Brethren provide labor, messages, alliances, funds and military might. Although treated with respect, Brothers and Sisters are lesser members of the Union.

- **Apprentice:** Pupils with talent, these young folk train hard for six years; each New Year's Day, a new secret is revealed and a new test is required. The final two tests require mystick ability; an apprentice who fails these exams joins the Brethren instead.

- **Mediator:** A graduate of the six tests joins the low-level willworkers, and begins to learn *Ars Praeclarus*.

- **Resplendent:** An accomplished Daedalean must pass five additional tests; if he succeeds, he gains this renowned rank and assumes a degree of respect within the Order.

- **Lodge:** A place rather than a rank, the lodge might be a guildhall, seaport, library, hospital, castle or school, depending on the needs and goals of the local Magistrate.

Each lodge is designed for ritual significance by Craftsmasons, and functions as a C'ray and Covenant (see Chapter IV) for its members. Nonmembers must pay dues or perform services to take advantage of the lodge's facilities. In addition to a vast number of lodges, each Convention (except the Ksiralai) has one or two Guildhalls, the "heads" of the organization.

- **Facilitator:** A traveling Resplendent skilled at politics and languages, the Facilitator conducts messages, performs intrigues and implements plans for her Convention. While many of the upper ranks within the Order are held by men, women seem to dominate this level.

- **Magistrate:** A supervisor with mystic skills, a Magistrate facilitates work and communication within his lodge.

- **Honestus Resplendens:** A powerful and highborn Daedalean might become a prince within the Order. Very few commoners ever achieve this rank.

- **Resplendent Maximus:** A member of the Inner Circle. Only 14 Daedaleans hold this rank at the same time.

## Internal Politics

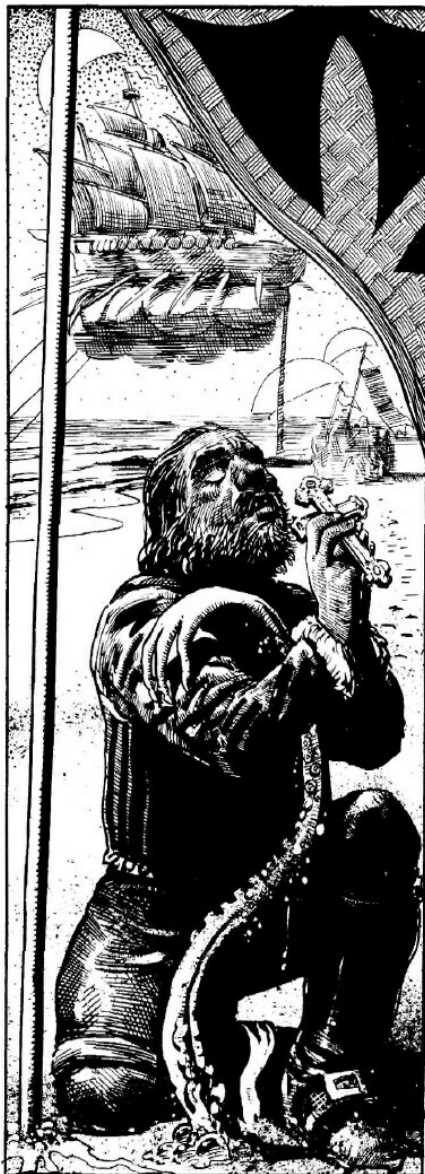
Order is, of course, essential. Everything, theoretically, has its place — even the woman, the stranger and the infidel. By putting a common goal above old prejudices, the Conventions utilize the genius within each member and direct it toward a single purpose.

At the top of the hierarchy, the 14 Maximi of the Inner Circle meet in a single heavily fortified tower, designed according to special geometric principles. In early days, the Circle met in Brittany; a few close calls during the I kindred Years' War convinced the Maximi to move their headquarters to Langudoc (the old tower still functions as a fortress). Both towers are bleached white, ringed by triple keeps and guarded by small but powerful armies. Each of the six Conventions has two Maximi — a man and a woman; two untitled Ksirati report to the Circle, but do not attend.

Each Convention has 20 Honori, each overseeing a district; within each district, that Honestus is essentially a prince, answering only to the Circle. Some of these men (rarely women) are accomplished magi, others are simply adequate magicians but good politicians.

A series of Magistrates mind the lodges, ports, castles and hospitals spread across the known world; at the "lodge" level, a group of Respondents, lesser Magistrates, Apprentices and Brethren attend to local concerns — usually a combination of trade, education, moneylending, fighting and invention. In the Far East and Turkish lands, the hierarchy is essentially the same, though distant cultures employ other titles.

Discipline depends on the Convention and local Magistrate; generally, minor infractions are punished by chastisement, demotion and hard labor; major failures



might earn branding, torture or exile, and betrayal is a death sentence. A chastised Daedalean has her research seized and distributed throughout the lodge; a censured lodge is put to the torch.

Human nature being what it is, of course, this "order" works better in theory than in practice. The Conventions have been at odds with each other since Day One, and the strange gender and religious politics within the Order heighten the tension. Sessions inside the White Tower are contentious indeed; even local lodges have their discipline problems and rivalries. Trade guilds constantly find themselves tangled in each other's business, while inventors and military commanders try to outdo one another as a matter of pride. On the whole, however, the Order works better than any other government on Earth — a feat facilitated by magical Vasilicos (see Appendix), mail fretnets and messengers who keep communications open across vast distances.

The real schism lies in the ideological rift between Gabrielites, Craftsmasons, Guildsmen and High Artisans. The Gabrielites seek a single Church, and dislike the liberal policies within the Order; the Craftsmasons champion the common folk and hard work; the Guild warns to build a new, cosmopolitan world through trade and wealth, while the smiths secretly prize innovation over everything else — even God. While these factions squabble, the Cosians and Ksirafai keep to themselves,

following private agendas; the Void Seekers and Celestial Masters form a right bond and eventually unite as one Convention, but keep many discoveries secret from the other groups. Although the Order continues to prosper, its inner alliances, rivalries and treacheries eventually have dire consequences....

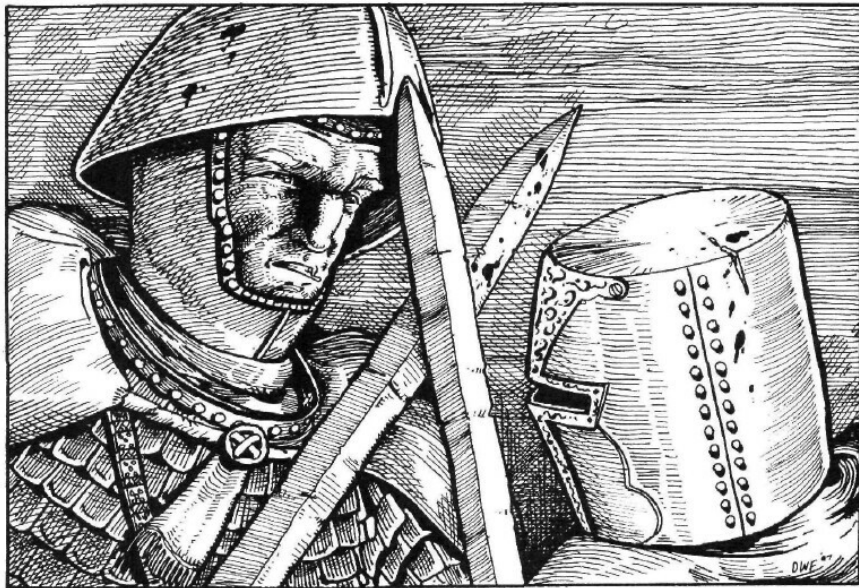
## Future Fate

*Let us, instead, concentrate on reaching a rational, sensible, civilised agreement which will guarantee a world fit for science, process....*

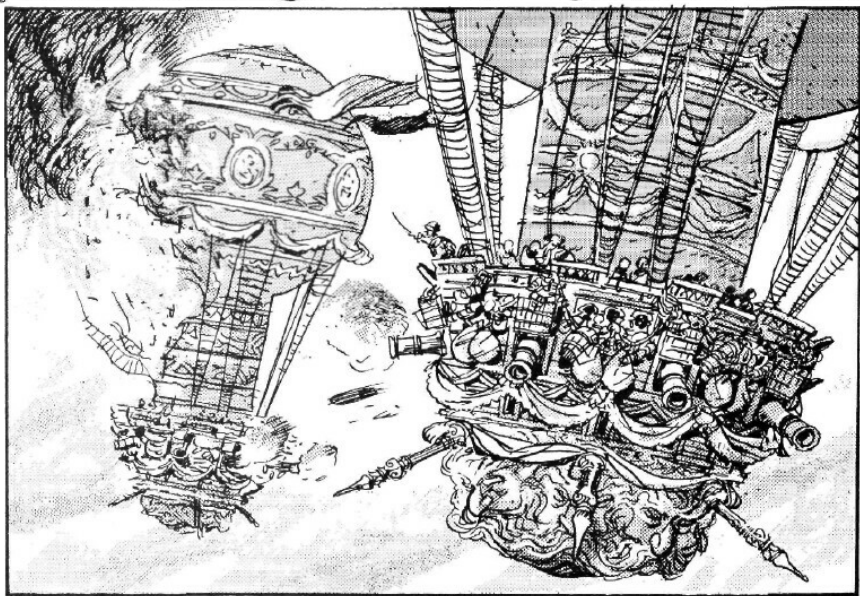
— The Honorable Mr. Jackson, *The Adventures of Baoni Munchausen*

The next five centuries are wildly successful for the Order of Reason. With their toes in disarray, the Conventions ride the rising tide of science and rationality. By the 19th century, they stand astride the majority of the world. That pinnacle, however, is achieved over millions of bodies and the corpse of the Order's Grand Ideal.

Out of the best of intentions, the Craftsmasons have created a monster. Even now, it's beginning to get away from them; in 1670, they will be betrayed and exterminated by an alliance of the Cabal of Pure Thought (itself dissolved in the late 1830s), the High Guild and the Ksirafai. This last group then conducts a purge of all records mentioning the Craftsmasons before melting further into the shadows.



## CHAPTER V: THE PLAYERS



By the late 1600s, the Daedaleans have begun to distance themselves from their flamboyant foundations. Many records and artifacts of the early Ascension Conflict are "lost" or "reclaimed"; all evidence of the Order's advanced practices systematically destroyed, suppressed or revised. In 1745, a magical battle shatters the White Tower of Languedoc. Both the Traditions and Infernalists are "credited" with the deed, but no reliable records survive. The Council gets the blame, and a massive series of assaults and intrigues hacks the Traditions into bits. Flush with triumph, the Order shines through the Age of Reason, but stumbles into decadence by the mid 1800s. Many of the original founders die or retreat into solitary research, leaving the Order to a new breed of scientists. Under the leadership of Queen Victoria and a new Inner Circle, the Order is stripped down, shaken out and transformed into the Technocratic Union — the Technocracy of the modern age.

During this reorganization, the Artificers discover a machine-Realm. Dubbed "Autoethonia," this Otherworld becomes a sort of spiritual focus for the group, which takes the man-machines fusion to its logical extreme under the name *Iteration X*. The Celestial Masters absorb the Void Seekers into a single Convention during the Age of Exploration; eventually, this group assumes the name *Void Engineers*, and begins an aggressive push against the horrors in deep space. Two new Conventions rise out of the Industrial Revolution: the

*Electradyne Engineers* and the *Difference Engineers*. Both groups later defect to the Council of Nine, becoming the Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts and sparking a new and bitter phase of the War. The High Guild shuffles its papers and dons the sinister mask of the *Syndicate*; a revolution in technique and application turns the Hippocratic Circle into the flesh-crafting *Progenitors*. Of all the Conventions, these two groups change the least. The Cabal of Pure Thought is undermined and decimated when the other Conventions decide that its "One-World-One-God" philosophy is costly and outdated. Shortly afterward, a *New World Order* rises in its place.

And the Ksirafai? Having never "existed" in the first place, the group purges all records of itself (along with many of its own members) and lays the foundations of the NWO. All records, that is, save one library. Knowing the corruptibility of a secret shared (and the treachery of their comrades), the Razors conceal their collected documents, even from their own eyes. Most of the survivors die out; by the late-20th century, perhaps five people know the Ksirafai ever existed. Five more tend the hidden archives somewhere in Europe. The Technocracy has no records of either group, and the librarians are unaware of the archives' significance. Figuratively buried alive, the final heirs of the Ksirafai maintain a lost treasure trove even they cannot find, overseen by keepers who do not understand the treasure they tend.

Such is the price of success.

## Artificers (High Artisans)

In an ideal world, any man (or woman) can have the power of a magus. While the ancients huddled around their fires and prayed to spirits, the forerunners of the High Artisans made clothing, and simple machines to cultivate the soil. Thus, did science supplant magick, at least among practical folk.

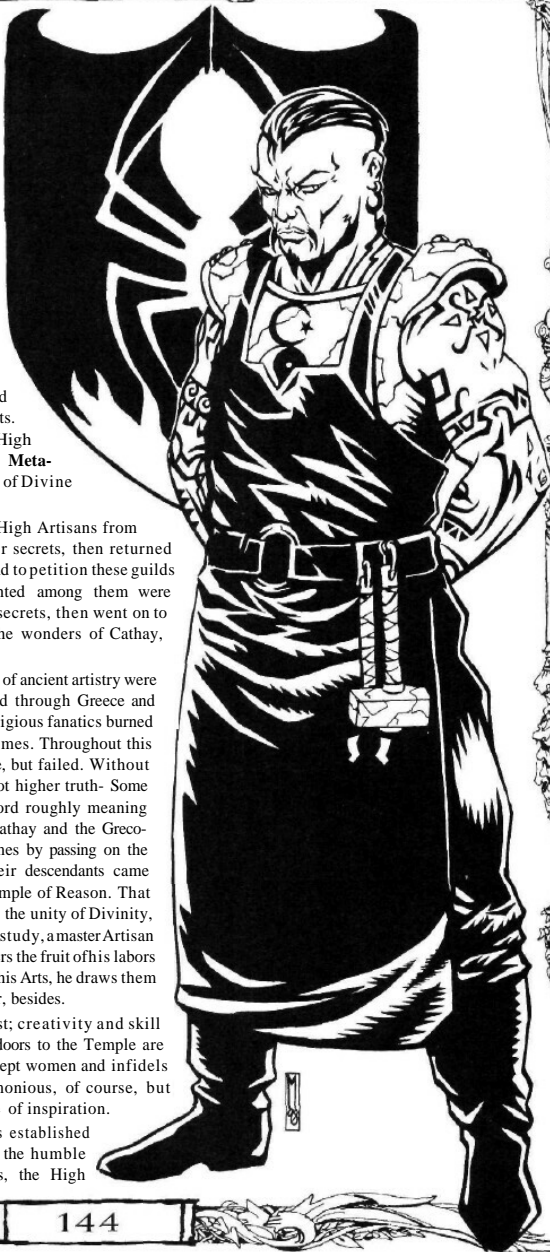
The true breakthroughs came with advanced mathematics; as architects and artisans strove to perfect their crafts, they discovered formulae that allowed them to get predictable results. The men who mastered such secrets became like gods to the people who had not, and those men wove elaborate rites around their Arts. Delving deeper into esoteric principles, these High Artificers uncovered sacred geometry (see the **Metaphysics Knowledge, Chapter IV**) — the spark of Divine guidance that illuminates genius.

In the court of Thothmes and Hatshepsut, High Artisans from across the known world gathered to share their secrets, then returned home to raise new guilds. Aspiring craftsmen had to petition these guilds to learn the necessary skills; the most talented among them were elevated to special ranks and taught the Divine secrets, then went on to create the marvels of the ancient world — the wonders of Cathay, Egypt, Greece and Babylon.

Sadly, it is man's lot to destroy. Vast amounts of ancient artistry were lost during the Long Night. Barbarians smashed through Greece and Rome; Mongols destroyed Cathay's wonders; Religious fanatics burned the Library of Alexandria, not once but several times. Throughout this era, scribes tried to reproduce this lost knowledge, but failed. Without Divine inspiration, the writers saw mere facts, not higher truth— Some guilds, notably the Dalou'laoshi (an esoteric word roughly meaning "People of the Five Sacred Stone Dragons") of Cathay and the Greco-Roman Collegium Praecepti, survived those times by passing on the mysteries to handfuls of initiates. In time, their descendants came together again, crafting a foundation for the Temple of Reason. That Temple, a symbol rather than a place, epitomizes the unity of Divinity, Humanity and Creativity. Through hard work and study, a master Artisan unlocks his inner genius; having done so, he scatters the fruit of his labors to the common folk. Through their acceptance of his Arts, he draws them along the Path of Reason— and makes life easier, besides.

To High Artisans, politics take the hindmost; creativity and skill are an Artificer's greatest prizes. Because the doors to the Temple are not barred by religion or sex, High Artisans accept women and infidels on a more-or-less equal basis. All is not harmonious, of course, but human imperfections are tempered in the forge of inspiration.

A long affiliation with the Craftsmasons has established the Artificers' position within the Order. While the humble Grafters assimilate and distribute technologies, the High



## CHAPTER V: THE PLAYERS

Artisans experiment. The engines, weapons and toys they make become the greatest tools in the Daedalean arsenal. To suit each man (or woman) to their talents, Artificers divide themselves into four guilds: the **Forgers** (or **Villains**), who fashion mechanical Devices; the **Bright Lions** (mockingly, *Puffers*), who pursue alchemy and esoteric Arts; the **Pythagori** (also *Scribblers* or *Heng'ti*) who concentrate on mathematics, languages and principles; and the **Mauls** (Hammers), who carry their discoveries into battle. Useful as they are, most Artificers frighten their fellow Daedaleans. Although they embody that genius's achievements, their odd ways and disregard for custom make them suspicious, if brilliant, companions.

**Philosophy:** Invention is the pinnacle of human achievement. To that end, we constantly create wild new gadgets, toys, weapons and artwork. Each new creation, it is said, brings you closer to Divinity. Sometimes that ideal kindles a fire so intense it burns an Artisan from the inside out.

**Tools and Style:** Skill, hard work and imagination are the keys to *Ars Praeclarus*. With them, a person might become nearly Divine. To that end, Artificers employ tools, alchemical laboratories and machines: Clockworks, steam, gunpowder and advanced metals provide the raw materials, while muscle and inspiration work those materials into miracles.

Artificers are renowned for their stamina, but even more for their eccentricities; scotched black by their forges, some add strange designs to their skin and odd prosthetic to their limbs. To these radicals, the human form is just another machine — one they enjoy experimenting with. Such is their dedication that some people say these Artificers carry on their trade even after death.

*(Storyteller Note: Artisan Devices shouldn't be L00 visionary. Anything invented within a century of 1500 is (air game, as are inventions like those envisioned by da Vinci. Twentieth-century innovations are out of bounds. Also note that wild gadgets often malfunction around mortals — with catastrophic results. See "The Scourge.")*

**Organization:** For the most part, Artificers disregard the usual ranks; respect is given for merit, not title. Within their various guilds, High Artisans recognize a bewildering array of degrees; in practical application, however, they divide their Convention into *Apprentices, Artisans, Masters, Grand Artisans and Epitomes* — titles granted by personal accomplishments. Although three rough councils

(one for Europe, one for Cathay and one for the Arab world) comprise Artisan concerns, they're chaotic affairs at best.

Artificers prefer to handle their own business. Even so, most require patrons to support them. A few isolated lodges are self-sufficient, but most get revenue from a wealthy or powerful benefactor — one who often helps himself to the lodge's inventions.

**Maximi:** A progression of people, all known by the titles *Daedalus* and *Ariadne* (who was secretly *Daedalus'* apprentice).

**Initiation:** All Artificers, even those who concentrate on esoteric studies, must know crafts and mathematics. Before or after his Awakening, an initiate must convince an Artisan to teach him mundane skills; if he displays genius (or Enlightenment), his master tunnels *Ars Praeclarus* into the lessons. If the pupil grasps the principles, he is brought to a forge and welcomed through any one of a hundred different ceremonies; depending on the guild or culture, initiation might range from a genteel rite to a hot-iron ordeal.

**Daemon:** The proverbial Muse of Fire guides each Artisan's hand, often appearing as a legendary inventor or mathematician.

**Affinities:** Forces and Matter, Stone and Metal.

**Followers:** Craftsmen, cannons, mercenaries, lords and princes, merchants, apprentices, monarchs who love mechanical toys or war machines

**Concepts:** Inventor, alchemist, blacksmith, architect, artist, gunsmith, war-machinemaker, toymaker, Skyrigger, dragon-killer

### Stereotypes

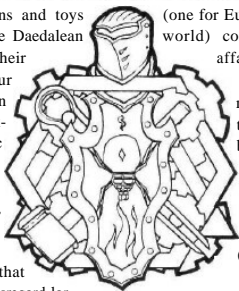
**Council Magi:** Packs of children, playing around their campfires and often burning their fingers — or ours.

**Daedaleans:** A cathedral is made by the labor of many hands. Let others tend the hearth of faith, the proportions of the structure, the health of the workers or the funds for the task. We, with our Crafter brothers, will provide the inspiration and materials. Together, we will all construct a spire to Heaven.

**Infernalists:** Worms in the timbers of Our Great Work. They must be squashed underfoot or thrown into the forge.

**Disparates:** Child, you need to learn a trade. If you're willing, I will teach you.

**Marauds:** Every structure has a few loose cobbles. Every structure but ours.



An invention is like unto a child — a living product of  
sweat, blood, love and genius.

## Cabal of Pure Thought (Gabrielites)

For over a thousand years, God's Holy Church has brought order to civilization. Throughout the Long Night, monasteries and nunneries tended to the needy, educated the poor and allowed all else, ministered to the faithful. As a result, the Church has kept darkness at arm's length.

Now that the Church has become corrupted. Simonists sell salvation; nunneries hide whorehouses; clerics sell their approval for worldly goods and influence. Many servants of God remain mercifully free of this spiritual taint, but the threat of corruption is still there. The City of God is besieged. Fortunately, the Knights of Archangel Gabriel, Messenger of God, are there to break that assault.

In His eternal wisdom, God granted a vision to His servant Claudius Dediticius many years ago. In it, Gabriel outlined a fellowship of reverent men and women who would supplement Peter's Church. To seal the covenant, Gabriel kissed Claudius, imbuing him with Holy Might — the Awakening of God's Power within him. To this day, that fire stirs within all true Gabrielites, and defines their sacred mission.

Claudius set his vision down as the *Revelation of the Pure Thought of God*, and assembled a fellowship of talented Christians to aid him. This Divine order outlasted Rome, Charlemagne and the Pagan hordes that once ruled Europe; its members went on Crusades, built cathedrals and compiled libraries when education was almost nonexistent. Working within the shadow of Peter's throne, this secret Cabal sought to unify all Christians under one World, one God and one Church, then protect that Church against its adversaries.

The decline of that holy institution and the stains on Saint Peter's holy robes have pushed the Knights into a more militant position. What good is world unity when the Church that provides it is defiled? When the Convention of the White Tower was called, Gabrielites saw it as a way to spread God's Word through prosperity. Some had initially hoped to convert the heathens in their midst, but were soon disappointed. Now, the Cabal seems beset on all sides by the enemies of God. In response, some Knights have suspended their commitment to the Sixth, Eighth and Ninth Commandments (killing, stealing and lying). Surely the Lord understands their distress!

This army of God conducts its war on three fronts: The **Illustroferatores**, who feed the hungry, tend the sick, debate the Word of God with skeptics, and monitor books for orthodoxy; the **Poenitenti**, who minister to the weak, take confessions and spy upon the faithless; and the **Venatores Maleficorum**, who war upon the enemies who will not be dissuaded by softer ministrations. The well-known "Falcons of Gabriel" come from the latter branch, while agents of the other two are inconspicuous in their dealings. Within the Church, these "Doves of Christ" conduct a secret crusade; they loose the Falcons — their military cousins — only when grace has failed.

## CHAPTER V: THE PLAYERS

These Falcons form the sword-arm of the Conventions, offering shelter to the Lord's followers (like the disgraced Knights Templar or refugees of the Hundred Years' War) while punishing heretics, night-folk and unbelievers. Equipped with the best weapons and armor the Order can provide, they take the field when no other options exist. Because the Falcons present the Cabal's most obvious face, most outsiders think *all* Gabrielites are warrior-priests. This is hardly the case; most Knights see their Cabal as a merciful order. Better to slay an errant soul than to stand by while innocent ones suffer. Worse still, the world would be forfeit if the Church itself fell. In the void, the Pagans and monsters would rush in, just as they did after Rome's decline, and take the collective soul of mankind screaming into Hell. That must never be allowed to happen!

**Philosophy:** Goodness comes through Christ's holy blood, shed on the Cross, Mankind has refused to follow the teachings of God, His Son and the prophets; thus, the world spirals downward, and Satan cackles. This truth is simple and self-evident; there is no reason to disguise it in riddles or signs.

A pure soul thinks pure thoughts; while no man is without sin, this ideal gives us something to aspire to. (Incidentally, Gabrielites hate being referred to as "Daedaleans," and never call themselves such. Daedalus was not a reverent man.)

**Tools and Style:** Each Gabrielite is invested with the Holy Fire — the Awakening — and carries it as a sacred trust. That trust can only be broken by forfeiting one's soul. Prayer is a Gabrielite's greatest tool; through it, God answers a servant's needs. Even so, He appreciates resourceful followers. Hence, a Knight also employs speeches and invocations (to change minds); healing salves (to cure illness and wounds); fire and water (to purify); and weapons, armor and torture (to destroy that which will not be changed). When discretion is essential, passwords, hand signals and Scripture-based codes assure the Cabal's secrecy.

**Organization:** The Doves (Knights of Peace) and Falcons (Knights of War) follow the basic Daedalean ranks, but make distinctions between peaceful and military Respondents. Gabrielites refer to Apprentices as *Aspirants* and lodges as *temples*; a *Senatus* oversees the Convention and reports directly to the Maximi. Despite the noble title, all

Gabrielites, even commoners and women, are considered Knights of God (within their own fellowship, anyway). Several military orders — among them the Templars, Swords of Grace, Die Wolffgilde and the Order of the Hammer — comprise the Falcons' ranks.

**Maximi:** Early 1400s: Girolama Gallo and Francesces Gillaume; after 1440: Bonifacio Valle and Gertrude de Aquino.

**Initiation:** A Gabrielite experiences a holy vision before Awakening. This usually leads the Aspirant to a tutor, where he receives instruction and a special sacrament— This ritual, the Kiss of Gabriel, involves long prayer, fasting and purification, followed by a series of vows and a final kiss. If the Aspirant feels the Holy Fire within him, he joins the ranks; if not, he becomes a Brother instead.

**Daemon:** Each Gabrielite has a personal guardian angel who acts as guide, teacher and disciplinarian.

**Affinities:** Forces, Mind and Fire.

**Followers:** Peasants, clergymen, knights and soldiers, witch-hunters, scholars, missionaries

**Concepts:** Scholarly monk, exorcist, orator, torturer. Inquisitor, knight or man-at-arms, healer, monster-hunter, servant to a bishop or cardinal

### Stereotypes

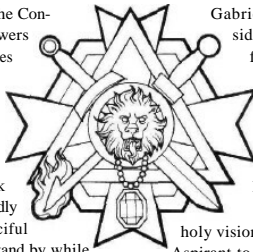
**Council Magi:** Pagans, monsters and detestable rabble — these are the forces we were formed to protect mankind against. A few have worthy talents or aspirations, but they're heretics, one and all. Most shameful are those who once took their tune from God; now they screech a dissonant cry, hidden among their Satanic consorts. He may forgive them, but we cannot.

**Daedaleans:** Allies of necessity. Someday we will convert them to the Truth of Gabriel and lead the world to glory; until then, minister to them when you can and guard against them otherwise.

**Infernalists:** Is there any question?

**Disparates:** Lost children wandering in Satan's thicket. Let us go to them and pluck the brambles from their eyes.

**Marauds:** Driven by demons; these poor souls need pity and exorcism.



God gave light to the world.  
Let us uphold it with wisdom and honor.

# Celestial Masters

Human destiny is written in the stars. The earliest magi turned their attentions Heavenward almost by instinct. Their heretical descendants, astronomers with the gall to call themselves "Celestial Masters," have stopped watching those Heavens and started questioning them. In the dead of night, they aim their telescopes upward and pray the answers they receive do not drive them mad.

To these magi, the sun, planets and stars are enigmatic hosts who reveal troubling truths. Examining the skies is only part of the plan; the Masters want to visit them — to walk in through God's gate and request a personal audience.

When the priests of Babylon and Egypt charted the skies, they divined events and personalities in the passage of the stars. As communities demanded schedules, the astronomers gave them days, weeks and years. Yet the undeniable connection between the skies, Divinity and mankind remained out of reach. A hundred celestial disciplines provided a foundation for greater study when Antonio Velio and his patron (and mistress) Mariana Sabine assembled a school of astronomers and adventurers: the *Colligium Astrologia*. Unsatisfied with being playthings of Heavenly forces, these philosophers turned an active hand toward discovery; rather than simply noting and tracking phenomena, they wanted to affect it. Wrapped in their academic robes, these so-called "Celestial Masters" toyed with devices of questionable design, hoping to sight Heaven itself. Most heretically of all, they soon began to experiment with sky-travel. Legendary heroes had ascended to the stars; the so-called Masters wanted to follow them.

Soon, they did.

Some Masters call it "the Ruined Road," "the Straight Road," or "the Long Road" — a path off the edge of the world. To navigate it, ships depart in the dead of the night and sail outward, never dipping below the horizon, going ever forward until they leave the waves behind. These ships catch the Celestial Wind in their sails or cruise upon the notes of the Music of the Spheres, striking out for different worlds. The sea fog swallows the craft and carries it away into the Otherworlds. But the Ruined Road is treacherous and uncertain; many sailors never return, or drift across the oceans until they find land, not stars. Expeditions on the Road are expensive, and often ill-fated. To surmount this problem, Captain Bernardo Marzani constructed an airship and went up rather than out. His first expedition returned from the moon with its crew largely intact. Although Marzani died soon afterward, his example has given the Masters a new quest, a *Profundum Exeditio* that travels straight to the stars rather than out toward them.

Now the Masters divide themselves between those who study, those who invent, those who explore, and those who prophecy. The **House of Prometheus** maps the Firmament, describing the character of the skies in vast, cryptic tomes. The **House of Daedalus** works with Craftsmen and Artificers, engineering the great ships, weapons and clockwork fantasias so essential to the *Exeditio*. The **House of Helios** sends adventurous "Skyriggers" out to sea or into the clouds, while the House of Selene transcribes chronicles, publishes theories and makes prophecies based on the mysteries they uncover.

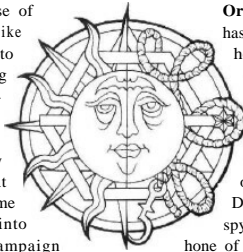


The latter group is called "the House of Cassandra" behind their collective back; like that prophetess, these seers have begun to sound a quiet but urgent alarm. Returning Skyriggers claim the Earth is an insignificant hall in a celestial Void, and that horrific creatures lair beyond the stars. This rumor is not only blasphemy to every religious and scientific truth, but it hints at forces that not even God can conceive. Some "Cassandras" have thrown their fortunes into war parties, equipping Skyriggers for a campaign against these forces; others are suppressing their discoveries, or undermining the entire *Expediatio* before it gets out of hand. Either way, their efforts are *subtle*. Men of faith (especially the Gabrielites) would be happy to burn the entire Convention if a single Master was overheard questioning God's Grand Creation.

As a whole, the Masters are a wealthy Convention; most Promethians and Daedaleans are nobility, or have rich patrons. The group's deep coffers fund elaborate experiments and journeys, some of which pay handsome returns. The greatest wealth, however, comes from the potential to command the Spheres of Heaven. Compared to that power, mere gold is nothing. Some Masters, however, have begun to doubt that anyone — man or God — can truly claim that title when the skies go on forever.

**Philosophy:** Within the stars, there is power; a wise and educated visionary can tap that power. Knowledge is the key to chains of ignorance. To free yourself of those chains, pluck that key from the Heavens.

**Tools and Style:** Weird mathematics and secret "tricks" of time and distance allow Celestial Masters to open doorways across space. Astrological charts, properly used, can become vehicles for prophecies, influence, charms and even mind reading. Ships, telescopes and navigational tools perform their usual functions, while wild Devices from Promethian laboratories channel elemental forces. And then there are the occasional alien herbs, ores and gases, brought back from space and capable of God-knows-what....



**Organization:** Largely autonomous; each lodge has one Magistrate, who conducts business as he sees fit. Those Magistrates convene a council twice a year in Paris, deciding policy during elegant week-long meetings. Skyriggers consider themselves a separate Convention tied to both the Celestial Masters and the Seekers, but follow the dictates of the Magistrate council, if only for gold. Despite the popular image of long beards and spyglasses, many clever women form the backbone of this Convention.

**Maximi:** Caesare de Porto and Sabina Valmarana (great-granddaughter of Mariana Sabine).

**Initiation:** Above all, a Master fears nothing; timid souls are not allowed. Every Apprentice must display courage, intelligence, cleverness and perception. A promising candidate finds a patron, then endures exams based on her House; if she passes, her patron decides how to best employ her talents.

**Daemon:** In dreams, the stars and constellations advise their observers, teach them, and sometimes punish them.

**Affinities:** Connection, Spirit and Air.

**Followers:** Merchant princes, astrologers' patrons, shipbuilders, sailors, scholars, radical philosophers

**Concepts:** Skyrigger, horoscope prophet, astronomer, mad inventor, paranoid visionary, tormented scientist

## Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** Not had sorts once you get to know them. Terribly disorganized, of course, but not entirely lacking in vision or ambition.

**Daedaleans:** A necessary evil, I'm afraid. One must occasionally suffer boorish companions to reach a greater state, and our world is too chaotic to go without watchdogs.


**Infernalists:** Pathetic children, really. Unless, of course, they're right... but that's impossible.

**Disparates:** Didn't they *all* go and form some Council or somesuch?

**Marauds:** Gravel-eaters and cess-wallowers. Phew!

To one who can touch the skies, nothing is impossible; if those skies seem infinite, then their power is also infinite.

## Craftsmasons



The Grafters are the architects — literally and figuratively — of the Order of Reason. Across the centuries, they have brought together separate orders, established lodges within the mortal community, and used their Divine mysteries to safeguard the common folk. Moreover, they're humble; in place of the cathedrals favored by other Conventions, the Grafters prefer a simple chapel. One would think they would be popular, even revered; instead, these dedicated Artisans hide behind walls of misdirection. Their crimes? They fired the first shot of the Ascension War, but even worse, they dared to treat commoners as equals, even superiors, of magi and nobility.

The gathering that brought the original High Artisans together laid the foundation of the Grafters' chapel. Schooled in sacred geometry and esoteric lore, these "Craftsmasons" understand the relationships between mathematics, the elements, Divinity and the human soul. Their Arts, channeled through architecture and invention, take advantage of Shallowings and Crays, focusing mystick power to auspicious locations. Each stone set and each wall erected is a ritual dedicated to the construction of something greater. Each creation becomes a symbol of a larger Unity-

Long ago, the Mt. Ossa Calyx and Collegium Praecepti birthed guilds that preserved the secrets of alchemy, architecture, trade and transportation after Rome fell. During that dark age, pride and jealousy splintered those guilds into dozens of fragments. The resulting "Masonic" sects offered variations on sacred geometry, but rarely with the insights of true Divine guidance. To preserve the *Ars Praeclarus*, the masters of several guilds forswore grand works; instead, they dedicated their fellowships to the common man and to God.

Slowly, these guilds built their chapel with mortal architects and began handing down the ancient secrets. Occasional lodge wars undermined the work, but alliances reinforced the walls. When Wolfgang von Reismann called his Gathering of the Square, the chapel became a gate; when the resulting Craftsmasons declared war on the Houses of Hermes, that gate became a castle.

A castle was necessary; as guildmasters compiled their archives, they noticed a disturbing pattern: Without help, the average person was trapped in an endless maze of mortal slavery and supernatural predation. Hammers in hand, the Craftsmasons began to demolish that maze, first by circulating texts about their enemies, then by encouraging free trade and advanced workmanship. When necessary, these gifts were hacked up by cannons, crossbows, Greek Fire and other "impossible" innovations. The greatest strike — the Convention of the White Tower — shook the maze so hard that it's still trembling today.

Over a century later, the Craftsmasons have become peasant magicians. Forswearing the finery of rival wizards, these folk use only what they need. Long centuries of cooperation have established a bond between common

laborers and Enlightened Artisans, The result is a humble but powerful Convention that combines esoteric doctrines with solid labor.

But now their castle is beset by storms. Hermetic wizards have sworn revenge for Mistrudge; rival "Mason Lodges" strike back at every opportunity; peasant uprisings, encouraged by Crafters, become purges; even the High Guild, a product of Craftmason activities, now mocks its founders' values. The dream has become a tempest and its winds shake the Crafters' keep.

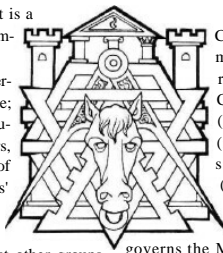
Craftmasons revere the common man, but other groups consider him a tool. This has caused a schism between the founders and their former allies. Although they're still part of the Order, the architects have begun to withdraw. While they still maintain the guilds that sustain the Order of Reason, Grafter Magistrates have begun to sap their own creation. Like Stephen Trevanus (the real Robin Hood), many of these magi establish secret societies and outlaw bands. The Sacred Artisans have become secret traitors among their own kind. The castle trembles. How long can its walls hold?

**Philosophy:** Sorcery is lazy and sinful; good things come through hard work.. Flaws invite disaster. An imperfect building must be torn down and begun again.

When God made the world, He left His mark on it — a Grand Design symbolized by a single red rose of 99 petals. Each of those petals circles a single hub; that center symbolizes Unity, and Unity is strength. Like the rose, a perfect structure combines disparate elements into a unified whole. Hence, our philosophy blends esoteric and symbolic aspects into concrete work — work that mirrors the labor of God.

(Some accounts claim the Colligium Praecepti undermined Rome, intending to rebuild it to its former glory. Thus, do the Grafters undermine rival magi, feudal society and the castle they helped construct. When it all comes down, they'll rebuild again.)

**Tools and Style:** Magick is Craftsmanship; a spell is *built*, not "cast." Most workings involve powerful tools; one creation, the Viasilicos, is the pinnacle of Craftmason Arts. The greater mason's tools—levels, chisels, ruling squares, ladders, hammers and plumb lines — all have ritual and symbolic significance as well as practical uses. Lesser tools—guns, cannons, and the one-handed crossbows many Craftmasons employ — symbolize the Grafters' commitment to force when necessary.



**Organization:** Within their lodges, Craftmasons recognize 33 levels of achievement that approximate the usual Daedalean ranks. Nine guilds function within the larger Convention: the **Chalice** (healers); **Coin** (traders); **Level** (political reformers); **Sword** (men-at-arms); **Hemlock** (spies and assassins); **Chisel** (architects and teachers); **Arrow** (charities); **Stone** (laborers); and **Scroll** (teachers and scribes). Some accounts claim a mysterious "elder circle" of astral magi governs the Maximi, but the tale is impossible to prove.

**Maximi:** A succession of humble workers, chosen each year by election.

**Initiation:** Many Sacred Artisans begin as mortal craftsmen who learn the greater secrets through the symbols employed by the group. By meditating at a site of architectural genius, an initiate receives visions of the Great Ideal, and Awakens. From there, she recruits a sponsor, who takes her through a series of tests. If she passes, a new Artisan joins the fold. If not, she's often kept on as a valued retainer.

**Daemon:** Most Craftmasons dismiss their Daemons as delusions or demonic tempters; some mystics, however, see the spirits as ghostly mentors or "Hidden Masters" who have transcended mortal form.

**Affinities:** Matter and Earth.

**Followers:** Workers, men-at-arms, radical clergy, tradesmen, bandits, midwives, apothecaries

**Concepts:** Mentor, Platonic visionary, reformer, Gnostic mystic, lodge mastermind, outlaw leader, Facilitator, architect, occult librarian, artilleryist, monster-hunter

## Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** Tyrants and leeches, lording over man and shitting on the floor of God's temple.

**Daedaleans:** With the exception of the Artificers, this crumbling cathedral needs to be ruined and built again. A shame, really, it took so much work....

**Infernalists:** Debris from a castle built by a madman.

**Disparates:** Some of these stones are fine for building; others are cracked or misshapen and must be discarded or broken for rubble.

**Marauds:** Dust storms and ashes.

The mightiest miracle is a simple task done rightly.

## High Guild (Grand Financiers)

Gold buys progress. It buys art, purchases medicine, builds bridges and rewards the scientist. Gold and trade are the cornerstones of any good society. And wherever there is gold, there must be people who help gather and distribute it.

The Italian Rebirth would be impossible without trade. The constant cry for luxuries and necessities alike created this traffic in goods, culture and ideas. If merchants and bankers still abided by the old prohibitions against money lending and left all trade to the kings and the Church, Europe would still be wading in mud. The unearthed glories of Rome and Greece reveal the good things commerce brings; with those treasures on display, the Golden Convention refuses to return to the old ways — even if its members must toil warlocks and clerics everywhere!

A stepchild of Craftmason reforms, the Guild is actually a network of guilds spread across Italy, Arabia and the Holy Roman Empire. A few scattered halls pepper other nations too, but the Convention focuses its attention on these brisk states. During the White Tower gathering, several tradesmen pointed out that the foundation of progress was widespread commerce. Despite objections from more conservative factions (especially the Gabrielites), a new Convention gathered to facilitate international trade. The market for goods from Byzantium, Arabia and the Far East provided funds; the reopening of the Silk Road between Europe and Cathay added incentive. Now the High Guild sets prices, protects trade routes, mediates disputes and lends funds for new endeavors.



Not that there wasn't opposition; the Church calls moneylending a sin, especially when it involves unbelievers. Also, there were the nobles who were not ready to share power with commoners — even rich ones. Heavy penances (bribes), a few skirmishes and the occasional spell cleared the way. This taught Grand Financiers a valuable lesson: Wealth is a form of magick. Like a god, it draws power from its worshippers. The more people want things, the more power they give those who supply them. From the Crafters' magicks, Enlightened Guildsmen created their own subtle form of enchantment called *Ars Cupiditae* ("the Art of Desire").

Now the scattered Guildhalls conduct their business. Among them, they employ Enlightened mercenaries (the Resplendent Axe Guild); patrons of the arts, sciences and medicine (the Patrons Guild or "*Black Uncles*," named because of the rich dark clothing they wear); moneylenders (the **Royal Griffin Guild**); traveling merchants (the **Albatross Guild**) who also fund expeditions; inter-Convention managers (the **Sun Guild**) who oversee Daedalean projects; and dashing chmanners (the **Rose Guild**) skilled in conspiracy and swordsmanship. Their network supplies kings, princes, merchants and priests from Malito Norway, from Beijing to London. Naturally, their affairs are somewhat diverse; small wars between lodges are common in trade, and unity is less desirable than competition. So long as it's controlled, that competition

## CHAPTER V: THE PLAYERS

is good for business — and for the Guildsmen. After all, an unused blade rusts in its sheath....

Grand Financiers cut dashing figures. Most are handsome, nearly all are wealthy, and the majority seem unusually charismatic — a product of Kith social savvy and mystick Resonance. If other Daedaleans regard them with suspicion, the common folk regard them with awe. The Guildsmen simply give to Caesar what is Caesar's; if they keep a bit for themselves, where's the harm? Without gold, the world is lost.

**Philosophy:** Trade is more than an exchange of goods — it is a communion between brothers. Through it, both sides are enriched. Granted, brothers fight occasionally, but that's to be expected.

On a deeper level, wealth is a manifestation of the soul; trade grants brothers influence over one another, just as a True Name confers power. The more wealth you accumulate, the greater your power over others. A good tradesman is like a shepherd, tending his flock, fleecing the sheep and weaving their wool into clothing. This is part of God's plan: Some people are shepherds, others are weavers, most are sheep.

**Tools and Style:** Let clumsy warlocks sing up spells and call down lightning! Ars Cupiditae is far subtler. Every Guildsman understands the secrets of influence and perception (see Chapter VIII, pages 258, 261), and employs them through social graces, favors and orations. Secret codes and Vtasilicos carry messages across vast distances, while illusions and mind tricks assist difficult transactions.

Like the Craftsmasons who bred them, Financiers pursue more "mystickal" trades, too. While a handful practice alchemy, many more know small but potent enchantments. An item, properly prepared, can carry a spell and release it when necessary. Poisons and magickal weapons conduct harsher negotiations; most Financiers — even women — know fencing techniques, too, and carry slender blades of unusual strength and sharpness.

**Organization:** Each Guild maintains its own lodges (called *Houses*) in major market towns, ports and trade routes. Within a House, the Master's (Magistrate's) word is law. The usual titles are respected, but given more for cleverness and skill than for magickal prowess or study. Four times a year, House Masters meet in capital cities, then address wider concerns through messengers to other nations.



Guild members are usually European (often Italian, Jewish or Dutch), although some hail from Africa or the Middle East. Several charismatic women have joined the Convention's upper ranks, and hold their places through wit, seduction, cleverness and threats. In this age, merchants are often richer than nobility; really prosperous ones become nobles in nil but birth, and often marry into royal families. Even the youngest Guild members are rich, and they like to show it.

**Maximi:** Wolfgang von Reismann (rumored to be over 400 years old thanks to alchemical immortality) and Margarita Impensi (a Medici by birth).

**Initiation:** Some Guildsmen are born wealthy; a poor one must find a sponsor and impress her with his imagination and intelligence. Depending on the House, an apprenticeship may be laborious and slow, or rapid but dangerous. The initiate is expected to take risks — financial, social and magickal — and prevail through his wits. If he survives, he receives a new position within the Guild. If not, he retires in disgrace, becomes a Brother, or perishes.

**Daemon:** While some Guildsmen are beholden to Mammon the money-demon, most view their guides as helpful angels or ghosts.

**Affinities:** Mind and Water.

**Followers:** Accountants, merchant princes, mercenaries, tradesmen, artists, scholars, debtors

**Concepts:** Rakehell, ambassador, seductress, merchant "nobleman," spy, assassin, patron, diplomat, guard

### Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** Ruthless barons, taxing the night with their demon-sent Arts. The wizards among them are sly and refined, the rest are as savage a bunch of bogies as ever I've seen.

**Daedaleans:** Our partners in this great endeavor have yet to realize that mortal man wants nothing more than pleasure and security. Give him a full belly and a warm roof and he'll follow you till the end of rime.

**Infernalists:** These vermin deal in darker trade than I, but have already gambled their greatest asset... and lost it.

**Disparates:** Who?

**Marauds:** I suppose even God needs His court jesters. Just keep them far away from me!

Better to be a cat in a barn full of mice  
than king of an empty field.

## Hippocratic Circle (Cosians)

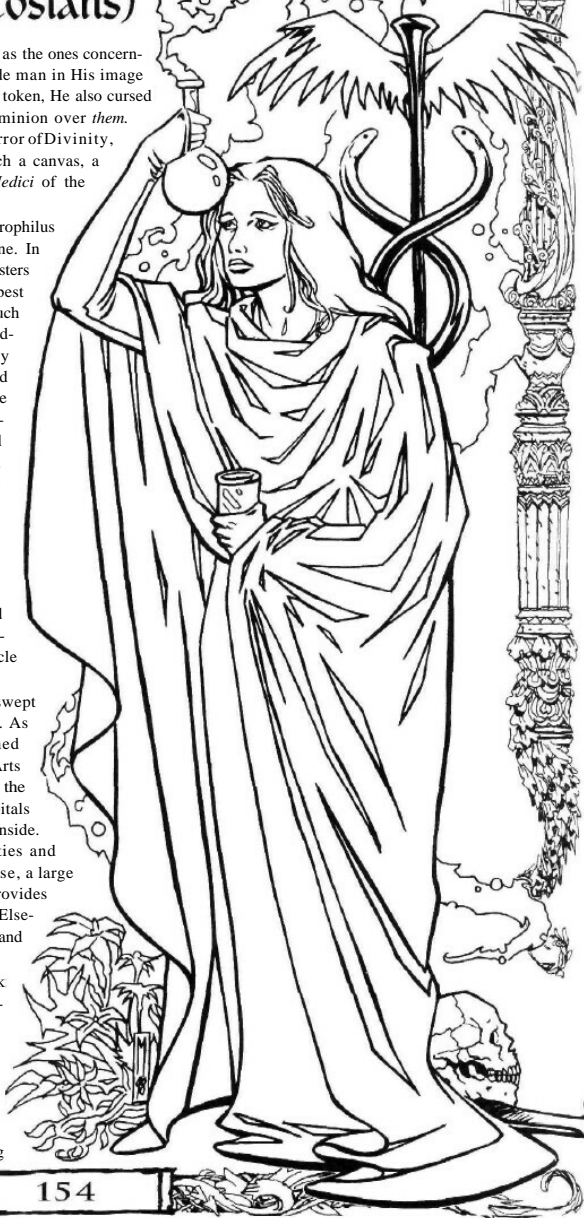
No Art or science is as viral (but problematic) as the ones concerning the human body. According to Genesis, God made man in His image and gave him dominion over the Earth; by the same token, He also cursed the children of Adam and Eve, and gave Satan dominion over *them*. The body, therefore, is both sacred and unclean, a mirror of Divinity, yet a harbor for lusts and disease. To work with such a canvas, a magus must be brave, wise and irreverent. The *Medici* of the Hippocratic Circle are all of those and more.

Long ago, healers like Imotep, Wang Wei-i, Herophilus and Hippocrates established great schools of medicine. In addition to mortal techniques, these Enlightened masters pioneered special Arts, and passed them on to their best students. Hippocrates established a special guild of such healers in Greece; named the Cosian Circle, this academy treated illnesses, pursued alchemical immortality and encouraged education and vitality. This Circle had a darker side, too; legends claim that a guild within the guild pursued a secret Hippocrates forbade: the creation of new life. To this end, the physicians dissected living creatures and infused them with odd humours. Chambers beneath the guildhalls housed the malformed results: creatures that were occasionally dispatched to kill the Circle's enemies.

When Rome fell, the Circle was broken and its secrets scattered. In the Far and Middle East, some guilds preserved the Arts, but in Europe, they were nearly lost. In Byzantium, a single school preserved Cosian techniques. When the Conventions gathered, several Cosians restored the Hippocratic Circle and returned those Arts to Europe.

It was none too soon; the rash of plagues that swept the land kept the handful of Cosian initiates busy. As the sicknesses spread, so too did centers of Enlightened healing. The odd and irreverent nature of their Arts soon brought these physicians into conflict with the Church, however, and the healers often lost. Hospitals were burned, often with both patients and Cosians inside. Now the Circle hides behind a maze of universities and temporary clinics. The Brandenburg Krankenhaus, a large hospital protected by the Holy Roman Emperor, provides the only "open" office for the elusive Cosians. Elsewhere, they cloak their teachings in symbology and pass them on to the most talented initiates.

While mortal physicians grope about in the dark (see "**Modern Medicine**," page 208), Cosian doctors preserve the advanced practices of Egyptian, Greek and Arabian healers—and add to them. Like the four humours, the Cosian body follows four functions: **The House of Mandrake** studies herbalism and agriculture; traveling healers from the House of Fire relieve plagues and isolate diseases; the House of Books concentrates on teaching



and study, while the dreaded **House of Knives** specializes in surgery. Outside that order, a "minor house" of non-physicians, the warrior **Phylaxoi**, protects the healers, and A secret alchemical guild, the House of Olympus, carries on forbidden experiments with immortality and creation.

The Cosian world is a strange brew of the blood-to-the-elbows experience of midwives, herbalists, barber-chirurgeons; the scholarly works of courtly astrologer-physicians; and the methodical experiments of botanists and dissectionists. A Cosian immerses herself in her work to an unsettling degree, and often chronicles her research in stomach-churning detail. An academic theorist spends much of her time among plants and star charts; the dedicated plague-chaser travels across the land searching for epidemics; the cadaverist dwells in charnel houses and blood-guttered basements. This Convention attracts all manner of folk, and some of them are deeply disturbing. It takes intelligence, obsession and empathy to question God's handiwork. A Cosian physician considers such questions merely a beginning....

**Philosophy:** As a carpenter works in wood or a stonemason in marble, the Cosian works in plants, flesh and blood. Divinity nestles within the natural world. What we cannot catalogue, we can create with secrets uncovered within God's puzzle. Our world is God incarnate — a miracle, not a prison.

**Tools and Style:** Founded in Pagan practices and ungodly research, the Hippocratic Arts delve into the patterns of life, decipher those patterns and turn them to greater ends. Herbs, potions, artificial limbs and surgical tools make up the Cosian's "kit." With such wonders, she can cure plagues, heal infections and create homunculi, living plains, wondrous creatures and longevity potions. Depending on the healer's discipline and personality, she might cure, alter or corrupt most living things.

**Organization:** Most lodges consist of secret meeting halls within established universities or hospices. The attending Cosians follow the common Daedalean rank structure, but refer to Respondents as *Medici*, Honori as *Doctores*, Magistrates as *Præceptores*, and the Maximi as *Praavus* (Grandfather) and *Proavia* (Grandmother). Among all the Conventions, the Cosians are most likely to respect female members.

Advanced as they are by mortal standards, the Cosians still follow the Greco-Roman model of medicine. Two rival Conventions, the Chinese **House of Hua To** and the Arabian **Hands of Mercy**, disdain the Cosians and are spumed in return. While some radical physicians study two or three healing styles, most uphold the superiority of their cultural Art and disparage the others.

**Maximi:** Proavus Marcus deSarda and Proavia Judith Miller.

**Initiation:** Most Cosians follow the family trade; occasionally, though, an outside initiate might seem worthwhile. Extensive training and experience provide the mentor a chance to observe budding Enlightenment. If a waking appears imminent, the mentor sends the initiate on some traumatic errand, then tests her when she returns. If successful, she joins the lower *Medici*; if not, she remains a valued but mundane healer.

**Dæmon:** While most Cosians see their guides as ghostly physicians, a few commune with angels or Old Gods of healing. (They keep those communions secret!)

**Affinities:** Life and Water.

**Followers:** Farmers, mercenaries, lepers, indebted nobility, former "experiments"

**Concepts:** Physician, midwife, mad doctor, surgeon, artist, herbalist, zoologist, animal trainer, alchemist, plague-healer

## Stereotypes

**Council Magi:** While it's true our caduceus shares one serpent with the so-called "Verbena" (named for a healing herb — how quaint!), the rest of these Dolores are as ignorant as ladybugs! They would sooner wave bones and chant hosannas than search for the true causes of disease. A pox upon them all!

**Daedaleans:** Like us, our companions search for a better tomorrow. Unlike us, they let squamishness quench their greatest discoveries.

**Infernalists:** Leprous limbs on the body of the world.  
**Disparates:** Let them play in their fallow fields. They harm us not.

**Marauds:** The worms in their brains are surely contagious!



Ah, life! Such a diversity of splendors!

## Ksirafai

Jove must have his thunderbolts. A prince must have his retainers. A king has his assassins, and the Order of Reason is no different. To implement their new design, the High Artisans need blades to do the cutting and brooms to sweep away the mess. The Ksirafai ("Razors") are those tools, honed in secrecy and dedicated to the greater good.

Officially, this group does not exist. The Ksirafai have no Guildhall and do not appear on the rolls or documents of the Order. A "Convention" in the loosest sense, these magi police the shadows, using infiltration, rumor, seduction and assassination to advance the agenda of Reason. While the Daedaleans conceal themselves from mortals, this "Army of Secret Angels" hides within their ranks, masters of charm, coercion, perception and obfuscation.

Soon after the Convention of the White Tower, the Inner Circle discovered that oaths were less binding than anger or gold. After the Solificati defected, several Magistrates founded a group that would answer only to the Inner Circle. From within the ranks of servants and companions, these agents would spy on their fellow Conventions and rival groups alike. Records would be kept and alliances struck; when necessary, the shadowy blades would strike, cutting away traitors or obstructions to the cause. Master Intriguers were recruited from Byzantium. An elaborate language of signals was composed, and likely recruits were initiated. Soon the Razors were polished and employed.

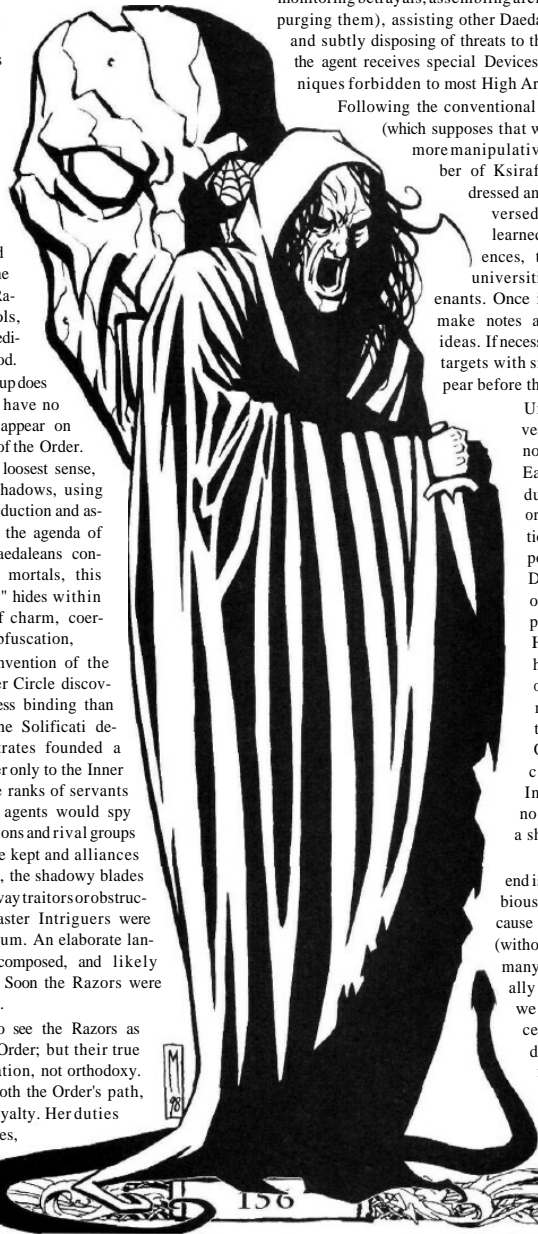
It's all too easy to see the Razors as Inquisitors within the Order; but their true purpose is implementation, not orthodoxy. A Ksirafai exists to smooth the Order's path, not to judge a person's loyalty. Her duties include recruiting allies, passing messages,

monitoring betrayals, assembling archives (and occasionally purging them), assisting other Daedaleans or their patrons, and subtly disposing of threats to the Order. To assist her, the agent receives special Devices and training in techniques forbidden to most High Artisans.

Following the conventional "wisdom" of the time (which supposes that women are craftier and more manipulative than men) a fair number of Ksirafai are female. Well dressed and disguised, eloquent, versed in languages, and learned in the arts and sciences, these spies infiltrate universities, churches and Covenants. Once in place, they watch, make notes and spread Daedalean ideas. If necessary, they murder their targets with silent skill, then disappear before the bodies can be found.

Unlike the other Conventions, the Ksirafai are not divided into guilds. Each member is given duties appropriate to his or her skills and location. Some play mortal politics, others observe Daedaleans, and still others execute darker plans. Although some High Artisans have heard tales of mysterious infiltrators, a Ksirafai never claims allegiance to her sect; as far as the Order of Reason is concerned, the "Razor Inquisition" is a legend, no more substantial than a shadow on the wall.

**Philosophy:** No noble end is achieved without dubious means. The Order's cause is just, but its enemies (without and within) are many. God's plans occasionally demand sacrifice, and we are the agents of necessity. When our task is done, we will depart; but for now, harsh times demand harsh measures. Bloodshed is to be avoided if possible, but all too



often, it's inevitable. Better to cut diseased flesh away before the entire body is corrupted.

**Tools and Style:** A Ksirafi regards herself as a servant of the darker angels (Michael, Uriel, Azrael, etc.), and purs her faith in the Order's cause. Although Daedalean in outlook, her Arts seem more arcane than *Ars Praeclarus*. Ksirafai spells depend on influence and misdirection; rooted in the practices of the *Lxos* (an elite hand of Greek sorcerer-spies who caused the true fall of Troy), these secrets involve spirit-speech, potions, poisons and tricks of the light. Delicate Devices—small crossbows, pin-guns, tiny grapples, ere.—help a spy achieve her ends, while makeup, perfumes, enchanted oils and forged documents assist more delicate matters. When violence is necessary, a Ksirafi invokes deadly angels through the seven Hermetic pentacles of Saturn, or employs Devices with great destructive power. When the tasks are done, prayer and purification cleanse the Razor of her sins — sins performed in the service of God.

**Organization:** Most Razors answer to a single mentor and three contacts. A Ksirafi Magistrate handles a "lodge" of six lesser Respondents and sends his reports and observations further up the chain. A council composed of the original Byzantines makes important decisions, but most activities are left to the Magistrate's discretion. Naturally, Razors keep an eye on each other, and report back to the council; thus, corruption and incompetence are rare — a Magistrate knows the cost of both.

**Maximi:** Two cloaked, masked figures, known only as Fulmen ("Thunderbolt") and Suavium ("Kiss"), answer to the Inner Circle.

**Initiation:** A promising initiate is noted by his future mentor, often long before he's aware of the group's existence. The mentor tests him from afar; if he passes, the

mentor offers him a place in an elite fellowship. One year of indoctrination follows, during which the initiate (called an *Ignorant*) is schooled in the lore of the Army of Secret Angels. During a grueling initiation, the youngster is taken through a cave, beaten and provided with an oath. Hopefully, the Ignorant Awakens to a vision of the Archangel Michael, welcoming him into God's agents. If the vision does not come, the oath is withheld and the Ignorant is welcomed into a lesser fellowship — the *Efalti* — of Un-Enlightened allies.

**Daemon:** Powerful, warlike angels or saints appear to prospective Ksirafai during their Awakenings, and guide them from that point on.

**Affinities:** Connection, Spirit and Air.

**Followers:** Seduced dupes, mercenaries, Erfalti, scribes, wealthy patrons

**Concepts:** (usually disguised as some other profession) diplomat, courtesan, assassin, archivist, spy

## Stereotypes

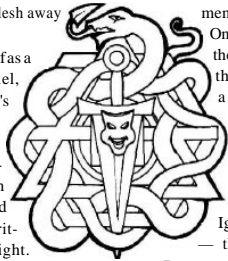
**Council Magi:** A basket of snakes. Their bites ; sometimes sweet, but venomous nonetheless.

**Daedaleans:** A fascinating menagerie of loyalists, virtuosos, pretenders and thieves, all bent to a just cause. If they had any idea how raddled their castle truly was, they'd quit the place and flee in all directions. It is up to us to hum the worms from the timbers and mind the shadows of the feasting hall. Without vigilance, the Order is for naught.

**Infernalists:** Nothing is created without a Divine purpose — not even a fallen angel.

**Disparates:** Puffers, jinks and village idiots, everyone.

**Marauds:** Cracked mirrors of ourselves. Bad dreams of the Lord.



There are no secret sins.

## Void Seekers (Explorators)

There's something both threatening and enticing about the end of a map. "Here Be Dragons" is an invitation to dragon-slayers. Against the dragons of ignorance and fear, the Explorators raise their swords and unfurl their maps. For this proud, rambunctious group, the end of the map is the beginning of history.

New opportunities have always laid on the other side of the hill. The earliest adventurers, bored or desperate, sought those opportunities out. It's no secret that the man brave enough to cross what cannot be crossed often becomes a *rich* man. The Phoenicians, Chinese, Egyptians and Norsemen built empires around wanderlust; as they did so, their greatest explorers discovered powerful Arts and worked them into their trade.

Various guilds arose in the port towns. Although many explorers and shipbuilders were skilled mortals, Enlightened masters preserved the lore each guild discovered. "Secret chronicles" joined maps and charts in the archives, and were passed on to the most promising students and sailors. Like the Craftsmasons, these early travelers interpreted magick through the tools and symbols of their profession. The Arts were defined as winds and currents, magick as a wave; instruments like ships, charts, compasses, ropes and blades attained mystick significance. Naming a new place granted a man power over it; soon, discovery and mastery became the explorers' highest goals.

Like most fellowships, these traveling guilds had rivalries with each other. When the Dark Ages swallowed Rome, many of the guilds fell with it. Several, notable Silk Road tradesmen and a Byzantine shipping guild, preserved the old ways while adding to their stores of knowledge. Their methods and achievements impressed the Celestial Masters; recognizing a common goal, both sides sponsored each other at the Convention of the White Tower. The Void Seekers, or Explorators, were born.

Now the Explorators have come into their own. As mortal monarchs reach for new empires and tradesmen for new market; the Seekers have all the work they can handle. As Skyriggers depart for the stars, the Explorators set out across this world, discovering new lands and adding them to the map - their way.

To this end, the Explorators divide themselves into seven guilds: The **Odysseans** set forth across the waves, while the **Alexandrians** journey over land. The **Order of the Grail** compiles maps and sagas, using mystick rites to seal what has been written; their contemporaries in the **League of Paul** purge heathen sins, cleanse tainted site and bring Jesus to benighted peoples. An elite warrior guild, the **Herculinian Compact**, asserts that its "seven labors" include slaying monsters and protecting companions; its



brother guild, the **Forge and Sail** (or *Lycians*) crafts the skips, instruments and weaponry that aid the other Seekers. Finally, the **Scribes of Apollo** (or *Apollonians*) work closely with the Celestial Masters, chatting the Earth and stars.

As their name indicates, the Void Seekers are a paradox. Although "Seekers" by trade, they want to *find* facts to add to their maps, bestiaries and histories. Although they take their name from the void, they seek to fill that void with knowledge. Explorer motivations are a bizarre mixture of lofty ideals and venal principles. To the Church, they "convert the Heathen"; to the monarchy, they "found an Empire"; to their crews and companions, they "seek treasure"; and for themselves... they look The world is *knowable*, though not yet *known*. Void Seekers expand that world by hearing witness to it.

Compared to their contemporaries, these magi are earthy, robust and aggressive. Armed with courage, tools and a few Tricks, the average Explorer dashes into the storm with a tip of his hat and a grin. Women swoon at his rakish charms and men tell tales of his journeys with a mixture of envy and admiration. Road dust or sea salt whitens his boots, and many a tavern goer cries, "What news?" when he swaggers in. Even the Convention's scholars have a dashing air—few Seekers restrict their adventures to the page. Image is important to an Explorer; even in the face of chaos, he keeps his wits and smiles.

**Philosophy:** A new world? Map it. The unicorn? Hunt it. Prester John's domain? Find it. Each new thing or place is a challenge set before man by God. Without those brave enough to dare the darkness, humanity would tremble at its hearth, too frightened to prosper, too poor to survive. We are the builders of the Empire of Man.

**Tools and Style:** Secrets from a dozen lands can be found in the archives of each Explorer lodge. While these Daedaleans prefer to rely upon proven tools — cannons, sextants, charts and captain's glasses — they're pragmatic enough to use whatever works. Prayers to sunlight, albatross charms, chants to elemental spirits — anything that allows a man to stride into mystery and return alive is good enough for them. When the goal is reached, maps and naming rituals dispel mysteries and make the land safer, if not tame.

While conventional wisdom insists that seagoing women are bad fortune, many Explorators know better. The elements

of wind and water often demand a woman's touch, so "sea witches" carry a certain place of favor on many vessels. These enchanters practice obvious sorcery, but when you're alone on a storm-tossed sea, any advantage is a boon.

**Organization:** Each ship or expedition functions as a lodge run by a Captain (Magistrate). On a larger scale, permanent lodges occupy major shipping ports and caravan routes; a council of Magistrates and Facilitators keeps operations running smoothly there, often with aid from other Conventions.

**Maximi:** The rivalries between Spain, Italy and Portugal keep these positions in constant flux.

**Initiation:** Each initiate embarks on a journey; he must go somewhere he's never been, return with a souvenir, and chronicle his travels for the lodge he wants to join. At that point, he's given several tests. If he Awakened during the trip, he can pass the tests; if not, he becomes a Brother. It's worth noting that Seekers respect their Brethren as much as they esteem Respondents; courage and wit mean more than Enlightenment.

**Daemon:** Auspicious animals—albatrosses, eagles, swallows and horses — beckon Seekers to new and safer roads.

**Affinities:** Connection, Spirit and Water.

**Followers:** Sailors, cartographers, monarchs, hunters, merchants, missionaries, prostitutes, conquistadors, pirates, wives and children

**Concepts:** Bold explorer, sailor, sea witch, bestiary scribe, captain, diver, missionary, chronicler

## Stereotypes

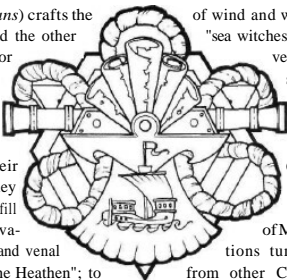
**Council Magi:** The best are refined but deadly schemers; the worst are screaming savages. Me, I've met lots of savages, and I know how to treat 'em.

**Daedaleans:** A good wind at your back, but treacherous nonetheless. Give me a stargazer or Cosian over a Vulcan any day, and watch out for the Guildsmen: Their funds are ready, but their price is a reef. No telling how close it cuts.

**Infernalists:** No Hell could be as hot or wild as the fires in their hearts.

**Disparates:** Fellow travelers,

**Marauds:** Walking Tempests boding ill for all.



Are you brave enough to enter the dragon's lair and come out with one of his scales? I wager not!





# Chapter VI: The Storyteller

*I sense a device!*

— William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

## Betrayal

"Agnesa! You must wake!" It was Karel's voice. What was he doing in her bedchamber? Her head felt cottony, her limbs heavy, as if she'd been ill a long time. Heat everywhere, and summer hardy in the world, how could it be? Something vile and bitter wet her tongue, and suddenly she was wide awake. Bright light flooded the room. Fire!!

Where was her master? What of Bartolameo? Karel hauled Agnesa from her bed and out the window into the courtyard. Only then did she see the flames. Von Ulm's body lay just outside the great double doors, a smoldering beam across his back. Agnesa rushed to his side. Feeling her presence, the knight opened his eyes.

"You were, a daughter to me, child." His voice was a rasp. "Now go." He saw Karel at her side. "If this man will save you, so he it, no matter his beliefs."

"You knew?" she asked.

"Ofcourse I knew, though I learned too late that we had an enemy in our own house. Kismet, the Muslims call it. Must not fight your fate. But do not forget the lessons I have, taught you, that beauty exists in all things." Manfred von Ulm's eyes closed.

"Saw him." Agnesa snarled La Karel. "You think yourself a great man of science, a healer. Prove it!"

Karel, shook his head, "He's gone, and I can do nothing. Please, Agnesa, we must hurry!" He tugged her toward the safety of the courtyard, away from the flames.

Bartolomeo blocked the way, madness in his black eyes. "You're the one I want dead," hissed the magus. "You've tainted her, and she was mine."

"I belong to no one," Agnesa retorted.

"I beg to differ," said the horseman in the courtyard. "You all belong to the bishop." A circle of soldiers lent weight to his words. A dozen crossbow's froze them in place.

"Our bargain..." Bartolomeo whispered. His face fell slack at the sight of the bolts — aimed as much at him as they were at the other magi.

"We have no pacts with witches in this bishopric," replied the horseman.

Bartolomeo's hand whipped forward. Five triggers snapped. The quarrels outmatched the man. With punctured lungs, Bartolomeo could not speak. Twitching like a hanged man, he fell backward and died in silence.

"Now," said the horseman, "we will put an end to this foolishness...."

## The World, a Stage

So why a story?

Because no character exists in a vacuum. The noblest, most puissant magus means nothing without foes to fight, friends to love, enemies to loathe, innocents to rescue (or corrupt), homes to leave and new horizons to explore. A character alone is not enough; a character needs to be a part of something dynamic, else he fades to the status of mere portraiture. In other words, characters are useless outside of the context of a story.

The tale you create is more than scenery for a hand of magics on a picaresque jaunt, however. A well-told story allows the characters to grow and change naturally. It gives them context—a history and a future, places to look back to and new horizons to see. Finally, a story provides a place for multiple personalities to weave themselves together; there, you—the Storyteller—direct the action as if it were a play with a stage as big as the world,

## Being the Storyteller

*I've heard all the stories you tell to your friends  
The heart-rending stories of maiden and men  
In the days gone before  
And songs of the mist-covered mountains and vales  
Of demons and fairies and mischievous tales  
— Pentangle, "The Storyteller"*

If you've never played a Storytelling game before, running one can be daunting at first. The best part of a game like *Sorcerers Crusade* comes from improvisation; it's more akin to theatre than to roll-the-dice-and-move-the-tokens games like *Monopoly*. There are no limits on the scope of what you can do, no set paths to follow and no reasons not to try anything your heart desires. This sort of freedom can be exhilarating or daunting—after all, the players sitting across the table are actors and audience all wrapped up in one, and you're working without a script. With that in mind, this chapter is a guide to Storytelling techniques, along with hints, tips and suggestions for making your game run more smoothly.

**(If the terms in this chapter seem confusing, see the "Game Terms" Lexicon at the beginning of the book.)**

Establishing the setting for the story is one of the Storyteller's largest responsibilities. Every character the players meet, every place they go and everything they see springs from your imagination, and it's important to keep it flexible. It's your responsibility to make the world come alive. The most brilliant setting ever created does no good if it's firmly locked up between your ears. You must communicate it to your players with as much verve and fire as you can muster, or the landscape they encounter is only a faint reflection of the landscape in your mind.

Storytelling is work. Creating the world is only half the battle; once you're done, you have to allow the new tenants (i.e. the player characters) to move in, and move in they will; they'll personalize, customize, interpret and distort your vision to match their own. That's what players do.

Let them. The world exists as much for their entertainment as your own. Too many "game-masters" (or GMs) get too wrapped up in their personal myths to recognize the vital (and unavoidable) part a troupe plays in the drama. Getting obsessed with the "right" way to play a story is a sure road to frustration—yours and theirs. Let the players weave their own subplots around your grand narrative, and you'll find that collaboration makes for an infinitely better game. Good Storytellers realize that the best stories develop naturally, not from forcing characters down narrative paths.

Sound like hard work? Well, it is—but it's also an astonishing amount of fun. Helping your players uncover all the hidden treasures you've buried is tremendously rewarding. Seeing your friends' eyes widen when they realize the humble watchmaker they've been staying with is a member of the Artificers, just as a Black Company of Swiss pikemen come stomping up the street to arrest them—it doesn't get any better than that. Until, of course, they escape and stumble into the next pattern of tripwire plot threads....

## Entertainment

The most important part of your role as Storyteller is to make certain that everyone, yourself included, has a good time. The player characters ought to be important people whose actions have a real effect on the world. Even if they begin as nameless apprentices, there should be some "Kiss of Fortune" that quickly sets them apart from their contemporaries. No one wants to be insignificant; people game to become legends.

This doesn't mean your players have to "win" every engagement, though. A powerful loss often leads to high drama, and high drama can be a hell of a lot of fun. Sometimes, Bad Things Happen To Good Magi, and those Bad Things can make all the difference between a "dungeon crawl" and an exciting tale. When the Hordes of Hell ride your characters down, however, the *players* should still be having a good time.. If people are feeling bored or bullied, the whole game suffers.

The best way to make sure all of your players have a good time is to keep them involved and active. Sitting around as one wizard ventures into the Inferno while the others write in a burning cell is no fun at all. Make sure that every character gets some time on center stage. Your troupe should be an ensemble cast, not one star and a bunch of spear carriers. Give everybody something to do and weave in plot elements that give each magus a chance to shine.

Keep the action moving, too. The magi might be in mortal jeopardy, but the rattle of dice and the chant of "soak four more Health Levels of damage" robs the scene of its impact. If you sense the pace lagging (and it's never a hard thing to sense, trust us), narrate through the difficult portion and allow the story to move on quickly. Conversely, know when to slow down and let the players run with the game. If everyone's getting into the action, yelling their next actions or passionately roleplaying, let it ride. Rushing the scene could spoil the fun.

Flexibility is the key to happiness. (See "Improvisation," page 174.) When you hatch your plots, shun the temptation to plait them out scene by scene. Players *never* do what you expect them to do. Trying to force them down predetermined paths is asking for trouble. Show them the beginning of the road, hint at the destination, plant a few markers along the way, but let the troupe chart the course of the adventure.

One more thing: Enjoy *yourself*, too. Many Storytellers make the mistake of playing with people who have nothing better to do but cause trouble. Hopefully, *your* players will act with balance and sense. Unfortunately, there are a lot of dicks out there. Our advice is not to game with those people. If your players get out of hand, take rime out to explain your position. If the guilty parties persist, throw them out or resign yourself. Few things are more frustrating than trying to handle a chaotic game. Better to let it die (and teach problem players the consequences of their actions) than to let childish players waste your troupe's time.

So why would anyone *want* to be a Storyteller? Because Storytelling can be the most enjoyable part of the game. When you craft something unique and share it with your players, when the blood starts pumping and the roleplaying begins in earnest, when your players recall those adventures weeks, months or even years later, you've tasted the rewards of Storytelling. Best of all is the act of Storytelling itself—the creation of a tale that your players eagerly create with you. When all the pieces come together, there's nothing else quite like it.

## The Story

*I sing for your lovers*

*Your heavenly fathers to be*

*Your possible futures*

*Your obvious endings defeat me*

*So carry me (there's no one to)*

*Comfort me (there's no one to)*

*Care for me (there's no one to)*

*Capture me*

— Faith and the Muse, "Iago's Demise"



A story is more than just a narrative to wrap around the main characters. It needs heroes and villains, sidekicks and victims and other supporting cast members beyond the presence of the cabal. More importantly, it needs a beginning, a middle and an end, not to mention a mood, a theme and a climax. You'll want to build your story from a small series of events to a knock-down, drag-out conclusion that shakes the pillars of Heaven. Ideally, you'll be able to build the tension, from the cabal's first tentative steps together, through triumphs and tragedies, to the group's ultimate confrontation with the face of evil. If you don't pace your story properly (say, by throwing too many waves of faceless bandits and town guards at the cabal), your story loses momentum. Pacing is Kith delicate and vital, and it's not something to be left to chance.



## Concept

Before you actually create your chronicle, you need to deekle the sort of story you want to tell. Will the cabal be searching after an ancient text, or fighting the Order of Reason? Will there be pitched battles or daring thefts in the night? The possibilities are limitless—the trick is to narrow things down before you get to work on the rest of your chronicle. (See **Techniques**, page 172.)

Knowing what you want ahead of time can help you create appropriate sellings and characters for your story. After all, if you want to run a tale set in the forests along the Danube, it won't do you much good to create fully realized city settings. They're not going to be used, so why waste the time and effort? The same principle holds for the population of your world. If your chronicle is going to be combat-heavy, make yourself familiar with the arms, armor and tactics of the period. On the other hand, if you don't intend to feature large battles, there's no reason for you to waste your time learning the details of Swiss pike square maneuvers. Devote your resources to something more cogent.

You don't have to know everything about the period in which *The Sorcerers Crusade* is set to run a good game, just enough to make the world believable. Decide on your concept early, then direct your research and efforts toward building up to that concept.

## Mood and Theme

Once you determine what you want, decide what you want to say with it. Any good story has an underlying theme and an overriding atmosphere. Through your subjects, descriptions and situations, you can make your game blaze with the power of a legend.

*Mood* covers the overall tone of the story; if you use a dungeon as a setting, and torture innocent characters, chances are you're a fairly grim game on your hands. If, by contrast, you employ the same setting, feature a faithful priest bent on rescuing the innocents, and spotlight the occasional rays of sunshine coming through the bars, that dungeon becomes a stage for a hopeful, if horrific, tale. Packed with emotional resonance, mood adds a delicious texture to your fictional play, and is usually summed up in a single word — "eerie," "disturbing," "fey," "wondrous," etc.

If mood is visceral, *theme* is intellectual. Mood sets the tone while theme works that tone into an idea. "Hope" becomes "the quest for freedom" or "love's redemption." If the magi break out of the dungeon, you're reinforcing the "freedom" theme; if they're freed by a priest who has fallen in love with a prisoner, then "love" becomes the theme.

Both mood and theme flow from descriptions and plot elements. The "Cast" and "Techniques" sections show how you can take a simple story and give it those extra layers. Mood and theme aren't essential, but they make a game session more memorable than a hack-n'-slash romp.

You don't have to plan every element of the story out in advance to use mood and theme; more often than not, they'll come to you while you're brainstorming up the next session — or even while you're in the middle of a story.

## The Tale

And so it begins... but *how*? Where do you start and what happens from there?

## In the Beginning

It's always best to start small. Great events may be afoot — the Order of Reason could be stirring; Inquisitors might be piling up firewood, and dragons may be rousing from centuries of sleep — but confronting the cabal with all of this tight off the bat can be overwhelming. You want to begin with a small, simple and stimulating introduction, then work outward from there.

Every game session should start with a hook tied to a dangling bit of plot thread. Your players bite the hook and you draw them in. Imagine this:

*On a rainy night, two day's journey out of Wien, the cabal finds a wounded courier in rich livery by the side of the road. The man dies before regaining consciousness, but in his saddlebag is a missive in code. Just then, a mounted patrol of soldiers trots up the road, obviously looking for the dead man. The captain reins in and rudely asks the cabal's leader if she's seen a man matching the corpse's description. Behind him, crossbows are wound and swords are loosed in their sheaths...*

So far, all that's really happened is that the cabal has found an illegible letter and a soldier has been rude. But there are at least a half-dozen tantalizing questions hanging in the air now, waiting for answers: Where was the courier going, and who was supposed to get the coded message? What does it say? Why were the soldiers so eager to stop him, and what secret is terrible enough to kill for? Should the magi hand over the letter and forget the incident, or is it worth standing up to the soldiers? Whom do these troops serve, and how far will their "patron" go to recover that letter? By attempting to find the answer to any of these questions, the cabal is drawn into the plot. The courier's murder isn't especially important, but it's tied to greater matters—and by interfering in the courier's death, the cabal becomes part of those greater affairs.

## The Middle

The middle of your story should be a time of revelation and complication — the cabal stumbles deeper into the initial mysteries and slowly unravels them. The challenges presented in the middle of your story should gradually become greater, even as the magi grow more powerful themselves. Footpads and thugs should give way to professional soldiers, consols and eventually magi or even monsters. At the same time, to each challenge the cabal overcomes, its members should be rewarded with another piece in the puzzle. For example:

*Having defeated the cavalry on the road outside Wien, the cabal ponders its next move. Dmitrios the Hermetic mage notes that he recognizes the soldiers' livery — they serve Pietro Sforzini,, another member of the Houses. Dmitrios knows that Sforzini lives in Padua, and suggests a trip in that direction....*

*"I am sorry, signore," says the guardsman at the gate of Padua., "but, my orders are most strict. You are to be denied entrance to the city as an enemy of the people. I must ask you to be on your way before I am forced to call the watch." Angered, Dmitrios' companion, the Ecstatic mage Robert terHorsr, turns and heads back to where the rest of the cabal has set up camp. He spits into the mud of the road, but doesn't notice the four men, each bearing Sforzini's badge, who separate from the crowd to follow him. Each one is a sorcerer....*

In the first sequence, a relatively minor triumph (the defeat of the mounted patrol) gives the cabal a name (Sforzini), and a direction (Padua) to follow. Defeating the soldiers isn't enough — the scene does double duty by leading the cabal deeper into the mystery.

As the cabal gets closer to ultimate answers (in this case, Sforzini's tower) the force and subtlety arrayed against them increase. The might of the city guard, with which the guardsman threatens terHorsr, is greater than that of a small patrol. The power of sorcery, implicit in the four magi who tail the Ecstatic back to the cabal's camp, is of a greater order than mere amis and armor. The closer the wizards get to ultimate truth, the stronger the forces arrayed against them become. With each triumph, the rewards grow as well as the dangers.

## The End of All Things

Dramatic tension can only be sustained for so long. Eventually, the cabal must face its nemesis. A rousing climax (not always a battle, we should note) provides a resolution for both the story and the troupe. Anticlimax sucks. If the cabal has been chasing an Inquisitor all over Europe for the last six months, the magi (and the players) will feel cheated if their quarry suddenly drops dead of a pox. When your group has earned the right to confront the foe, let it have him. So:

*Sforzini stands atop his tower; the gathering winds whip his cape about him. "I wish it had not come to this, Dmitrios," he says quietly. "I could have taught you much had you seen fit to turn the letter over to me. But now..." The magus gives a theatrical shrug: "Now it comes down to power." With that, a jagged fork of lightning comes snaking down to where Dmitrios and his companions stand. They scatter an instant before it hits. The others lay stunned as terHorsr climbs to his feet and stumbles toward Sforzini, who reaches toward the heavens again....*

And so it comes down to a final confrontation. The fight should be desperate, bloody and close — some of the sorcerers of the cabal may be injured or killed. At the end of the climax battle, all questions should be answered. The mysterious code, the courier's source and destination, the secrets the letter contains—all of these should be explained by Sforzini's

possessions (a diary or a collection of letters from a co-conspirator), if not by the man himself. The battle has been won and the cabal should be satisfied with its achievements. All of the plot threads should be tied up...

...except, perhaps, for one, which can now serve as the lead into the next story:

*"Dmitrios, come here," says Mercedes, the witch from Brittany who had noticed the huddled figure by the side of the road, so long ago. "I've found Sforzini's letters. He wasn't acting alone." Slit' looks up, a sheaf of papers in her hand. "The closest of his allies is in Ostia. Shall we?"*

## Chronicle

Your game doesn't have to end with one story. Why retire a perfectly good cabal—and world — after only one tale? You can string story after story together to form a chronicle, following the cabal as it grows in power and wisdom.

The most important techniques for running an extended chronicle are twofold: Don't repeat yourself, and start laying the groundwork for the next story before you finish the current one. If the second story mimics the first, your players won't have much fun figuring it out, and might not stick around for the third tale. Where the first villain tried brute force, perhaps the second will try to seduce the cabal onto his side. Or he could just feign friendship while slipping hemlock into the magi's wine\_\_

Tying your second story into your first, even if it's just by dropping the odd hint or two, gives the players a sense of continuity. Remember, the chronicle is an ongoing tale; there ought to be a natural flow between stories, rather than a series of jerky transitions from one adventure to the next. A cabal doesn't travel from town to town looking for monsters to kill and treasure to steal. Its members live, and the chronicle is the story of their lives. Let the legend grow even as the characters do:

*Lost in thought, Mercedes steps over Pagliucci's smoldering corpse. In the corner, terHorsr fiddles with a silver ring taken from the dead man's pinkie. "You know," he says, "Sforzini had a ring just like this. I wonder how many more are out there, and what they're really up to."*

*"Too many, and no good," Mercedes replies tersely. "You saw what I found in Padua. That letter was the first part of an incantation, a summoning...."*

## Conflict

Conflict doesn't necessarily mean combat. Conflict is really any force directed against the cabal, and force of arms is only the most primitive kind. Perhaps there's a magical trap that's been laid, or a law the characters need to circumvent, or a riddle that needs to be solved. All these obstacles oppose the characters, and thus qualify as "conflicts."

Without conflict, there is no drama: legends rise from opposition, not from the status quo. Even so, you need to be careful about the amount and nature of your conflicts.



If you put in too much conflict, the diameters will wear down before they get anywhere near the climax; too little, and they won't have a chance to grow along their journey.

While a good knockdown, drag-out fight can be fun, it's not the only way to settle things. Ending each session with a battle quickly gets old. Let's lace it: Most of us don't get into life-or-death warfare every day, so why should our characters? The rarer combat is, the more terrifying it becomes for both players and characters. The two ingredients for a rousing struggle are parties with opposing goals, and something that each one stands to lose. A climactic showdown could involve a race, a trial, or even an insult contest (with a great loss of face for the loser). The higher the stakes, the nastier the fight; still, many foes won't dirty their hands (or risk their tile or freedom) with mortal combat. Sometimes a social, emotional or material blow hurts more than a sword thrust.

### Hue and Cry

When combat occurs, it needs to be carefully managed and placed, set up for dramatic tension and ended when events reach a peak. Many Storytellers make the mistake of turning combat into an endless succession of dice rolls. If things start dragging, have Lady Fortune step in and tilt the scales one way or the other. Knowing when to stop a fight is as essential as knowing how and where to start one.

Anyone who's ever been in a fight knows that violence is far more than a simple exchange of blows. Violence is visceral, repellent, yet fascinating. The threat of death drives us to extremes we never thought possible. It's been said that the best way to simulate a fight is to hit another player upside the head with the rulebook. While we *don't* encourage that level of realism, the point of the jest — that combat is fast, edgy and unpredictable — is valid.

Combat happens *fast*; the battlefield doesn't give time for pause and reflection. Sweat pours. Hearts race. Vision blurs. When the fighting starts, in many games, time slows to a crawl. Don't let it. **Mage's** combat systems are as streamlined as possible, but even they should be junked (see "General Action Rolls" and "The Narrative (Combat) System" in Chapter VII) whenever the results aren't vital to the plot. When every blow *does* count, keep the excitement high by describing what's happening in sensory Terms. On top of that, you can make a battle memorable by keeping the action moving, and setting it in a cool location — a crumbling bridge, a dye shop, a laboratory filled with seething vats.

Fights are not static; they grow from a spark into a holocaust, and once those flames have spread, they're difficult to put out. At the early "angry words" stage, most battles can be defused — or tanned; once blows have been traded, things tend to go crazy. Bystanders are dragged in, property is destroyed and authorities are inevitably involved. The opening brawl of *Romeo and Juliet* begins as a quarrel and becomes a riot; to restore order, the prince must threaten to kill everyone.

It's worth remembering that once battle is joined, the lives of the participants change. Even after the dust settles, combatants and their loved ones often seek revenue, especially if someone has been killed.

Even war-scarred veterans cringe from an unnecessary fight. There's a reason for that: Pain hurts! Nobody walks away from a sword slash with a smile on his face. Pain *stuns*. It splinters your senses and lingers for a long time afterward. While we aren't suggesting that you paralyze a character every time he gets bit, it is, worth remembering that torn flesh and broken bones are more traumatic than marks on a character sheet. The most heroic deeds are done by heroes in *extremis*, fighting through a haze of pain. If you're a Storyteller, make those cuts throb; if you're a player, gasp for breath as your magus stumbles bleeding from the fray. This sort of thing can be overdone, of course, but even then, it's more dramatic than saying, "Oh, yeah, I'm down to Mauled, but that's okay, I've got two more Health Levels left!" In a fight, *somebody* always gets hurt; the big questions are who and *how badly*?

Fights are brutal, unpredictable and dramatic. Their consequences last long after the last body falls. In short, make your combat come alive. Keep it fast, vivid, exciting and meaningful. Drama is the soul of Storytelling.

## The Arc of the Story

Nothing lasts forever. Trying to drag a tale on past its logical conclusion can make a game seem forced. If, for example, Cynthia takes a simple mystery and spreads it out into a grand conspiracy that winds outward through every aspect of the setting, the plot will lose its spice. "Bishop Malchezi again!" her players grumble as they unpack then-character sheers. If she's wise, Cyn will take a bint, wrap up the tale and start in on something else.

A good story has a beginning, a middle and an end, perhaps with an epilogue to lay all the ghosts to rest before the next tale begins. Writers call this the *dramatic arc*; when the story goes on too long, the arc wobbles and the blade — the intensity — falters. If the story simply swings in place, going nowhere, the audience gets bored and goes elsewhere. Don't let this happen. Let events hurtle down to a conclusion.

Think of your story as a pendulum, as in Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum." Your players are like the narrator, stuck in a bad situation as the blade descends. If they cannot get free, the full impact of the plot will cut their characters to ribbons. Each arc of the blade brings the conclusion closer. With each swing, the drama increases. What will they do to get free?

(This brings up an important point: *Always leave a way out*. Nothing sucks worse than a game in which the magi are doomed from the start. Things may get dire, even fatal, but there *must* be hope if you expect your troupe to keep showing up. The so-called "killer GM" is a dinosaur that deserves to be extinct.)

To tie your players to the table, set up a situation and give them a stake in it. In Cynthia's game, a sorcerer's brother dies at a feast. He's been poisoned! Who did it, how and why?

Once the group decides to act, give them complications: The dead man was having an affair with a countess. Her husband knew about it and vowed revenge, but he wasn't present at the banquet. His archrival was, however, and may have poisoned the victim to send hunters after the count.... Now the blade's moving. With each new revelation or confrontation, the arc drops and speeds. To keep up, the player characters will have to stay in morion. As events come to a head, the blade screeches across the table. The climax resolves the issues at hand and opens the door for a new story or three. The blade rises and the tale begins anew....

Setting the speed of the arc is tricky; the best advice we can give is to watch your players and gauge the arc by their enthusiasm. If they seem to be having fun, take your cue from them. Diversions are fine so long as they, like the overall plot, keep moving. Maybe Cynthia's players want to mess with an inkeeper's head during a one-night stopover. Cyn could run a whole game session around their mischief before sending them back on course in pursuit of some new lead. Even then, however, Cynthia will want to keep the "inkeeper plot" moving; if it drags out, the whole rhythm of the tale will be thrown off.

Obviously, a free-form Storytelling game follows a different beat and structure than a static narrative. You want to be flexible and give your troupe room to move. Most likely, the climax won't be what you had in mind, but that's half the fun of the game. Even so, each session should tie the characters to the table and set a new blade in motion. When time, interest or events are running out, guide your game to a stopping point and let things rest. When the story hits a dramatic conclusion, let it end. You can always start off with a new table and a fresh blade.

## The Edge

Without a cutting edge, a pendulum is simply dead weight. To keep the action moving, give your players a sense of immediacy and consequences. **Mag**e if, a game about doing something. Make your players care about what happens by tying events to their characters' fortunes. Unless the mages act, the world as they know it will be consumed.

Many Storytellers make the mistake of providing a setting with no purpose, or of creating a purpose without any immediacy. Why should the wizards band together and risk their lives if everything is okay. "That old ruin will still be there next year, and that guild rivalry is somebody else's problem. The cutting edge of the arc comes from personal involvement — usually linked to something more important than money or fame. The plague that infests the artisan's hometown comes from the ruins; the group might be able to discern the cause and effect a cure. The guild rivalry killed the warlock's sister; now he wants revenge. Once it's personal, the story has bite.

Peril sharpens the edge; if the players feel assured that their wizards are immortal, they'll probably get complacent. Make them feel they've something to lose. Give them the impression of danger; ask, "Are you sure that's what you're doing?" even when *you* know there's nothing to worry

about. Hint at greater hazards just on the edge of perception and let your troupe's imagination take over. Gainers are a paranoid lot. Nothing you could do can be as sinister as the things they'll conjure up, given the chance.

## Your Friend, the Reaper

Every once in a while, justify their fears: Take something precious away. Edges cur, and those cuts may be social (exile), emotional (the bitter end of love), spiritual (a loss of faith), or physical (illness, maiming or death). Every so often, a little death should fall into your chronicle, if only to keep the blade sharp.

"Death" can be symbolic or literal. In Tarot, Death represents some dramatic change. Something familiar ends and something new turns your life in an unexpected direction. A symbolic death removes something the magi have come to count on — a friend, a title, etc. Literal death is just that — the end of a character. Although it is possible to restore life to a corpse in **Mage**, such things don't happen very often. A wizard who dies is usually gone for good.

The threat of death (any kind) makes the game more interesting and immediate. If your players are complacent, the Reaper should come a'calling; if they act, he should be standing right over their shoulders. This doesn't mean you should be waiting for a chance to slay a player character — far from it! However, you ought to assure the troupe that things can — and will — change drastically in your world. A feeling of mortality will lend intensity to your game.

Even so, character death should *never* be arbitrary; the old "poisoned pin trap — oops, you're dead" bit is lame. Keep deadly threats to appropriate times and let the needs of the story decide the characters' fates. In many cases, you ought to tilt the dice rolls and circumstances in favor of player character survival. On the other hand, if the Reaper is banished from your game entirely, tension follows him out the door. Few things are as boring as a sure deal.

## Triumph!

Perpetual tragedy sucks. While a fall from grace can be powerful stuff, an endless series of defeats is infernally frustrating. The Sorcerers Crusade is a dark setting, no doubt about it; still, there ought to be a sense of triumph, even in adversity. When the cabal strives against miserable odds, reward your players with some degree of success, even if they seem to fail.

Victory entails more than experience points and treasure. A plundering killer is not a hero; someone who sacrifices himself for the betterment of his people is. It your players' wizards act heroically, make them proud by working their deeds into the chronicle. Saved peasants honor the magi; grateful lords and ladies grant them favors; troubadours sing their praises and magical beasts, which might be hostile otherwise, offer nods of respect. On a broader level, show that the characters have made a difference. Some-

thing as simple as a child, whose village might have been destroyed if not for the magi, running up to hug a wizard's neck can outweigh a pile of the finest gold.

Naturally, heroic rewards go to heroic magi. A sullen antihero isn't likely to receive a triumphant welcome. That's not to say that every character should act like Sir Lancelot; even, a gypsy thief is entitled to a reward for her efforts. "Low heroes" might receive covert favors, backhanded honor ("If you were any other man, I would spit on thee..."), good reputations among the downtrodden or perhaps the simple satisfaction of seeing the world made better by their efforts.

Some rewards are less tangible; a lone witch might achieve inner peace, even if the townsfolk shudder as she passes. Enlightenment, the ultimate coin of magi, often comes without fanfare. Mystick power is more obvious, but few people notice it unless the magus chooses to blow things up. The best reward, however, comes with Resonance (see "Techniques," and "The Scourge" in Chapter VIII) — the payback for a life lived well and simply — or, perhaps, in Heaven. Such rewards, it should be noted, must be earned. A character who lives for nothing but his own gain should receive nothing better in return.

## Cast

*May God keep all good people from such had company*  
— "Two Butchers" (traditional)



story without characters is nothing more than scenery. You need to populate your story; the world you create must extend beyond the players' characters' presence. Things need to happen offstage. The villains don't stop plotting just because the characters aren't around; nobles don't stop scheming and churchmen don't stop praying simply because the cabal isn't gracing them with its presence. In order for your story to breathe and grow, it needs people, nor lists of stats.

## The Cabal

It doesn't matter if your players have the most wondrously original character concepts since the dawn of roleplaying; if their sorcerers have no reason to talk to each other, your chronicle will rapidly fall to Earth with a moist thud. If the characters have no reason to *be* together, odds are they won't *stay* together. Most attempts to force them into doing so will fail miserably. Thus, it makes sense to ensure that the members of the cabal (the stars of your drama) have some compelling ties to one another.

To forge those ties, talk to your players before the chronicle begins. Make each one aware of what the others are doing (though not to the point of revealing characters' secrets), and encourage everyone to build characters with common bonds. Keep a weather eye out for characters who

will probably kill each other and gently steer players away from such concepts. Encourage people to weave their backgrounds together — a shared schooling here, a mutual acquaintance there — and give them common ground. Some advocates of "pure roleplaying" might find "jury-rigging" the characters an insult to "the art," but for most troupes, it prevents headaches later on.

Once your chronicle starts, it can be a chore to keep the characters together. The easiest way to do so is to provide a common enemy. In the face of impending doom, the choice of whether to chase manuscripts in Prague or Lwos suddenly fades to insignificance. *Eternal impending doom can get dull* after a while, *though*. If the magi are always a heartbeat away from death and damnation, the drama quickly wears off.

Sometimes, characters hate each others' guts. There's *nothing* wrong with that so long as the *players* are having a good time. A stirring rivalry — hurled insults, barbed repartee, even occasional fisticuffs — can embroider your tapestry with brilliant color, and save you Storytelling work. Competitors tend to create their own plot hooks. (*"I must win the hand of Lady Gianni before Marco proposes to her!"*) The trick, as always, is making sure the rivalry stays within manageable levels; things tend to go sour when player characters kill each other. Providing the whole group with a powerful shared goal will go a long way in ensuring their survival. A tale of two rivals working together despite their hatred can be powerful indeed.

## Supporting Cast

The world is full of people (and, by extension, beasts, spirits and other beings). A landscape of empty buildings might make an intriguing setting for one session, but it would quickly lose its charm. To keep things interesting (in all the right ways), stock your chronicle with an assortment of intriguing characters — peasants, popes, courtisans and kings.

Creating a supporting cast sounds like a lot of extra work. In the long run, however, it saves work and makes the game more fun, if your Storyteller characters are simple automatons, you're going to be in trouble the first time your players depart from the script — which they *will* do, trust us. If, for example, you create an alchemist whose sole purpose is to sell the characters saltpeter, you're screwed if the cabal suddenly decides to kidnap him. On the other hand, you've an idea of the alchemist's basic personality and motivations, you can improvise like crazy.

### "...By Demons Driven"

"Men are chariots of wrath," as the Bard says, compelled by their desires. That observation serves you well when supporting characters enter the scene. It's a lot easier to play your alchemist when you know what he wants and what he'll do to get it.

Motivation forges the difference between a list of Traits and a rounded character. People want things; the more a person wants something, the harder he'll work for it. Desire provides the character's motivation. Once you establish that motivation, you'll have a basic blueprint for the character's behavior. As a rule, assume that a powerful motivation makes for a powerful scene; it will be harder to kidnap an alchemist if he wants to be free, than if he doesn't mind passively observing his kidnappers. You don't need to supply every character with a burning obsession, but active motivations provide good starting places.

So what will a character do to get what he wants? That depends on his *approach*. Some folks employ "light" tactics and backoff when they get discouraged. Other people are desperate, determined, or callous enough to do *anything* to fulfill their needs. You don't want to get in the way when one of those folks wants something, but such characters can be a lot of fun to play!

More often than not, a person's background shapes his motivations and approach. A man who grew up a Florentine urchin may take a really direct path to his needs, while a genteel Roman merchant would probably use subterfuge and bribes to achieve his goals. It's a generalization, of course, but simple people tend to have simple pleasures and methods; the refined classes revel in intricate plots and elaborate desires. You could always invert those generalizations for drama's sake — the subtle merchant suddenly finds himself obsessed over a tavern wench and will kill to get her. On a moment's notice, however, it's often easiest to go with the obvious approach.

The "Breath of Life" and "Prelude" sections of **Chapter IV** explore motivation and background in a bit more detail. Obviously, you don't have to provide every stableboy with an elaborate background history; still, if you give him one overriding goal, then you've an advantage over a Storyteller who simply says, "Um, he's a stableboy with a Riding Skill of 3... Roll initiative." (See "The Storyteller's Cheat Sheet" for the practical side of supporting characters and their motivations, page 173.)

Characters who want things create stories simply by existing. Provide an abundance of motivated heroes, villains and innocent bystanders, and you'll never lack for ideas. Storyteller characters are your friends on a lot of different levels; properly motivated, they do your job for you. Spies convey information; paramours offer their favors... usually for a price, and authorities can compel service, or provide a good reason to leave...

Oh, and don't forget to add in a few villains as well. You might be surprised at just how much fun they can be.

## Nemesis: Building an Imperfect Beast

Behind every nefarious plot stands a nefarious plottor. While your characters may be the center of your story, they need an archrival to give the chronicle balance. Without an ultimate enemy or two, a chronicle lacks grandeur. A series of small skirmishes with small opponents can quickly turn tedious. If, on

the other hand, it turns out those "small opponents" actually work for a Hell-tainted magus who just happens to be after the same tome the characters are seeking, all those encounters with low-grade ruffians suddenly become part of a pattern. Your chronicle becomes more focused. By setting up an ultimate enemy, you set up a final confrontation with that enemy as the natural climax for your chronicle — as the end of the arc.

Nemeses don't just happen. You need to construct an archvillain carefully. After all, most of your plot developments will flow from him. With that in mind, think about *who* your characters' nemesis is as much, if not more, than you think about *what* he is.

No villain worth his salt does things just to screw the heroes over. He has a plan, an overriding goal that he wants to achieve, and the heroes are merely obstacles in his path. For the most part, the nemesis' actions don't revolve around the chronicle's central characters; he directs his plans toward an eventual goal, one that may or may not involve those magi.

The first step, then, is to figure out what your archnemesis wants. A host of related questions spring from that one. What is he after and why? What will he do to obtain that goal, and how soon must he accomplish it? Does he serve a greater power; if so, how, and what is it? Will he bargain with the players' characters, or kill them if he can? The answers to these and other, similar questions provide a framework for your archvillain. If you know how far he's willing to go and what he's striving for, you'll have a handle on how he'll react to setbacks and triumphs — and what his next move is likely to be in either case.

You'll also want to figure out who your nemesis is — his background, beliefs, powers, authority and so on. A good rule of thumb is to take the most prominent features of the players' characters and invert them for the nemesis. If the cabal consists of a group of Pagans, a cardinal or patriarch makes an appropriate nemesis. Idealistic initiates of the Order of Reason might be best opposed by a wily, ancient magus of House Flambeaux. This approach works on a general level as well — if the characters are sneaky, devious sorts, a brute who relies on sheer force provides both contrast and a challenge. After all, if the characters' usual hag of tricks suddenly comes up empty, the heroes will need to try something new — and fast!

Also bear in mind that the villain doesn't necessarily see himself as a villain. Perhaps he has idealistic motivations for his actions: The aforementioned cardinal might honestly believe that the cabal is a batch of Hellbound souls. Your villain *could* simply be pursuing personal gain or power, but he may be more interesting if he's serving what he perceives to be a higher purpose. Allowing your nemesis character to honestly, earnestly believe in what he's doing can add a fine moral shading to your game. Avoid mustachio twirling and scenery chewing — it's more comical than menacing. If your villain honestly believes that killing off the cabal is the best thing for the world, let him pursue that goal with style and dispatch.

Oh, another note: A good villain isn't stupid. He won't stand around while the player characters carve him into

meatpies, nor will he expend most of his resources in an all-or-nothing assault the minute the cabal spoils his plans. If your nemesis acts As The Plot Demands, his actions — and the Same — soon become contrived. So play your villain cool and smart, Climb inside his skin (unless doing so means that the cabal has no chance of survival) and run him like a player character. After all, the game's supposed to be fun to you, too.

## Henching for Fun and Profit

A good archvillain never works alone. Even the most maniacal madman needs henchmen to run errands, terrorize the locals, obtain ingredients for foul midnight rituals, and so on. More to the point, it's pointless to spend hours creating a well-rounded villain just to throw him into a winner-take-all bout with the characters immediately. In a situation like that, there's no sense of dramatic tension. Your players should learn to hate the bad guy's guts, or his defeat means nothing. If he's handled like a "monster," your archvillain just becomes another big obstacle, a "villain of the week." Another approach is called for — one that draws the characters' road out to the final confrontation. The best way to stretch the time between introduction and climax, in many cases, includes encounters with the servants of your villain.

Such "hired help" depends on the nature and background of the villain: A cardinal will have lesser churchmen and allies at his disposal, while a merchant prince will have sailors, factors, and hired thugs in his pocket. From there, consider how those henchmen encounter the cabal. Odds are low that they'll wander up, introduce themselves as The Villain's Servants, and then proceed to draw steel mid spell. It makes more sense if the characters come across the henchmen engaged in some nefarious act, put a stop to it, and then discover a connection to a "higher" power. Of course, that sets the players against your archvillain nicely; now he has an excuse to send servitors of increasing power and importance after the cabal. The closer the characters get to their main antagonist, of course, the more powerful and resourceful the henchmen become. Each contest is a bigger challenge, and sets the stage for a greater one.

Your henchmen will share some relationship to your archvillain, too. That relationship will probably affect the plot. Did the cabal's nemesis send, say, his own brother out in an attempt to deal with them? If so, how will he react to his brother's failure — or death? By defining the bond between master and servants, you give yourself the material for new stories and lend the existing story more drama.

## Allies and Bystanders

Main characters don't operate in a void. They have friends, lovers, families, mentors and so on, any of whom might be called upon (or threatened) in a pinch. Naturally, you'll want to pick a few of these allies and keep them well supplied with motivations and quirks of their own. When the time comes, those plot threads can ensnare your troupe

from an unexpected direction. You thought that trip to Newcastle was going to be easy? It turns out your true love Mary was horn in Newcastle, and tied an arranged marriage there, a marriage to the local lord....

Building up the essential humanity of the supporting characters also grounds the cabal in the reality of your world. After all, it's one thing if the villain wants to grind Luxembourg under his heel, quite another if a player character's grandmother lives there. By connecting the magi to the world around them, you make the players care about something besides themselves. Believable allies also create roleplaying opportunities for your players; if the only characters your cabal interacts with are villains, innkeepers and one another, odds are they're not turning into fully developed personalities. Give them a chance for some positive interaction as well — it can work wonders.

## Recurring Characters

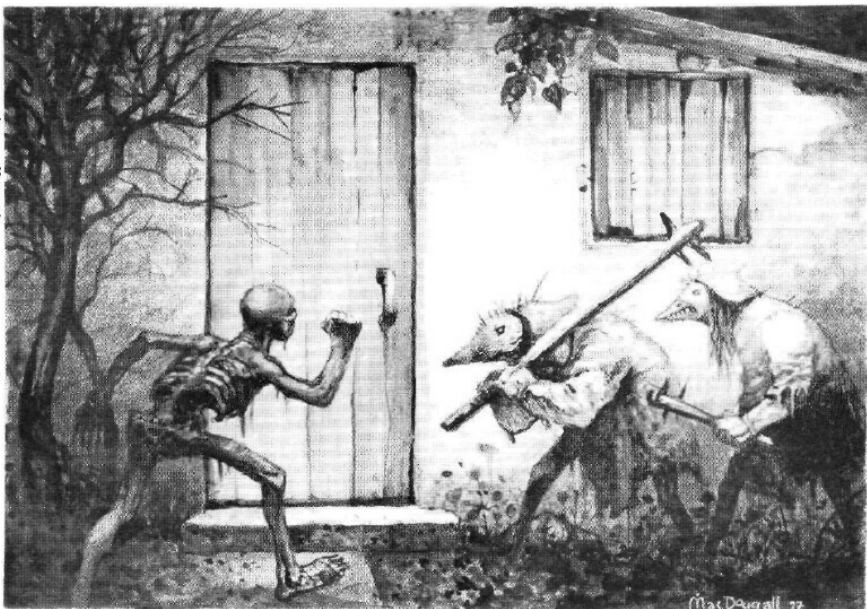
The inhabitants of your chronicle's world don't fade into nonexistence when the cabal leaves town. Events the characters kick in motion — embarrassing a noble, impregnating a barmaid, burning down a stable — aren't just going to go away; the noble might seek revenge, the barmaid might turn up with child in hand, and the stable owner might hound the cabal for damages. Wouldn't you? If objects and events can follow the player characters, surely supporting characters can do the same.

Recurring characters serve as graphic reminders of the impact the cabal members have on the world around them. It's all well and good for the cabal to urge a Dutch town to revolt against the Spanish, but there are consequences to doing so — particularly if the group skips town before the Spanish troops arrive. If they come back a year later to burned houses and accusing stares, a footnote in your chronicle suddenly takes on anew importance. Will the characters stay and help rebuild. Will they seek vengeance, or run? By allowing people and places to progress away from the main action of your story, you give your players all those options and more.

## The Setting

The setting is a character. Think about the brooding castle, the menacing wood, the welcoming village or the angry storm. People tend to personify places and things to begin with; when magick rears; its head, such personification is perfectly appropriate.

A good setting makes a huge difference in your tale. Imagine King Lear's madness without the stormy moors. A hare stage (or gaming table) lacks vitality; give your adventures bite by crafting exciting locations. You don't have to turn the whole world into a tempest, of course, but give your players a sense of space wherever they are. Describe the environment — the look of it, the feel of it, the placement



of landmarks and the overall impression they give — especially when that setting is significant. Mood and theme (see “**The Story**”) depend a lot on the setting (again, recall *Lear*), and the die rolls might depend on it, too. After all, a battle in the rain isn't quite the same as a battle in broad daylight! Let your players feel the difference.

Once you figure out where you want to set the stage, give the setting a personality or motivation as if it were any other character. This will add a level of intensity to the scene — a tree stands sentinel, the sky weeps. A natural setting probably won't have a motivation (although with *Naturae* spirits everywhere, you never can tell...). An inhabited one, though, may have a collective ambition. (A society tends to bond into something larger than a collection of individuals.) Depending on where you place the tale and what you want from it, you might establish a “setting motivation” in addition to the character ones: A town waits for news of the ailing princess; a grove hungers for its annual sacrifice.... You get the idea.

This sort of thing can be overdone, of course. If the whole world is raging, rage becomes commonplace. With moderation, however, exciting settings create an exciting world — a fit stage for a magical tale.

## Techniques

*If you're inclined to art beware,  
Take care: avoid all spivish churls  
Who despise our refined ideas.  
In hailing yokels of art unaware  
Refuse your art — he grudging,  
And don't spend it till they beg for it.*

— Anna Bijns, “Tisa Waste to Cast Pearls Before Swine”  
enough theory. Let's talk about practice.



Mage is a challenging game to run. The flexibility of the magic system and the sheer size of the setting can make even veteran Storytellers throw up their hands in ainfusion. Where do you begin?

With the people.

The first and most important thing to remember is that you don't have to run *everything*. Pick the elements of the setting that appeal to you; ask your players to come up with a suitable group of characters, and leave the rest of the world for later. You aren't under any mandate to run the entire world in a glance.

When you center your game around the people and their adventures, you give yourself a *furlong*, a plot of land intended for a single crop. It's far simpler to plant and plow a single furlong than it is to cultivate an entire field, and it's much easier to run a limited game than it is to cram everything in this book into a single epic chronicle. For your own sanity and your game's survival, pick something that interests you and begin with that. Later on, the rest may come and go as you see fit.

The “**Story Hooks and Concepts**” section (page 179) provides a new Storyteller with several starting places. For now, let's discuss some of the Techniques that can help immeasurably once you begin your game.

## A Note About Rules

Game systems decide what people in your story can and can't do. Unfortunately, some gamers — and Storytellers — get so wrapped up in the systems that they drop the game on its head. Sure, the rules can be important, but in the end, they're tools, nothing more.

The trick is adopting just *enough* of the rules to suit your troupe and leaving the rest for certain circumstances... or for the carrion crows. That balancing act depends on your style of play and on the experience and maturity of your troupe. A group of beginners may need “training wheels,” while a pack of veteran roleplayers can get through whole sessions with a die roll or two.

**Chapters VII and VIII** offer a variety of systems to guide your game. Some are somewhat essential, others are optional and some may be disregarded entirely. Ultimately, the systems you employ and the frequency with which you employ them rest in your hands.

## Storyteller Checklist

- Read this book. If there are any supplements you find helpful, read them, too.
- Decide the kind of game you want to run, and plan an overall plot line to begin that game.
- Give your players some guidelines for character types (spies, apprentices, solitary magi, etc.). Feel free to discourage or disallow any inappropriate character.
- Write out a “cheat sheet” featuring the main Storyteller characters in your plot. Write down their goals and basic personalities.
- Write or narrate a prelude to the game. If you're feeling ambitious, create a prelude for each character and run it as a solo game before the chronicle begins.
- Stay flexible. Make the notes you need to keep up with the story, but avoid scene-by-scene scripting and mega-detailed maps (which get hard to follow in the course of play).
- Keep the action moving and the players involved.
- Watch the “arc of the story.” If it falters, wrap things up. From there, you can plan a new adventure from the beginning.
- After each session ends, consider what happened and make adjustments in your notes based on the events of the game and the ways in which they changed the Storyteller characters.
- While you brainstorm on the next game, make some notes to help you remember what you had in mind.

## Setting the Scene

Atmosphere makes all the difference in the world — not simply the ambiance of the game world, but of the game space itself. A session run in a crowded convention hall will be markedly different than one played in a marble amphitheater. While your group's meeting place may be outside your control, there are a few things you can do to set the proper mood before the game begins:

- **Dim the lights.** Use candles if you can, diffused lighting if you cannot. Harsh artificial lights create a modern atmosphere — appropriate for a tale set in 1998, but not one set in 1498.

- **Employ music.** The Appendix features an extensive list of artists who suit a Sorcerers Crusade chronicle. Keep the music low and select it 10 match the mood you want to convey.

- **Props are great if you can get them.** Obtaining tapestries, gargoyles, tomes or candles is pretty easy if you're a recreationist, but could be a problem if you're not. Props aren't essential, but they do add to the ambiance.

- **Take a minute to set the mood.** When everyone's ready, turn turning off the lights to set the mood. It works well, as does reading a short introduction from a prepared "script." Whatever you do, set the beginning of the play apart from the mundane gathering. It's pretty hard to "set a sacred space" if someone has her hand buried in a bag of chips when you begin.

## The Storyteller Cheat Sheet

Once the game's afoot, it's easy to lose track of things. Traditionally, "gamemasters" carried large notebooks filled with arcane scribbings. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to locate the necessary information in a pile of paperwork. A one- or two-page summary of the important stuff, however, can speed play along immeasurably.

At the very least, you'll want the names of your important Storyteller characters, their driving motivations, weaknesses, and important Dice Pools. (See Chapter VII.) If there's a significant setting or plot point, note that as well. Some Storytellers can run a game with nothing more than a cheat sheet. On an extended run, you will want to keep more detailed records; even then, though, some bare-bones notes will make your job much easier.

In the beginning, plan things out as if the player characters didn't exist: This is Mary; this is the bishop; here's Caesario, and here's what they would be doing if no one got in their way. Naturally, player characters make it their business to get in the way; thus, the conflict begins. Between each session, replot your cheat sheet to reflect the cabal's meddling. Motivations will change: Perhaps Mary befriends a shape-changer in the cabal and decides to join. Maybe Caesario takes a fancy to a player witch. Quite possibly, the bishop will declare war on *everyone*, especially if he's been foiled before. As each new game begins, the cheat sheet charts the effects of the players on their surroundings, and provides you with a script of sorts for the next chapter—

## Documentum: Cynthia's Cheat Sheet

**Setting:** *Whitcomb* (small village in southern England). Late summer—hot, rainy, very green, very rustic, near harvest time.

**Plot:** A game of cat-and-mouse between the three characters and the troupe. Caesario uses the players' money; Mary lives at the farm where they stop to buy food.

*Mood:* comelic. Theme: You can't hide forever!

**Mary Prior**—young, impulsive, loner; loves animals, dislikes people. Motivations: to join beasts and run away from home; to save animals in peril. Weaknesses: socially inept, poor, smells of animals. Strengths: powerful Life-based spells, beast affinity, allies, pretty.

Arts: 4, Life 3, Mind 2, Spirit 2

Dice Pools: Initiative 5, Dodge 6, Bravel 4, Perception 7

**Caesario the Fool**—charming traveling player; womanizer, acrobat, seductive, very social. Motivations: to have a good time; to heal lots of wenchies; to keep his purse full. Weaknesses: leech, reckless, selfish, always running. Strengths: lucky, charming, perceptive, quick, gorgeous.

Arts: 4, Connection 2, Entropy 2, Life 2, Mind 2 Dice Pools: Initiative 8, Dodge 7, Acrobatics 7, Bravel 6, Fencing 7

**Bishop Malheri**—French churchman; chasing Caesario for defiling the bishop's secret mistress (Cortie). Supposedly "moral" fanter—promoting exorcism on traveling players. Motivations: to catch and punish Caesario; to make self look good. Weaknesses: hypocrite, obsessed, tied to Church, so has to keep up appearances. Strengths: lots of spies and allies, involved in Villencio plot, charismatic, wealthy.

Arts: N/A (non-mage)

Dice Pools: Initiative 4, Dodge 5, Influence 7

## Improvisation

Mage is a game in motion. An attempt to run a session by a preplotted script is doomed. So what's a Storyteller to do? How can you run an epic with theme, mood and drama without planning the next Battle of Tewkesbury?

Improvisе.

In the *Commedia Dell'Arte* (a 16th-century refinement of early drama and traveling player acts), the performers work without a script. Each assumes a stock character (one with set motivations and personality), and together they hatch a simple plot. With the needs of that plot in mind, the troupe improvises in character. The result, hopefully, is a familiar but entertaining tale. Roleplaying bears some resemblance to the *Commedia*. It's far less strenuous, but the essential elements are the same. Each player — you include — takes on a character with certain parameters and skills. Everyone improvises within the setting, and the troupe becomes its own audience.

The secret to good improvisation is this: *Know your character*. It you're the Storyteller, that means knowing the setting, the characters in it and the forces that drive the story forward. Hence, the cheat sheet and the other information mentioned earlier in this chapter. If you know who's doing *what to whom and where*, you can Storytell with a much freer hand than if you had chained yourself to a script.

Once you have that information mapped out, ride with it. Watch your troupe, play off their actions, respond according to your characters' motivations and try to guide the plot toward a climatic resolution. If you get any sudden flashes of inspiration, go with them, even if it means throwing away your previous plans (so long as said inspiration isn't too silly, of course). It can be scary to let go like this, but it's also exhilarating — and it's much less likely to fall apart than a tightly plotted narrative.

Improvisation is both a talent and a skill. Some folks are better at it than others, and everyone needs a bit of practice to get the hang of it. Running preludes (**Chapter IV**) with each player will help you get a feel for improvisation, and should establish a rapport between yourself and the players. Once that's set, you can wing it with relative ease.

## Description

Like any good tale-teller, a Storyteller needs to convey a sense of place and atmosphere. Your descriptions bear the troupe into your imaginary world, so you'll want to make sure those impressions are as vivid and exciting as possible.

Some folks have a natural gift for expression; others need to work at it a bit. The talents you bring to bear on the game are your own; we can, however, offer you the following hints for better description:

- Picture the scene in your mind and describe what you see. Nothing is more compelling than a Storyteller who "believes" in the story she's telling.

- Concentrate on sensory impressions ("*The air's thick and reeks of decay*") rather than geographical measurements ("*The hall is 10 feet wide and 50 feet long, and it's made of stone*").

- Let the mood seep into your descriptions ("*Countless centuries weigh upon these stones, and you feel every one of them*"); alternately, let your descriptions shape the mood.

- Get up! Move around! Get into the story! Look each player in the eyes and show him what his character sees. If you look bored, your players will be.

- Snuggle up to a thesaurus (but *not* during the game!). The larger your vocabulary, the better you'll be able to choose the right word for the right occasion.

- Draft some crib notes when you're feeling inspired, and refer to them when you're at a loss for words.

## Crosscutting

Cabals get separated. It happens. When it happens, you'll want to keep the game shuttling back and forth between the different parties. No one wants to sit around for hours while somebody else roleplays.

The technique is simple: run two different scenes at once, jumping between them at dramatic times. If possible, juggle events so that either A: the two scenes come together (like the chase that tears through the feast), or B: the two scenes reinforce each other (like the discovery of a clue that implicates the Baron in another scene). Don't spend too long on either location — keep the action moving. Crosscutting this way can be tricky; handled well, however, it not only keeps the play in motion but allows you to build suspense by cutting away at just the right time. ("*Kestral, you duck down as the horses pass. Suddenly, one of the riders stops. Meanwhile, back at the feast...*")

Generally, you don't want to keep the characters apart for long. If the separation is extreme (one party's in the Court of Fire, the other's in King Henry's hunting lodge), you may want to recruit an assistant Storyteller, especially if the troupe's going to be split up for a while. Find someone you can trust, brief her on the particulars (especially if something really vital is supposed to happen on her watch) and let her take the players into another room. Check back with her occasionally to make sure that both of you are heading in the same direction. Sooner or later, the magi should be reunited; otherwise, the game splits and you have two chronicles, not one.

## Soreshadowing

One of the greatest debates of Renaissance philosophy is Fate verses Free Will. Some authorities insist that Creation is foreordained, while others argue that humans are masters of their own destinies. Magi argue these points, too. Creation, we should note, keeps the waters muddy. Some events seem to support Free Will, while others smack of predestination.

As the Storyteller, you know that both ideas are true. The players are certainly free to do what they want, but you're still guiding things along a predetermined course. By foreshadowing certain events — planting clues about the future — you make the case for Fate. Clever foreshadowing can give your players clues, alert them to danger or lead them into traps. This really comes in handy if you have a Seer in the cabal; his visions often determine the path the sorcerers follow, a path you can shape to your needs.

Symbolism plays an important part in foreshadowing. Creation is rarely straightforward. When you decide to drop a hint about coming events, choose an appropriate symbol and leave it in plain sight. This works especially well for prophecy and omens, since such visions are never literal anyway. If, for instance, Cynthia wanted to warn terHorst about the four magi pursuing him, she could have four ravens suddenly dart from the sky and tear a hare to pieces. If terHorst's player is even slightly clueful, the Ecstatic will be looking over his shoulder after that!

Like anything else, foreshadowing can be done to death. Keep it for special occasions. Remember, though, that many folks in this age see "great providence in the fall of a sparrow." Toss in false omens from time to time just to keep your players guessing. After all, a magus sees the world as an endless message. No one said that message always has to be true....

## Symbolism

In the Dark Fantastic world, *everything* is symbolic. Historically, the art, writing and discourse of the period are loaded with allegories. Occult (literally "hidden") lore is buried in a wealth of symbols; some knowledge is too precious to reveal openly, especially when there are those who would kill you for possessing it. Finally, Divinity speaks through omens and signs; a clever man should be able to interpret the will of God, and the foolish man deserves not to know.

In your game, symbolism helps you set up mood and theme. Occasionally, it helps you pass out information, too; an insightful player might be able to catch important clues from the symbols you employ. Work such things into surroundings (a wall of thorns), characters (three sisters spinning thread), weather (an approaching storm), descriptions ("*His eyes remind you of a lucked crypt*"), events and omens (a white hawk devouring a snake), and even dialogue ("*Your words, sir, are like cries on the River of Lethe*"). Let the players figure out what you mean. If they don't, well...

A detailed discussion of symbols would be beyond this chapter's reach; besides, there are plenty of good books on the subject (see "**Resources**" in the **Appendix**), numerous symbolic objects in the "**Ritual Tools**" section of **Chapter VIII**, and a small but helpful sidebar in *Beyond the Barriers: The Book of Worlds* (pages 46-47). Symbolism texts make great brainstorming material, too. Most include the myths attached to certain symbols, and those legends may inspire a few myths of your own.

## The Magickal World

*Your reality, sir, is ticks and balderdash and I'm delighted to say that I have no grasp of it whatsoever!*

— Baron Munchausen, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*

Aye, sir, we get thy drift. We have all the tools of good Storytelling at hand. Now how do we use them in a game of **Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade**? The Storytelling? As thick as you like. The rules? As little as possible.

That may seem impossible. The magick system is so flexible and the rules chapters so prodigious that Mage looks like a trial by fire. Looks, however, can be deceiving. If you have a good troupe and an imagination, the Path of Magick is far smoother than it appears.

## Workings of the Art

In Mage (as in real magick theory), the Arts are fluid, limited only by will, knowledge and the bounds of disbelief. The rules, therefore, are pretty open. In story terms, castings are performed through rituals; in game terms, they're controlled by Spheres. (See **Chapter VIII** for details.) The magus employs his tools and concentration, the player employs the Spheres and a magick style. From there, he rolls and you narrate the results.

The openness of the magick system may be puzzling to someone used to "spell lists" and "experience levels." Some players might take advantage of that confusion and flexibility to dominate the game. Fortunately, **Chapter VIII** features some guidelines for you: a fairly extensive list of different feats and the Spheres you need to perform them, a "how to" section for complex magicks, a list of casual and vulgar workings, and the Scourge. Between those elements, you shouldn't have much trouble.

Once you get used to it, Storytelling magick is easy. When the mystick tides start swirling, highlight the wonder with lots of description and symbolism. This is the twilight of High Magick, after all, so have fun with it. The Arts are anything but mundane.

If a problem with rules arbitration arises, consult the **Common Magickal Feats** chart; if nothing seems close to what the player is doing, check the Sphere descriptions or the "**Parcel of Spells**" section. If all else fails, bear two things in mind:

- The bigger the spell, the harder it is to perform (in game terms, it requires a lot of successes, perhaps at a higher difficulty); and...
- The more a Storyteller dislikes the spell, the harder it is to perform.

Don't use the latter truism to torment your players; if they're being fair, you should be also. This is your Big Stick, however; if a player absolutely, positively *has* to try things you don't want him to do, just make them damned near impossible to achieve. Magick is not an exact science, especially not in the chaotic world of the Dark Fantastic.

Good roleplaying should work the opposite way. If a player whips up a really cool spell and roleplays it to the hilt, cut her some slack. Perhaps the spell succeeds automatically, or the player receives a reduction on the difficulty number. Maybe the effects are grander than the magus expected; in game terms, she receives an extra die or two for her Dice Pool. By putting the emphasis on the story rather than the rules, you can cut down on power-naming and encourage your troupe to be creative.

One point you ought to stand firm on: *Magick does not just "happen."* A magus must channel her concentration through a ritual of some kind. When a player wants her character to cast a spell, ask what the magus is doing to make it so. Have the player describe the easting and the effect she wants from it. You might "color" the spell with a bit of Resonance if you see fit. The final results are your decision.

## Resonance

Nor is magick impartial. The shape it takes depends a great deal on the intent of its caster. While the forces behind magick may be morally neutral, their effects ride on spiritual steeds. As far as **The Sorcerers Crusade** is concerned, magick is the magus, and the magus is his magick.

Fans of **Mage: The Ascension** should note that the modern idea of magick as an amoral force is totally alien to this setting. Concepts like relativism and existentialism are

centuries in the future. The idea of magical morality isn't limited to the God-Father faiths, either; the Hindu-Buddhist idea of karma and the Pagan concepts of hubris and Three-fold Return predate Christianity by centuries. In short, Resonance isn't "goody-goody stuff" — it's magical law.

In story terms, Resonance flavors a magical working. A spell cast in anger manifests more violently than one cast out of love; a working drenched in hubris swells in proportion to the magus' pride: A flame spell might ignite a single candle when cast by a humble apprentice, but flares a room full of candles when cast by a proud Magister. If either magus sweeps his arms out in anger, the same spell might melt every candle in the room in a sudden, fiery burst. Resonance also reflects the caster's soul: Nightshade, lighting a candle in her child's room, invokes a small, warm glow; Caspar the death magus, in contrast, conjures a cold, black flame. In game terms, the rolls and Spheres for all five options are exactly the same (Forces 3, Prime 2). The difference lies in your Storytelling — in the way you make the magick come alive.

In most cases, magick "obeys" the desires of the caster and follows the dictates of the Dice Pool; at times, however, Resonance "runs away" with the spell, doing things the magus hadn't intended or reflecting his emotional state. Maybe Caspar really *wanted* a warm, bright candle; the Death-taint



lay so heavily on him, though, that his magick kindled cold fire instead. By making a none-too-subtle point about the magus, you add to the drama of the tale and open the door to mood, theme and plot hooks; perhaps Caspar's Storyteller was getting annoyed with the alchemist's disregard for life and decided to use Resonance to dramatize the mage's cold soul. From that point, the player decides how the magus reacts: Perhaps the incident shocks Gaspar into a change of heart; maybe he *prefers* the cold fires. Either way, the arc of the story picks up speed.

Under most circumstances, you could leave the effects of a magickal working to the players' discretion, or simply present them in the most obvious form (all five instances produce the same simple flame). When the circumstances of the game (or the behavior of the player) suggest a more dramatic approach, however, you might "juggle" the spell's effects to suit the circumstances. If you want, you could even "adjust" the results, making Che spell's effects bigger or smaller than the die rolls would indicate.

Use common sense, symbolism and judgment when you alter a spell with Resonance. By watching the player, you can get a good idea of the mage's intentions, then shape the magick to suit your needs. Remember, too, that Resonance isn't always a punishment; altruistic behavior can stir positive effects as easily as greed or anger conjure negative ones. If the whole idea seems too complicated, you could ignore the effects of Resonance; by using them creatively, however, you add a whole new layer of magic and mystery to the tale.

## Seekings and the Daemon

Each magus possesses a divided soul: the "human" side and the *Daemon*. (See Chapters I and IV.) These two aspects of the sorcerer's personality rarely get along; the conflict between them causes the magus to grow.

From a Storyteller's standpoint, you could do three things with the Daemon: ignore it as nothing more than a Background Trait, bring the Daemon into the tale as an occasional "voice in the shadows," or play each Daemon as a full-fledged character. The first and last options might be overkill for many chronicles — too little or too much. The middle option allows you to steer the player once in a while without overwhelming the living characters.

In any case, you'll want to cobble up a Daemon from the appropriate Essence. (See Chapter IV.) From there, play it as though that spirit was a character; the Essence will help decide the Daemon's motivation. With an occasional nudge from the Mystick Self, you can plant the seeds for many a tale. (See the *Prelude for two simple examples*.)

When a magus confronts her Daemon in a *Seeking* (see Chapters I and IV), the divided soul meets in a dreamland where conflicts become milestones. When, in game terms, a player wants to buy a new point of Arete, you might elect to send her on a *Seeking* — a one-player game (see below) where the magus confronts her deepest conflicts.

In the course of her life, a magus encounters 10 "chambers" — one for each point of Arete. With each "chamber" comes a test; with each new chamber, those tests become more difficult. The higher reaches of enlightenment are almost impossible to achieve, and may take lifetimes to master. Each *Seeking* brings the magus to a "chamber" and confronts her with the following six steps:

- *Initiation* begins the quest. The sorcerer passes through some symbolic gateway that leads to the "chamber" itself.
- *Impediment* presents the first challenge, where the quester's fears manifest in symbolic form and tell her "Thou shalt not pass." This step often requires a Willpower roll to get through.
- *Trials* offer obstacles that terrify the Seeker while confronting her with the issues she must face. Examples might include a cliff (which she must jump from), a fire (that she must walk across), or other symbolic barriers. In game terms, this might require a Willpower roll, too; ideally, however, the player should roleplay through the test, not leave it to dice.
- *Choice* forces the mage to make a decision during a Trial. That decision ends the "chamber" and either passes the mage through or sends her back "home."
- *Acceptance* is the correct choice, and it's not an easy one to make. The quester must face her deepest conflicts, often abandoning things she loves or embracing things she fears. From there, *Closure* brings an Epiphany and ends the quest. The rapture lasts for days; the Arete is fairly permanent.

• *Denial* means the magus isn't ready yet. For whatever reason, she fails the test and plummets back to the mortal world, bearing some kind of trauma to remind her of her loss. *Failure's* mark lingers for hours or days afterward, and ranges from tears to madness. The greater the *Seeking* level, the greater the cost of failure, and the longer it lasts. The higher you climb, as it were....

The Daemon stands as the Guardian and Guide to the trial. Every time the seeker pursues a new level of Arete, she must go through each "chamber" again; each rime she does so, the test changes in some subtle way — it's easy to pass a test once and fail it the next time you visit that "chamber."

**The Book of Mirrors:** The Mage Storytellers Guide features a much more detailed outline for *Seekings* on pages 53-55. It's in your best interests, however, to make *Seekings* as dramatic and problematic as possible. A series of hard tests not only makes for a powerful tale, it forces the player to think of her magus as more than a fireball machine. Classic folklore is full of such challenges— Should your game accept anything less.?

## Other Types of Games

There's more than one way to skin a mage. A few variant game styles offer you some flexibility as a Storyteller. Like anything else, these options can be abused or overdone — and may throw an established chronicle off-kilter. The "things to watch for" sections mention a few pitfalls; if you see any of these things happening, cut the experiment short and return to standard gameplay. These suggestions should enhance your game, not wreck it.

## Crossover

The Invisible World teems with potential friends, foes and complications. As wanderers of the shadows, magi cross paths and blades with any number of night-folk. A crossover game unites sorcerers with vampires, wererecreatures, spirits and the fae. The mysterious natures and elaborate power-plays of these creatures promise a wealth of material; who could resist a story about the Tremere/Hermetic war, the Shattering, the fall of the Ceilician wererecats or a spectre-ridden keep?

The following books have plenty of information for tie-in games: **Crusade Lore**, **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, **Bastet**, **Dark Ages Companion**, **Dreams and Nightmares**, **Axis Mundi**: **The Book of Spirits** and the rulebooks to the other White Wolf games.

- **Things to Watch For:** *Chumminess*. The creatures of darkness should be mysterious to each other. Nevertheless, many players insist on acting like all night-folk belong to one big, happy, well-informed family. Discourage this by emphasizing atmosphere over "brand names," and by chastising players who ignore the gulfs between "families."

## High Plot/Low Plot

Contrast is fun. By setting different things next to each other, you get fresh possibilities and throw new light on old stories. A common literary and theatrical device of the period, the high plot/low plot contrast sets highborn characters on grand errands alongside their lowborn, earthly counterparts. Both stories twine together, and reinforce (or undermine) one another.

To run a high plot/low plot chronicle, have your players create two sets of characters — the magi and their companions; or highborn characters and peasant ones. Both groups coexist, but rarely go adventuring together. Perhaps they share a Covenant, home town or story line. Lay out some common plot threads between both groups, then run them in alternating game sessions. One week, the nobles pursue their lofty goals; the next, the folks below the salt tend their business. Every so often, allow a player to step between characters, introducing the peasant into the company of her betters for a scene or two. If you're really ambitious (and have exceptionally good roleplayers), allow them to run both sets of characters in a single story.

- **Things to Watch For:** *Overkill*: When both characters share the same stage for too long, one or both plots suffer. Keep "encounters" short. *Metagaming*: If a servant knows the master's business, their player is allowing a bit too much "privileged knowledge" to pass between his characters. The "*Cannon-fodder*" *Syndrome*: When a player uses both characters as extensions of each other, rather than as different people, this option breaks down.

## One-or-Two Player

The ideal method for running Seekings, past history, trysts and split-party adventures. Simply set aside a time when you get together with one or two select players, then run a story

that involves only their characters. This way, you can rake care of personal plots without ribbing the other players of their game time. A perfect way to encourage diameter growth, and to while away time when the entire troupe is unable to meet. Such games, if well-played, ought to be worth a single experience point, and should add to the ongoing story line.

Another option, blue-booking, is essentially a one-or-two player game in written form. You write down what's happening and pass it to the other player(s). Each party describes what her character is doing, then passes it back to you. You add 10 it, pass it back, and the cycle continues. Blue-booking can be done with notebooks, over e-mail or through standard letters.

- **Things to Watch For:** *Monopolization*: If one player gets too much attention (and experience), the others may resent it. Isolation: You (or the player) might get so wrapped up in the "mini-epic" that you lose track of the rest of the game. *Point-hoarding*: A greedy player might use this option to gain experience points way out of proportion with the other players.

## Live-action

When you get up from the table, dress in costume and "speak the speech," you take the game to a whole other level. Live-action roleplaying (LARPing) is a popular option for folks who don't want to confine their imaginations to the living room. So long as you draw the line at swordplay and other stunts, there isn't any reason why a **Sorcerers Crusade** game couldn't be played out live-action. The magick, of course, remains imaginary, but gamers tend to be imaginative sorts to begin with.

Magick, of course, presents the biggest obstacle to a live-action **Mage** game. The raw flexibility of the Sphere rules (**Chapter VIII**) screams for a Storyteller for each player. We suggest the following options if you choose to take your chronicle to a live-action level:

- Avoid Trait-checking through elaborate roleplaying.
- Minimize the use of magick, run with low-powered sorcerers, or both.
- Keep copies of rye appropriate Spheres and charts handy and give everyone a few dice, then run spells or Trait-checks as usual. Narrate and roleplay the effects.
- Trust your players to be fair if you're not there to oversee the results. They, in turn, should avoid doing anything too spectacular without a Storyteller present.
- Recruit a couple of assistant Storytellers, brief them on the overall plot, and let them run with it.
- Keep the troupe small—no more than 10 people, under most circumstances. At the very least, limit yourself to 10 mages or less; Awakened folks aren't that common, anyway.

Most cities already have LARP groups, medieval recreation societies or Renaissance fairs. Some already have "magic rules" in place, in which case you might use those systems instead of the ones given in this book, and simply adopt the **Sorcerers Crusade** background to that game. White Wolf does not take any responsibility for you if you choose this

option, by (he way. LARPing can be a lot of fun, but it can present some real problems beyond die usual game questions.

- **Things to Watch For:** *Satanist Syndrome:* Many folks get the wrong impression of gaming, and assume that such groups are "Satanic cults." This can be a real problem in some cities, especially if the players get a little too far into character. *Injury:* Geeze, how many times do we have to say, "Don't tigh, don't go into sewer tunnels and don't antagonize the locals?" There, we said it again. *Rules Disputes:* With mature players, this isn't a problem; some people, however, must argue every specific of each spell. When this happens, the game breaks down. If your troupe can't handle it, don't do it. *Chaos:* LARPs take on a life of their own, and that life can get pretty weird—maybe too weird for your chronicle. *Overwork:* Unless your troupe consists of four or five players, you will want help Storytelling a LARP game. One person can't do it all; don't even try. (See White Wolf's *Mind's Eye Theatre* line for LARP rules and options for non-magickal games.)

## One-shots

An alternative to the continuing chronicle: With a single, self-contained story, you can assemble a group of characters, give them a limited objective, play it out and wrap the whole story into a (fairly) neat package. If you want to keep going, you could always run a sequel.... This option is ideal for short-term troupes, crossover games, LARPs, test-runs and breaks from the usual chronicle.

- **Things to Watch For:** Nothing. Have fun!

## Story hooks and Concepts

A good story needs a great hook — something to drag your players into the action. The old "barroom brawl" device is as stale as day-old beer. You want to haul your troupe in with the first line and weave the story from there. Make it short. Make it grab. Make it count.

A crafty Storyteller can conjure a tale from an opening line. Simply ask yourself, "what's going on?" and let your answers lead you. The following hooks (in italics) may be used as springboards (or whatever your devious little mind can imagine.

Shall we begin?

- **Apprenticeship:** Every sorcerer must learn the Arts. "Teacher's rules" might feature a group of students (the players), a player's own apprentice, or a third party's troublesome pupil. *That meddling brat stole my treasure! So — you fancy yourself a wizard, do you? The master's dead—now what?*

- **Archmagus:** Even archmagi face challenges. A truly "high-level" game might feature ancient grand masters as either supporting roles or player characters. *You stand between a city and its destruction. Only the truly wise may prevail — all others perish. At last, after so many years, we meet again...*

- **Comedy:** All's well that ends well. Till then, anything is fair game. Comic romps make great "rest stops" between grimmer tales, but even light slapstick might

appear deadly serious at first. *What do you mean, you lost it? Don't feign innocence — you defiled my bride! Your life is forfeit unless you perform the following tasks...*

- **Faith:** It's all too easy to portray religion as a villain. In these dark times, however, faith is a beacon and guiding hand, often stronger than any blade. *I will not betray my God! Surely this sacrifice is too much to ask...? Hern — let me offer comfort.*

- **High Adventure:** Kick down the walls and storm the castle! Saddle up the dragons and ride! Blast the darkness away with a hearty cry and let swordplay tell the tale! *Aye, my liege, I do swear to follow thee. The enemy is at the gates! There is but one chance... but it surely leads to doom.*

- **Historical:** Your magi help make history — or change it — when they accompany some pivotal figure on a significant task. *Comes with me to the City of Gold! Help paint the chapel! — but of course, maestro. I have found a route to India, your highnesses...*

- **Horror:** Plagues, torture, warfare, the night-folk — this world is rife with horrors if you tare to look for them. True tar hinges on helplessness, so cripple your cabal's resources when you begin. *I condemn thee as a witch — take her! My God — what is happening to me...? Hell isn't what they said it'd be — it's worse.*

- **Intrigue:** Plot and counterplot — in this world, you can't trust anybody! Conspiracy tales demand a host of plotters, a web of agendas and some reason to keep the game a secret. *Oh, you haven't met the king's mistress...? Let us stake a title wager, then... Where did this come from, and why do they want it back so badly?*

- **Romance:** The path of true love never runs smoothly, especially in the Dark Fantastic world. A good romance demands conflict, obstacles and an attraction beyond mortal understanding. *But m'lady, you're the prince's wife... I swear I shall never forget thee. His eyes blaze like a thundercloud — despise me or no, I must have him!*

- **Turnabout:** The unexpected rears its head, often in the middle of some other type of story. Turnabout tales are good for keeping a cabal on its collective toes, but everything hinges on an unexpected revelation: *But... you're dead... You mean it wasn't poisoned? My closest friend — how could you?*

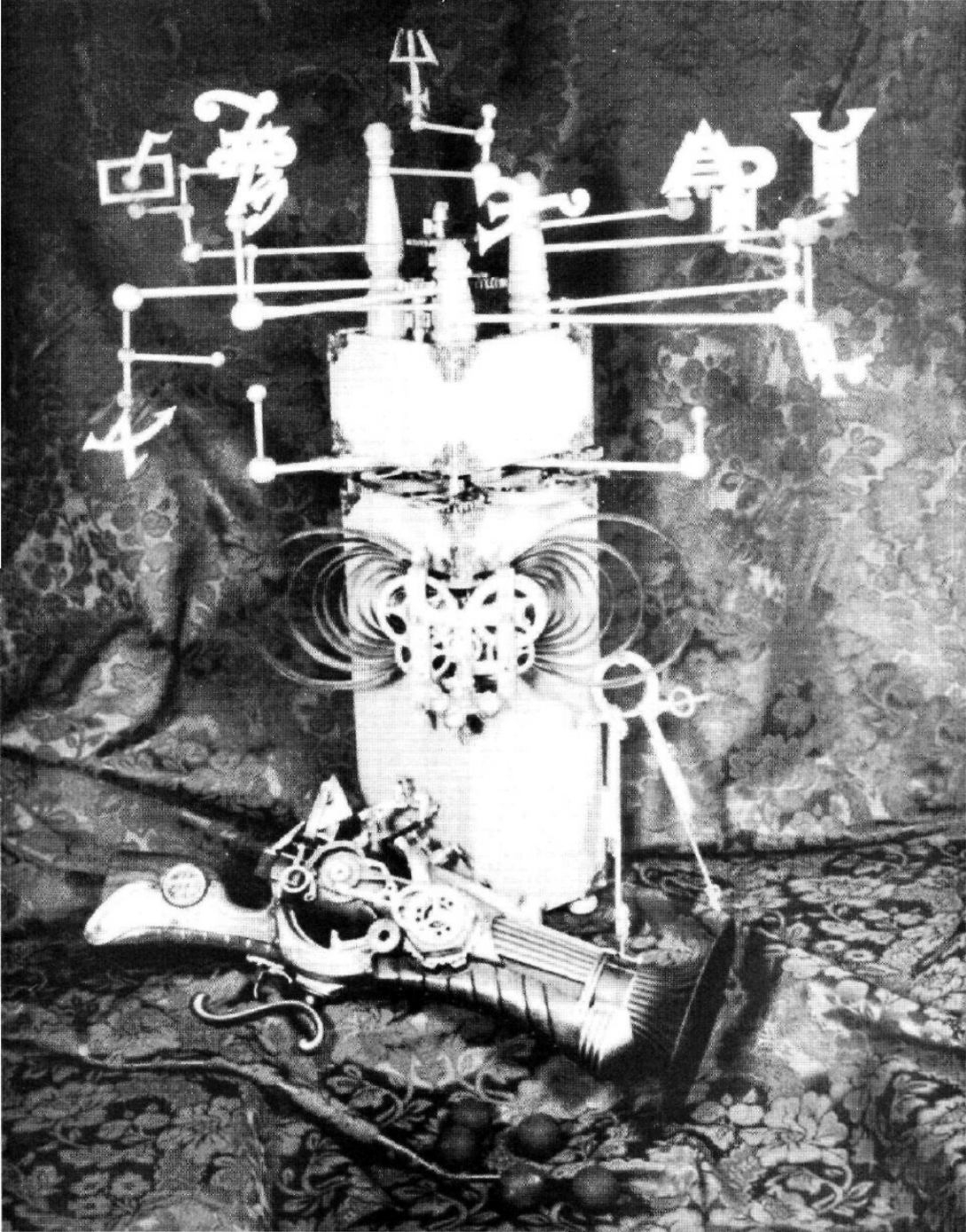
- **Tragedy:** The mighty often rise and fall, and their failures shake the world. The tragic figure could be a player, her close companion, or some mighty figure whose influence surrounds the cabal. *The prophecy must be true! My Lord, are you ill? We must avenge her death, evert if it means our own lives...*

Arid so it goes.

## Conclusion

We are the tales we tell. For all the "official" advice White Wolf can offer, the final shape of the chronicle belongs to you and your troupe. With an eye toward your enjoyment, resources and desires, shape an epic that captures the Dark Fantastic in a shimmering glass. The romance, the adventure, the horror and the humor of this setting mean nothing without the kiss of life you bring it. In the end, run the tale you want to tell.

Your audience is waiting.



# BOOK III: SCIENCE

## THE DAEDALEAN'S JOURNEY

THE THEOLOGIANS LIE, MY LOVE. OUR WORLD IS INDEED A SPHERE.  
IT HOVERS IN THE FIRMAMENT, CHASED BY DRAGONS OF CLOUD AND  
STORM. FROM HIGH ABOVE, I SEE THE TEMPESTS WEAVE THEIR WILL  
ACROSS THE HUDDLED MULTITUDES. IN THE WAKE OF STORMS, THE  
MORTALS I CANNOT SEE CLUSTER LIKE SHEEP IN WINTER, MORTALS LIKE  
YOU, GOOD CATHERINE, AND LIKE I WAS BEFORE I CAME ABOARD.

MY SHIP IS A STAR AMONG MANY, LIT BY FUELS THAT WILL NEVER  
DIE. IT IS MY TASK TO SAIL HER, AND HER CREW, INTO THE VOID. GOD  
WILLING, WE MIGHT RETURN, BUT STRANGE AIRS AND STRANGER  
SIGHTS WILL GUIDE OUR MINDS FOREVER AFTER. ONCE YOU HAVE SEEN  
WHAT WE HAVE SEEN, NO MORTAL LIE CAN PURGE THE KNOWING.

CELESTIAL WINDS FILL THE SAILS ABOVE AS I WRITE MY TESTA-  
MENT. IF I COULD, I'D TOSS IT OVERBOARD AND WATCH IT FALL LIKE  
STONE THROUGH THE CLOUDS. PER CHANCE MY LOVE FOR YOU WOULD  
BRING HOME MY REMEMBRANCES, BUT THE FALL IS LONG AND UNCER-  
TAIN. TILL WE MEET AGAIN, I'LL CLASP MY BOOK AND TRAY FOR OUR  
REUNITING. WILL THESE STRANGE THOUGHTS, I WONDER, FORM A  
NEW VOID BETWEEN US? OR WILL THE LOVE I BEAR YOU PIERCE THE  
STORMS AND BRING MY VISION HOME?





# Chapter VII: Rules

... the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear  
with hearing...

—Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of learning*

## Rules of Engagement

The cell's only other occupant was an old woman who cried all night for her cat. Agnesa tried to pray with the dame in order to comfort her, but to no avail. The woman's mind had long since fled, and she hardly knew that when dawn came, it would be her last. The bishop's men took the poor thing away quietly, and Agnesa wept in sorrow, not for herself, but for the suffering: Ritter Manfred von Ulm, a gentle knight who loved the forests; Bartolomeo Cavalcanii, corrupted by a desire for power, flesh and wealth; and what of Karel, her friend?

Agnesa braced herself as she heard the cell door open. She'd made her peace and was ready. To her surprise, an elderly man in scholar's robes entered. He looked familiar, and she realized she'd seen him in the market many months ago, debating with a flock of young students about celestial bodies. Had Karel been among them?

The man wasted no time on peasantries: "You have a decision to make, Agnesa, and you must do it quickly. My pupil,

Karel der Untersee, has told me he secretly took you as a student, that your dabbling with von Ulm was a sham. Is this true?" Agnesa's mind spun. Could she have judged Karel so wrongly? Had he been trying to sway her to his cause all along! No! She trusted her judgment better than that. This cold fish had no trace of human compassion, but Karel was different. Perhaps his words to his mentor were the sham.

"Yes," said Agnesa. "It is true. Karel has been my true mentor these past months. Von Ulm was blinded by old superstitions and childish beliefs. How can we believe in the power of that which we cannot prove?"

The man nodded and called the guard. "Release her as the bishop instructed." He turned back to Agnesa. "You understand I had to be sure of the truth. I would not want His Grace's mercy to be without cause." The guard removed Agnesa's chains as she walked into a harsher prison than the one she'd left.

## Rules, Golden and Otherwise

Fun's tun, but there are times when rules come in handy.

At its heart, **The Sorcerers Crusade** is about creativity. No amount of rules could hope to capture the complexity of real life (or good fiction, for that matter). On the contrary, we feel that an excess of systems spoils a really good game.

How much is "an excess"? That's your call.

In an ideal world, we could simply dispense with the following charts, tables and modifiers. This is not, as we know, a perfect world, so the following chapter provides a collection of game systems as a framework for your adventures.

These rules provide a inundation for your game; the final shape of the structure or lack of it — is up to you. A really flexible, trusting troupe can dispense with many of the usual die rolls and simply wing it; an inexperienced group might be better off sticking to the systems provided, if only for consistency's sake. We can't tell you how to play; in the end, the style you choose is your decision.

The following guidelines are based on a loose playing style, with a few detailed systems to cover certain important cases. You are officially given license to change, adjust, keep or discard these systems as you see fit. Remember, the story is key, not the rules. It's your game. Have fun with it.

## Time

In the Dark Fantastic world, people measure time in sunsets and seasons, not in minutes or seconds. Mechanical clocks exist, but they're rare, and not many people pay attention to them anyway. Time is fluid and highly subjective.

Things run the same way in **The Sorcerers Crusade**. Events happen quickly, or slowly, but never precisely. Instead of seconds or hours, we, in this setting, measure time in the following terms:

- **Turn** — When things happen quickly, the story shifts into turns. Each turn reflects anywhere from 30 seconds to three minutes, depending on what's going on. When Eloine sings, when Sir Roland swings his sword, when Brandon Slaine searches the Inquisitor's library, it takes a turn. In game terms, a turn is the time it takes to perform one action.
- **Scene** — A series of events linked by a common setting is called a scene. When Eloine's song calls forth a group of faeries, when Roland covers the ground with corpses, when Brandon finds the books he needs and torches the library, a scene passes. In game terms, a scene is any collection of actions taken in the same place. Dramatically, a scene marks a "beat," or an event in a larger tale.

• **Chapter** — When a series of events comes together into a whole, those events become a chapter. When Eloine strikes a pact between the fae and her band, when Roland rescues his grogs and spoils an Infernalist's ritual, when Brandon exposes the Inquisitor's plot and saves ancient tomes from destruction, a chapter passes. In game terms, a chapter constitutes a single session. Dramatically, each chapter marks a turning point in the story.

• **Story** — A complete tale, with an introduction, buildup, climax and resolution. Each chapter mentioned above could have been part of a larger story featuring the three mages and their respective goals. In game terms, a story takes however long it takes; some tales require a single night's play, while others may weave several months' game time into one long epic.

• **Chronicle** — An ongoing series of tales, connected by a core of magi. Individuals may come and go, the world itself may serve as the stage, but the basic themes and characters remain. In game terms, the chronicle begins when your troupe begins its adventures and ends when you retire the characters — hopefully after a suitably dramatic climax.

Another form of time, *downtime*, passes when events occur offstage. Nobody wants to play out the details as the characters prepare for bed each night. If something important happens — Eloine hears voices by the fire, for example — the Storyteller shifts to a scene. Otherwise, it's downtime and nothing much happens.

## Basic Rules

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;*

— Matthew 7:7



The Sorcerers Crusade is an easy, fast-moving game. The core rules, collectively called the *Storyteller System*, are designed for flexibility and improvisation. Based around the d10, or 10-sided die, the system determines everything according to a series of successes rolled against a difficulty number. The more successes you roll, the better you perform. The higher the difficulty, the harder the task. Obviously, you want to roll high and roll well.

The core system works like this:

- Your character has a certain number of dots in each Trait. Each dot equals one 10-sided die.
- When your character takes some important action, the Storyteller may call for a roll. She'll tell you which Traits to combine for your Dice Pool. The total equals the handful of 10-sided dice you roll for the task.
- The Storyteller also sets a difficulty number (see below) as your target. Each die that comes up equal to or higher than the difficulty number is called a *success*.

- A modifier may add to the difficulty number, or subtract from it. A +1 difficulty modifier, therefore, would add one to the difficulty of your roll.

- The more successes you roll, the better your character does. If you don't roll any successes, he fails the task. If you gain negative successes — called a botch (see below) — something goes horribly wrong.

- Under certain rare conditions, your Storyteller may add to your Dice Pool. When this happens, you roll more dice and increase your chances for a real triumph — or a disaster.

That's it; everything else is a variation on that basic system.

## Trait Ratings and Dice Pools

Before you can roll the bones, you need to know what you're rolling and why:

- Traits reflect a character's innate and learned abilities; a series of dots or numbers shows how good she is at any given thing. The human Trait scale runs from one to five. Most people range from one to three dells in their Traits; player characters, being exceptions to the norm, run from one to five. Traits beyond five *are* possible through mystical means (see the *Titan's Power* spell, page 273), but are highly unusual among magi and unknown to mortals—

x	Pathetic
•	Poor
••	Average
•••	Good
••••	Notable
•••••	Legendary
6+	Beyond Human Capability

Characters have two types of Traits: those that go to five, like Attributes and Abilities; and those that go to 10, like Arete and Willpower. Traits that go to five can be combined in a single Dice Pool; those that go to 10 cannot. (The exception to this rule is any inhumanly high Attribute or Ability).

A third type of Trait, the Sphere rating, is never rolled as part of a Dice Pool. Magickal workings come about through other rolls, which are described in **Chapter VIII**. **Chapter IV** covers Traits in greater detail.

- A *Dice Pool* is the maximum number of dice you can roll in a single turn. To perform several different actions in the same turn, you'll have to split your Dice Pool. (See below.) That Pool comes from a Trait (like Willpower) or a combination of two Traits (like Dexterity + Melee). A Dice Pool never combines more than two Traits; a Dexterity + Melee + Willpower roll is not an option. Unless magick is involved, a normal human being cannot have a single Dice Pool greater than 10.



## Difficulties and Successes

• To complete a task, roll your Dice Pool against the *difficulty*. The Storyteller assigns this target number based on the circumstances — an easy action requires a low roll or none at all, while a heroic task demands a similarly heroic die roll.

• For each die that equals or exceeds the difficulty, you get one success. The more successes you win, the greater the feat. Some tasks, like rituals, contests or long struggles, require a certain number of successes before they're completed. Others demand only a success or two. A really good roll in this case grants the character a grand victory.

### Difficulties

3	Child's Play
4	Nothing Special
5	Simple Task
6	Average
7	A Challenge
8	Very Difficult
9	Infernally Hard

### Successes Needed

One or Two	A Simple Thing
Three to Five	A Stretch
Six to 10	Major Effort
11 to 15	Heroic Effort
16 to 20	Legendary Effort
21+	Titan's Task

### Successes Achieved

One Success	A Near Thing
Two Successes	Well Done
Three Successes	Accomplished With Style
Four Successes	A Stroke of Luck
Five Successes	God's Fortune

Some tasks are so easy (difficulty 2) that they're not even worth rolling for; others are so damned near-impossible (difficulty 10) that they tax the resources of the greatest wizards. Difficulties cannot go lower than 2 or higher than 10 — modifiers (see below) simply drop the target number to 2 or raise it to 10. A natural roll of 10 always succeeds, and a natural "one" always fails.

## Botches

Nothing is perfect, least of all life. Whenever you roll a "one," it takes away one success from your total. If you end up with more "ones" than successes, the result is a *botch* — and a mess for your character.

Botches are Lady Fortune's way of slapping you in the face. A bad turn of luck can knock the most accomplished magician to the apprentice level, and possibly into the grave as well. When a botch occurs, something bad happens. The particulars depend on your situation, but the Storyteller will make sure it's a memorable occasion.

Some troupes count extra "ones" as really bad botches — double or even triple botches. This option can be a real pain, but reflects the rise and fall of Fate on a grand scale.

## Taking Action

For the most part, you should avoid resorting to dice; roleplaying's generally more fun than roleplaying. When the whims of Dame Fortune might make a real difference, though it's time to see how she's feeling about you....

Some actions succeed automatically; you don't need to make a roll for them. Others may require a roll, or a series of them. Many, however, fall somewhere in between:

- If there's something critical at stake with the character's success or failure, or if acting out the role would be dangerous in real life, a roll should be made.

- If, on the other hand, the action could be described through Storytelling and roleplaying, use that option as an alternative to dice.

It's generally best to leave die rolls to those actions that have serious consequences and a real chance for failure. If Eloine simply needs to jump 10 feet from the battlements to the siege tower, don't bother rolling. She's a hero and shouldn't worry about minor things. If, on the other hand, she has to make a dramatic 15-foot leap through a storm of arrows, the roll becomes important — and difficult to boot.

Rolling for every little occurrence weighs a story down. As a general rule, *avoid* rules whenever possible.

## Initiative and Turn Organization

Unless something really important is happening, don't worry about who goes first; the characters do what they need to do more or less simultaneously and the troupe can roleplay everything out. When things get critical, however, it's a good idea to know who's doing what and when they're doing it. Lives may hang in the balance. This is when an action turn begins.

*Initiative* decides the first move. All players roll their characters' Wits + Alertness against difficulty 4. The person with the most successes acts first, then the next highest, and so on. Ties go simultaneously, or they are broken with the Dexterity rating — the highest Dexterity goes first. Those who fail act after everyone else, and those who botch stumble that turn and cannot act at all. If the circumstances warrant, the Storyteller can substitute Melee, Fencing, Dodge, Subterfuge or some other appropriate Ability in place of Alertness.

As an option, use the initiative results from the first turn as the action sequence for the whole scene. Things speed up tremendously when you're not making a new roll every turn. The Storyteller ought to be careful when taking this shortcut, though — you don't want someone standing around helplessly for a whole scene because her player blew the initial roll. As always, let good sense guide you,

Storytellers: Once things have begun.) organize your scene like this:

- Describe what happens in story terms. Be as vivid and exciting as possible and give your players a sense of what their characters experience.
- Have the players decide what their characters do. You can go by initiative rolls (lowest result describes what she's doing first, then the next-lowest, and so forth). Go around the table left to right, or use whatever other method you prefer.
- Roll the dice (if necessary) to see who succeeded and who failed.
- Describe the results, again as vividly as possible. "He hits you for three Health Levels of damage," isn't nearly as much fun as, "With an upward slash, the bastard catches you across the gut. Cloth tears, blood spills. You stagger back. Take three Health Levels."

## Automatic Actions

Rolled Actions are handled in more detail under "**Dramatic Systems**" and "**The Art of War**"; some actions, however, succeed without a roll:

- **Getting to your feet:** A character who's been knocked to the ground takes at least one turn to stand again without a roll. If he wants — or needs — to rise more quickly, he may split his Dice Pool (see below) and make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 4). As easy as this roll is, it's rarely worth checking — unless a knight is charging down on the mage at full gallop.
- **Holding:** You can hold your character's action until some event has passed. She can still take action at the end of the turn without penalty - waiting may, in fact, have some benefit at the Storyteller's option. If everyone in the scene holds his or her action, the turn passes without incident. The next turn begins when somebody acts.
- **Moving:** See below for details. Unless there's some important factor in the move—a slippery floor, a tightrope, etc. — no die roll is necessary.
- **Automatic Success:** Sometimes it's just easier to let a character succeed without a roll. If the mage is so proficient with a certain skill that checking it is a waste of time, this optional rule allows her to bypass the roll. As a guideline, assume that a character whose Dice Pool exceeds her difficulty number can perform a simple feat without trouble — *so long as* nothing truly critical hangs in the balance. Simple feats include walking across a floor, calming a horse or using proper manners at a banquet. Critical tasks — combat or other high-risk situations — should negate this rule. At the Storyteller's option, small spells might also succeed automatically. (See page 229.)
- **Social Interactions:** It's usually more fun to play out a trade, a seduction or an argument than it is to roll dice every time your character tries to accomplish something. Still, fictional magi often have resources their players do not; in those cases, a roll or two may be a good idea. (See "**Dramatic Systems**.")

## Movement

Characters move by crawling, walking, jogging or running. Some can fly or swim. Unless there's a hazard involved, none of these actions require a roll; some obstacles, however, may slow the usual movement rate by as much as half.

- **Crawling:** A character can move roughly five yards per turn on his hands and knees.
- **Walking:** Under normal conditions, a human-sized character walks roughly seven yards per turn. Some exceptionally small creatures (like mice) "walk" at crawling speed, while exceptionally large ones (like elephants) cover 10 or even 15 yards per turn.
- **Jogging:** At a quick trot, a human character moves (12 + Dexterity) yards per turn. At this speed, he can split his Dice Pool and perform another task with the same action. Small creatures jog at walking speed, while large ones jog 15 to 20 yards + Dexterity.
- **Running:** Flat out, a human covers about 20 + (3 x his Dexterity) yards; an average Dexterity 2 person, therefore, runs at 26 yards per turn. At this speed, he can't do anything else except perhaps dodge or charge. (See "**The Art of War**,") Small creatures can't run like this, and large ones can outrun any human.
- **Flying:** Creatures with wings or magic can fly 10 to 20 yards per turn, depending on what they use. Under most circumstances, flying doesn't require a roll; when something dangerous occurs, however, the flier might need to make a Dexterity + Athletics roll to avoid crashing.
- **Swimming:** There aren't many people in this age who can swim. Those who can, however, move through the water at roughly eight yards + Dexterity. A really strong swimmer can go 12 yards + Dexterity. Many marine creatures can do at least that well, and often better.
- **Riding:** A character who's mounted on another creature uses that creature's movement as his own. It's usually a good idea to have at least one dot in the Riding Skill before clambering astride a mount.

## Complications

Those are the basics. You can play a game (albeit a simple one) with that much. However, to reflect the complications that usually come up in life (fictional and otherwise), we offer a few additional rules and adjustments. As always, use them as you see fit and ignore them otherwise.

## Modifiers

All situations are not created equal. When circumstances change, you can shift the difficulty number up or down to show that change. Modifying the difficulty number is a judgment call; under most circumstances, it isn't worth the trouble. Some rules, maneuvers and situations, however, adjust the normal target number as a matter of course. Unless something really seems like it should be adjusted, leave the difficulty as is.

## Extended Rolls

Most rolls are standard; you roll once and either succeed or fail. Sometimes, though, your character needs to perform some prolonged or extraordinary deed — a ritual, a race, etc. When that happens, the Storyteller might call for an *extended roll* — a contest where you have to roll a certain number of successes before the task is completed.

Simply roll the dice as many times as you need to succeed... or to fail. In story terms, each roll reflects a certain amount of time your character spends in action. Depending on the activity, a single roll could cover 30 seconds, one minute, five minutes or even a day. A failed roll sets you back a hit. (See "Try, Try Again.") A botch undoes the whole effort and forces you to start from the beginning. Successes accumulate from roll to roll. When you gather enough of them to finish the task, you're done. (See "Successes Needed" under "Difficulties and Successes" for guidelines about tasks and the successes necessary to complete them.)

## Resisted Rolls

When two characters oppose each other, the Storyteller may call for a *resisted roll*; both players pit their Dice Pools against a difficulty number, and the one who rolls the most successes wins the contest.

During a prolonged contest — like a wrestling match — you might combine extended and resisted rolls. Let's say Nik and Jean-Marc need to accumulate 10 successes, total. The first one to do so achieves the objective. As the characters struggle, the players roll.

Most resisted rolls subtract successes from the other player's rolls. If Nik got three successes and Jean-Marc won four, Marc would end up with one success and Nik with nothing. Since keeping track of successes from one turn to the next can overcomplicate things, you might opt to simply compare success totals and let the player with the most successes win.

## Splitting Dice Pools

When you want to do more than one thing during a single turn, you can split your character's Dice Pool between those actions. The number of dice you use for each action is up to you. If two different Pools are used, however, the lowest total gets split. If, for example, Nik wants her mage to leap (Dexterity + Athletics, Dice Pool of seven) and hit someone (Dexterity + Brawl, Dice Pool of eight), she would split seven dice, not eight.

## Teamwork

If several characters work together toward a common task, die players may, at Storyteller's discretion, combine their successes. The team rolls and its totals are added together. If one player botches, the effort is undone. Characters have to use

the same Traits in order to work together this way; you can't combine successes if one wizard is using her Dexterity + Brawl while the other employs Perception + Awareness.

## Try, Try Again (Optional)

Everybody fails once in a while. Even so, it gets frustrating. If you blow a roll, you can usually try a second time; each new attempt, however, adds one to its difficulty. Additional failures add another difficulty level. If you fail a difficulty 6 roll and want to try again, your new difficulty is 7. If you screw that one up, your next attempt is difficulty 8, and so on.

Depending on the situation, the Storyteller might use this rule, ignore it, or prohibit your character from making another attempt. After all, some things — like bluffing a prince — can only be tried once. If you fail, that's *your* problem....

## General Action Rolls (Optional)

Some things just aren't worth checking roll by roll. Is Eloine hit by an arrow as she leaps to the siege tower? Does Roland get past the witches in time to destroy the ritual? In cases like these, where one roll can cover a series of related tasks, the Storyteller may call for a single general action roll. The success or failure of that roll measures the character's accomplishment.

A general action roll takes the most appropriate Traits and measures them against a target number. Since one roll takes the place of several, the difficulty will be a bit higher than normal.

Difficulty	Task
7	Easy
8	Challenging
9	Hard
10	A Hair too Close to Hell

In the examples above, Eloine's player rolls the mage's Dexterity + Dodge to avoid the arrows as she leaps. Roland's player makes a single Dexterity + Melee roll, rather than a turn-by-turn series of rolls. Success in any case means that the mage did what he or she came to do; fai Liire destroys the attempt, and a botch leads to a near-fatal scrape.

In some cases, your magus might have to, shall we say, override the objections of a number of inferior but determined opponents. Archers fire at the witch; frenzied Infernalists lunge with drawn blades. When this happens, the Storyteller makes a roll for the opposing party using the general action roll rule. Again, success or failure depends on the roll. In most situations, this becomes a resisted roll. (See above.) The one to get the most successes wins the day.

This optional rule is ideal for large battles, chases, prolonged debates, haggling sessions or other scenes when an obviously superior character matches wits or blades with a group of mundane people. By narrating the event, roleplaying it to the hilt, and resolving fate with a single roll, you emphasize the drama over the dice.

## Documentum: Kestral's Flight

Kestral Windfree, Nik's Verbena character, has a Dexterity of 5, an Athletics of 2, a Brawl of 3, a Stealth of 4 and a Willpower of 6. Note how the following die rolls translate into a story.

- **Standard Roll**

Things are not well in Baron Tyburn's manor. Kestral goes to investigate tales of a trophy room filled with slain magical beasts. First, however, she needs to yet inside. Spotting a likely opened window, she climbs up the stone wall and crawls through. Nik's Storyteller calls for a Dexterity + Athletics roll, difficulty 7; Kestral's Dice Pool is seven, and Nik rolls seven dice as the witch ascends the cold rock manor....

- **Standard Roll with Modifiers**

Soon afterward, Kestral creeps through the sleeping baron's bedchamber. Nik rolls her Dexterity + Stealth, for a total Dice Pool of nine. Kestral is barefooted; normally, the difficulty would be 4 (6 - 2 for bare feet). The boards are old and creaky, though; Nik's Storyteller raises the difficulty by two, back up to 6. Under most circumstances, Kestral wouldn't have a problem — she has a Dice Pool of nine, three more than the difficulty. Under the "automatic success" rule, she shouldn't need to roll at all. Still, a witch in a baron's bedchamber had better watch her step.

Nik comes up with a four, a two, a one, three fives, a seven and two nines. Three successes! Without a sound, Kestral glides across the boards and reaches the Baron's side....

- **Botching and Movement**

Baron Tyburn's dog crouches in the corner. The Storyteller offers Nik a chance to spot the companion before he spots her. "Make a Perception + Alertness roll," he says, "difficulty 7." Nik rolls. No successes, two "ones." Kestral doesn't notice a thing.

The barking rouses Baron Tyburn. Kestral bolts for the bedroom window. Locked! As the Baron leaps from his bed, Kestral dodges him and runs for the door. The dog scrambles after her. The Baron yells for the guards. Kestral's 5 Dexterity gives her a running speed of 35 yards per turn—enough to outrun the dog and the Baron. She may, however, meet the guards on the way out....

- **Extended Roll and Failure**

The front door is locked too! The Storyteller informs Nik that Kestral needs to score three successes to break it down. The witch slams her shoulder against the door as Nik rolls her character's Strength (3) against difficulty 7. First roll: no successes. The diffi-

culty rises to 8. Again! Two successes. The guards are coming. A third try: Kestral hurls herself against the wood. Two more successes! The door cracks and Kestral is through....

- **Resisted Roll**

A guard pins Kestral to the ground outside the manor. He's stronger than the mage (Strength 4 verses Strength 3), but she still has a chance to get free. Nik rolls three dice against difficulty 8; the Storyteller throws four dice against the same target. Nik gets one success; the Storyteller gets three. Kestral's arms are pinned and she's carried inside....

- **Extended and Resisted**

Kestral isn't going without a fight. Nik's Storyteller tells her she'll have three turns (three rolls) to get free before the guards chain her up. Nik has to score more successes than her captor on a resisted Strength roll, difficulty 7. Ideally, one of them should achieve five successes, but time is limited and both characters are opposing each other's efforts. Nik rolls first and gets two successes. The guard's roll (three successes) takes both of them away and gives him an edge. Nik spends a point of Willpower (see "Will power," Chapter IV) to get one success, then rolls two more. The Storyteller botches; the guard fumbles. Kestral 3, guardsman 0. On the last roll, Nik spends another Willpower point and rolls one additional success. That makes five. The Storyteller rolls two for the guardsman; this takes away two of Nik's successes, but Kestral still has the edge. She pulls one arm free as she's dragged through the doorway....

- **Splitting Dice Pool**

As another guardsman reaches for Kestral's arm, the witch lashes out. Kestral's Dexterity + Brawl totals eight dice. Nik splits them between a scratch to one man's face and a kick to her captor's shin. The Storyteller assigns a difficulty of 8 to both feats. Each strike gets four dice. Nik rolls....

- **Teamwork**

Robbed of their prize, the two guards search the manor grounds. Kestral, hiding in a hedge, won four successes with Nik's Dexterity + Stealth roll. The guardsmen "combine" their Perception + Alertness rolls. Together they need to collect five successes in order to notice Kestral. One gets two; the other rolls one. Not enough. Kestral slips away, leaving the guardsmen to face the Baron's fury alone. And thus, the tale continues....

## Dramatic Systems

*Of Dames, of Knights, of armies, of loves delight,  
Of courtieses, of high attempts I speake...*

—Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*



or the most part, you'll be playing out your character's actions; when she speaks, you speak for her. Roleplaying is three quarters of the fun in a Storytelling game; so get into it!

When things get heated, it's time to roll the dice. It's not really a good idea to roleplay things out in live action at this point, for what should be obvious reasons. Leave the steel at home.

Which isn't to say that you can't have a good time making the action as dramatic as possible. Vivid descriptions heat handfuls of dice clunking across the table, even when the dice are a necessity. The task at hand may involve a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) in game terms; in story terms, Eloine leaps from the battlements, grabs hold of the siege engine and hauls herself up into...

You see what we mean.

Don't let the dice fool you into thinking that the story goes away. Action is the operative word here, and that word implies drama.

Dramatic systems cover the situations you can't or won't roleplay. They're a court of last resort. When you hit a crisis point in the story, check the chart. Roll, see what happens, then describe the results in story terms. This list doesn't cover every possible action — how could it? — but it'll give you a range of suggestions and possibilities. It should not limit your choices in a game. Ultimately, your troupe decides for you what does and doesn't work. Anything is possible.

Each task on the chart has a couple of features. The Action section describes what the character's doing; Traits tells you what the Dice Pool should be; **Difficulty** is obvious enough, and **Description** tells what kind of roll to use — standard, extended, resisted, etc. In places where the Difficulty says "varies," the conditions decide the target number. Under normal circumstances, the difficulty is 6; really good or bad conditions lower or raise it. For extended or resisted rolls, decide the number of successes by the circumstances and difficulty of the feat. The Notes, marked by (\*number), detail options or exceptions to the rule.

## Physical Feats

As you can guess, these guidelines cover feats of strength, speed and prowess. A **Resisting** character tries to withstand some physical, mental or emotional trauma (torture, sickness, heartbreak, etc.) without breaking. While this isn't the sort of challenge you want to roll all the time, it can be pretty important at certain points. The other actions are self-explanatory,

## Art and Science

This section deals with the design and creation of artwork, devices, inventions and performances. In most cases, you can simply roleplay such events; every so often, though, a crisis might occur (the troupe performs for the king, the mage plays chess with Death, etc.) that cries out for a roll. **Design** covers the research and drafting stage of a project; by itself, this can take months. **Creation** refers to the physical act of making something (sculpting, painting, smithing, brewing). Depending on what the character's trying to do, this could take weeks, months or longer. (Some accounts claim da Vinci worked on the *Mona Lisa* for nearly 10 years!) **Gamesmanship** refers to games of strategy — chess, cards, etc. (Games of chance ought to be left to simple die rolls between the player and Storyteller, with the highest roll winning; riddle contests would involve Knowledge Abilities.) The other listings speak for themselves.

## Intrigue and Social Occasions

The heart of a Renaissance game, this category describes all kinds of skullduggery and social graces. Cryptography refers to hiding a message or breaking a code. Deception is, of course, fooling someone. Eloquence refers to speechmaking and insults, while a Facedown reflects an intimidation contest that might or might not involve words. A **Fake-out** is used in attempts to palm objects, cut purses or distract observers. **Impressing** someone comes in handy when you want to display your strength or manners, and Poisoning helps when you want to kill someone without getting caught. Gossip spreads or absorbs poison of a different sort, and Seduction, well... **Torture** is a sad sign of the times, but a common one when war, sex and magick are involved. **Spotting (a) Sneak** is what you have to do to notice someone attempting to sneak past you. It's usually more fun to roleplay such scenes than to *rollpaly* them; sometimes, though, you might need Fortune to rake a hand in the outcome.

## Travel and Recreation

For the most part, travel simply *happens*. The Storyteller describes the journey and nobody bothers rolling. In really important situations, however — a stunt, an obstacle, etc. — he might decide to let the dice tell the final result. A Driving roll steers a wagon or carriage. **Foraging** helps you find food or goods when both are scarce. **Flight** literally refers to flying, whether on broomstick, wings or dragonback. The other feats should be obvious enough. A standard roll covers one incident; for long trips, you might want to use extended rolls instead.

## Dramatic Actions

Action	Traits	Difficulty	Description
<b>Physical Feats</b>			
Climbing	Dexterity + Athletics	(varies)	Extended (1 success = 5 feet.)
Demolition	Strength + Athletics	(varies)	Extended (1 roll per strike)
Juggling	Dexterity + Athletics	5-9	Standard(extended for long performances)
Jumping	Strength	3	Standard (up: 2/success,across: 4/success)
Lifting	Strength or Willpower	9	(See Feats of Strength chart.)
Pursuit	Dexterity + Athletics	6	Resisted &. Extended
Resisting	Willpower or Stamina	(varies)	Standard, or Resisted (See "Torture" and "Mortality.")
Sneaking	Dexterity + Stealth	(*1)	Standard See "Spotting Sneak."
Swimming	Stamina + Athletics	(varies)	Extended (1 success = 10 minutes or so; see "Movement" for speed.)

## Art and Science

Creation	Dexterity + Crafts (*2)	(varies)	Extended (1 roll = 1 day, week or month, depending)
Design	Intelligence + Crafts (*2)	(varies)	Extended
Gamesmanship	Perception + Logic or Subterfuge	8	Resisted
Judging Work	Perception + Artist or Crafts	(varies)	Standard
Mapmaking	Intelligence + Science	8	Extended
Performance	Manipulation + Expression (*3)	(varies)	Standard
Repair	Dexterity + Crafts	7	Extended
Research	Intelligence + Research (*4)	(*5)	Standard

## Intrigue and Social Occasions

Cryptography	Intelligence + Subterfuge (*6)	8	Standard
Debate (*7)	Manipulation + Logic	6	Resisted
Deception (*7)	Manipulation + Subterfuge	(*8)	Standard
Eloquence (*7)	Charisma + Leadership or Expression	7	Standard
Facedown (*7)	Charisma + Intimidation	8	Resisted
Fake-out (*7,9)	Manipulation + Larceny	(*8)	Standard
Gossip	Manipulation + Subterfuge (*10)	7	Standard
Impressing (*7)	Charisma + Etiquette	(varies)	Standard
Poisoning	Dexterity + Poisons	(varies)	Standard
Seduction (*7)	Manipulation + Subterfuge	(*8)	Extended
Spotting Sneak	Perception + Stealth	8	Resisted (See "Sneaking.")
Torture	Manipulation + Torture	(*11)	Resisted (See "Resisting.")

## Travel and Recreation

Driving	Dexterity + Crafts (Coachman)	(varies)	Standard
Flight	Dexterity + Athletics	(varies)	Standard
Foraging	Perception + Survival	(*12)	Standard
Hunting	Intelligence + Survival	(*12)	Standard
Pursuit	Dexterity + Athletics or Ride	6	Resisted
Riding	Dexterity + Riding	(varies)	Standard
Sailing	Dexterity + Crafts (Seamanship)	(*12)	Standard

## Notes

\*1: Watcher's Perception + Awareness; could also be set by conditions.

\*2: Or Artist, Herbalism, Invention or Science, depending on what's being made.

\*3: Or Artist, Singing or Dancing; to fake it, substitute Appearance or Charisma.

\*4: Or Larceny (for street dirt), Investigation (when checking sources) or other appropriate Knowledge Abilities.

\*5: Depends on how accessible the information is: 4 = Widely Available, 6 = Normally Available, 8 = Hard 10 Find, 10 = Secret.

\*6: Or Artist, Intrigue, Logic, Mathematics, Linguistics or Secret Code Language if the code is based on "privileged" information.

\*7: Attribute could be switched to reflect appeals based on charisma, looks or social savvy.

\*8: Target's Wits + Subterfuge.

\*9: Or Dexterity + Stealth or Larceny- Difficulty might be either target's Perception or Wits + Subterfuge.

\*10: Or Intrigue, Larceny or the Influence or Spies Backgrounds.

\*11: Target's Willpower rating. Each successful roll lowers the victim's Willpower pool by one point. Even when resisted successfully, torture inflicts physical barm (between one and three Health Levels of damage, depending on the method and instruments). Harm is automatic, and may be normal (blows, crushing) or aggravated (fire, blades, spikes).

\*12: Depends on surroundings; bad conditions raise the difficulty. Could also be played out as a complete scene with roleplaying and other appropriate rolls.

## Seats of Strength

Note: If the character's Strength rating is within the Dice Pool range, he lifts the object automatically. If he's attempting to lift something out of his normal range, roll his Willpower against difficulty 9. Each success moves him one step up the Dice Pool scale. A botch means he hurts himself.

Dice Pool	Feat	Lift
1	Rip a shirt	40 lbs
2	Smash a chair	100 lbs
3	Kick through a plaster wall	250 lbs
4	Throw a full barrel	400 lbs
5	Dent plate armor with fist	650 lbs
6	Rip chain links	800 lbs
7	Bend a one-inch thick iron bar	900 lbs
8	Throw a horse	1000 lbs
9	Punch through plate armor	1200 lbs
10	Lift a small cannon	1500 lbs
11	Throw a small cannon	2000 lbs
12	Break a small tree	3000 lbs
13	Throw a cornerstone	4000 lbs
14	Punch through a stone wall	5000 lbs
15	Throw a war machine	6000 lbs

## The Art of War

*O God of battles! Steel my soldiers' hearts;*

— William Shakespeare, *Henry V*



or players used to wading Through armies of foes without a scratch, combat in the Dark Fantastic world can come as a shock. Violence is swift and deadly here, and magi are hardly war machines. Some companions and night-folk can strew bodies with Frazzettian prowess, but most wizards are better off fighting from a distance.

Combat uses the same system as other tasks. Actions are resolved with standard die rolls unless otherwise noted. There are, of course, many ways to fight, but the physical methods fall into five general categories:

- A *brawl* involves bare hands and opponents must be within arm's reach. **Roll Dexterity + Brawl.**

- A *melee* signifies a clash of arms. Combatants have to be able to hit each other to fight this way, but the distance depends on the weapons used. **Roll Dexterity + Melee.**

- *Missile combat* sends shafts, knives, stones or bullets hurtling through the air. Fighters usually have to be able to see one another, although blind shots are possible. **Roll Dexterity + Archery, Firearms** or (in the case of thrown axes, spears or knives) **Athletics.**

- *Magickal warfare* involves spellcraft, and is covered in the next chapter. **Roll Arete.**

- A *barrage* sends cannonfire or other agents of mass destruction on their way. **Roll Perception + Artillerist.**

As a Storyteller, you have two choices when the fighting begins: the *detailed system* or the *narrative system*. The detailed version breaks a fight down to blow-by-blow descriptions. Each maneuver is rolled and countered on a turn-by-turn basis. The narrative version uses general action rolls (see "**Basic Rules**") to give a general impression of the fight and determine its ultimate results with a die roll or two. **The Combat Summary chart (page 202)** offers a concise sequence of combat, weapon damages, moves and modifiers for the detailed option; in the middle of a game, refer to that section before digging through the text for an answer.

## The Detailed System

When the outcome of the story hinges on every sword stroke, use this set of rules. Each turn equals roughly five seconds, and each roll reflects a move or two.

### Stage One: Initiative

A normal initiative roll (see "**Initiative and Turn Organization**," page 186) determines the order of battle. Unless the Storyteller has some really quick or powerful



adversary, he might want to consider making a single, initiative roll for all his characters, rather than a separate one for each combatant. Doing so really cuts down on rolling time — there are few things more monotonous than resiling initiative for every knight in an attacking army!

Players must declare their actions before the Attack phase begins. Someone who wants to split her Dice Pool has to make that decision (aloud!) and announce which dice are going where before the troupe continues on to the next stage. The only action a character can make out of turn is a *dodge* (see below), which she can perform at any time so long as she has a couple of dice left in her pool. She can say a few words, of course, but cannot take a new combat action.

### Stage Two: Attack

...And the blades meet! In game terms, the combatants make the appropriate rolls and see whether or not they succeed. The nature of the fight determines the Traits rolled and the weapons or maneuvers the fighters choose determine the difficulty. A failed roll denotes a miss; a botched one, a mistake. A magus can dodge before she gets hit, allowing her to escape the force of the blow.

### Stage Three: Resolution

Did you hit, and if so, how well? In this stage, the Storyteller determines what happened. A mix of die rolling and storytelling, the results of the clash will carry over into the next turn....

- **Damage:** The attacker's weapon or strategy gives the him a certain number of dice to roll. If he scores a hit, he rolls that Dice Pool against difficulty 6. Each success equals one Health Level of damage. (See "Mortality.") If the weapon is a firearm, he adds one additional Health Level for each success he scores (after dodge successes have been counted). Melee and brawling attacks do not add to their normal damage.

- **Soaking:** After the damage has been figured, the target can try to "soak" it. If she succeeds, she remains unharmed.

## The Narrative System

The quick and dirty fight system relies on a single roll or a set of rolls to reflect a few furious moments. It's a useful option when the heroes face off against a pack of less worthy opponents, or when an army storms the castle. Rather than breaking the battle into turn-by-turn attacks, the Storyteller simply narrates the highlights and perhaps makes a roll or two to see how well the player characters fare. The players, for their part, describe what their counterparts are doing; maybe they make a roll or two of their own and glory in their triumph... or wallow in their defeat.

This "system" is easy to use. First of all, if you're the Storyteller, decide what's happening; from there, assign a base difficulty for a few rolls, check them and see what occurs. (See "General Action Rolls" for rules and examples.) Generally, each combatant has an objective. Have each person say what it is he wants to do. Let each participant make a general action roll, then check their opponents with another roll or two. The winners succeed, the losers do not. From there, narrate the results.

Better yet, go "diceless" and simply describe the obvious outcome: "You waded into the cultists with a flaming sword and a vengeful cry. They scream blasphemies and try to take you down, but it's really no contest. Before you know it, seven corpses are cooling on the ground and the other Satanists are running for their lives. After a moment, you realize you're bleeding a bit. Mark off two Health Levels. They got you, but not badly." This tactic saves a lot of time and effort, turns a rolling contest into an event and lets your troupe go on to better things.

When the bodies fall, let drama dictate how much noise they make. Generally, you don't want to kill a player character in this kind of fight. If the player rolls badly, though, some disaster occurs — his sword arm is crippled, his right eye is put out, his leg broken. The character shouldn't die, but ought to have some severe obstacle (including a Health Level penalty) to deal with for the rest of the scene, if not the story. As for the enemies, let them survive or die by your desires for the scene.

## Avoiding Harm

The best way to survive a fight is to avoid getting hit; if you get hit, it's a good idea to have something between the blade and your skin. If you have nothing to rely on but your own skill, you'd best hope that Divinity smiles upon ye....

## Dodging

During the Attack stage, a character can try to avoid getting hit. This "dodge" could be a feint, duck, sidestep, block — anything that would keep an opponent's blade from a character's skin counts as a dodge.

To do this, a player simply declares "Dodge!" before her opponent makes his attack roll. So long as she has an action left, she can put it into a Dexterity + Dodge roll; if she splits her Dice Pool and keeps a few dice in reserve for emergencies, that works too. Each success she gets subtracts one success from her opponent's attack roll. If she wins more successes than he does, her character escapes harm. She could opt to divide her successes between different enemies, but that reduces her chances to escape either one.

- The base difficulty to dodge a hand-to-hand roll is 6, +1 for each additional attacker (+1 to dodge two opponents, +2 for three, etc.).
- The base difficulty to dodge a missile attack depends on the available cover:

Difficulty	Terrain
2	Within a step or two of cover.
4	Full cover within diving distance (a yard).
6	Full cover within running distance (three yards).
7	Partial cover within three yards.
8	No cover; duck and roll.

• Magi can sometimes dodge explosions that would kill a mortal. At the Storyteller's option, a mystick with Entropy, Forces, Matter, Lite or Time may make a Dexterity + Dodge roll to avoid an explosion's worst effects. This dodge is instinctive, a reflex rather than a spell. Success means that the mage takes half-damage, or — with a really good roll — none at all. Really huge explosions — like ones that level whole manor houses — cannot be dodged without resorting to some weavery.

Difficulty	Size of Explosion
6	Small explosions (oil lamps, flaming bolts)
8	Large explosions (fireballs, small-cannon shot, hellfire blasts)
10	Huge explosions (volcanic eruptions, large-cannon shot)

Dodging isn't always possible; a magus backed into a corner or surrounded by foes only has so much space in which to move. A surprised character might not be allowed to dodge, or might have to make an extraordinary effort — difficulty 8, perhaps — to do so.

## Soaking

A character can try to "dodge" damage once it's been dealt, relying on his innate toughness to withstand the pain. When the mage gets hit, the player rolls his Stamina against difficulty 6. Each success removes one success from the attacker's damage total. If all the attacker's successes are nullified, the character shrugs off the blow.

Certain attacks cannot be soaked. *Aggravated damage* (see "Mortality") is too much for the human body to withstand. Compared to the raging werewolves or undead vampires, magi are fragile things; certain magicks can toughen a wizard's skin to supernatural levels (see Chapter VIII), but otherwise, attacks like fire, acid, poison and some forms of magick are too devastating to bear.

Note; Damage and soak rolls cannot be botched.

## Armor

This age sees the perfection and decline of armor. On one hand, the artisan's craft creates the familiar "knight's plate" design and makes it common enough to dominate the battlefield; on the other, firearms, longbows and advanced tactics quickly make plate armor obsolete. By the end of the age, most soldiers rely on helmets and breastplates, but little else. Speed and skill eventually replace elaborate protection.

Plate armor sees its ultimate refinement in the invincible Titan's Armor favored by Gabrielites and Craftsmans; lesser suits protect the nobility and their favored warriors, while literally hundreds of different chain, scale, leather and plate variants cover the less fortunate foot soldiers. Many mercenaries and levied troops scavenge bits of armor from dead combatants, cobbling up "bastard plate" and "crow's mail." For simplicity, we'll categorize body armor into the following types:

- **"Crow's Mail":** A scavenger's delight, this willy-nilly mix includes leather, bits of chain mail, small plates and heavy clothing. Many rogues and bandits wear this sort of armor. Another, stealthier variety of this protection hides thick plates of leather or steel in strategic locations under otherwise-normal clothing.

- **Light Armor:** Typical footman's protection, often made of boiled leather breastplate, greaves, bracers and codpiece, with a metal helm and possibly a few bits of plate or ring stitched on for good measure.

- **"Bastard Plate":** This variation mixes metal breastplates, greaves and bracers with chain mail and an open-faced helmet. The preferred armor of pikemen, heavy footsoldiers and elite guards, this "bastard plate" offers its wearer protection and flexibility. A samurai's laminate armor fits into this category as well.

- **Mail:** Quilted clothing underlies a suit of linked chain mail topped off with a full- or half-faced helm. A few pieces of plate might add strength (and weight) to the suit, which tops in between 50 and 80 lbs. Most heavy soldiers, poor knights and lesser nobility wear such armor into battle, but it's not the sort of thing one puts on for social functions.

- **Full Plate:** The crowning achievement of armorfcraft; a fully articulated suit of shaped metal covers the warrior like a shell. A visored helm completes the set. Lighter and better distributed than mail, plate armor is so expensive that only the richest knights and nobles could hope to afford it. Full plate is shaped to fit the individual who buys it; another person could wear pieces of a set, but he'd have to be an almost-identical twin to fit into the whole suit without trouble.

- **Tournament Armor:** Too heavy and ornate for battlefield use, this impressive suit boasts full-body plate etched with elaborate designs. Less articulated than campaign plate, this suit weighs over 80 lbs and protects its wearer from damned-near everything. It's also beastly hot and inflexible, with plenty of raised surfaces that an enemy's blade might catch. Such armor is not intended for real combat, but can serve in a pinch.

- **Titan's Armor:** A Daedlean innovation, Titan's Plate combines the full-body protection and articulation of normal plate armor with incredible strength and a subtle but potent aura of dread. An elite Gabrielite becomes not only invincible but intimidating as well. Larger and more elaborate than normal plate, a Titan's armor suit is made specifically for its wearer and rarely accepts another.

Each type can be found on the Combat Summary chart; the *Protection* rating indicates the number of dice added to the wearer's soak roll. The *Penalty* adjustment reduces Dexterity and Perception Dice Pools while the character wears the armor. Titan's armor is fully described in the Appendix.

## Shields

As a defense against arrows, incendiaries and hand weapons, the shield plays an invaluable role in a warrior's survival; even so, it's not as popular in this period as it once was. Many combatants trust themselves to armor and keep their hands free for two-handed weapons and other tasks. A shield is heavy and conspicuous; when you have one, everyone knows you're expecting trouble.

By deflecting blows, a shield raises the difficulty of a foe's attack roll. It cannot protect a character's back or off-side. Categories include:

- **Bucklers:** Small and light, a buckler measures one to two feet across and raises an attacker's difficulty by one. A small, sturdy weapon (dagger, short sword, main gauche, etc.) can serve as a shield if it's held in the off-hand. Some bucklers, like the Scottish targe, have long spikes on the front to catch an enemy's blade or pierce his body. These inflict damage like a knife, but at difficulty 7.

- **War Shields:** A heavier wood or metal shield measuring three to four feet across, and occasionally larger. In some designs, a shoulder strap helps bear the weight. A character with a war shield adds two to his opponents' attack roll difficulties.

## Maneuvers and Complications (Optional)

When the clamor of steel drowns out compromise, anything can happen. The following modifiers, maneuvers and optional rules can help turn a series of static rolls into a deadly fray. Feel free to ignore or twist such complications for best effect. Remember: Keep things moving! (See the Combat Summary chart for the necessary Traits, rolls, statistics and modifiers.)

### General Circumstances

- **Changing Action:** Under most circumstances, you cannot change your action once it's been declared. If that action suddenly becomes impossible (like jumping onto a horse that's no longer there) or undesirable (jumping through a doorway that's full of enemies), you can abort that action and try another one. The new action's difficulty is one step higher than it would have been otherwise (6 goes to 7, and so forth).

- **Fighting from Horseback:** A character's ability to fight while mounted is limited by horsemanship. Her attack roll Dice Pool cannot exceed her Dexterity + Ride Dice Pool.

- **Flank and Rear Attacks:** The difficulty of a flank attack is lowered by one; the difficulty of a rear attack is lowered by two.

- **Immobilization:** A character who has been grabbed can still fight back; his attack difficulties are two levels higher than normal, however. Attempts to hit him are lowered by two; if he's tied up or otherwise immobilized, his attackers strike him without needing a roll at all.

- **Multiple Opponents:** A character fighting several enemies in close quarters raises her attack and dodge difficulties by one per opponent, up to a maximum of 10. Her opponents might have to add the same penalty to their attacks if they don't have room to maneuver — it's possible to elude a group that's getting in its own way. The penalty doesn't apply if the outnumbered magus is fighting from a distance; however, she might reduce her attack difficulties by two if her opponents are bunched together.

- **Targeting:** By aiming for a particular body part or item — the heart, the eyes, the sword hand, etc. — a character can cripple or disarm her opponent. Such an attack adds two to the roll's normal difficulty; if the toll succeeds, the Storyteller decides what happens; if it fails, the attacker misses completely.

## Hand-to-Hand Moves

- **Bind:** By catching an opponent's weapon and holding it, a character may keep it at a distance. To disengage, the enemy must beat the binder in a resisted Strength roll. Binding a weapon takes at least three successes, and usually requires some sturdy object to catch the blow.

- **Body Check:** By throwing herself against a foe, a character may inflict a bit of damage and knock the opponent off his feet. This hurts both parties — bodies aren't battering rams! To accomplish the attack, the character must win at least three successes; the damage is her Strength rating plus one additional Health Level for every success after the third (one for four successes, two for five successes, etc.). If she doesn't get at least three successes, she *takes* one Health Level per success.

A bodychecked opponent is stunned; for the rest of the turn, he adds two to all of his difficulties. A really good strike (five successes or more) knocks him sprawling (see "Immobilization") — the same fate that meets the attacker if she blows her attack roll, or if the defender soaks all the damage she inflicted.

- **Disarm:** With a quick swipe, the attacker flings her opponent's weapon across the room or takes it into her own hands. Three successes sends the targeted weapon flying; five or more snatch it away.

- **Fang and Claw:** Dragons, shapechangers and animals can bite, gore, rake or slash their opponents with great effect. An especially good strike — five successes or more — may impale the victim on the horns (if a gore) or grip him in a jaw-lock (if a bite), allowing a "free shot" — damage with no attack roll — next turn.

- **Grapple:** By grabbing an enemy, the attacker can try to pin her down, crush her, or both. If the attacker's successes exceed the victim's Strength rating, the grappler gets a hold. On the next turn, he can start squeezing. A pinned character loses her actions that turn, but can fight back next time around. If the attacker misses his roll, he grabs air and falls. If he wants to keep grappling, both characters make resisted Strength + Brawl rolls. The winner inflicts damage. If neither one wins, both spend the turn wrestling without effect.

- **Parry:** A magus can block his foe's strike by declaring "Parry!" instead of "Dodge!" Like a dodge, each parry success reduces the attack by one success. The defender stays in place rather than moving around, and can parry so long as he has dice left in his Dice Pool. Naturally, he needs a weapon to perform this move. A botched parry sends that weapon flying.

- **Reach, Speed and Initiative:** More often than not, a warrior with a long weapon gets the drop on a foe with a short one. In really extreme cases — a dagger verses a pole arm, for example — the Storyteller may grant automatic initiative to the combatant with the longer weapon. The same holds true for a fighter with a really fast weapon — a rapier, possibly — going up against one with a large, heavy one, like a battle-ax. (Watch Archibald's duels in *Rob Roy* for an example of this rule in action.) Even so, a really skillful fighter can get inside her foe's reach; assume that a character with at least eight dice in her Dice Pool can make up the difference and attack normally.

Let common sense rule; if the weapons seem fairly even, ignore this option.

- **Stunning Blow:** A character who wants to hurt someone without killing him can employ a "soft" weapon (a sandbag, a small club), open-handed slaps or a blow to the head. Such attacks knock a person unconscious if the total damage after soaking is higher than the target's Stamina rating; she stays that way for one turn per damage success. The victim might stay on her feet if she can make a Stamina roll (difficulty 8), though she'll be a bit dazed. Since such attacks center on the head, they're best done by surprise. Stunning blows rarely work on big targets (horse-sized or larger), and do not harm the victim past the Bruised injury level. (See also "Stunning" under "Mortality.")

- **Shield Parry:** Blows rain down on the shield as the attacker rushes in. Like a normal parry, this maneuver absorbs an attacker's successes; unlike it, this move must be declared at the beginning of the turn. A botch shatters the shield.

- **Throwing Objects and Opponents:** Combatants hurl all sorts of things — knives, rocks, tankards, people, etc. Small weapons have a range of 10 yards x the thrower's Strength, while large ones go five yards x Strength. A character can throw two lbs of unbalanced weight or five lbs of aerodynamic weight for every point of Strength. (See the Missile Weapons chart for ranges and damage.)

## Stunts and Surprise Moves

In the heat of battle, any number of things can happen. In many cases, the fighter who scores some unexpected success wins. Such stunts (throwing salt, whipping a cloak, suddenly leaping between tables) take an opponent off-guard. While they aren't especially damaging, these surprises (if successful) can turn a battle's tide.

To perform a stunt, simply take a turn and describe what your character is doing. The Storyteller decides the difficulty of the feat and the necessary roll; a successful roll gives you an edge — not a handful of damage dice hut a dramatic reversal of fortune. A failed roll does the same, but that reversal works against you; a botched stunt plops the character down in the path of some disaster. Surprise moves are risky, but often worth the attempt.

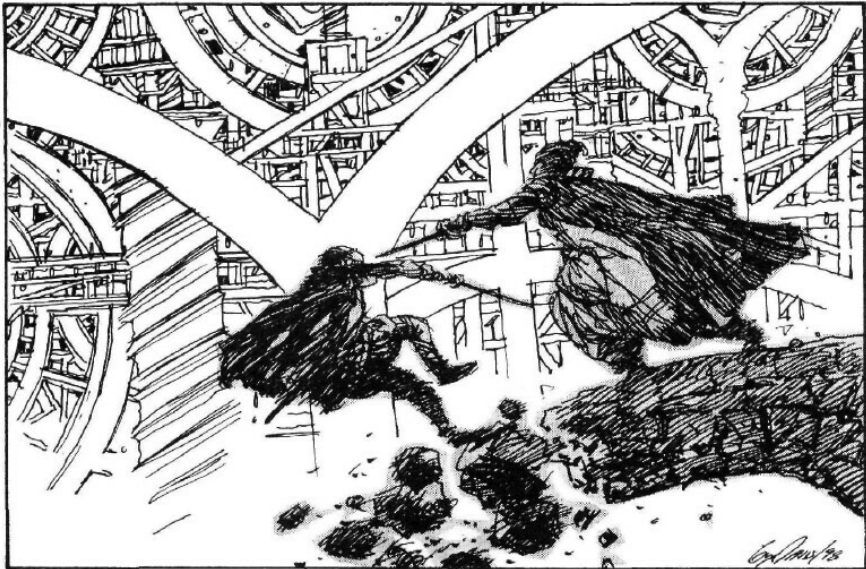
Storytellers should set the specifics of a stunt roll by the obvious Traits and circumstances; most surprises pair Dexterity with a Trait like Acrobatics, Athletics, Melee or Subterfuge. The harder the stunt, the higher the difficulty; 7 makes a good base, but really risky tricks could run to 9 or even 10. The Combat Summary chart has a few sample stunts and their difficulties; base your own decisions on these examples. A good trick ought to tip the scales in some meaningful way — automatic initiative, an extra damage die or two, a downed or blinded opponent, etc. Clever combat tactics often win fights; stunts should be rewarded — and should not be restricted to player characters!

## Fencing

Historically, fencing is in its infancy during the 1400s. The antics of the Three Musketeers are over a century in the future and the swashbuckler's heyday is just beginning. Dramatically, however, there's nothing wrong with moving things forward a bit, especially when magi are involved. The duels in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Princess Bride* are the highlights of those films; such swordplay would be a sad thing to omit from a Sorcerers Crusade chronicle.

Most sources place fencing's origins in Tuscany; Spain and France are equally notorious for such techniques, however, and a well-bred gentleman may have studied fencing in either country. Fencing is a serious business in this era; a rapierblade is deadly, especially in skilled hands. The mannered linework of modern sports is far removed from the killing arts of Florentine gymnasiums. A trained fencer is intelligent, cunning and very, very dangerous.

Fencing is fairly exclusive; a pupil must find a swordmaster, impress him, pay his (considerable) fee and endure months or years of exhausting, often abusive training. Lessons include forms, tricks, etiquette, politics, anatomy, philosophy and mind games. A fencer is not merely a warrior but an elite man of the arts — dashing, passionate and as graceful as a cat. Although such skills are supposedly the purview of men, many a determined woman has either donned a boy's garb, seduced a fencing master or purchased a secret teacher through exorbitant bribes or threats. Fighting schools breed



proudrivalries, too—rivalries often colored with blood. The politesse that comes with fencing is more important in the court than in a duel, especially in this early era. Many fencers Love to show off their formidable skills, and the time for restraint has not yet come.

In game terms, a fencer can use a variety of exclusive maneuvers. In story terms, he's an impressive character, performing all sorts of stunts in the course of a fight. Fencing is an art, a statement and a kilting technique all at once. Fights featuring a bladesman should reflect the dazzling novelty of his craft. No fencer should be without a few dots in Dodge or Acrobatics; the parry, bind and disarm maneuvers mentioned above are common practices, too. The following moves are exclusive to fencing styles, however; they're too esoteric to have entered general combat skills at this time.

- **Fletch:** Also known as *aballistra*, the fencer runs or slides in toward her target and lashes out or thrusts. The momentum carries the point through the target's body.

- **Florentine Style:** A favored (and very intimidating) Italian style involving two weapons, often of equal length, alternating between defense and attack. In game terms, a fencer must have at least five dice in his Dexterity + Fencing pool. From there, he can choose to employ one weapon as a shield (adding one to the attacker's difficulty), or as a second attack (dividing his Dice Pool between the two, but adding a "bonus die" to the Pool before the split).

- **Riposte:** This blindingly fast counter follows a parry; as the fencer sets up her next shot, the player adds two dice to her next initiative roll. The riposte must follow a parry—no other action can be taken between the two moves, or the opportunity is lost.

- **Thrust:** A sudden dip of the blade sends it deep into an enemy's flesh—and usually into an organ. This is one of the deadliest fencing maneuvers because it happens so quickly: One moment, the fencer faces you with a motionless blade; the next, that blade passes through your heart.

- **Tranche:** A quick move whips the blade across the victim's hand, chest, face or leg. The cut is usually superficial but very painful; the target must roll her Willpower against difficulty 8 or be stunned on the following turn. A good maneuver for ending a fight quickly with minimal bloodshed.

## Do

As a terrifying, alien fighting style, Do focuses the ultimate potential of the human body and spirit into a tight series of devastating maneuvers. As a lifestyle, it promotes health, vigor and discipline. Most people only see the art's warlike applications; its subtler sides are lost in an appreciation of broken objects and shattered bodies.

In the Dark Fantastic age, Do is a secret, the province of the Akashic magi and their closest companions. Although Do is not in itself magical, it often serves as a style for powerful mystick feats. (See Chapter VIII.) In its most basic form, Do allows a person to hit, leap and dodge with

inhuman skill. Refining this skill takes years of devotion, diet and exercise. Do is not learned—it is lived.

As a combat art, Do allows a character to purchase several exclusive maneuvers; several dots in Acrobatics, Athletics and Dodge also come with the territory, although they must be purchased normally. In story terms, a Doist practices elaborate *katas* (forms), cats properly and meditates several hours a day. When forced to fight, she assumes a deadly stance; when she strikes, she does so with total commitment. Depending on the character and her circumstances, the Do practitioner may fight to subdue, or kill with mechanical precision. A variety of styles within the art emphasizes "hard" techniques (kicks, punches, toughness) or "softer" options (dodges, throws, yields and misdirections). In game terms, both styles employ similar moves, but in story terms, they seem quite different. It falls to the practitioner—and her player—to decide which style suits the character best.

Unlike most combat actions, Do strikes have a base damage; to this, the player adds her successes. A punch, for instance, inflicts at least three Health Levels worth of damage. If Isabelle rolls three successes, her Akashic character deals out six Health Levels worth of harm. This damage is normal, not aggravated, although certain magical "enhancements" can make the same strike more potent.

The basic maneuvers and their modifiers can be found on the Combat Summary chart. An especially skillful Akashic can perform several special maneuvers in addition to her normal repertoire. To buy a special move, the character must have a Do rating of 2 or better; for each dot above the second, she may purchase another special maneuver. These options do not cost character points; the Doist simply has to be skilled enough to use them.

- **Catch/Deflect Missiles:** By taking a full action, an Akashic can spot an incoming missile attack and either catch it or knock it aside. This requires at least one free hand and a standard roll. Throwing the missile back requires a second roll and a separate action.

Missile	To Deflect	To Catch
Rock	4	5
Spear	5	4 (both hands)
Knife	6	7
Arrow/bolt	7	8
Ax	8	7

- **Flying Leap:** With a turn's preparation and a successful Dexterity + Do roll, the Brother may either double his normal leaping distance (see "Dramatic Systems") or stay aloft for one turn per success by bouncing off of various walls, branches or other hard surfaces. This is not a magical spell, though some truly long-term leaps involve weavery.

- **The Iron Shout:** By channeling his inner strength through a deafening yell, a skillful Akashic can either toughen himself against blows (roll Stamina + Do) or frighten his opponents (Manipulation + Do). The first

option allows the player to add the Shout's successes to his soak roll; the feat is difficulty 7. The second choice terrifies the enemy into flight, or stuns her for one turn (see "Immobilization"); that roll's difficulty is the target's Willpower. The Shout can be used against several weak-willed opponents (Willpowers of 4 or less), scaring one character per success rolled. This trick usually works once per fight; after A while, enemies get used to being screamed at. The player must state his intention to use the Shout at the beginning of the turn, or keep a few dice in reserve for it after the character has acted.

- **Redirection:** By catching a blow and sending its energy back against the attacker, a Do master can hurt someone who tried to harm him first. A successful roll inflicts the mage's Do rating + her successes and protects the mage from that attack.

## Cannons and Guns

The Daedaleans' edge, artillery levele castles, demolishes troops and scares the living hell out of the enemy. By the mid-1400s, cannons are irritatingly common on large battlefields, and lesser war machines like catapults and ballista have been around for centuries. The Order of Reason occasionally deploys rockets, too, but such things are more common in Eastern battles than Western ones (unless the Artificers are involved; see **Crusade Lore** for details).

Each artillery piece demands a skilled crew of artisans and mercenaries. Very few kingdoms have standing artilleryists; rather, they subcontract experts for exorbitant fees. These troops are worth the price — their craft is dangerous, and not only because of the guns' tendency to explode. Armies make gruesome examples of enemy cannonneers, and soldiers attack gun emplacements whenever they can. Slow to move and cumbersome to aim, artillery pieces are sitting ducks — but ducks with bite. Surrounded by heavily armed guards, these war machines bring thunder down to earth. Some fire hail of projectiles, while others send 50-pound balls crashing into castle walls. A cannon's roar terrifies horses, men, even dragons. Most opponents would rather flee than fight a war machine.

In game terms, artillery creates battlefield hazards; few mortals stand a chance of surviving a direct hit from a big gun, though damage statistics have been provided on the chart. Most cannons require a crew of between five to 50 men; the larger the gun, the larger the crew. Aiming, loading and firing a war machine requires the Artillerist skill — few people can grasp the concepts, let alone the applications, behind battlefield technology. Wat machines often focus a Daedalean's powers (see **"Ritual Tools," Chapter VIII**) and provide a foundation for advanced Machinae, too. Many Craftsmen and Artificers have their personal artillery designs, and often man the weapons themselves. Such Machinae demand enlightened gunners, though Brethren often assist the main gunner. Failed Artillerist rolls indicate misfires, fizzes or

missed targets; a botched roll destroys the machine (and usually its crew) in an explosion or other disaster — or lobs the projectile into friendly ranks, with tragic results.

Most cannons fire large balls of stone or cast iron; explosive shells are pretty much confined to Daedalean experiments, although the Artificers love testing out new designs on their opponents. In this age, each cannon is more or less an individual work of craftsmanship; standard calibers, bore sizes and ammunition are future innovations, so most halts are cast or cut to fit a certain gun. Some innovative (or desperate) crews fill their cannons with scraps of stone and metal, filling the air with shredding hail. Such "ammunition" — called *langridge* — leaves tremendous carnage among nearby troops, but it's useless against distant foes or fortifications. No matter what form it takes, artillery gives its owners a decided advantage.

Each gunwright creates his own designs; cannons are as varied as the men who create them. For our purposes, large guns fall into four general classifications:

- **Pots-de-fer** — small, cheap bronze or iron "vases" that fire large arrows — are generally obsolete by this period, but some armies still use them. One strong man can load a pot-de-fer into place, load it, light it and flee.

- Small cannons (sakers, demi-culverins, etc.) are simple cast barrels set in wooden frames. Propped on raisers or wedged into the ground, they hurl small balls at troops of siege engines, but aren't much good against walls. Some artilleryists mount rows of small cannons on wagons or mantlets, and fire them in quick succession, providing a primitive Catling gun effect. Most small cannons are too heavy for a single artilleryist, but some have been mounted on portable frameworks that a single person can drag if necessary.

## Explosions

When used properly, artillery devastates its target. When things go wrong, it can be equally devastating to the artilleryists. Exploding guns, cannons and rockets tend to inflict damage on their crews rather than their targets. Most detonate for their usual damage rating, but some elaborate machines explode at two or three times their normal power. When guns go up in flames, they tend to take their ammunition with them; it's unhealthy to be within 100 feet of an exploding cannon or rocket frame, and it is almost always fatal to be near the center of the blast.

When something blows up, it sends flames and debris scattering across a wide area. To reflect this destruction, plant the full damage amount at the center of the blast and subtract one die from the damage pool for every yard of distance between the character and the detonation point. If several characters get caught in the blast radius, simply roll the damage once and subtract one Health Level per die as the blast fans out. Lucky magi may be able to dodge the worst of the blast (see **"Dodging"**), but most mortals are not so lucky.

- **Large cannons** (dragoons and bombard) and *siege mortars*; flung large shots through or over castle walls; trundled in on gun carts or cast at the siege area, these cannons may be moved with some degree of effort. A crew of a dozen men can fire three to five shots per hour so long as nothing goes wrong.

- **Heavy field cannons**, which fire 50 to 100 pound balls at a rate of one or two an hour, are often built at the staging ground. Such guns take hours, if not days to move, and demand crews of a dozen or more men.

Most guns load from the muzzle, though some artilleryists experiment with breech-loading guns. Other innovations include multibarrel cannons, revolving-gun frames, horse-drawn "fire wagons" and front-and-back firing designs. Some work, many do not.

## Firearms

In this age, guns are just advanced enough to be dangerous, both to their targets and their users. Rapid fire, accuracy and dependability are centuries in the future; even the most visionary Daedalean would find an M-16 inconceivable. Still, guns are fairly effective in trained hands — inaccurate, testy, but effective nonetheless.

Historically, most firearms of this period are either hand cannons or match-lit huckbutts and arquebuses — heavy, open-pan barrels with shoulder stocks or long poles for holding. The Order of Reason, however, has refined gunnery to unforeseen heights; matchlocks, wheellocks, repeating pistols and multibarreled pepperboxes are fairly common in Daedalean ranks, both as Devices and as focuses for High Science. Through their genius, guns are safer, more accurate and more reliable than the period's "conventional" firearms.

The downside of this innovation is unpredictability; a failed or botched attack roll might set the gunpowder off or render it useless (Storyteller's option). Most Daedalean guns have several barrels, which rotate when a shot discharges or jams. Even those guns, however, have limited fire rates, and they take longer to reload. Most gunners carry 12 shots worth of powder, shot and primer; any more, and the character is taking serious risks.

Firearm complications include:

- **Aiming:** Guns are notoriously inaccurate; even so, a marksman can take an extra turn to aim. Doing so enables the shooter to add her Perception rating to the Dexterity + Firearms Dice Pool. She may not move in any way while she sets up the shot, and ought to steady herself before firing.

- **Misfire and Detonation:** A failed roll may either misfire or miss the target (Storyteller's option). A misfire must be cleaned out before the gun can fire again. A botched roll makes the gun blow up in the shooter's face, inflicting (our Health Levels of normal damage and blinding her for a turn or so.

A character who's carrying a lot of gunpowder is in deep trouble if she's hit by open flame. Extra ammunition may explode for five to eight dice of aggravated damage (depending on how many shots the gunner has left) if allowed to burn.

- **Moving Targets:** Shooting at a moving Target increases the attack difficulty by one or two; firing from a moving vehicle or horseback does the same.

- **Range:** The range given on the chart sets the maximum accurate distance of fire; a shot outside that range adds three to its normal difficulty. In contrast, a point-blank shot (one fired at a target within a yard or so) is difficulty 5.

- **Reloading:** Renaissance guns take a long time to reload; assume a gunner must spend at least five turns per barrel cleaning, priming, loading and readying her weapon. During this time, she must remain more or less in place; she cannot take any other action while reloading unless she wants to start the process all over again. Bad conditions (heavy fighting, rain, darkness, etc.) may double or triple the usual loading time.

- **Wet Powder:** Period gunpowder is unstable and irregular. A character who gets wet, or who uses her gun in rain or mist, may spoil her powder supply unless she takes special (possibly magical) measures to protect it.

## War Magick

A clever magus can sway the tide of battle; a whole cabal of them can win or lose a war. As the forces of magick, faith and science struggle, the Awakened on all sides bring their talents to the killing ground. Although magi are rarely known for their physical prowess (with the exception of the Akashics and some war-witches) their Arts can leave a veteran troop bleeding in the mud... assuming said soldiers don't kill the wizards first.

Magick can be pretty terrifying; most mortal soldiers will back away from fighting an obvious wizard until they can get the advantage. This fear works both for and against the magi. Ambushes, kidnapping, diversions, assassinations and sheer numbers can blunt a wizard's edge, and most veterans prefer such methods to open combat. If spells start flying, the average soldier is going to leave until he can get some ally — like a priest or rival spellcaster — on his side. Naturally, a sorcerer overwhelmed by Sleepers will be, shall we say, ill-treated; people tend to destroy an obvious threat, and few threats are more obvious than a spell-slinging witch.

Sometimes it's best to be subtle; occasionally, though, a good firestorm is the perfect solution. When the negotiations fail and the blades are drawn, a magus has several options:

- She could disguise her Arts in a "coincidence" that tilts the fight in her favor: A horse stumbles, a spark destroys a cannon, a sudden attack of vertigo unbalances a swordmaster, and so forth. Spells drawn from the Life, Mind, Time and Entropy Spheres are ideal for "coincidental" weavery, so long as the magus can conduct her ritual without being noticed.

- She might conjure some powerful manifestation to blast her opponent to bits. The Old Testament speaks of pillars of flame and sudden earthquakes; who is a mage to argue with God's best tactics? Falling rocks, bolts of lightning, death spells

and the like make impressive "statements" when an angry magus washes her hands of subtlety. However, they also draw a lot of attention to the sorcerer; no army will forget the wizard who made the earth swallow their baggage train. Those soldiers *will* be back, and they'll be ready next time....

- Perhaps she "enhances" a mundane attack, making it more accurate or damaging. Captain Phillippe has an especially good day, cleaving through his foes like a scythe; the cannon-hall flies true, shattering a guard tower with a single shot. Like a coincidence, an enhanced-attack spell relies upon secrecy; unlike the other tactic, it "rides" something that already looks destructive. Another Conn of weavery reshapes the magus or her companions into battle-forms — tigers, dragons, etc. — with physical abilities beyond the human norm.

- If all else fails, she might summon someone else to fight for her. The effect a griffin has on a group of bandits must be seen to be believed, and few things terrify an assassin more than a pack of living shadows—Summonings take work and skill (see **Chapter VIII**), but they're often worth it if you can't tight well yourself.

In game terms, a magus must have an opportunity to cast a spell; depending on her tools and expertise, this might be easy — or not. Combat magick often relies upon "fast-easting" (see the **Magick Reference charts**, pages 238-241) to work magick under duress. Prolonged rituals should take place out of harm's way; an extended weaving will be destroyed by interference. Any element the mage wishes to command must be in place before the spell begins, and any helpers ought to be present. See **Chapter VIII** for more details about magick in general.

## Spirits and Their World

When a magus enters the spirit world — by "stepping sideways" or opening a gate — he passes into a place where the usual laws of reality do not apply. The Scourge is minimized except in one glaring case: machine-magick, which is vain. All other forms of spellcraft are considered "casual" in this primal land.

Human beings, even Awakened Ones, lost their connection to the Otherworlds long ago. In game terms, a person's attack difficulties increase by one on the other side of the Gauntlet. A material being cannot physically harm a spirit unless that entity Materializes first. (See "**Spirit Rules**," page 213.) A sorcerer with three dots or better in Spirit can sidestep this rule, but anyone else swipes at empty ephemera. Guns are no good here unless they employ High Science. Life and Matter magick are worthless unless the Umbrood Materializes. The Spirit Sphere acts as a Life magick when used against beings of ephemera (and Matter when used against inanimate ephemera), while Entropy 4/Prime 2 inflicts damage against such beings on their home ground.

Arracks that go against an Umbrood's Attribute (a spirit dodging an incoming Force bolt) are figured against its Willpower. In other words, the dodging spirit would roll its

Willpower, rather than its Dexterity + Dodge, against a wizard's attack. Spirit has several different Traits (detailed under "**Spirit Rules**"), which they use in social situations, combat and other activities. In story terms, an Umbrood being can be frightening and unpredictable, a whirlwind of elemental destruction or an insidious, poisoned whisper....

## Poison

Toxins play a huge part in the Dark Fantastic world. No better symbol for the intriguer's art carries more weight than the poisoned cup and the envenomed blade. Oiled onto weapons, mixed with food or drink, shot into the body, or carried on the wind, the "oft-fatal dosage" brings a smile to the conspirator and a chill to the brave man. No one wants to die by poison, but plenty of folks Jo.

Understandably, the apprehended poisoner's punishment is as gruesome as the age can make it; some assassins are boiled alive, others flayed, burned or hacked apart. Common as they may be, poisons are highly illegal. Owning them is a serious offense; using them is a death sentence. Players who wish to emulate Lucrezia Borgia should be reminded of a poisoner's fate — one way or another.

In story terms, poison is common enough if you know where and how to get it. Any alchemist, herbalist, physician, spy or apothecary worth the name knows a few good recipes, and many such folk keep poisons on hand... just in case. Naturally, they're circumspect about their clientele (no one wants the local constables kicking down his door) and demand a steep price for their services. (See —orrather read— *Romeo And Juliet*; Acts IV and V, for two really good examples.) A person who wants poison will have to locate it, pay for it and use it properly. It's easy to botch a poisoning if you don't know what you're doing. Once obtained, the toxin has to be administered — not an easy task in an age where every wealthy "target" has a private taster and a personal brute squad. Food, wine, weapons, cosmetics and tainted dust make common agents, and magick is always an option, too. No one can be completely safe from a detennined poisoner — not even a player character!

## The Fatal Drop

In game terms, a character must either obtain the drug or brew it herself. The former demands a Wits + Larceny roll or two, and a really good explanation (preferably roleplayed out; again, see *Romeo ami Juliet*). The latter requires some time, materials and an Intelligence + Herbalism, Poisons or Metaphysics (Alchemy) roll, The Storyteller might set the difficult? of either roll by the deadliness of the drug, but that wouldn't be entirely appropriate. Some of the virulent venoms are readily available. It might be better to base the roll on the rarity of the poison; common drugs like henbane or belladonna should be easy to find (difficulty 6), while cobra venom or mandrake would be a great deal trickier (difficulty 8 or 9), depending on the mage's resources.

# Combat Summary Chart

## Normal Combat

### Stage One: Initiative

• Roll Wits + Alertness (difficulty 4). The winner declares her action *last* (after she has heard everyone else's actions) and performs it *first*.

- Declare Dice Pool split if performing multiple actions.
- Declare any magick cast. Only one magick roll may be made each turn.

### Stage Two: Attack

- To brawl, roll *Dexterity + Brawl*.
- For a melee, roll *Dexterity + Melee*.
- For missile combat, roll *Dexterity + Archery, Firearms or Athletics*.
- For magickal warfare, roll *Arête*.
- For a barrage, roll *Perception + Artillerist*.
- To dodge, roll *Dexterity + Dodge*. A character can forfeit some or all of his Dice Pool to dodge at any time; each success subtracts one from the opponent's successes.

### Stage Three: Resolution

- Roll damage, determined by weapon or maneuver (difficulty 6).
- Soak damage, roll *Stamina* (difficulty 6).

## Spirit Combat

### Stage One: Initiative

- As above. Spirits roll Willpower for initiative.

### Stage Two: Attack

- Roll Willpower (difficulty 6) unless a Charm is being used (refer to the Charm descriptions).
- Dodge: Willpower (difficulty 6), or split Willpower Dice Pool between attack and dodge.

### Stage Three: Resolution

- Roll Rage (difficulty 6); one Health Level of aggravated damage is inflicted per success. (Mages with the Spirit Sphere can soak this with counter-magick, difficulty 6. Other mages can soak with an Arête roll, difficulty 8.) One Power point per success is lost if the target is a spirit.
- Soak damage: spirits cannot soak damage.

## Armor

Type	Protection	Penalty
"Crow's Mail"	1	0
Light Armor	2	-1
"Bastard Plate"	3	-1
Mail	4	-2
Full Plate	5	-2
Tournament Armor	6	-3
Titan's Armor	7	-2
Shield	Difficulty Bonus	
Buckler	+1	
War Shield	+2	

If you want to poison someone, you'll have to get close enough to do it. For some killers, access to food is enough; others insist on the personal touch, and bribe, fight or seduce their way to a victim's side. Poisoning usually requires some finesse — a clumsy attempt usually gets noticed before the venom can do its work. In game terms, play out the deed, perhaps backing it up with a few rolls (see the **Dramatic Systems chart**) to make sure everything goes smoothly. A failed or botched roll means disaster; as we mentioned, a poisoner dies hard — very hard.

The effects of poison are handled better through Storytelling than through systems. Instead of assigning harm by dosage and dice roll, let the "drama factor" and the poison's virulence determine the results. Every poison is, to some degree, fatal. The questions are: How fatal is it, and how quick is death? The answers are best left to the demands of the tale. It may be really dramatic to have a supporting character gasp, fall to the ground writhing, and suddenly die from the same poison that, later in the story, makes a main character grasp his sides and struggle around looking for an antidote.... As a rule, assume that a poison is as deadly as the scene demands. If the victim is a walk-on, kill her in some horrible manner; if she plays a major role in the chronicle, have her suffer until some cure can be found. This isn't to say that a major character *can't* be murdered by a fatal draught, of course, merely that there should be a compelling dramatic reason for the death. Important characters should never be killed arbitrarily.

The crowning glory of poison as a dramatic device is its insidiousness. Generally, it's more effective to show the effects once they strike than to say, "You're poisoned! Make a Stamina roll!" The Storyteller ought to mention a strange taste or odd twitches, followed by gagging, a thundering heartbeat, rising gorge, spasms, pain.... By this time, a poisoned magus will be agonized and frantic. Renaissance poison is neither fast nor sure — minutes or even hours can pass before a victim dies. A player character (or important Storyteller character) should be able to resist the worst effects of a toxin through Stamina rolls or Willpower points, but no one simply walks away from a dose of arsenic. At best, a poisoned character can stagger around in a haze, holding death away through sheer will until aid can be found. Die roll penalties and roleplaying work better than a damage chart, and they're much more flexible.

Most toxins are incurable; a victim either lives or dies, and the living part usually involves a lot of suffering before the drug passes through. Most poison brewers have remedies for the milder toxins, but these may or may not work. A Life 3 healing spell (see **Chapter VIII**) channeled through a miracle cure or brew can defeat most poisons; still, magick shouldn't be an instant cure-all. Let drama guide the tale; a whole story can be built around the search for some rare antidote... or around revenge for a poisoner's deeds (see *Hamlet*).

**Crusade Lore** features an elaborate list of common poisons and healing herbs.

## Combat Maneuvers

Move	Roll	Difficulty	Damage
<b>Hand-to-Hand</b>			
Bind	Strength vs. Strength	6	0
Bite	Dexterity + Brawl	5	Strength + 1
Body-check	Dexterity + Brawl	7	Special; see listing
Claw	Dexterity + Brawl	6	Strength + 2
Disarm	Dexterity + Melee/Fencing	8	0 + Disarm
Grapple	Dexterity + Brawl	6	Strength + Special
Kick	Dexterity + Brawl	7	Strength + 1
Parry	Dexterity + Melee/Fencing	6	0
Punch	Dexterity + Brawl	6	Strength
Stunning Blow	Dexterity + Brawl/Melee	7	Special; see listing
Shield Parry	Dexterity + Melee	6	0
Throw Object	Dexterity + Athletics	(*1)	By weapon

\*1: Difficulty is distance to the target in yards divided by thrower's Strength (yards/Strength).

### Stunts

Blind Foe	Dexterity + Subterfuge	9	Special
Frighten Foe	Manipulation + Intimidation	7	0
Kick in Door	Dexterity + Brawl	5	0
Knock Foe Down	Dexterity + Athletics	7	0
Swing on Chandelier	Dexterity + Athletics/Acrobatics	5	0
Yank Rug	Strength + Athletics	6	Strength

### Fencing

Fletch	Dexterity + Fencing	7	Weapon + 1
Riposte	Dexterity + Fencing	6	Weapon
Thrust	Dexterity + Fencing	7	Weapon + 2
Tranche	Dexterity + Fencing	7	1 + Special

### Do

Punch	Dexterity + Do	6	3 + Successes
Kick	Dexterity + Do	7	4 + Successes
Flying Kick	Dexterity + Do	8	5 + Successes
Throw	Dexterity + Do	8	3 + successes

### Do Special Moves (minimum: two dots in Do)

Deflect Missiles	Dexterity + Do	(varies)	Weapon
Flying Leap	Dexterity + Do	6	0
Iron Shout	Stamina/Manipulation + Do	7/Special	Special; see listing
Redirection	Dexterity + Do	8	Do + successes

### Firearms

Complication	Difficulty	Dice or Damage
Aiming	-	+ Perception
Detonation	-	4 + Blinding
Explosion	-	4 - 8
Long Range	+3	Weapon
Moving Target	+1 or +2	
Point-blank	5	Weapon

## Melee Weapons

Type	Difficulty	Damage	Concealment (#1)	Minimum Strength
<b>Blades</b>				
Bastard Sword	6	Strength + 5	L	3
Broadsword	6	Strength + 4	L	2
Dagger	4	Strength + 1	C	1
Falchion	5	Strength + 3	L	2
Greatsword (2 hands)	5	Strength + 6	N	4
Katana	6	Strength + 5	L	2
Katar	6	Strength + 2	C	2
Knife	5	Strength + 1	P	1
Kris	5	Strength + 3	C	
Main-Gauche	5	Strength + 2	C	1
Rapier	5	Strength + 3	C	2
Scimitar	5	Strength + 4	L	3
Short Sword	5	Strength + 2	C	2
Tiger Claws	5	Strength + 2	C	2
<b>Swung Weapons</b>				
Cat-o'-nine-tails	(*2)	Strength + 1	C	2
Club	6	Strength + 1	C	2
Flail (2 hands)	7	Strength + 5	N	3
Flail, Spiked (*3)	7	Strength + 6	C	2
Great Ax	7	Strength + 6	N	3
Great Spiked Club (2 hands)	7	Strength + 4	N	3
Hand Ax	7	Strength + 5	L	3
Mace	6	Strength + 4	T	1
Mattock (2 hands) (*4)	7	Strength + 6	N	4
Morningstar	7	Strength + 6	T	1
Quarterstaff	4	Strength + 1 to + 3	N	1
War Hammer	6	Strength + 5	C	3
Whip (*5)	6	Strength + 1	C	2
<b>Pole Arms (*6)</b>				
Halberd	7	Strength + 6	N	3
Lance (*7)	8	Strength + 6	N	2
Field Fork	7	Strength + 4	N	2
Glaive	8	Strength + 6	N	3
Pike	7	Strength + 4	N	3
Pitchfork	6	Strength + 1	N	1
Spear (1 hand)	7	Strength + 1	N	2
Spear (2 hands)	6	Strength + 3	N	2
<b>Improvised Weapons</b>				
Branch	5	Strength + 1	N	1
Candlestick	6	Strength + 2	C	2
Chair	7	Strength + 2	N	2
Smith's Hammer	7	Strength + 3	C	3
Table	8	Strength + 3	N	3
Tankard	5	Strength + 1	C	2

## CHAPTER VII: RULES

### Notes

\*1: P = may be hidden in a pouch; C = may be concealed in a tunic or under a cloak; L = may be hidden under a long cloak or robes; N = may not be hidden on a person.

\*2: Rips bare flesh. Pain may stun an unarmored target if he fails a Stamina roll, difficulty 6.

\*3: A *two-handed flail* consists of a pole chained to a spiked club, while a *spiked flail* binds one to three flanged iron balls to a short, heavy handle. Both can tangle or bounce back on a botched roll. Contrary to popular belief, a *morningstar* is not a flail, but a spiked or blade-headed mace.

\*4: A *mattock* is a huge hammer, while a *war hammer* is actually a short pole arm with a flanged head, spikes and a point.

\*5: May grab opponents or objects by adding +1 to attack difficulty.

\*6: All pole arms demand a two-handed grip. They're difficult if not impossible to use in crowded spaces, and are more effective in ranks than in a single warrior's hands. Such weapons may reach 10 to 15 feet, or even longer. Spears are the exception to the notes above.

\*7: Must be used from horseback; if used on foot, damage is Strength only.

### Missile Weapons

Type	Difficulty	Damage	Rate (*1)	Concealment	Strength Range (*2)	
<b>Bows</b>						
Short Bow	6	2	1/2	L	2	60
Compound Bow	6	4	1/2	N	3	120
Longbow	6	6	N	1/2	4	150
Crossbow, Hand	5	3	1/2	C	2	50
Crossbow, Lt.	5	5	1/3	L	2	90
Crossbow, Hvy.	5	5	1/4	N	3	110
<b>Thrown Weapons (*3)</b>						
Ax	(varies)	Strength + 1	N/A	C	2	10
Grenade	(varies)	5 (*4)	N/A	C	2	10
Knife	(varies)	Strength	N/A	C	2	10
Spear	(varies)	Strength + 2	N/A	N	2	10
<b>Firearms (*5)</b>						
Arquebus	8	8	1/6	N	3	30
Hackbutt	7	8	1/5	N	2	40
Hand Cannon	8	8	1/6	N	2	20
Matchlock Musket (*6)	7	6	1/5	N	3	35
Matchlock Pistol	7	5	1/5	C	2	30
Wheellock Musket (*7)	6	6	1/4	N	3	35
Wheellock Pistol	6	5	1/4	C	2	30

### Notes

\*1: 1/2 = one shot every two turns, and so on. Bows may shoot at double their normal Rate if the archer uses half her usual Dice Pool, but crossbows and firearms are bound to their normal Rate.

\*2: Range is given in yards. A character may shoot double the listed Range by adding +2 to his difficulty.

\*3: The difficulty for most thrown objects is the distance to the target divided by the thrower's Strength.

\*4: Explosion damage. See sidebar.

\*5: Some designs feature two to five barrels, which may be fired one every other turn (once per turn for wheellocks). Reloading takes five turns per barrel. Many also feature blades or spikes on the barrel; see *Knife*, *Mace* and *Morningstar*.

\*6: Matchlocks depend on the cord being kept dry; if snuffed, it must be relit.

\*7: Fires wet or dry, without concern for the match cord.

## Cannons

Type	Difficulty	Damage (*1)	Range
Pot-de-fer	8	10	500
Small Cannon	7	10	500
Row Cannon	7	Special (*2)	200
Large Cannon	8	20	400
Siege Mortar	8	20	200/1/2 mile(*3)
Field Cannon	9	25+	1 mile
Langridge	7	Special (*4)	100

### Notes

\*1: Damage to objects within 10 feet of the ball; bystanders within 20 feet or so may suffer half-damage from debris. This does not apply to a small cannon, or a *pot-de-fer*, which fires a spear.

\*2: Fires a barrage; each success on the roll indicates three Health Levels of damage to every target within a 15-foot killing zone radiating outward from the barrels.

\*3: Mortars lob their shells and cannot hit nearby targets. Some fire incendiaries or explosives. (See sidebar.)

\*4: A hail of scrap metal; each success indicates six Health Levels of damage to every living (or undead) target within a 300-foot cone. Opponents standing between 300 and 600 feet away suffer three Health Levels. Inanimate targets are damaged but not badly.

## Mortality

*Bring away the beggar, bring away the king*

*And every man in his degree*

*Bring away the oldest and the youngest thing*

*Come to death and follow me*

— "The Shaking of the Sheets" (traditional)



Man is mortal. Awakened or not. The blade, the flame, the bitter wind... they undo the magus as easily as they fell any other man. The wizard has his arts to shield him, true, but sooner or later, he'll feel pain... and the pain of death.

The systems for injury are simple enough; the Health Trait (see Chapter IV) tracks a character's well-being from healthy to Incapacitation. Every time a character suffers harm, the player marks a check on the Health track; severe wounds inflict greater injuries — more checks on the track. When the player runs out of boxes, the magus lies dying. Healing works the opposite way, removing checks from the boxes until the sorcerer is well again.

Say, for example, that Kestral Windfree takes a cut from the Baron's guards — in game terms, four Health Levels of damage. After checking a soak roll (see page 194), Nik makes three checks on Kestral's Health track.

The witch goes from healthy to Injured. Later, she applies some healing salve to the wound. The concoction heals one Health Level, so Nik erases one check from the track. Normal healing will have to take care of the rest.

Injuries *hurt*. Next to each box on the Health track, you'll find a penalty number. This penalty is subtracted from all the character's Dice Pools (except Arete) until it's healed. When Kestral is Injured (-1 penalty), Nik rolls one die less. In the story, Kestral limps away from the Baron's manor bleeding, her side throbbing with every step...

## Stunning (Optional)

Pain has a way of stopping you where you stand. If a character's injuries (after soaking) exceed his Stamina Trait, he may be stunned during the next turn at the Storyteller's discretion. Although this option can cripple a sorcerer at a crucial time, it offers him an edge, too; if tie can stun a stronger opponent, he might just survive a lopsided battle.

## Aggravated Damage

Some wounds are too terrible to endure. Fire, deadly magicks, angry spirits and the claws of many night-folk inflict aggravated damage — damage a mage cannot soak, nor heal without real effort. Curing such damage requires nature's touch — represented by the Normal Healing Times chart — or magical restoration. The latter consumes one point of Quintessence (see Chapter IV) for each Health Level healed.

Aggravated damage should be marked off the Health track with an X rather than a check.

## Death

When a character reaches Incapacitated, he's one Health Level away from the Reaper. If he sustains another wound, or cannot be treated within the next hour or so, Father Death takes his soul and sends it onward to its reward. That soul's destination — reincarnation, or some afterlife? — is a subject of much debate.

## Sources of Injury

*They thekkit it o'er wi rashes green*

*They thekkit it o'er wi healer*

*But the plague came from the burrows-town*

*And it slew them baith thegither*

— "Betsy Bell and Mary Gray" (traditional)

The darkness is full of perils. Combat may be the most obvious way to get hurt, but it's hardly the only hazard—

## Disease and Poison

Romance aside, the Dark Fantastic world is filthy by 20th-century standards. Bad hygiene and even worse sanitation make disease the primary killer of the age. The Great Plague was only a few generations ago, and smaller



epidemics sweep the land like a harvester's blade. Only the strongest mortals survive infancy, and few people live to old age. Obviously, healers are in great demand; sadly, many of them are, by modern criteria, horrifically inept (see sidebar). The severity and prevalence of disease should depend on the nature of your chronicle — plague-carts and gangrene aren't especially romantic. Still, dramas are built on crisis, and as films like *The Horseman on the Roof* and *Dangerous Beauty* attest, high adventure can still rise from an epidemic.

Magi are more fortunate than most folk; with magic, fortune and general wisdom, they avoid the worst ravages of disease. Still, when a plague comes through, trapped sorcerers may need to make Stamina rolls (difficulty based on conditions and the strength of the disease) to remain healthy. Infection, too, is a constant threat; a wound that goes without treatment might develop gangrene or some other septic condition unless the character employs either magical healing or a skillful healer (three or more successes on an Intelligence + Herbalism or Medicine roll). While dying of the flu isn't very heroic, a vicious plague — and the very real danger it represents — could make a powerful chapter in an ongoing story.

As a rule, disease reduces a character's Health Trait; the worse the illness, the more Health Levels the wizard

loses. A had cough might diminish the character by Health Level or two for a week, while leprosy would inflict aggravated damage that may or may not heal. Roleplaying and Storytelling can depict the rest.

Poison, too, is a common way to die. If you have powerful enemies, chances are someone will try to dispose of you. When in doubt, treat a near-fatal dose like a disease.

## Drowning and Suffocation

Few people swim in this age, and smoke is everywhere. A sorcerer can hold her breath for a while (set chart), but when that air runs out, she suffocates or drowns; at a rate of one Health Level per turn. Once she passes Incapacitated, the character has one minute per Stamina Jot left; after that, she dies. If she can escape before then she "heals" the damage at the same rate (one per turn).

## Falling

When the chandelier gives way, its rider tends to fall. The Falling chart gives the amount of damage a character suffers when he hits the ground, but he does get a chance to soak (difficulty 8) in case Lady Fortune was watching. Each success reduces the damage by one Health Level; each "one" inflicts an additional Level of harm.

## Fire

The lady, as they say, is nor for burning. If she's unlucky enough to do so anyway, roll your character's Stamina rating against the difficulties listed on the Fire chart. Each turn in the flames requires a new roll. If the roll succeeds, your mage holds out; if not, she suffers one to three Health Levels of aggravated damage, depending on the intensity of the fire. A notched roll cripples the victim in some way — often with awful scars or withered limbs. There are reasons "the fire that quengeth not" is so feared, even by the most sophisticated scholars....

## Harsh Weather

This is, in many ways, a world without shelter. Warm clothing and a campfire only mean so much in the heart of a Northlands blizzard. Deserts, typhoons, frosts — any one of them can kill. When the elements come roaring down, your Storyteller may call for a Stamina roll to see how well your magus survives the night. (See "Resisting" on the **Dramatic Systems chart**.) A successful roll reflects an uncomfortable but unharmed character; failure may cost

him a few Health Levels from frostbite or heatstroke. A botch renders him helpless — he's too frozen or parched to move without help. It will take a long time to die this way — days, perhaps; in the meantime, the mage had better hope that his friends are close at hand....

## Healing

Naturally, magick can shield one from the elements; many skilled sorcerers enchant their flesh with Life-based Arts (Life 2, to be exact) and heal wounds with similar spells. (See **Chapter VIII**.) Without such luxuries, a body must depend on its own healing abilities, or on the dubious talents of strangers.

The **Normal Healing Times** chart gives common recuperation periods, based on the injuries (Health Levels) and reasonably good conditions. Foul environments — battlefields, plague-hospices, etc. — can double the usual time and expose the character to infection as well. Really severe wounds might leave permanent scars or disabilities, but such "souvenirs" are left to the Storyteller's discretion.

## "Modern Medicine"

Wise folk avoid physicians at all cost. Those who cannot quickly learn that examination, diagnosis and treatment vary from practitioner to practitioner. A university-trained physician, for instance, would say a great deal about the four elements (water, air, earth and fire) and their relation to the four humours (phlegm, bile, atrabile and Mood), and their relationship to the four temperaments (phlegmatic, choleric, melancholic and sanguine). He would then decide, by various forms of divination — including careful body measurement, pulse-taking, palmistry and astrology—which humours were imbalanced. Prescriptions vary, although the removal of excess humours is pretty common. Cough it up, bleed it out, flush the digestive system from one end or the other — it doesn't matter so long as the appropriate humour is purged. Rut don't expect the Christian physician to do the work himself! One of the last remnants of the ecclesiastical grip on medicine is the ban of contact with blood: *Ecclesia abhorret ab sanguine*.

Perhaps your physician will specialize in alchemical treatments. Such men can prescribe some of the most bizarre and distasteful medicinal complexes ever conceived, including metals, opium, bezoars (hairballs) or potions of boiled puppies. Unfortunately, such remedies worsen a patient's condition as often as they help; generally, the best you can hope for is nothing at all. But such healing is, of course, in the pursuit of science, and one must take the good with the bad.

If you're badly injured, a barber-surgeon (reviled by "true" physicians) might be your only resort. He's the only medic who'll do the dirty work: suturing, cautery and amputation. The barber's practice is less lofty and esoteric than the other approaches, but it works. After a run of viscous, brown-yellow ooze and the first cloying whiff of gangrene, the surgeon's fiery touch is a mercy.

In a time when a male physician directs childbirth from outside the room (some regions forbid physicians from touching female nobility at all), the midwife is a blessing. Most women have seen birth and death at their most intimate levels; still, the midwife brings more knowledge and experience to her work. This specialist usually serves a region of peasantry, and often the lord's family as well. She knows herbs, foods and charms to strengthen both mother and child, and can care for them afterward if need be. Naturally, she's not considered a "real" healer by the established professionals; even by the 20th century, many physicians consider the midwife a quack, nor a master like themselves.

Visitors from the Far and Middle East have their own healing techniques; some, like acupuncture and lancing, are remarkably effective; others, like the redirection of Chi and the chanting of sutras, seem somewhat less than miraculous, at least to European patients. In the deepest backwoods, weal-witches use herbal and spiritual remedies; these cures are more dangerous to the witch than to her patient. If the remedy actually works, the local constable may soon be banging on the healer's door....

## Injury Charts

### Falling

Distance (in feet)	Injury
Five	One Health Level
Ten	Two Health Levels
Twenty	Three Health Levels
Thirty	Four Health Levels
Forty	Five Health Levels
Fifty	Six Health Levels
Sixty	Seven Health Levels
and so on, to a maximum of 10 Health Levels.	

### Drowning/Suffocation

Stamina	Holding Breath
	30 seconds
2	One minute
3	Two minutes
4	Four minutes
5	Eight minutes
6	15 minutes
7	20 minutes
8	30 minutes (!)

### Difficulty

3
5
7
9
10
Wounds
One
Two
Three

### Fire

#### Heat of Fire

Candle (first-degree burns)
Torch (second-degree burns)
Bonfire (third-degree burns)
Hellfire
Molten lead
Size of Fire
Torch; part of body burned
Bonfire; half of body burned
Inferno; entire body burned

### Normal Healing Times

Health Level	Time
Bruised	One day
Hurt	Three days
Injured	One week
Wounded	One month
Mauled	Three months
Crippled	Three months
Incapacitated*	Three months

\* Character often suffers some permanent disability, scars or both if he reaches this level.

## The Otherworlds

... it is contrary to reason to say that there is a vacuum or space in which there is absolutely nothing.

— Rene Descartes, *Principia Philosophica*

(See Chapter III for setting details and Chapter VI for Storyteller Hints.)



In the center of the universe, the Earth spins amid the rings of God's Creation. Wrapped in a Tapestry of ephemeral delights, circled by the dancing planets and bound between Heaven and Hell (in their many aspects), the Common World mirrors man — and by extension, the magician; stretched to four corners and surrounded by a perfect circle of spirit. Beyond that spirit, a hungry Void awaits.

But is that how it truly is? Does Creation revolve around the Earth, or is Earth some part of a larger infinity? Some people, especially magi, are beginning to wonder.

No magus questions the existence of the Otherworlds; even the most learned skeptic accepts the drifting Mists that cloak the rational world by night, drawing it into

something strange and primal. The Otherworlds lie close to mortal pathways and often spill over into the most ordered chambers. Many mysticks travel into this mystery, parlaying with the spirits, visiting the Courts and finding damnation in dungeons without end.

In later days, people may claim the universe is an infinity of spheres, that the Earth is one of many planets whirling around a dot of light in an endless cosmos. In this age, however, most authorities recognize the true place of the Earth: It is the center of Creation, as the Gospels say, and the Otherworlds exist in its shadow. Here God spread His hands and made all things right. Above, He built His Celestial Court; below, He dug a Pit and flung the rebellious angels thence. The Earth, like humanity, lies in between both—imperfect, doomed yet teeming with the promise of eternity. The spirit lands are the whispers of that promise.

Some call these places the *Umbrae*, or "shadows," for the mirror they present of the mortal world; many authorities, nor content with enigmas, seek to define these shadows, like a tailor defines a garment. Here the seams, there the trouser legs — it's a thankless task in many ways because the Otherworlds defy categorization. The sages gnaw their beards when they discover some new wrinkle or seam, some new Realm that missed their records and throws their theories into question.

In many ways, that's exactly what the Otherworlds are for to create questions and defy answers. In The Sorcerers Crusade, no place is as boundless and enigmatic as the worlds beyond the Mists. To the Storyteller, the spirit worlds are an infinite playground, a theatre of moonlit mysteries. No matter how many times your troupe travels through the Umbrae, the magi should discover new and novel secrets. To the player, they present a dizzying array of masks, curtains and trap doors. Never assume anything as a given when you step through the shimmering Mists....

## Ways of the Worlds

Magi who study such things often map the Otherworlds into rings around the mortal world. Intuitive mysticks simply accept what is and do not bother trying to quantify it. Within those "rings" — which are symbolic, not literal — three Worlds settle: The *Astral World* of high thought; the *Middle World* of primal nature; and the *Low World* of death and decay. These essences draw similar things to them; intellectuals tend to travel to the Astral planes, earthy souls go to the Middle grounds and the dying or death-obsessed visit the Shadowlands. The *Maya*, or Dreaming, seethes between each World like restless smoke. The anger of the Kindly Folk and the specter of disease have poisoned this Maya; even the fairest dreampaths are dangerous these days.

The borders between Worlds are as ephemeral as the Mists themselves. Still, some definitions can be made. The archives of the Houses of Hermes and the Celestial Masters (the two groups most interested in "charting" the spirit lands) agree on several fundamental points:

- On the verge of mortal vision ties a *Periphery* of blended sensations. At night, this "bolder" bleeds into the material world, letting spirits cross over. Some haunted or magical places exist in a perpetual Periphery, bound between the Common World and the Otherworlds. Hermetic documents call such ureas *Shallowings* or *Regio*—places wrapped in eternal magick. Most Crays have Shallowings around them, and exist in a semi-ephemeral state to begin with.

- A so-called Gauntlet blocks most of the spirits away from Earth; the "barrier" is hardly solid, however — it ebbs in hidden places, in Shallowings, at night and on certain times of the year: Hallow's Eve, Christmas, Beltane and the Equinoxes and Full Moons. (See the Gauntlet chart on page 240 for the crossing difficulties.)

This Gauntlet gives way to the three rings of the spirit worlds....

- Authorities have dubbed the first ring the Penumbra. A reflection of the mortal world, this spirit-mirror shifts slightly, depending on one's perspective. To astral travelers, the Penumbra shimmers with glassy surfaces and crystal latticework; to a nature-mystick, the shadow reflects the "soul" of the land around it — of times primal and lush, other times bloated and foul; to a death-strider, the world's reflection is dying, choked with shadows and spiderwebbed

with decay. Each view shows the same Penumbra, but in a slightly different way. All three manifestations glow with eerie half-light and swim with shimmering Mists.

- Travelers who wander into those Mists occasionally discover the *Paths of the Wyck*, mystick trails between the Otherworlds and the mortal lands. In most places, the Paths resemble rough trails worn through overgrown forests. Thick Mists shroud the surroundings, and an endless maze of branches and fog blocks out all but the faintest bit of moonlight. In some places, the Paths *become* moonlight and rise into the air. Although moonbeams and misty forests are common enough in the mortal world, the Wyck trails are uncanny even by magical standards. Most travelers would rather cross vast distances on foot than wander these mystickal shortcuts. The journey is just too unnerving for most sorcerers to bear.

- Deeper in, Realms rise from the primal fog. Here the mortal world is left behind — the only reality is the Realm itself, Authorities call such places Aethers, and dub this second ring *Veshaya*, or "the Mist-home." A larger part of the Umbra, this Veshaya rests between the Penumbra and the Horizon; like smoke in a bottle, it seethes in between the Earth's shadow and the Void.

Realms come into being in the appropriate Worlds: elemental Courts and uncanny concept-Realms swirl in the High Lands; weird forests and daunting cliffs lie in the Middle Mists; and dungeons, hells and necropoli perch over the black Tempest swirling at the heart of Hell. Some master magi have even learned how to create their own *Horizon Realms* on the borders of Creation. Two of the greatest Council Covenants, Horizon and Doissetep, exist in such places. Gates link Realms to the mortal world, allowing a traveler to bypass the Mists and go directly to her goal.

- The so-called Horizon shines like Astarte's girdle across the border of what-is and nothingness. Hermetic lore likens it to the rainbow described in Genesis 9; some claim that on the Day of Judgment, God will withdraw the Horizon and let the Void pour across the Earth. This third ring represents Divinity; somewhere in the Horizon's blinding haze, Heaven supposedly waits (or righteous souls. The ring's shadow, the *Contrarium*, rests inside the Earth and supports Hell and the related Underworlds.

- The *Void* stretches forever outside the holy sphere. Along its borders, so they say, the stars and planets whirl across the Horizon. Explorers who've returned from the Void claim differently; by their accounts, the celestial bodies spin in orbits far outside the Horizon — and do not spin around the Earth! This observation is being silenced for the time being.

- Supposedly, other Realms drift in the Void — Purgatories, planets keyed to the magical Elements and other, more esoteric places. The Awakened have yet to chart or define such legendary worlds, but folklore and Daedalean expeditions suggest a universe vast beyond all imaginings, a universe in which the Earth is an insignificant speck.

Could God permit such a thing?

## What's Real?

The truth behind this cosmology, of course, rests within the Storyteller's hands. It contradicts several "known facts" about 20th-century astronomy and World of Darkness "gospel," but that's the point. Did Creation truly shift over the last 500 years, or has cosmology simply become more "accurate"? Maybe *all* the concepts are wrong. The final verdict should suit the needs of your chronicle, rather than some slavish attention to "Holy Gامتetx Writ." The Otherworlds are, and ought to remain, personal and mysterious.

(For really detailed 20th-century treatments of the Otherworlds, see *Beyond the Barriers: The Book of Worlds, Umbra; The Velvet Shadow, Dreams and Nightmares and Sea of Shadows.*)

## Systems

In general, rules should be left at the back door when characters cross into the Mists; still, the following systems may help a harried Storyteller adjudicate certain sticky situations. (All magical spells can be found in Chapter VIII.)

## Travel

- **The High Reaches:** Using a Mind 4 spell, a nude traveler leaves his body behind and ascends into the worlds of high thought. Once there, he can find his way about by concentrating on his destination. In game terms, he rolls Perception + Occult. The difficulty depends on how abstract the thought might be; common concepts are 5, deep thoughts 7 and really arcane logics 9.

- **Middle Worlds:** To pass the Gauntlet, a magus must either enter a Shallowing or a gate, or employ Spirit 3 or 4. (Spirit 3 lets one person through, Spirit 4 creates a gateway.) To find a specific Realm, she ought to wander into the Mists while concentrating on her destination, or find a Moonpath or spirit guide. In game terms, roll Arete against the difficulties set on the Gauntlet chart; a naked traveler enters easily, while a clothed or equipped magus adds one or two to her difficulty. Once there, she navigates with either Wits + Cosmology or Perception + Enigmas, whichever is stronger.

- **The Underworld:** One must often be dead to cross to the Ghostlands. Some magi have perfected the secret of doing so, however, and many wraiths learn to come back the opposite way. To enter the Shadowlands, one must cross either through a Shallowing or **Agama** magick (Entropy 4/ Life 2/Spirit 3), leaving a corpse behind as the soul journeys onward. Weavery sustains the corpse until the soul returns, but if anything should happen to it in the meantime....

- **World to World:** A thin spirit web rises from the Middle World to the Astral Reaches; a brave world-walker can climb up or down that web with a good Dexterity + Athletics or Cosmology roll. Failed rolls drop the climber into the Mists below, and there's no telling where she'll end up.... Magical gateways allow magi to go from Realm to Realm; rising from the Low World to the living ones is difficult (Entropy 5/Spirit 4), but not impossible.

- **Realms:** Most Realms—especially Horizon Realms and Courts—have specially prepared gateways linking them to the mortal world. For the most part, such gates are the only pathways to these Otherworlds. Nature-Realms and Dreamspires drift through the Mists; a lucky traveler could discover a Moonpath to such places on her own. As a rule, however, Realms are closed to easy passage.

- **The Dreaming:** Many magi remember faerie secrets; some even have the blood of the Kindly Folk running through their veins. A simple Mind 2/Spirit 1 spell allows a magus to see "chimerical reality" through **Faerie Sight**; walking into the Dreamworlds is harder—Spirit 3/Mind 2—and dangerous. Uncanny spirits and living nightmares feast on mortal travelers, here—even the fae aren't safe! It takes a good imagination and a high Perception + Enigmas Dice Pool to find your way around once you reach these twisted roads, and there's no guarantee that the path you arrived on will exist when you leave....

- **The Void:** To enter the highest reaches, one need only fly past the clouds. The shimmering band of the Horizon drifts across the world like a veil, but doesn't do much to impede a skillful traveler. Very few magi have ever ventured this far—it's difficult to fly so high, after all. The explorers who understand it best often belong to the Celestial Masters, and their notes have formed the foundation of many Daedalean theories—and secrets.

- **The Paths of the Wyck:** Primal Pagans—many of whom belong to the Verbena Tradition—hold the mystical keys to these Paths; hence, any journey along these roads must include at least one witch or shaman as a guide. Magick and science are useless along the Paths; travelers must depend on their own skills to survive. You don't need magick to reach these byways, you've just got to know where and how to look for an entrance. The real trick is finding your way around once you reach the forest; unless some elder has taught you how to navigate the Paths (possibly reflected by high Cosmology, Enigmas and Survival ratings), it's very easy to get lost... eternally lost.

## Combat and Magick

*Ephemer*a, the matter of the spirit worlds, differs from Earthly matter. Under normal circumstances, spirits can't touch mortal creatures, and the reverse holds true for the mortals. To touch an ephemeral being, a character must have at least three dots in Spirit 3, or be related to one of the Changing Breeds. (See *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* for

details.) To touch a person, a spirit either needs to Materialize (see below) or turn the elements against him.

All mortals add one to their attack difficulties in the spirit world; guns are worthless, as are Life- and Matter-based spells. Spirit-based workings act like Life magick against Umbrood beings, and like Matter on their surroundings. Entropy is a very bad idea in the Underworld — it brings out the worst in ghosts, rocks the foundations of the Necropoli and sometimes summons black storms of Oblivion — of damnation incarnate. All other Spheres work normally.

In the Mists, reality favors the mystick; Daedalean workings occasionally backfire, but magick in general is perfectly casual. Low-level spells may even work automatically at the Storyteller's discretion. The Otherworlds are innately magickal, after all.

Within the "little worlds" of the various Aethers, reality works however the Storyteller wants it to. Some Realms favor certain belief systems and consider all other magick styles vulgar — a Christian willworker would be out of luck in the Hall of Thor, for instance, while a Verberna would find Saint Peter's retreat a veritable hell — and other simply suspend *all* Earthly rules.

## Spirits

Gods, angels, demons, enigmas? Spirit beings are all of these and more. Otherworldly creatures of uncertain lineage and baffling intentions, Athereal entities answer to a thousand different names — when they answer at all. To Christian and Jewish mysticks, spirits are demons and angels of various capacities; shamans call them Oresha, Iwa, totems and a host of other honorifics; witches see them as Old Cods, faeries and elemental forces, while the Muslims speak of djinni and afrit. In an effort to rectify the confusion, Hermetic scholars refer to all spirit beings as Umbrood — a colloquialism roughly translated as "Children of the Shadow-family." As a compromise, this name satisfies nobody; most mysticks refer to spirits in familiar cultural terms, or simply as "spirits," or "the mysteries."

And mysterious they are; spirit-beings are not "monsters" in the conventional sense, but forces of Creation incarnate, poured into a glass and bubbling with Otherworldly power. Things *happen* when such entities appear — lamps dim, winds rise, sounds grow faint or roar like thunder. Even the minor beings literally make the earth tremble, and the powerful ones can make castles tumble from their wrath.

Umbrood are enigmatic to a fault, too; a single great spirit can wear a dozen faces or more. Such beings love toying with mortals, and often change their "masks" to conform to a person's expectations; a Malice-spirit could appear as a leaping imp to a priest, a laughing cloud of dust to an Ute shaman and a hook-nosed troll to a Norse runewright. One spirit, three faces, and each one of them is true. The key (for

both a mage and a player) to guessing a spirit's "identity" is this: *Spirits are what they are*; very rarely does an Umbrood's appearance lie. The Malice-spirit *looks* malicious — it doesn't look like angel. The spirit's nature might be obvious or subtle, but it's there to see if you know how to look.

## Companies of Twilight

Spirits range from living balls of light to literal gods. For game purposes, a Storyteller can group the Umbrood into the following rough categories:

- **Gods:** When magicians from across the world gather, the greatest arguments rise from their concepts of Divinity. Most Western mysticks swear there is but one God, the Lord Creator of all things. Below Him sits the Devil, and below them, two legions of angels, saints and demons. Jews, Christians and Muslims all accept this as The Holy Truth. The Pagans, shamans and Far Eastern pantheists beg to differ; to them, the world is full of minor gods and governed by greater ones. In time, the heretical notion that there are no gods may rise to challenge all the faiths. In the Dark Fantastic age, however, nearly everyone (saint, sage and scientist alike) admits the concept of Greater Powers.

Technically, God, the Goddess or the gods qualify as spirits of the most powerful kind. Some gods wander the Earth in various forms, while others rest in Otherworldly Aethers and tend their mysterious tasks. A monotheistic magus would hesitate to put God into the company of lesser beings, but he'd define the Devil as one out of sheer spite. The Pagans and shamans have no problem at all with the idea of gods among men; to them, spirits are as common as people, and occasionally more so. Those divinities may be as capricious as any mortal, and rarely fit into "good" or "evil" camps — they simply do as they will. The trick is staying on their good sides.

- **Angels and Demons:** To many monotheists, all spirits belong in this category; shamans, pantheists and Pagans disagree. Truthfully, there *do* seem to be many entities more attuned to nature than to morality. Even so, spirit-servants of good and evil spirits clearly exist; Angelica enforce the will of God and lead good folk to salvation, while Infernals gnaw at the cornerstones of Creation with temptation, vice and violence. The most dangerous forms of magick request — or compel — service from these entities, often through dispensations from God, the Devil, or both. The so-called *Scourgeligs* that terrorize errant magi are usually regarded as angels or demons, and seem bound to individual sorcerers. (See "The Scourge," Chapter VIII.)

- **Ghosts:** The Holy Word speaks of Heaven and Hell; some spirits, however, never seem to make it to either one. Trapped between life and eternity, these ghosts usually make trouble for the living. Mysticks from faraway lands claim that ancestor-spirits watch over their families, but many Europeans sneer at the idea of benevolent ghosts. Death-walker magi visit a nightmarish Underworld where the wraiths make mockeries of the living world; occasion-

ally, those wraiths come across the Gauntlet themselves — (**Crusade Lore** features a section on the Restless Dead and their activities during this period, and Wraith: The Oblivion presents a 20th-century look at ghosts and their world.)

- **Naturae:** The spirits of nature and the elements take suitable forms; many resemble animals or plants, or combinations of them, while others take on humanoid faces. Of all the spirits, these entities are the most obvious. Some represent colors, concepts or dreams; others favor animals, and "sponsor" human shamans; still others embody corruption. These last, often called *Banes*, possess hosts and feed on spiritual and material rot. Witches, shamans and Hermetic wizards recognize the various Naturae, and often establish pacts with them. Simple and amoral, these spirits are the most direct of their kind. (See **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** and **Axis Mundi: The Book of Spirits** for further details about Naturae.)

- **Bygones:** Once, these creatures lived on Earth; for some reason, they passed on to the spirit planes and eventually became half-spirit themselves. Some supposedly began as people, while others are survivors of extinct species. Most Bygones reside in Realms that suit their bizarre temperaments, but some travel on endless journeys through the Mists. Magi who tend the dying magical beasts claim many Bygones were once living creatures who grew tired of this world; if they're to be believed, all magical beasts will soon pass away, leaving the Earth barren and sad.

- **Spirit-hosts:** Material creatures possessed by ephemeral beings, these hosts meld spirit-power with mortal flesh. Celtic Pagans tell tales of *fomori* who fought the Wyck and their allies; from time to time, new ones are born from Infernal bargains and spoiled passions. Other spirit-Hosts bear demonic, ghostly or even celestial "riders" who use the meat for their own purposes, then depart. The hybrid creatures rising from such unions are weaker than spirits but far more powerful than mortals.

The traditional celestilogographies and demonologies — considered gospel since the Dark Ages — seem a bit obsolete after mysticks begin comparing notes. The sheer diversity of Creation's "housekeepers" defies rigid order, Christian tomes tell of the 666 Abyssal hosts and three grand Celestial tanks; Hindu sutras speak of several *million* gods; add the Pagans, tribals, Buddhists and everyone else into the spiritual picture and confusion is inevitable. The Celestial Chorus Still swears by the old spirit hierarchies, of course, but most Council mysticks search for a new and better way to understand the Aetheral Ones. In the Order of Hermes, dedicated scholars catalogue the Umbrood by the spirits' relative power. Four ranks — *Celestine*, *Lord*, *Preceptor* and *Minion* — are defined for the Council of Nine, but they never really catch on. Verbena, Dream-speakers, Seers and Chakravanti refuse to define spirits in these terms; to them, the Hermetic designations are little short of blasphemy. Still, most Council records use these terms, if only for clarity.

The Order of Reason designates all spirits as *Imaginis* — as reflections or phantoms. Noting that Umhrood seem to come and go, Daedalean scholars created the *Millesseptuaginta Imaginis Constant Theory*; according to this treatise (first published in 1423 by Stefano Alexandri, who probably had nothing better to do), 70,000 spirits exist at any one time. Each of them provides a "veil" between mortals and God; if each one is looked through — or better yet, withdrawn — the Divine Face becomes clear. The Theory is especially popular among young Celestial Masters, many of whom aspire to be the one to see the Face of God first. This concept gives rise to three things within the Order: a hostile attitude toward spirits, a schism with the Gabrielites (who favor the old hierarchies) and a truly confused "Imaginis head count" in the archives. By the 1800s, the Daedaleans officially refute all existence of spirits; in later accounts, such "manifestations" are delusions, superstitions or aliens from hostile dimensions. In time, a division of the Celestial Masters will be assigned to the disposal of all Umbral "phantasies."

Unaffiliated mysticks continue to define the Aetherial Ones in the traditional ways — gods to some, monsters to others, mysteries to all. (Examples of several spirit-types can be found in the Appendix. Chapter VI contains Storyteller advice concerning spirits and the Otherworlds.)

## Spirit Rules (Optional)

As creatures of ephemera rather than matter, spirits play by slightly different rules. Your troupe may use these systems or discard them as you see fit.

### Traits

First of all, Umbral beings use different Traits than humans do:

- **Willpower:** A reflection of innate determination, this Trait takes the place of Dexterity and allows a spirit to move or attack. Hitting a human target is usually difficulty 5.

Difficulty	Action
3	Easy
5	Fairly simple
6	Normal
8	Difficult
10	Virtually impossible

- **Rage:** A measure of raw anger, Rage inflicts harm on material and ephemeral targets. For each success on a Rage-roll (difficulty 6), the spirit inflicts one Health Level of damage on a material being, or removes one Power point from another Umbrood.

- **Gnosis:** In place of Social and Mental Traits, a spirit uses its Gnosis. Any Abilities the Imago possesses — Seduction, Occult, etc. — would be added to this Trait, too.

- **Power:** As fountains of Creation, spirits draw from innate reserves of mystical Power. The higher this Trait, the

mightier the spirit. Charms use Power, and damage takes it away. An Umbrood that depletes its Power rating, either through damage or through overuse, fades away for a day or so until it can Reform itself; really powerful entities can Reform in an hour or less.

A Power-drained spirit begins to fade; attacks tear large holes in its body. To return to "health," a spirit enters Slumber, a dreaming state in which Creation restores the being's Power. For each hour that the spirit Slumbers, it regains one Power point. Some say God (or the Devil) nurses His emissaries, while others insist the spirit's karma or its connection to the World-heart holds the key to its mystic energy.

A shaman can work an Umbrood being into a fetish if he knows Spirit 4. A spirit bound into a fetish automatically enters Slumber and stays there until released. The fetish's power is activated by the user, not the spirit. A newly created fetish will need time to recharge to full Power before using, which can take a long time with some of the more powerful spirits. That fetish won't be of any use to the shaman until its Power is fully restored, and the spirit probably will probably be... displeased... to become a part of some mortal's toy. (See page 261.)

## Tasks

### • Combat

In their natural state, spirits cannot physically attack. A hostile spirit rolls its Willpower to hit, then rolls its Rage to do damage. Both rolls go against difficulty 6. Each success rolled inflicts one aggravated Health Level of damage. A mage can soak this with either Spirit (and only Spirit) countermagic, difficulty 6, or by rolling her Arete against difficulty 8. Each success reduces the spirit's damage by one Health Level. Umbrood who fight each other reduce each other's Power, not Health.

A Materialized spirit attacks, soaks or defends using its Materialized Attributes; an Umbrood in its normal state cannot soak damage at all unless it has the Armor Charm. In either form, Gnosis stills stands in for Social and Mental Traits. Healing requires the appropriate Charm, or a retreat into the Umbra.

### • Communication

The Umbrood speak different languages than physical beings do. Spirit communication isn't so much a language as a form of comprehension between both parties. Not everyone can understand spirits, though; a magus needs Spirit 2 to communicate with Umbrood beings, unless those beings also speak familiar human languages.

### • Movement

All spirits can fly or float. The maximum distance (in yards) that they may move in a turn is 20 + Willpower. Yards and feet don't mean very much in the Mists, however; distances can warp without warning — and often do.

### • Pursuit

A spirit trying to flee rolls its Willpower against difficulty 6. It begins with three automatic successes because it's on home ground. To follow, a human character must roll either her Dexterity + Athletics (if she has walked through the Mists to the Otherworlds), or her Willpower rating (if she entered through astral travel). The difficulty for both rolls is 8 — the Otherworlds are not home ground to a mage! A spirit with more than 10 successes gets away clean, and one with the Reform Charm can simply disappear without effort.

## Charms

The mystical power of the Otherworlds comes through in Charms — the natural magics of spirit beings. These magics requires a certain amount of Power to use. Most Charms last for one scene, but combat-related Charms last only a turn or two.

• **Airt Sense:** Most spirits have a natural sense of the *airs* (directions) of the spirit world and can travel around without much difficulty. It costs one Power to find any particular thing.

• **Appear:** With this Charm, a spirit can manifest to an Earthly observer without taking on material form. It cannot, however, affect the material world in any way while using this Charm. A specialty of demons, who use it to taunt their victims. Costs five Power.

• **Armor:** This Charm provides a spirit one soak die per Power point spent. This is the only way a spirit can soak damage unless it has Materialized. The spirit may use this Charm at any time in the combat turn before damage is rolled.

• **Blast Flame:** The spirit consumes its opponents with fire. Costs two Power per die of damage.

• **Blighted Touch:** This demonic enchantment allows a spirit to bring out a target's worst passions. If the spirit successfully attacks, the target must immediately make a Willpower roll. If she fails, her baser side comes to the surface; if she botches, that "beast" becomes a permanent companion. Costs two Power.

• **Cleanse the Blight:** An angel's touch cures spiritual corruption in the vicinity. Power cost is 10.

• **Corruption:** The spirit can whisper an evil suggestion in a victim's ear — a really *tempting* suggestion. Costs one Power.

• **Create Fires:** By succeeding with a Gnosis roll, the spirit can create small fires. The difficulty varies (from 3 for small fires to 9 for conflagrations). The Power cost varies from one to five points.

• **Create Wind:** The spirit can create wind effects. Power cost varies from one for a breeze to 20 for a tempest.

• **Element Sense:** A talent of most elemental spirits, this Charm allows the being to notice anything that happens to be touching (or very close to) the entity's element. This perception extends in a circle roughly 500 feet around the

spirit, and lets it "see" in all directions. Within this radius, a fire elemental can see things within a yard or two of a flame and a wood spirit can watch goings-on near her tree. This Charm costs five Power and lasts for an hour or so.

- **Flood:** With a wave of its hand, the spirit makes all water in the area rise. Near lakes, rivers and ports, this Charm can cause severe flooding. Costs five Power-points for a one-mile radius.

- **Healing:** With a touch, the spirit can heal itself, another spirit or a material being. This Charm cures normal and aggravated damage of all types. The Power cost is two for each point of Power healed, or five point? per Health Level.

- **Lightning Bolt:** Like Jove, the spirit hurls a thunder-holt. The Power cost is two per die of damage inflicted.

- **Materialize:** A spirit with this Charm can create a physical form for itself. To do so, the spirit's Gnosis must equal or exceed the Gauntlet rating for that area. When a being Materializes, it spends Power to give itself a body and Physical Traits. Gnosis still represents the entity's Social or Mental Attributes, however, Power point costs are as follows:

Power Cost	Trait
1	Per one Physical Attribute level
1	Per two Ability levels
1	7 Health Levels (as a mortal)
1	Per additional Health Level (each extra Health Level also increases size)
1	Per one Health Level healed (to regenerate damage to the spirit's own physical form), per three if the damage was inflicted by Spirit magick
1	Weaponry: Per die of aggravated damage done in addition to Strength (Bite is one die, claws are two, etc.)

Umbrood have no limits on their Attribute and Ability levels. A spirit can create an extraordinarily strong, fast body for itself if it spends enough Power. Most, however, have "default forms" they regularly attain.

**Example:** An angel spins herself a pleasing form. For the following Traits — Str 3, Dex 4, Sta 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Stealth 3 and seven Health Levels — she spends 16 Power points.

A spirit may stay Materialized as long as it desires, but cannot enter an area with a Gauntlet rating higher than the spirit's Gnosis. While Materialized, the spirit may not recharge its Power. When a Materialized entity fights, damage comes away from its Health Levels, nor its Power; if the spirit's Health Levels drop to zero, it fades away and cannot return to Earth for a day. (Note that aggravated damage suffered by a spirit is applied equally to both Health Levels and Power. Thus, a spirit cannot always escape its sojourn on Earth unscathed.)

- **Meld:** Some spirits can shift into their native elements and "disappear." This takes one turn and makes the elemental completely unreachable. The element may be disturbed after the spirit's departure, but the entity has fled. Such Charms work only in the spirit's natural environment — a fire spirit cannot Meld into earth. Costs two Power.

- **Mind Speech:** A spirit with this Charm can speak directly into a subject's mind. Costs three points.

- **Possession:** A member of the Infernal Hosts may possess a living being or inanimate object. Possession requires a successful Gnosis roll (difficulty is the victim's Willpower, or 6 for a non-magical item). The number of successes equals the speed with which possession occurs:

Successes	Time Taken
1	Six hours
2	Three hours
3	One hour
4	15 minutes
5	Five minutes
6+	Instantaneous

During the time it takes to possess its victim, the spirit crawls into a dark, isolated niche in the spirit world; there, it goes into a trance and sends its essence into the victim. If attacked during this time, the entity loses its link to the material world. Possessing spirits are often guarded by others of their kind to ensure that the possession process remains undisturbed.

- **Reform:** This Charm allows a spirit to dissipate find Reform elsewhere in the Mists — usually far away. Costs 20 Power.

- **Shapeshift:** The spirit may take the form of anything it desires. It does not gain the powers or abilities of its new shape, only the form and visage. The Power cost is five.

- **Soul Reading:** With a glance, the spirit can see a person's inner temperament. Not mindreading, but a good indication of a person's guilt, innocence or passions. Costs three Power.

- **Spirit Away:** This dread power lets a demon snatch a victim from the material world and take him straight to some Otherworldly prison. If the Umbrood scores four or more successes with a Willpower roll (difficulty 7), the mortal passes through the Gauntlet and into the spirit's personal Realm. Once there, he can try to escape; Hell's chains, however, are thick and often eternal.... This costs 25 Power and takes the spirit along with its target.

- **Tracking:** The spirit can follow prey like a master hunter. Costs five Power.

- **Waves:** By turning waters to froth, a spirit can try to drown victims, upset seacraft or pull swimmers down. This Charm creates strong currents on or under the surface of any liquid. Costs five Power for a 50-foot radius, and lasts

ENTER EDWARD  
AND KESTRAL,  
ARGUING SOFTLY.

WOMAN,  
THOU'RT MAD! WE  
SHALL BE CROW'S  
PICKINGS BY  
MORNING IF WE  
STAY!

LEAVE THEN,  
AND BE COWARD  
DAMN'D, I SAY.

I SHALL  
NOT.

BE SILENT,  
THEN, AND LET  
ME LEAD THE  
WAY.

SOFT, SIRRAH!  
WE'RE IN THE  
VERY SHADOW  
OF THE WALL.

YOU PLAN  
TO CLIMB  
WITHOUT A  
ROPE? YOUNG  
GIRL,

YOU'RE  
MADDER  
THAN A  
TINKER'S  
EGG!

HOLY GOD,  
WOMAN! I HAVE  
NO WANT TO  
SEE UP YOUR  
SKIRTS!

IF THY  
LIVER IS THE  
MEASURE OF  
THY ROPE,

I'LL BE  
IN MY OWN  
HANDS  
TONIGHT.

YOU'RE  
STRONG, GIRL.  
I GRANT  
YOU THAT.

'TIS NO EASY  
THING TO HAUL  
AN ARMORED  
MAN...

PEACE,  
GOOD  
EDWARD! I  
BEG FOR  
THY  
TONGUE!

WE ARE IN  
THE VERY  
SEAT OF PERIL  
HERE.

BEAR THE  
SCARS TO  
PROVE IT.

HUSH.

## EXAMPLE OF PLAY

### The Play's the Thing

Jean-Marc's "Bloody Crosses" chronicle goes to a new level when Jason brings his Craftmason character Edward Geisler into a group with Kestral (Nik's witch from Chapter IV) and the mysterious Christina de Aeoli (played by Rachelle). A stout Christian lad with a talent for guncraft, Edward clashes with the others from the start — which is just what Jean-Marc intended.

When Kestral's investigations into the uncanny Baron Tyburn hit a stumbling block, she resolves to return. Edward has his own score to settle with the lord; rumor has it that the master of the house was behind a recent demonic possession in Warwick — a possession instigated by one of Tyburn's Black Masses. The Baron provides a common enemy for Kestral and Edward. Good thing, too — these two need all the commonality they can get!

A lengthy trek brings the sorcerers to Baron Tyburn's grounds. From there, they'll have to be quiet and careful. Both players make Dexterity + Stealth rolls as they approach the manor. A misstep now can kill.

Success. The magi prepare to climb. Nik and Jason roleplay out their characters' dislike for each other while they figure out their Dice Pools. Kestral's Dexterity 5 and Athletics 2 give Nik seven dice; Jason pulls five himself — three for Dexterity 3 and two for Athletics 2. Since Edward isn't much of a climber himself, he readies a grapple and rope.

Kestral goes up the hard way. Marc assigns Nik a difficulty of 7. Nik points out that she has enough dice in her Pool (seven) to do the task automatically. Marc asks her to make a single roll, just to make sure she doesn't botch. Meanwhile, Jason has Edward toss his grapple up — Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 8 given the darkness and height of the wall. He rolls a two, a four, two eights and a 10. Victory!

Nik makes her roll without trouble, so Kestral beats Edward to the top by a wide margin. Jason fails a Dexterity + Athletics roll partway up, and Kestral has to help him. Before she does, Nik has the witch take a look around with a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8 because of the darkness). She remembers the dangers here all too well. Marc wants his players paranoid, so he makes the roll for Nik and keeps the results secret. "Well," he tells Nik, "you don't notice anything...."


"...But then, you didn't notice the dog last time, either."



WE'RE ALMOST  
TO THE CHAMBER  
I SPOKE OF.

WHERE PROOF  
OF THE BARON'S  
INFAMY LIES.

WAIT HERE.  
YOUR LANTERN  
WILL BETRAY  
US.



ENTER MADRIGAL.



AND  
WHAT HAVE  
WE HERE?



SO BRAVE A MAN,  
TO BE SLINKING THROUGH  
MY LORDSHIP'S HALLS



AT SO DEEP  
AN HOUR. WILL YOU  
EXPLAIN?

I MERELY SOUGHT  
ACCESS TO THY  
LORD'S LIBRARY.

PR...PRAY,  
GOOD LADY, BE  
NOT ALARMED.

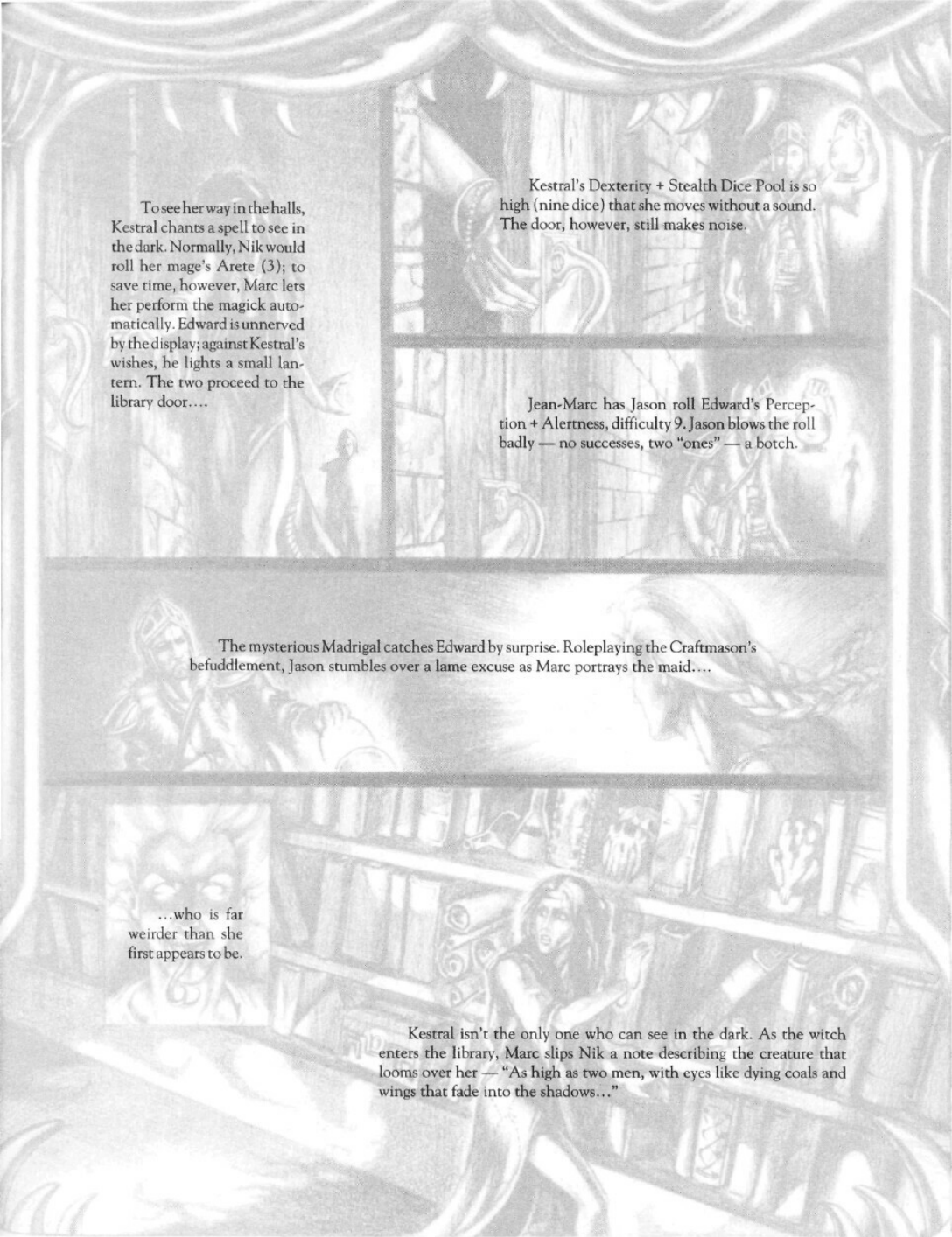
I HAVE A LOVE  
FOR BOOKS, I MUST  
CONFESS, THAT OUTWEIGHS  
MY WISDOM, AND  
MY SENSE.



INDEED?



ENTER THE INFERNAL ONE.



To see her way in the halls, Kestral chants a spell to see in the dark. Normally, Nik would roll her mage's Arete (3); to save time, however, Marc lets her perform the magick automatically. Edward is unnerved by the display; against Kestral's wishes, he lights a small lantern. The two proceed to the library door...

Kestral's Dexterity + Stealth Dice Pool is so high (nine dice) that she moves without a sound. The door, however, still makes noise.

Jean-Marc has Jason roll Edward's Perception + Alertness, difficulty 9. Jason blows the roll badly — no successes, two "ones" — a botch.

The mysterious Madrigal catches Edward by surprise. Roleplaying the Craftmason's befuddlement, Jason stumbles over a lame excuse as Marc portrays the maid...

...who is far weirder than she first appears to be.

Kestral isn't the only one who can see in the dark. As the witch enters the library, Marc slips Nik a note describing the creature that looms over her — "As high as two men, with eyes like dying coals and wings that fade into the shadows..."

THEY FIGHT.



IF ONE OF  
US BE HELL-BOUND  
FRIEND,

IT SHAN'T  
BE ME,  
I SWEAR!

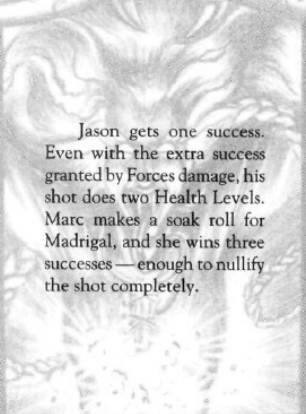


**BOOM!**



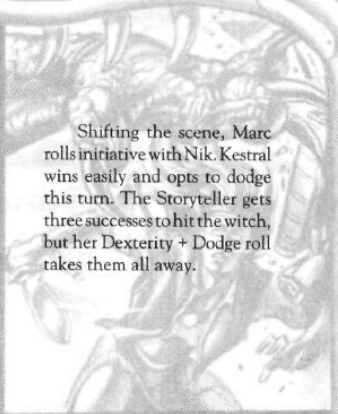
ENOUGH  
SKULKERY.

LET US  
PURGE THIS  
PLACE.

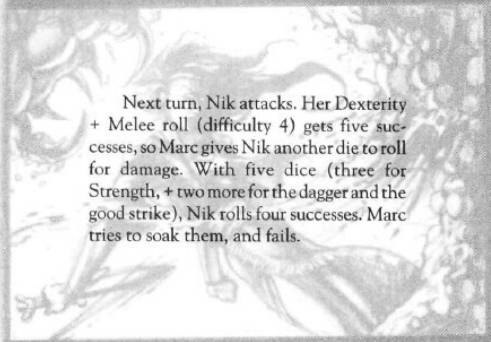


Jason rolls Edward's initiative, gets four successes to Marc's two, then rolls his mage's Arete (4) as a blazing Forces 3/Prime 2 Effect rips into Madrigal. Edward's wheellock pistol provides the focus for the spell, making it casual enough to be difficulty 6.

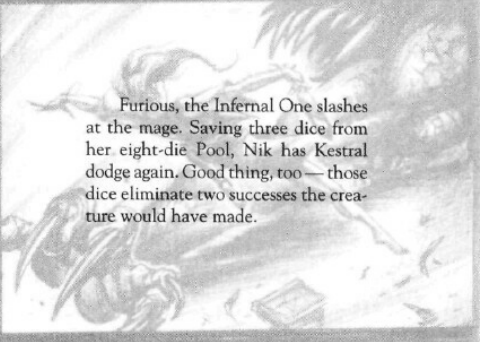
Jason gets one success. Even with the extra success granted by Forces damage, his shot does two Health Levels. Marc makes a soak roll for Madrigal, and she wins three successes—enough to nullify the shot completely.



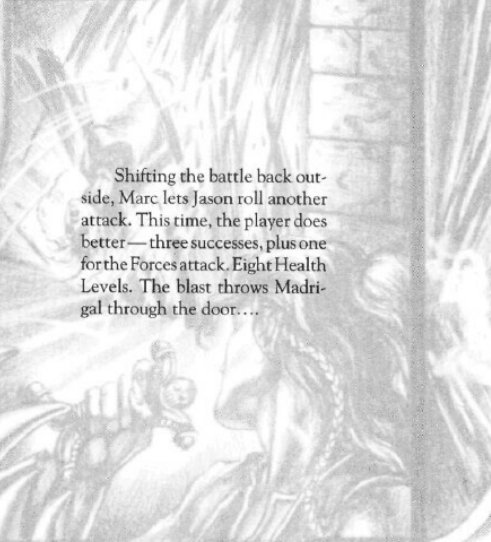
Shifting the scene, Marc rolls initiative with Nik. Kestral wins easily and opts to dodge this turn. The Storyteller gets three successes to hit the witch, but her Dexterity + Dodge roll takes them all away.



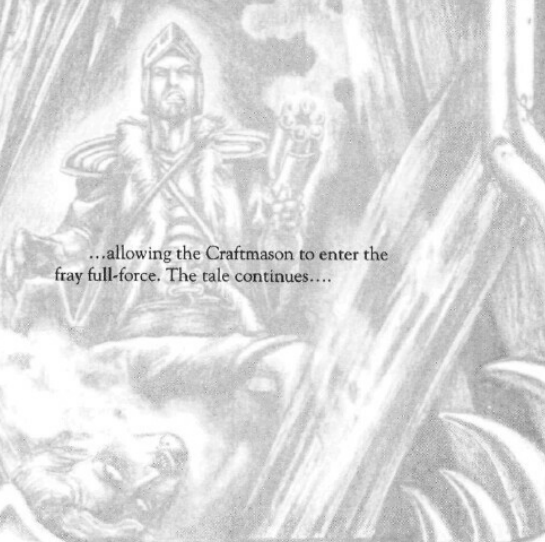
Next turn, Nik attacks. Her Dexterity + Melee roll (difficulty 4) gets five successes, so Marc gives Nik another die to roll for damage. With five dice (three for Strength, + two more for the dagger and the good strike), Nik rolls four successes. Marc tries to soak them, and fails.



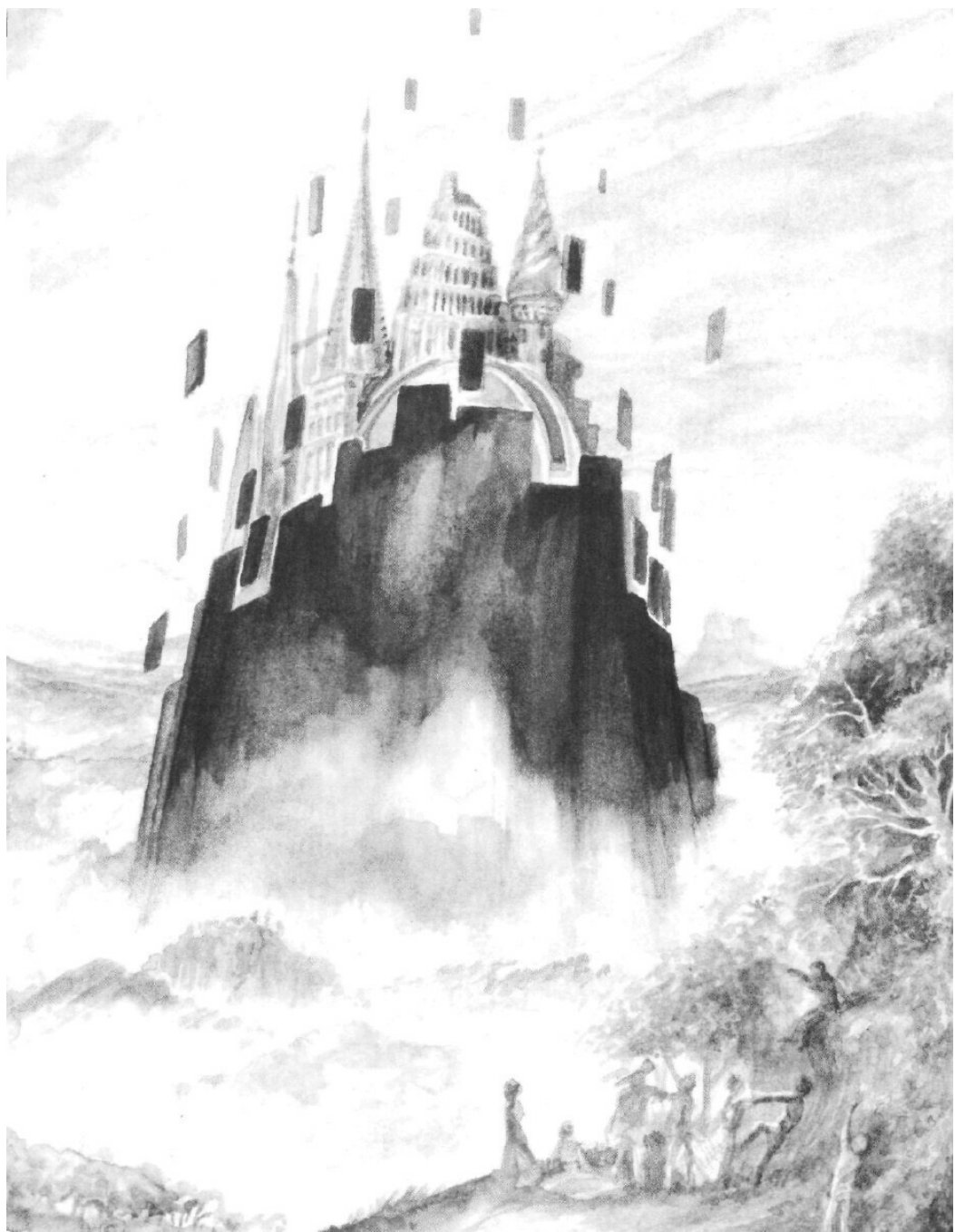
Furious, the Infernal One slashes at the mage. Saving three dice from her eight-die Pool, Nik has Kestral dodge again. Good thing, too—those dice eliminate two successes the creature would have made.



Shifting the battle back outside, Marc lets Jason roll another attack. This time, the player does better—three successes, plus one for the Forces attack. Eight Health Levels. The blast throws Madrigal through the door...



...allowing the Craftmason to enter the fray full-force. The tale continues....





# Chapter VIII: Magick Rules

*His mother was a witch, and one so strong  
That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,  
And deal in her command without her power.*

— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

## Mercy Has a Human Heart

Groaning floorboards woke Agnesa from the depths of sleep. Before she could cry out, Karel's hushed voice echoed in the darkness.

"Silence, Agnesa. It is time to end our association."

"What? What do you mean?" asked Agnesa in a frightened whisper.

"Master Ottavio means to test you tomorrow." His voice was deadly serious, which surprised and alarmed her. Had she not been tested before?

At her hesitation, he continued: "He suspects you cling to the old ways, and he means to test your faith and knowledge. I know the truth and know also that my master lacks the compassion and mercy you possess in such abundance."

Without further discussion, Agnesa drew on her worn traveling clothes before following him, silently cursing the groaning stairs and the creaky oaken door. "Where shall we go?" she whispered as they stepped outside.

"No, not 'we,'" Karel answered. "The horse is already saddled. Use the corns in the pouch to aid your way to Rome. There, you can find another mentor."

"But why will you not go with me? Surely you do not wish to stay with that cruel..."

He hushed her with a sad sigh. "Cruel or kind, it matters not. He is my master, and I need him far more than he needs me."

"Then you should have learned to hold Reason over base emotions." The harsh voice cut across the yard, startling them both. A hand lifted the hood from a cunningly wrought lantern. Ottavio! He held what appeared, to be a short arquebus, though Agnesa couldn't smell match smoke. "You disappoint me, Karel," he said. "Return colour room, apprentice, that you may contemplate your failings. And you, girl," he said, pointing the muzzle at Agnesa, "be thankful that your end will be quick, and not at the hands of Inquisitors."

*Light flashed across the master's eyes. He stepped back in surprise. Agnesa saw a small silver mirror in Karel's palm, reflecting the lantern's gleam back into their captor's face.*

*Ottavio, partly blinded, hissed in anger and swung the weapon towards his betrayer. Heedless of her friend's order to run, Agnesa dropped to her knees and began a sharp song of deliverance.*

*Sparks suddenly flew from the priming pan. A small flame flared as the powder ignited. With her eyes shut tightly, Agnesa prayed for a miracle, that the bullet would never leave the muzzle....*

*There was a sudden flash before her eyelids, a roar, then silence and the reek of sulfur. She heard Karel, coughing. "May I remember this moment," he finally said, "and never again question the power of your faith."*

*The magus opened her eyes.*

*The gun had exploded. Its remains lay shattered on the ruin that had been Ottavio. It was indeed a miracle.*

*"Let us thank God," she whispered to Karel, taking his hand. "But quickly. The guards will be here soon enough...."*

## Rules of Mastery

Man is, in many ways, the pinnacle of Creation. Made in God's image (or favored by the gods, at any rate), the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve savor the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and speak the many tongues of Babel. In many ways, the magus is the *virtuoso*, the superman. Standing above his common brother, he wields elemental powers and uncanny insights. The price of that Art is to be set apart from mortal folk. From the moment of Awakening, new rules apply.

The game systems of Mage magick differ slightly from the normal Traits discussed in **Chapters IV and VII**; the basis of those rules, however, is the same, and it's pretty simple. The following chapter covers the basic systems, optional complications, story aspects and sample spells of the Great Art. These rules require a bit of judgment and imagination, but that's to be expected.

Magick requires nothing less.

## Freedom to Create

(*Note:* Again, the word "you" applies to both the player and the character.)

In **The Sorcerers Crusade**, magick is free-form. You craft the spell you need when you need it. A magus is magickal, a force of change incarnate; it would be inappropriate, then, to render all possible enchantments into a collection of generic "spells" — especially since magi come from all lands and cultures. So, in Mage, all spells are custom-made, shaped by your imagination, knowledge and will.

That freedom carries two prices. The first is judgment. Yes, you can screw with the following system. Yes, you can pull the moon from the sky and hit the bad guy over the head with it (in theory, anyway). Yes, you can argue for

hours over the particulars of each casting. This system isn't ironclad, nor is it meant to be. A free-form rules system presumes a certain amount of maturity. It grants that you, the player, are more interested in telling a cool story than in ruling the world. If that's not the case, maybe you should be tapping mana points or something.

The second is the Scourge. *That which you do*, as the truism goes, *returns to you threefold*. Sometimes it comes back at you when you least expect it. In the Dark Fantastic world, magick works; the ways in which it works aren't always clear. Sometimes, Dame Fortune steps in and smashes you across the jaw with an iron gauntlet. When a wizard reweaves Creation, he opens himself to that blow. In Mage, as in life, nothing comes for free.

## Casual Magick

In the modern world, many people consider magick impossible; to fight the weight of disbelief, 20th-century wizards cloak their workings in "coincidences." In the Dark Fantastic age, however, magick is totally plausible — so long as it comes from the practices of the Art. *Casual magick* flows from those practices; such spells seem like the will of God, Fate, Fortune or the Devil.

In story terms, a magus uses acceptable rituals and talismans to attune her will to Creation. In game terms, her spells come fairly easily and are less likely to invoke the Scourge. A magus whose rituals match the prevailing beliefs may pull off some amazing tricks — flight, conjuration, even shapechanging — without "offending" the established order. That order, however, is changing; as new ideas spring up, the concepts of what is and is not "possible" change so rapidly that wizards are often caught unaware. Thus, casual magick carries its own set of risks — what worked today might not work tomorrow....

## Vain (or Vulgar) Magick

By setting himself above the Lord or the laws of Creation, a magus commits the sin of Pride. Such *vain magick* seems impossibly proud; by using it, the sorcerer sets himself up to fail. In later days, such crass workings will be called "vulgar"; these days, however, most people subscribe to the idea of Divine regulation. Thus, vain magicks seem to defy both possibility and reverence.

In story terms, vain spells tax the natural order; in game terms, they become harder and riskier to cast. Workings that defy the local belief system, or that spring out of nowhere, put their caster in peril. Ironically, vain magicks are necessary for the survival of magick; the shifting currents of belief are washing away the old ways. Machine-magick — which in many places is considered vain — is the next wave. To survive the coming flood, mysticks must learn to disguise their showy Arts behind the whims of Fortune — or to employ sheer will alone.

## The Realms of Belief

So my sorcerer can kick butt, right? I mean, he's using magick and people believe in magick, so I can do whatever I want, correct?

Not quite.

Casual magick still depends on belief; belief has boundaries. Even at its peak, European folklore does not accept people who can snap their fingers and conjure holocausts. Floating castles and armies of skeletons appear in legends, but by the 1400s, such things are considered fairy tales at best. Even the miracles of the Bible occurred through the might of God, not through hyper-powerful magi. In short, magick has its limits.

For quick reference, consider the following "limits of belief in force in a European setting:

### Vain Workings...

- Appear out of nowhere with a shrug of will.
- Involve elaborate machinery ("*That will never work!*") rather than mystical rites,
- Demand something from God or His agents without some suitable favor, prayer or piety.
- Employ styles from foreign or alien cultures (shamanism, Do, Tantra) that seem incredible to European beliefs.\*
- Quickly conjure huge Effects (the legendary fireball spell); greatly distort or alter mass, material or distance (shrinking a city, turning it into glass and sending it to China).

If the Storyteller feels a spell defies the local beliefs, she is within her rights to declare it vain.

### Casual Workings...

- Call upon Divine or demonic favor through pacts, prayers or sacrifices.
- Seem like accidents (like 20th-century "coincidences"). Even then, however, some invocation must set the coincidence in motion.

## Belief

Magick without belief is nothing. A magus weaves Creation because she *believes* that she can, not because the dots on her character sheet say so. It's really easy to confuse the game terminology with the character sometimes, so let's take a moment to discuss magickal styles and creeds.

In game terms, you use *Spheres* to craft your magician's spells; these elements, described later in the chapter, allow you to simulate a huge range of weaveries. No matter what style of magick your sorcerer employs, the rules remain the same. Whether she's a witch, a priest, or an artisan, she uses the same basic rules. So what's the difference?

Belief.

• Employ prepared salves, potions, wands, circles, dust, relics or other items. (See "**Ritual Tools.**")

• Take rime to prepare, even if the casting itself is quick.

• Enhance human abilities to a patent but not extreme degree (allowing a man to run faster than normal, but not faster than the wind).

If a spell seems to fit within the limits of medieval folklore, the Storyteller ought to consider it casual.

As a "cinematic example," use low-fantasy films like *Ladyhawk*, *Dragonslayer* or *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* to set the limits of casual magick. Really high-fantasy stuff—*Xena*, *Baron Munchausen*—rides on the far side of reality. The exact boundaries depend on the Storyteller and the tone she wants for her game; even then, Dame Fortune has a way of sneaking you some arsenic. (See "**The Scourge.**") Faraway lands, of course, "accept" different types of magick—some of which can get pretty wild.

Note that even casual spells can be difficult to perform. The bigger the spell, the more successes you need to cast it (see the **Magickal Feats chart for examples**), and the more Resonance it carries. You might be able to call upon Mammon to create a roomful of gold, but it'll take 10 or 15 successes to do it. Even then, that gold will carry an uncanny taint, and the Demon Lord of Greed will consider you a debtor.

Is a roomful of gold really worth that?

*\* This works the opposite way if a European uses her Arts in a distant land. Most cultures tend to have very narrow concepts of magick at this time. A group of Mayans may accept a Mayan sorcerer with a knowing nod, but a Spanish Hermetic defies its worldview, thus, his Arts become vain in the Mayan lands, even if those same spells are casual in his own home. As a rule, if a wizard "ain't from 'round here," consider his Arts vain.*

In the "**Breath of Life**" section of **Chapter IV**, we mention the importance of your character's beliefs. When magick comes into play, those beliefs become important. The style the magus uses to cast her spells depends on what she believes will work: The witch calls the corners, summons the spirits of the elements and invokes Brigit to kindle a flame; the priest whispers a prayer to God, perhaps intoning Psalms 5:8 ("*Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness...*") to call forth fire; the artisan, meanwhile, constructs a device that sparks when the wheel is spun, igniting a small cache of fuel. In game terms, all three magi use Forces 3/Prime 2 to create an element that wasn't present before. (See "**How Do You Do That?!**" page 255.) The characters' methods, on the other hand, are pretty different.

## Magickal Workings

*I sail goe until a hare  
Wi sorrow and sick mickle care  
I sail goe. in the Devil's name  
An while I come home again*

— incantation attributed to a Scottish witch

At its core, the **Mage** magick system is simple, based on the same kind of Trait-versus-difficulty die roll described in the previous chapter:

- **Step I:** Decide what you're doing, and how.
- **Step II:** Check to see whether your character knows how to do what you want her to do.
- **Step III:** See whether or not you succeed. Simple workings are easy; Complicated ones are more difficult.
- **Step IV:** Reap the harvest of your success—or failure.

The **Magickal Reference charts** (pages 238-241) sum up the process in shorthand. Here, we'll go through everything in detail. For the most part, you should be able to use the basic rules without trouble. If all else fails, check the "**How Do You Do That?**" section, the *Documenti Magica* given by the reference charts, or the sample spells at the chapter's end.

### Documentum: Helpful Terms

- **Arete;** The enlightened will; also the Trait rolled to create an *Effect*.
- **Sphere:** One of the nine magickal keystones of Creation; also a Trait that measures what a wizard understands.
- **Effect:** Game term for a spell.
- **Pattern:** A material substance, as opposed to "free" mystick energy. A wind, a rock, a flame, a disease — each of these is a Pattern filled with Quintessence. The "Pattern Arts" manipulate Patterns; with them, a magus can change one thing into something different.
- **Fortune Die/ Dice:** Extra dice, rolled with the *Arete*, which determine the whims of Fortune. For every five points in a mage's Scourge Pool, his player rolls one Fortune Die.
- **Conjunctional Effect:** A spell that uses two or more Spheres.
- **Casual Magick:** A spell that fits into the local beliefs about magick or Nature. Examples: Changing into a wolf by donning an enchanted skin; flying through the air on a broomstick; whistling up a fire by calling upon salamanders.
- **Vain Magick:** A working that seems impossible, or that defies the orders of God and Nature. *Examples:* Changing into a wolf by snapping your fingers; flying through the air in a machine; throwing a fireball without demonic or elemental aid.

### Step I: What Are You Doing?

First, decide what you want your magus to do. Then describe how she does it. Finally, tell the Storyteller which Spheres you intend to use to pull the casting off.

The first part is simple enough; the second involves a bit of imagination and roleplaying. (See "**Belief.**") The third draws from the "**Spheres**" and "**How Do You Do That?**" sections. Once you're familiar with those, the process is easy enough.

### Simultaneous Workings

A sorcerer may cast only one spell per turn, no matter how quickly she may be moving. (See the Time Sphere.) She can keep as many spells "running" as she wants; after a while, however, it gets difficult to concentrate on them all (+1 to the casting difficulty for every two spells in use).

### Casting Time

Weavery often demands time; depending on the mage's tools, her beliefs and the complexity of the working, a spell could take a few moments or several hours to cast. Some practices require tasks like dancing, carving or singing before their spells take effect. A wise magus prepares her spell ahead of time and sets it in motion with a final mystick "trigger" (a word, a rune, a shattering of glass). In any case, *spells are not cast without effort*.

## Step II: Do You Know Enough to Do What You Wanted?

Now figure out if your character *can* do what you wanted her to do, and whether or not she's successful.

The mystick Spheres reflect a mage's understanding of reality's elements. The more she knows about a given thing, the higher her Sphere rating will be. Provided she knows what she's doing, a mage can do anything her Sphere rating allows. (See that section for details.) Some workings might also require specialized skills from the magus who would employ them. (See the "Optional Rules" sidebar.)

## Step III: Did You Succeed?

Did it work? If so, how well? Did it fail? If so, how badly? This step involves the success — or lack thereof — of your spell.

### The Roll

To cast a spell, roll your Arete plus Fortune Dice. The more dice you roll, however, the greater the chance for a botch. Think of this as a reflection of the pitfalls of pride — if you only need to expend a small amount of power to accomplish something, throwing everything you have behind it may be like using a thunderbolt to kill a flea.

Someone with a high degree of enlightenment knows the appropriate times to use force. A smart magus, then, uses as little as necessary. Under stress, she still has a lot of power to call upon. Mrigickally changing clothes, however, does not require a lot of Arete. Using your entire Dice Pool to do so would be a bit excessive and may be asking for trouble.

### Difficulty

A sorcerer's magical difficulty is based on the way she chooses to cast her Art. Magick that stirs the pot a little bit — like changing the color of your eyes — isn't difficult. Things get harder if the spell obviously defies what most people would consider possible — changing the color of your skin, for example. If some un-Awakened person is watching, the "weight" of this disbelief or fear makes the feat harder still.

Modifiers (see below) can adjust this base difficulty to some degree.

- *Casual magick's* base difficulty is the highest Sphere used in the Effect + 3. If Mary Prior calls a distant cat to her side — a casual Connection 2/ Mind 2 spell — her base difficulty would be 5.

- *Vain magick without a Sleeper witness* begins with a difficulty of the highest Sphere + 4. If Mary teleported the cat, but did so when no mortals were around, her difficulty would be 6.



- Vain magick *with* witnesses uses the highest Sphere + 5. Say Mary conjured the cat in plain view of her father; her base difficulty would be 7.

- *Even if it succeeds*, any vain Effect earns one point of Scourge — not a good thing!

## Modifiers

A variety of circumstances — from high-stress situations to elaborate rituals — can make magickal workings harder or easier to perform. The *Magickal Difficulties* chart lists many such modifiers.

Reality has a somewhat consistent base, if for no other reason than game balance. Assume that no modifier can increase to or reduce a difficulty by more than three places, total (+/- 3). Thus, no matter what Mary does, the minimum difficulty to call her faraway pet would be 2 and the maximum would be 10.

To avoid complication, we recommend using only one or two modifiers at a time. Too many at once can slow the game down.

## How Many Successes Do I Need?

For the most part, the size and complexity of a magickal feat determine the number of successes needed to accomplish it. The *Magickal Feats* table offers a few examples, along with the successes needed to accomplish each act.

- In general, assume that a casting that alters *only* the mage herself — prophecy, self-healing, all first-rank sensory magicks, shapeshifting, etc. — needs only one or two successes to perform. You have no one to convince but yourself.

- An action that affects another existing object or being — whether it's a telepathic link, possession, transformation, raw damage, whatever — needs at least two successes to have any sort of impact. Any less, and the magick fails,

- A spell that affects the world around the mage — conjuration, weather control, shadow-walking, channeling Quintessence, creating new creatures, — may demand anywhere from one to 30 successes, depending on the magnitude of the magick. Conjuring a flame on the tip of your finger is easy; pulling the moon out of the sky is not.

## Success, Effect and Interruptions

Most spells are pretty straightforward — either you succeed or fail. Examples include: changing your own shape, magickal brainwashing, conjuring or creating some being or object out of thin air, or passing through the Gauntlet and into the spirit world. Such all-or-nothing magicks demand a certain number of successes be rolled before the spell takes effect. Simple actions are easy; more complicated ones, however, may take time and effort, i.e., extended rolls, to complete. The *Degrees of Success* table handles these cases.

Other spells are cast with an immediate intent in mind — to cause or heal damage, to sense something, to influence somebody's mind, or change an object's shape, etc. The amount

of damage, benefit or influence you exert depends on how well you roll. The better you roll, the more effect the magick has. The same goes for duration; the better the roll, the longer the Effect lasts. See the *Damage and Duration* table in these situations.

If an all-or-nothing action (i.e., setting a barn on fire) also inflicts damage or lasts for a while, use the *Damage and Duration* table to find out just how much harm it did or how long it lasts. Base the result on the number of successes you rolled.

Under ideal circumstances, a wizard can take as long as she needs to work her Art. In combat or other stressful conditions, however, she might be interrupted before the Weavery is finished. If someone stops the mage before she gathers the successes she needs, assume either:

- that the magick has only limited effect, like a partial success;

- or that it is completely lost due to interference. Damage, in this case, would be based on the successes that had been rolled *before* the disruption.

## Rituals and Extended Magick Rolls

A magus can accomplish most feats with little difficulty (one to five successes). The term "magickal working" came about for a reason, however: large or complex spells demand extra time and effort. In story terms, the magus must perform a magickal ritual; in game terms, her player must make an extended roll, gathering enough successes to finish the job.

Magicks that might require extended rolls include Summonings, complex creations, weather-witchery, strong curses, distant scrying, Cray drainings, Horizon Realm creations and other powerful acts of will. The Storyteller may decree that one roll may take game-time hours instead of turns, depending on the magick involved.

The essential rules for extended rolls can be found in **Chapter VII**. Extended magick rolls work the same way, with the following qualifications:

- The Scourge "circles" during an extended ritual; the bigger the magick, the nastier the potential backlash. Each roll after the first adds one more Scourge point to a backlash's total. If Caesario the Fool botches a vain Entropy 4 casting after three turns of extended rolls, he receives seven Scourge points if he was acting alone and 12 if he cast the ritual in public.

- If you fail a roll, you may continue rolling at +1 difficulty (per failure), until the ritual is completed or the magick is somehow disrupted.

- If the roll botches, you could choose to spend a turn and a Willpower point to avoid fouling the affair. By spending the Willpower, your magus keeps the magick going — barely — but loses all previously rolled successes in the process as well as the Willpower point. From there, he must roll at +1 difficulty until he finishes.

A second botch will utterly destroy the ritual and bring down the Scourge....

• If the ritual is disrupted by an outside force— like an attack or a distraction — you must make a Willpower roll at difficulty 8 or botch the whole Effect.

Rituals are best performed in secret, with elaborate preparations to reduce the difficulty of the roll. Even then, the difficulty cannot be reduced by more than three.

## Using Quintessence

By channeling Prime Essence through his Art, a mage can reduce his difficulty by one to three points. This works like any other modifier, but lasts as long as

the magus continues to use Quintessence. If Mary taps the power of a magical stream (her Cray), she could use up to three points of Prime Force per turn, reducing her difficulty by three each turn, until either she falters or the stream runs dry.

A mage can use whatever personal Quintessence he has to reduce his difficulty. Employing outside Quintessence (Tass, a Cray) this way requires an additional use of Prime 3. Once this spell is cast, it needs no additional attention for its duration. (See both "Duration," below, and "Simultaneous Workings," above.)

The following options give you some leeway and help address certain questions. You don't have to employ these systems in your game, nor are you "required" to use them every time a situation comes up. Just leave them for the times when the option seems important or appropriate.

## Mundane Knowledge (Step II)

Really complex feats — like priming and firing a cannon — may require some mundane knowledge in addition to magical wisdom. A cannoner's Storyteller is within her rights to require the Artillerist Skill from any character who wants to use a bombard. You might understand Forces, but if the science of gunnery is lost on you, you're not going to be able to make a cannon fire.

Only truly complex feats demand specialized knowledge. Storytellers should let common sense, rather than hard rules, dictate when and how mundane skills are necessary. Although really advanced feats — like forging a suit of armor — might demand three or more dots in a particular Trait, no roll is needed. Magicians can also utilize their skills to make their magicks easier (see "Permutations," page 243), or as parts of a larger ritual.

Common "mystick" skills include Animal Ken, Artillerist, Crafts, Dancing, Do, Firearms, Hearth Wisdom, Herbalism, Invention, Linguistics, Medicine, Metaphysics and Science. Feats that might require mundane Knowledges include animal transformations (Animal Ken), curing a plague (Medicine), working a war machine (Artillerist, Crafts), literally dancing up a storm (Dancing, Expression), or summoning an archangel (Metaphysics [Celestigraphy] and maybe Occult).

## Automatic Success (Step III)

A skillful magus can perform simple tricks without much to-do. If the esteemed Lady Carla Gianni wants to light a candle or two with a wave of her hand, or sharpen her fingers into claws, she can — if her Arete is at least one point above the necessary difficulty. A casual Rank One Effect, for example, would

require an Arete of at least five; Rank Two, six; Rank Three, seven, and so forth. Such spells last only a turn or two, but work long enough to get the job done.

To speed up play, a Storyteller may let her troupe's magi automatically succeed with *simple* spells regardless of their Arete, so long as they possess the Spheres to do so. This "generosity" depends on the Effect, the circumstances and the player. (See "Workings of the Art," in Chapter VI.) Attacks, complex creations or other huge or damaging Effects should not be allowed, but simple bits of roleplaying ("I adjust my eyes to see in the dark") don't always require die rolls.

## Using Willpower (Step III)

Since magick is, by nature, an effort of will, the Willpower Trait comes in handy when using the Arts. Both applications use temporary Willpower points, not permanent ones. (Details on Willpower and Quintessence can be found in Chapter IV.)

- By spending a point of Willpower, the wizard can get one automatic success on his magick roll.
- Through sheer will, a mystick can undo a magical botch by spending a Willpower point to counteract it. This does not give the mage a success — his spell still fails — but it shields him from an impending Scourge.

## Waves (Step III)

If Creation is a pond, then magick stirs its surface. After a while, even the smallest ripples can cause waves. If your sorcerers are overusing the Arts, their actions might make future magicks difficult.

As an optional rule, a Storyteller can impose an additional +1 difficulty to magick difficulty rolls for every five spells cast in a single scene. This penalty adds up (+1 difficulty after five, +2 difficulty after 10, and so on) but ought to apply to large castings (shapeshiftings, explosions, Summonings and such). Minor spells — perception magicks, Attribute increases, objects disappearing into pockets — should not invoke the penalty unless they get really out of hand.

## Step IV: What happened?

So you've cast your spell. Whether it worked or not, the magick will probably have some effect. This step tells you what those effects might be.

### Range, Damage and Duration

The effects of a magickal feat are based on the successes rolled:

- Under most circumstances, a mage's Arts can affect anything within her normal sensory range. Subjects on the edges of that range — far away, under cover or obscured by smoke, fog or other obstructions — add one to the magick roll's difficulty. Connection magick can dramatically expand the mystick's sensory range; a mage with fewer than three dots in that Sphere, however, must cast long-distance Effects at +1 difficulty due to her inexperience with such extended perceptions. The Connection Sphere must be used if a spell is supposed to affect something on the other side of a harrier.

As a quick and dirty rule, figure that a spell can affect one subject within easy reach per success, unless it includes some large area by its very nature — an explosion, a wall of thorns, etc.

- Damage: is figured by multiplying your successes. (See the **Damage and Duration chart**.) Healing works the same way, but "repairs" the damage rather than causes it.

- Like damage, an Effect's *duration* is based on the chart results. This usually applies only to magicks that could last

a while — sensory magicks, mental spells, shapeshiftings, transmutations, etc. Damage is usually immediate, while created, summoned or conjured items are often permanent.

Some Spheres, by their nature, add or subtract successes when they're used. Forces Effects add one success when used (or damage; *Mind* attacks subtract one success when used to inflict damage, while *Entropy* itself does no damage until the fourth rank. Until then, it can only inflict indirect damage by causing objects to fall or striking weak points.

Other Spheres have specialized uses, *Connection* magick works across great distances. Use the **Connection Range chart** to find out how many successes a wizard needs to link two places, people or items together. Spirit Effects must often work against the Gauntlet, and the strength of this harrier varies from place to place. Use the Gauntlet chart when some Effect must pierce it to work. With Time, a mystick can look across different time spans; use the **Time Sphere chart** to figure out how far in the future — or past — a seer can see.

These modifications apply whenever the Sphere is used in a simple or conjunctive Effect.

Most magicks fade or need to be replenished over time. Truly permanent results are possible, but Storyteller's may require twice the usual successes to make them so.

- Combining damage with duration (that is, inflicting damage over a period of time) can be done *at the Storyteller's option* by adding the necessary successes together. If Porthos wants to make a witch-hunter suffer, he can add the amount



of damage his player rolled (three successes, or six Health Levels) to the length of time he prefers — over one day, or three more successes. Thus, Porthos' player needs a total of six successes. This is an *optional rule* that adds flexibility at the risk of complication or rules abuse.

- Any physical attack. — a lightning bolt, magickal blade, leprosy—that hits a solid thing can be soaked by the target. Vulgar acts of pure magick, which attack a victim on a purely mystical level (transformations, sudden aging, possessions, etc.) cannot be soaked, nor can mental attacks.

Most magickal attacks cause normal damage; the **Aggravated Damage chart** illustrates more severe injuries. (See "Mortality" in Chapter VII for the different types of damage.)

If several different Spheres are used in a spell, the damage comes from the "largest" Sphere. A Forces/ Matter attack, for instance, would inflict damage as a Forces spell; a Mind/ Life attack would deal out harm from the Life Sphere, not the Mind one. Damage cannot be "stacked" by combining Spheres together—it comes from one roll only.

## Dodging and Resistance

A target who's aware of an incoming magickal attack may choose to dodge it (if the attack is material) or resist it (if it involves the Mind). The first requires a Dexterity + Dodge roll; the second requires a Willpower roll. The difficulty of either avoidance is 6. Like any other form of dodge, each success the defender rolls subtracts one from the aggressor's magick successes.

- Direct attacks (lightning bolts, falling buildings, blasts of energy, hails of stone and such) can be dodged like any other physical assault, so long as the victim knows the attack is coming. Most direct assaults are visible; invisible ones can still be detected with a Perception + Awareness roll, difficulty 8.
- Mental attacks (commands, possessions, mind crushes, telepathic bonds, brainwashing) can be countered by a Willpower roll if the defender is aware of what's going on. This often makes Mind magick a slow and subtle Art.

## Counter Magick

Essentially, *counter magick* is a soak roll used for undoing magickal Effects, and *unweaving* takes an existing spell apart. All of them require an one-turn action. (Details about counter magick and unweaving can be found in the "Permissions" section.)

The basic systems are as follows:

- Counter magick requires an Arete roll, difficulty 7. Each counter magick success cancels out one of the opponent's magickal successes.
- Unweaving is an attack upon an existing enchantment. By rolling her Arete against difficulty 8, a magus may cancel out one success in the Effect for every success she wins. This takes one turn per roll; a botch during unweaving means the sorcerer must begin again from scratch.

Any of these actions, if successful, might cancel out or dilute a mystical spell.

## Failure

When you roll fewer successes than you need, or if your mage is restrained or incapacitated before she can finish, the magick fails. Failure is simple; the spell has little or no effect. Depending on what the character wanted to do, this might be a partial success or complete failure. (See the Degrees of Success table.)

## Botching

If you botch the roll (roll more "ones" than successes), your magus blows the spell and gains the following Scourge points:

- If the spell was casual, she gets one Scourge point for every dot in the highest Sphere she was using. If, for example, she was trying to cast a Life 4/ Prime 2 ritual, she would gain four points of Scourge.
- If the Effect was *vain without witnesses*, she gains one point for every dot in the highest Sphere, plus one. The aforementioned mage would now earn five Scourge points.
- If the Effect was *vain with witnesses*, she gets two points for botching a vain action plus two per dot in the highest Sphere used. The unfortunate from the first two examples now gets a total of 10 Scourge (look out...).

"Witnesses," by the way, means Sleepers who are physically present and able to observe a sorcerous act. Their belief, or lack of it, shifts reality's balance. Note this still holds true around mortals who believe in your kind of magick. The average man fears sorcery — as he should! — and wants to keep it at arm's length. Or, as many peasants have been wont to say, "God'll punish ye for that!!"

## The Scourge

*When pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom.... The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.*

— Proverbs 11:2-3



Magick has never been an exact science; in these topsy-turvy days, however, even the most reliable Arts backfire in unpredictable fashion. But is this so-called "Scourging" as unpredictable as people like to believe?

Well, no. Not always.

A magician's deeds come back to help or haunt him. This is one of the costs of magick: to feel the kiss of Hell and the wrath of Heaven. Magick itself is neutral, but it is shaped by human intentions. Those intentions — good or ill — dog the magus and his Arts. Hence, the consequences of ill fortune bear the mage's own seal on them. That which you do *will* come back to you. The only uncertainties are timing and form.

Sometimes you get what you deserve; other times you get the opposite. Dame Fortune is a fickle mistress, and magi spend a lot of time in her bed. The purest magus might feel the Scourge's sting across his back, while an insufferably evil one

hears marks of favor. Some elements of magic are uncontrollable; in the end, Dame Fortune walks away laughing.

In story terms, the Scourge cracks down from the Heavens at unpredictable times; sometimes it hurts — a *Bane* — and sometimes it helps — a *Boon*. In game terms, a Fortune Die determines the whims of Lady Luck; when that luck strikes, your actions up to that point determine what happens.

## Systems

In game terms, the Scourge works like this:

- Whenever you make an *Arete* toll, add one Fortune Die to the pool. Ideally, that die should stand out from the others (being a different, color, different size, etc.).
- Check the **Fortune Die**. If you get a "one," suffer a *Bane*; if you roll a "10," enjoy a *Boon*.
- Expend your whole Scourge Pool if a *Boon* or *Bane* occurs. A small Pool causes some minor event, while a larger one creates a stir. A really huge one unleashes either a catastrophe or a miracle. (See the **Scourge Point Total Chart**.)
- The Storyteller describes the Scourging. Your character's actions influence the backlash. (See below.) Depending on the size of the Pool, the event and the Storyteller's discretion, the results might last a turn, a scene, a story, or longer.
- For every five points in the Scourge Pool, add one more Fortune Die. If one die indicates a *Bane* and the other a *Boon*, the *Bane* takes effect. If several dice demand a *Bane* or *Boon*, something *big* is going to happen....

## Storyteller Hints for the Scourge

- Don't bother rolling a Fortune Die for minor castings (perceptual magicks, self-empowerment). If it seems like the magus could perform a small task without a roll (see "**Automatic Success**"), let her do it and get on with the game.
- If a catastrophe comes up, you might want to sit on it for a while and spring it at an appropriate time. Don't let the dice rewrite the tale for you. Simply make a note that "Mary's in big trouble *now*..." and move on. The same applies to miracles. Save one for a good moment and continue with the tale until then.
- Determine *Boons* and *Banes* through the 10 virtues and vices given below. Don't feel compelled to use the examples as your only options; feel free to create your own "rewards." For that matter, don't limit yourself to virtues and vices; the Scourge strikes in many ways. (See "**Other Forms of Backlash**.")
- Go with your instincts. If a player seems to be running a bloodthirsty witch, let Resonance kick her ass. If, on the other hand, the magus acts virtuously, allow Fortune to shine on her.

## Avoiding a Backlash (Optional)

So do you exist at the mercy of the Scourge? Not completely. All magi feel its bite, but there are certain ways to stave off the worst effects:

• **Purification:** A prerequisite in almost every mystick discipline, purification helps you center yourself, slough off Resonance and approach a ritual with clarity and devotion. To purify himself, a sorcerer should retire from all companionship, attune himself to Creation and Divinity, and perform some sort of cleansing ritual (prayer, fasting, bathing, trance, etc.). Every so often, it's a good idea to purify yourself anyway, lest ill fortune taint your magickal workings.

In game terms, the character must successfully meditate alone for at least one day for every point in his Scourge Pool. He cannot do *anything* else during this time; otherwise, he loses any benefit whatsoever and returns to his old Scourge total. The Storyteller may, if she wishes, ask for a Perception + Meditation roll (difficulty equals magi's Scourge Trait, maximum 10); this last option might be too complicated for some troupes, however, and may be ignored.

• **"Straightening":** In time, the Scourge's effects bleed off slightly. A magus who avoids using magick "straightens" himself, much as an unstrung bow returns to its old shape.

In game terms, Scourge points fade at a rate of one point per week, assuming the magus forswears magick during that time. Any spell cast during that time immediately undoes the "straightening," leaving the Scourge Trait at its previous level. If the magus has acquired more than 10 points, "straightening" is not an option. Something has to give — and will.

• If all else fails, take the mage's last action as a demonstration of her virtue or vice. Did she create good to feed a poor man? She's being generous. To enrich herself? Obviously, she's greedy.

• Think dramatically; Resonance works in powerful, symbolic ways. Don't get wrapped up in the "right" way to run a Scourging — just do whatever you think is appropriate. (See "**Symbolism**" and "**The Magickal World**" in **Chapter VI** for other suggestions.) Folklore and fairy tales provide plenty of inspiration for Scourge effects.

• *Boons* and *Banes* do not have to come across in game systems — story elements are just fine. Minor events usually affect the magus in some subtle way; significant backlashes stick around for a while, and can be pretty uncanny; catastrophes and miracles unleash obviously magickal forces, and usually leave an impression on the world at large.

• Resonance gives magick life, turning a roll of the dice into a mystickal event- It fits the setting, too; in **Mage**, all things have consequences, especially when magick's involved. Nothing comes for free.

## Resonance, Boons and Banes

...all sorts of conflicting tendencies and lusts drive the heart to the manifold sins of uncontrolled love, hate, envy and pride.... When we speak about this great ruin of human powers, we are talking about free will.

— Philipp Melancthon, *Of Human Strength and Free Will*

A magus is what he does. Caspar the Alchemist, for example, has always been fascinated with pestilence and death. Over the years, his research has eaten away at him; now Caspar carries the price of his studies—he's a wealthy, urbane man with the soul of a plague. Beneath his rich robes, Caspar's flesh boils and rots. Despite his polished manners and eloquent charm, the alchemist repulses people who possess any kind of intuition. The Resonance of death infects him on every level.

Resonance colors a magus in subtle ways; a weather-witch brings the breeze with her, while a bird-shaman resembles the hawk he calls friend. Among magi, this is normal. In a Scourging (good or bad), that Resonance flares; suddenly, the witch speaks in cold winds and the shaman grows hawk markings. Really weird effects burn the Scourge off quickly, but the traces can linger for days or months afterward. (See "Resonance" in Chapters I and VI for more details.)

In magic, virtue literally is its own reward: Boons flow from virtuous actions, and Banes seep from sinful ones. When a sorcerer follows the path of virtue, her Resonance takes a helpful form; when avarice or greed drive her passions, those vices poison her Arts. Caspar is not what you might call the most virtuous of mysticks, and his punishment rides him like a night-hag. Virtues and vices take mystickal energies and give them direction.

In game terms, the character's most obvious motivations determine her Resonance. When a Scourging occurs, base the results on the virtue or vice the magus embraced at the time of the backlash. Was she acting greedily? Let her pay the price! Did she use her Arts to help poor folk? Then Divine favor may follow her... or may not, depending on Fortune's whims. Either way, the sorcerer's actions influence her fate.

Christians speak of the Cardinal Virtues, the Theological Virtues and the Seven Deadly Sins; Pagan cultures respect three additional virtues and vices. Other cultures, especially Muslims, Jews and Buddhists, have similar ethics; the idea of "moral behavior" was not invented in the Ten Commandments, after all. Virtue and the lack of it are fairly universal ideas.

- **The Cardinal Virtues:** Fortitude, Justice, Prudence, Temperance

- **The Theological Virtues:** Faith, Hope, Love

- **Pagan Virtues:** Courage, Generosity, Trustworthiness

- **The Seven Deadly Sins:** Avarice, Covetousness, Envy, Gluttony, Lust, Sloth, Vanity (Pride)

- **Pagan Vices:** Cowardice, Deceit, Stinginess

From a character standpoint, you might want to emphasize the importance of certain virtues or vices over others. A Verbena probably wouldn't care much about the

Christian virtue of Temperance, but would hold Courage quite dear. Each virtue and vice features a few suggested "echoes" at three different levels — minor event, *significant backlash*, and catastrophe or *miracle*. When a backlash occurs, the Storyteller may take her cue from these examples.

Naturally, a vice could present a Boon (or a virtue, a Bane) if the Fortune Die gives a "sinful" character good luck (or a virtuous one, bad luck). If Mary, for example, holds to her Faith despite ill fortune, a "Bane" roll might sap her devotion just when she needs it most; Caspar, on the other hand, might get a Lust Boon and attract some sick syco-phant to his side. No, Creation isn't always fair. Bad things *do* happen to good people, and sins often breed prosperity. Some examples of "reverse justice" are given below.

## Virtues

- **Courage:** Boons: The magus gets an extra point of Willpower, which lasts until spent; a surge of confidence energizes the magus and all her associates, giving each of them one point of Willpower; a spirit or angel comes to the wizard's aid just when things look darkest. Bane: At a critical moment, the sorcerer cowers and flees.

- **Faith:** Boons: Inspiration shines from the sorcerer, unburdening her soul or giving hope to another person; the magus gains a point of the True Faith Merit (or an additional point if she already has the Merit) for the duration of the scene. (See Chapter IV for details.) Some Otherworldly entity grants the magus a temporary favor — a blast of light, a surge of strength, a totem animal. Bane: A crisis of faith drops the wizard into a depression — or worse.

- **Fortitude:** Boons: A surge of energy allows the magus to keep going (physically or otherwise) long after a normal person would have faltered; the sorcerer gains a Willpower point (see above) or wins a Willpower roll he desperately needs to make; a stroke of luck allows the magus to survive something that would have killed him, orto perform a feat that would normally have been beyond his powers (lifting a portcullis, leaping a span, calling down lightning). Bane: Weakness cripples the once-hardy magus — is it sickness, sadness or some hidden sin?

- **Generosity:** Boons: The magus wins some lottery, game of chance or other payoff; his pockets always seem full of whatever he needs, so long as what he needs goes to help other people; spirits of giving offer the magus a reward for his own openhandedness. Bane: Thieves, beggars or ill fortune rob the magus of everything he has.

- **Hope:** Boons: With inspiring words or prayers, the sorcerer restores happiness to a forlorn character; the magus's sense of optimism is correct — he wins some contest or test automatically; a sudden change of fortune turns a hopeless situation into a victory. Bane: The magus goes blind for an indefinite period of time, or falls into a deep sadness.

- **Justice:** Boons: The sorcerer's strength of character wins over hostile witnesses or judges; uncanny insight allows the mage to tell truth from lies for a scene or two; the walls of a prison

literally come tumbling down. *Bane:* Some spirit or human justicar condemns the magus for a crime she didn't commit, or imprisons her in an earthy or Otherworldly dungeon.

• **Love:** *Boons:* The magus inspires great and lasting affection between two people; his love carries him through some dire event (a battle, torture, etc.) without lasting harm; an angel or other spirit bestows a gift of love on the magus. *Bane:* Someone the wizard loves turns him away, or someone he doesn't want to love contracts a great passion for him.

• **Prudence:** *Boons:* A wise choice yields great rewards (the duke listens, the investment pays off); a sudden insight changes the sorcerer's course of action for the better (that is, the Storyteller gives him good advice); the magus gets an extra dot of Wits or Intelligence for one scene. *Bane:* One foolish choice turns into a howling disaster.

• **Temperance:** *Boons:* Confusing situations don't disorient *this* magus! He remains clear-headed amid chaos; characters who indulge while the mage remains sober do something really stupid — something that benefits the magus; a mystical entity grants the temperate one a dot in Stamina or Willpower for the rest of the story, so long as he remains sober. *Bane:* One drink turns the magus into a raving, stupid drunk. Worse, the drink needn't be intoxicating!

• **Trustworthiness:** *Boons:* A suspicious character lets down his guard for the mage; animals or magical beasts pay tribute to the sorcerer's honesty; even enemies trust the magus, and lay down their arms to settle their differences. *Bane:* No matter what the magus says or does, her companions turn on her — or perhaps she only thinks they do \_\_

## Vices

• **Avarice:** *Banes:* Greed overwhelms the wizard's common sense; thieves descend on the magus, trying to take whatever he possesses; all the mage's gold turns to dust. *Boon:* A stroke of luck gives the magus a big payoff at someone else's expense.

• **Cowardice:** *Banes:* Everyone disdains the sorcerer for his lack of courage; no matter how hard he tries to act, the wizard is literally paralyzed with fear; the mage's skin turns jaundice-yellow and he shivers uncontrollably. *Boon:* The magus literally disappears when he tries to hide — until he takes some aggressive or assertive action, he remains silent and invisible.

• **Deceit:** *Banes:* No one trusts the magus, no matter how sincere he might be; everything the wizard says becomes a lie, unless he tries to lie, in which case, it becomes the brutal truth; a disguised demon comes to trap the magus with guile and temptation. *Boon:* Whatever the mage says for the next scene or two sounds like Gospel to whoever's listening.

• **Envy:** *Banes:* Voices in the mystick's head start telling her how she needs what someone else has; she cannot rest until she steals something from wherever she might be; the magus winds up exiled to a Realm where no matter what

she has, everyone has something better, *Boon:* The magus acquires some valuable item she covets.

• **Gluttony:** *Banes:* The magus is compelled to eat every bit of food in sight; no matter how much he eats, the wizard remains painfully hungry; the wizard swells to grotesque proportions, or goes gaunt unless he eats constantly. *Boon:* The sorcerer can eat anything remotely edible (rotten meat or poisoned ale, as opposed to daggers or stones) without ill effects.

• **Lust:** *Banes:* The wizard becomes physically and emotionally insatiable; pursued by admirers, he's driven to copulate with everyone who comes his way; lusty demons or spirits arrive to take advantage of the mage's... condition. *Boon:* The sorcerer has lovers — possibly several at once — no matter how foul or rude he might be.

• **Sloth:** *Banes:* The mage tires easily — *too* easily; no matter how important the occasion, the wizard cannot stop yawning or dozing off; he falls into a deep, death-like sleep for hours, days or even weeks. *Boon:* When he awakens from sleep, the magus finds himself cured of any illness or wounds he might have suffered.

• **Stinginess:** *Banes:* No one wants to give the magus anything; all the wizard's wealth somehow winds up in other hands; he finds himself in a prison or Realm where all things retreat from his touch. *Boon:* The wizard cannot part with anything for long. Whatever he gives away returns to his hands soon afterward.

• **Vanity (Pride):** *Banes:* An obsession with her own beauty drives the magus to strange activities (combing her hair in a fight, glancing in mirrors everywhere she goes); the mage's skin wrinkles and spots; she finds herself transformed into a hideous creature, or attracts obsessed admirers. *Boon:* The wizard becomes more beautiful than she could imagine; for one day, her Appearance Trait rises to 5 (or 6, if it was 5 already).

• **Wrath:** *Banes:* The mage lashes out at every distraction; his skin turns red and hot, and steam rises from his pores; the wizard literally erupts in a frenzy, or explodes in a firecloud. *Boon:* Anger strengthens the mage; his attacks gain an additional die of damage for the duration of the scene, and he never grows tired.

## Other Forms of Backlash (Optional)

Resonance isn't confined to virtues and vices. Many sorcerers manifest strange Boons and Banes from their Arts — either from their affinity Spheres or from the spell that finally "caught up with them." Such effects can range from the obvious (a fire spell sets the magus on fire) to the indirect (the same spell ignites every candle in the room at once). Whatever form it takes, the Scourge represents "poetic justice." That which you do does indeed return several times over.

## Witch Marks

A minor but perilous Bane raises small black marks on the magician's skin. Beneath those marks, the witch feels no pain. Inquisitors love to stick pins and hot irons into the blemishes; if the victim feels nothing, the hunters ready her for trial....

Witch marks manifest after a witch suffers a small surge of Scourge energy (one to five points at once); not every magus gets them, but those who do seem to get them all the time. These little Judases often assume an unusual shape — large moles, mystick sigils, runes or symbols. When the Scourge fades (or a Boon manifests), the marks go away.

## The Devil's Brand

Really violent magi get really violent results. The most literal Scourge Bane burns a magus with spectacularly aggravated damage — he hursts into lames, shatters into pieces, gets struck down by a thunderbolt, or suffers some other horrific punishment.

Generally, this Bane falls on Daedaleans, elementalists or Infernalists; in game terms, the backlash strikes a magus who has between 10 and 20 points in her Scourge Pool — one who seems to "deserve" a catastrophic Scourge. Each point in the Pool gives the Storyteller one die to roll for damage (difficulty 6); each success inflicts one aggravated

Health Level. Unlike most forms of aggravated damage, this can be soaked — it's too deadly to consider otherwise! Even then, a strong backlash can slay a wizard in one blast.

A really huge explosion — like an exploding cannon — burns everyone in the area. In this case, divide the damage by the number of people within a five-yard radius of the Scourge center. Artificer "misfires" kill whole artillery crews this way. A Boon "backlash" can heal a dying character by the same amount of damage that the Bane would've caused. It cannot, however, heal several people at once. Miracles have their limits.

## Witchwalks

When the air suddenly turns cold, when grasses wither and water turns to ice, a Scourging has tilted the world around the mage. Such *witchwalks* give rise to folklore — milk sours, hells ring and footprints disappear as the wizard passes by.

Environmental shifts are pretty much the Storyteller's prerogative; as a rule, they ought to be small, local and tied to the mage's affinity Sphere. Once in a while, a really dramatic event — a burst of light in a dark room, an earthquake, etc. — might spring up during a real crisis. Obviously, anyone can sense a witchwalk, and anyone with a clue will know that a magus is present if a shift occurs.



## Scourgelings

Man has a tendency to overreach himself — to forget his place in the cosmic order. Once in a while, an Otherworldly entity appears to set him straight. In later days, these creatures may be known as "Paradox spirits" for the paradoxes they seek to undo. In this age, however, mysticks see them for what they truly are: agents of God, Satan or the gods, come to assert dominion over an offending magus.

A Scourgeling's arrival may be heralded by a clamor — winds rise, fires blaze, animals run away howling — or it might occur in silence. Some of the stealthier entities appear only to their victims (see the **Appear Charm under "Spirit Rules," Chapter VII**) and seek to drive them mad. Shamans, clerical magi, Hermetics and Infernalists meet such spirits most often, but Daedalean nemeses — sometimes known as "goblins" or "hobgoblins" — have been recorded, too. Some spirits simply warn their targets or bedevil them with minor mischief; others attack or whisk their victims off to unearthly prisons (see below) where the magi work off their crimes. The severity of the attack corresponds to the size of the backlash; a small stirring merits a warning, while a catastrophe heralds harsher punishment.

When Dame Fortune smiles, an angel, totem animal or demonic patron arrives to aid the magus. As always, the wizard's belief determines the helper: A faithful Christian will meet her guardian angel, while a Hindu would see an avatar of Durga or Hanuman. Such aid is brief — a scene at most — but often critical. Naturally, a faithless wizard shouldn't hold his breath waiting for an Otherworldly protector. You get what you believe in. (*Crusade Lore* and *The Bygone Bestiary* include a few noteworthy Scourgelings; the spirits in the **Appendix** might serve as Otherworldly punishers, too. For more details, see **Chapter VII**.)

## Imprisonment

Some spirits come to drag the offender off to an Otherworldly hell. A really severe backlash (10 points or more) might open a path to a Realm: Creation itself yawns wide, inhales the magus and condemns her to punishment.

Sometimes, the Realm corresponds to the mage's Arts or sins: A necromancer might be stranded in an endless, empty graveyard, while a vain magician finds himself in a room without mirrors (or with too many of them, all reflecting his imperfections). It's never easy to escape such a place, and using magick only makes things worse: The graveyard might suck the sorcerer into the earth, while the mirror room makes the mage grow homely. Nevertheless, there's always a way out — the magus must recognize his mistake, make amends if possible, repent his hubris and forsake his Arts. Given the stubbornness of some magicians, this might take a long while....

In game terms, a Realm drags the magus (and sometimes his companions) into its maw and slams the door. As a Storyteller, you should set aside time for an imprisonment tale — such events can throw a chronicle out of whack if used randomly. (See **"Other Types of Games"** and **"Seekings and the Daemon"** in **Chapter VI** for suggestions on the practical side of things.) Imprisonment is a Bane only; while some tales speak of prophets drawn up to Heaven, such acts of God are not meant for mortal men.

## Eternal Scourging

Sometimes, a magus changes himself so radically that he takes Scourge energy into his body. If he wants those changes to become permanent, he must pay the price.

Normally, transformations that make a magus obviously inhuman — Attributes boosted beyond 5, grafted-on Devices, claws, extra limbs, etc. — last only a short time; permanent changes give the magus permanent dots of Scourge energy. For every dot that exceeds human Attribute levels or every skin-grafted Magical Treasure, add one Scourge point; for every odd change (set of horns, set of claws, new arm), do the same. These dots count against the magus whenever a Bane (not a Boon) appears, but do not go away when the backlash ends. Thus, Tezghul the Insane suffers two permanent dots in his Scourge Pool for his boosted Strength and Stamina. (See **Appendix**.) His vanity marks him wherever he goes.

Yes, this "punishment" also applies to the subjects of a wizard's enchantment. If the subject isn't a mage, the Scourge radiates a weird aura. The transformed creature gives folks the creeps and seems to be the center of strange quirks of Fortune. The greater the transformation, the weirder the effects. God's creations are not mocked lightly.

## Jhor

The darkest shadows of the Path wind through the Underworld. Cloaked in the eternal half-light of the Dead Lands, a necromancer attracts the eeriest type of Resonance — *Jhor*, the Death-taint. Obsessed by mortality, a Jhor-laden magus takes the Reaper by the hand and begins a whirling *danse macabre* that often ends in destruction for both the magus and all he holds dear.

Jhor follows five stages: morbid fancies, a compulsion to observe death, an obsession with mortality and decay, an aura of corruption ("Worm's touch," as some shapeshifters would say), and finally sadism and a killing presence that withers plants and small animals. Each stage leads to the next in a downward spiral that eventually drives mortal company screaming into the night.

In game terms, Jhor infects magi who deal too closely or often with death energies. This isn't the same as killing frequently, although callousness plays a part

in the process. Jhor literally flows through death-Spells and ghost-magicks; after a while, a necromancer's specialty catches up with him. Each botch with death-magick adds another point of Jhor to the Pool-On the character sheet, Jhor accumulates as permanent checks on the Scourge wheel; no backlash dispels these marks — unless the magus lifts the taint, those points are there to stay. (See above.)

Purification (see "Avoiding a Backlash") can cleanse the taint, but it takes dedication; each point of Jhor demands one week of meditation to dispel. A necromancer at the fifth stage doesn't want to come hack from the edge. Like Caspar the Alchemist, he becomes a companion to death.

## Madness

*Michael he ranted and Michael he raved  
And beat the four winds with his fists, O  
He laughed and he cried, he shouted and he swore  
For his mad mind had trapped him with a kiss, O  
— Fairport Convention, "Crazy Man Michael"*

Also known as *Quiet* or *Twilight*, this magical insanity rips through a wizard's perceptions and hurles her into a nightmare landscape. She sees things that aren't there, or distortions of things that arc there; she assumes new identities, forgets details of her old life, and occasionally locks herself away in a prison of her own imagination. Madness grows like weeds in a corpseyard; if it goes unchecked for too long, the magus might join the ranks of the dread Marauds (see Appendix), lost forever to saner company.

Scourge Pool	Delusions
1-3	Minor (odd smells, fleeting sights; lasts a day or so.)
4-6	Common (sights and sounds that "do not exist" seem as real as anything else; lasts a week or more.)
7-10	Severe (nothing is as it seems; the magus views the world quite differently, and cannot be convinced otherwise. Hobgoblins may appear. Lasts a month or longer.)
11-15	Indefinite (the magus becomes a wandering lunatic or a sleeping prophet; hobgoblins plague the mystick and whoever she encounters. Lasts months or even years.)
16+	Permanent (the magus becomes a Maraud and leaves the group and the player's control.)

Madness takes two forms: a wandering, **babbling** delusion that breeds so-called *hobgoblins*; or a comatose near-death that takes the wizard on a long and perilous Seeking (see **Chapters I and VI**), abandoning his body to the crows. Either state can last for weeks or months; without outside help, the magus can be lost forever.

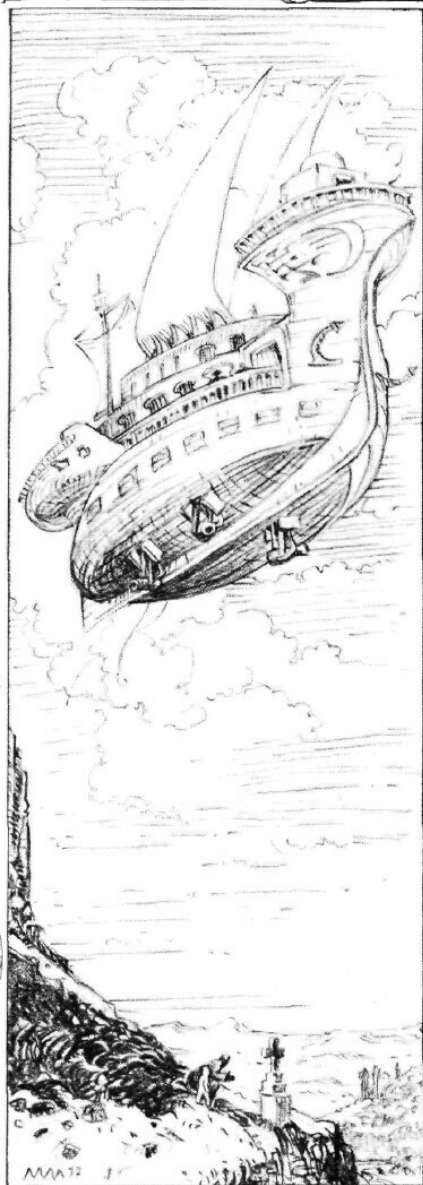
In game terms, madness creeps in when the Scourge Pool runs over. The level at which the delusions emerge depends on the Storyteller's wishes. Generally, some traumatic event — torture, failed Seeking, a curse — triggers the insanity; depending on the cause, the "Quiet" may be solitary or very, very public. We recommend that a Storyteller set time aside for a single-player game (see **Chapter VI**) devoted to the wizard's madness. Once insanity bridles the mage, she begins to hallucinate; the higher her Scourge Trait, the worse the delusions become and the longer they last.

Hobgoblins are visions that take solid form. Some resemble creatures (lost children, rabid monsters), while others seem like objects (incriminating documents, bloodstained knives). Either form lasts one day for each point of Arete the magus possesses; "living" hobgoblins have one Health Level per Arete point, which they lose at a rate of one per day. Both delusions can cause untold woes for the magus in question — lost children may create mischief, stained blades could provoke an inquiry. As always, Resonance plays a major role in the hobgoblins' appearances and their "behavior": an envious mage sees the children she cannot have, while a wrathful one conjures the weapon of a secret murder.

Shrugging off insanity is no easy task — psychotherapy is centuries away. In this age, madness is a gift or affliction from on high. Even magical theories stop short of undoing madness. Unless the wizard has an unusually astute friend who has mastered the Arts of the Mind (see the **Mind Sphere, Rank Three**), she's on her own.

To escape the delusions, our mage must recognize them for what they are. In game terms, this might require a Perception + Enigmas roll (difficulty 8) and some heavy roleplaying. She might try to keep the phantasms at bay by spending Willpower points (see **Chapter IV**), but sooner or later, she'll have to enter a Seeking. Curling up in a ball, she meditates her way into the landscape of insanity (with a Perception + Meditation roll, perhaps) and battles her way to clarity. This part ought to be left entirely to roleplaying and Storytelling, but may last a long time (one day per Scourge point if the Pool was under 10, one week per point if it was over 10).

If or when the mage emerges from insanity, she sees things in a far clearer light than she did before. The specifics will depend on your chronicle and the nature of the mage and her delusions; nevertheless, the road through madness' valley provides an enlightening, if treacherous, sidetrack to the Path of Thorns.



## Casting Magick

### What Do You Want to Do, and How Do You Want to Do It?

- What are you attempting to do and how?
- Which Spheres are you using?
- What did your character do to make it happen?
- How long does it take?

### Do You Know Enough to Do What You Want?

- Do you have the appropriate Spheres?
- Is what you're doing casual or vain?
- Do you need any mundane skills to help you?

### Are You Successful?

- Roll your Arete verses the appropriate difficulty (minimum difficulty is 2):  
Casual: Difficulty = highest Sphere + 3  
Vain, without Witnesses: Difficulty = highest Sphere + 4  
Vain, with Witnesses: Difficulty = highest Sphere + 5
- Add or subtract any modifiers (maximum +/-3)
- Check the number of your successes.
- Spend Quintessence or Willpower, if you desire.
- Do you need to roll more successes to accomplish your task?
- Did the Fortune Die demand a Bane or a Boon?

### If So, or If Not, What Happens?

- How much effect did your magick have?
- Did someone dodge, soak, resist or use counter-magick against your working? If so, subtract her successes from your own, then see if you still succeeded.
- Did you fail? If so, did you botch, or did you just not succeed?
- Botches and the Scourge:  
Casual Botch: gain one point of Scourge per dot in the highest Sphere you used.  
Vain Botch: gain one point of Scourge for botching + one per dot in the highest Sphere.  
Vain Botch with Sleeper Witnesses: gain two points of Scourge + two points per dot in the highest Sphere.
- Were you Scourged for five points or more?

# Magick Reference Charts

## Notes:

- The **Magick Difficulties** chart offers the pluses and minuses of some circumstances. Use this as a general guideline for other possible modifiers.

- The **Scourge Pool** table measures the size of a Scourging by the mage's "collection" of Scourge points.

- Use the **Magickal Feat** chart when a player wants to accomplish an all-or-nothing Effect. He should roll the appropriate number of successes to perform it. This may require an extended roll. The **Degrees of Success** chart measures how well a given feat was performed and the effect it had.

- Check the **Damage and Duration** table to see how much damage or benefit the spell has or how long it lasts. The **Aggravated Damage** table shows which types of attacks inflict severe damage. All other forms do normal damage only.

- The **Connection** (Correspondence), **Time** and **Spirit charts** differ from their modern counterparts. The first two Spheres are limited by Renaissance concepts of time and distance; Spirit Arts, in contrast, are far easier.

- Remember that these charts are guidance, not gospel. Ignore them as you see fit.

## Magick Difficulties

(Maximum modifier: +/-3. Minimum difficulty 2, maximum 10.)

Activity	Difficulty Modifier
Researches lore on subject before using magick	-1 to -3
Has item Resonating with target's essence	-1 to -3
Near a Cray	-1 to -3
Using a consecrated tool	-1
Using a tool she doesn't need	-1
Extra time spent on magick	-1
Spending a point of Quintessence	-1 per point (max.3/turn)
Using Tass with appropriate Resonance	-1
Using Tass with opposed Resonance	+1
Fast-Casting	+1
Distant or hidden subject	+1
Magus distracted	+1 to +3
Magus in conflict with Daemon	+1 to +3
Waves	+1 per five spells cast
Monumental feat (pulling moon from the sky)	+1 to +3

## Scourge Pool Total

0-5	Nothing happens; add to Pool.
6-8	Minor event. (Some small thing — good or ill — stirs around the magus.)
9-15	Significant backlash. (The magus receives either a painful, damaging Scourging, or a great Boon.)
16+	Catastrophe or miracle. (A powerful Scourging or Boon affects the magus and everyone nearby as well.)

## Magickal Feats and Successes Required

### Simple Feat 1

(changing the color of your eyes, lighting a candle, using Mind magick to sense someone nearby, conjuring a knife)

### Standard Feat 2

(changing your own shape, causing a powder keg to explode, influencing someone's mood with Mind magick, conjuring a ball of flame)

### Difficult Feat 3

(transforming into something bigger or smaller than yourself, igniting a hayloft, deep-reading someone's mind, conjuring a crossbow)

### Impressive Feat 4

(changing someone else's shape, blowing up a cottage, taking over someone's mind, conjuring a suit of armor, making yourself disappear)

### Mighty Feat 5 - 10

(turning someone into sludge, incinerating a keep, obliterating someone's mind, conjuring a magical beast, making all furniture in a room disappear)

### Outlandish Feat 11 - 20

(turning a roomful of people into sludge, igniting a castle, Mind-controlling a horde of madmen, conjuring a demon, making a manor house disappear)

### Godlike Feat 21+

(making a castle disappear, finding one particular person in a kingdom using Mind magick, summoning an archdemon, levitating a mountain, creating a Horizon Realm)

- Damage for these feats is based on the successes rolled. If, for instance, a magus tried to slay a griffin, the method he was using determines the level of the feat. If he rolled four successes after ripping into it with Life magick, he would do  $(4 \times 2 = 8)$  eight Health Levels of damage.

## Degrees of Success

• **Botch:** The mystick makes a critical mistake and screws everything up. The Effect is wasted and the mage gains Scourge points, unless she spends a Willpower point to cancel out the botch.

• **Total failure:** No successes, but no botch. The sorcerer may continue her spell at +1 difficulty, or try again from scratch.

• **Partial success:** 50% of the necessary successes. The mystick accomplishes what she set out to do, but not as well as she would have liked. Christina de Aeoli, for instance, conjures a sword, but the blade is soft and dull. The magus can keep going if she wants to, at an additional +1 difficulty.

• **Success:** 100% of the successes required. The mage does exactly what she wanted to do. Christina's sword is as sharp and fine as any in the local army.

• **Extraordinary success:** 150% or better. The mage not only succeeds, she succeeds brilliantly. The sword is uncannily sharp, with an etched blade and a small gem in its basket hilt. (It is not a Talisman, however; that requires a separate act of magick.)

## Aggravated Damage

• **Vulgar Life magick attacks (Witch's Vengeance)** which rend the being's Pattern by magick rather than through an object or disease.

• **Vulgar Prime magick attacks (Living Husk)** or attacks charged with Prime; this does not include Effects merely created with Prime (**The Dragon's Touch**).

• **Direct (vain) Entropy attacks** on a living body (**Necrosynthesis**).

• **Spirit magicks** that summon Umbrood to attack a living being. (See page 261.)

• **Natural weaponry** of supernatural creatures (werewolves, vampires).

All other forms of damage are normal unless the target is unusually susceptible to them (werewolves to silver, vampires to fire), or unless the Storyteller decrees that the damage is particularly nasty (leprosy, acid, boiling lead).

## Time Ranges

Successes	Timespan
One	Within a month
Two	One season
Three	One year
Four	Five years
Five	10 years
Six to nine	50 years
10 to 14	100 years
15+	500 years

## Connection Ranges

Successes	Range or Connection (Use one or the other.)
One	Line of sight/ blood relation; body part or humour
Two	Very familiar (home)/ best friend; prized possession
Three	Familiar (town square)/ cousin; possession
Four	Visited once/acquaintance; anything used once
Five	Saw or heard about it/stranger; item touched casually
Six+	Anywhere on the continent/ no connection

## Damage and Duration

Successes	Damage	Duration
One	None	One turn
Two	Successes x 1	One scene
Three	Successes x 2	One day
Four	Successes x 2	One story
Five	Successes x 2	Six months
Six+	Successes x 3	Storyteller's opti

Forces add one success, when used for damage. Mind subtracts one success when inflicting damage. Direct Entropy attacks do no damage at all until the fourth level, but incidental attacks (crumbling walls etc.) inflict normal damage.

## Spirit Gauntlet Chart

Area	Difficulty	Successes Needed
Deep Sea/ Beyond Clouds	0	None
Great Cray	1	One
Cray, Glen or Faerie Ring	2	One
Deep Wilderness or Crossroads	3	Two
Woods	4	Two
Countryside	5	Three
Villages & Towns	6	Three
Large Towns & Cities	7	Four
Warded Areas	8	Five
Powerful Areas of Opposing Faith	9	Five

### • Optional Gauntlet Modifiers

Time	Difficulty
Dawn	+1
Midnight	-1
Beltane or Hallowe'en	-2
Christmas or Easter	+2
Solstice or Equinox	-1

Note: An area with a Gauntlet of 1 or 2 is a Regio; or with 0 is a Shallowing. A modifier may reduce the local Gauntlet to 0 at certain times.

## Common Magickal Feats

*Note:* Some listings feature two Sphere levels; the first allows a mage to work on himself, while the higher level lets him affect others. Healing yourself takes Life 2; to heal someone else, you need Life 3. Other spells start small (like conjuring a wind), but require higher Sphere levels if you want to do something really big (like conjuring a storm). These workings have been marked with a "+".

### • Body Magick

Adapt to Environment	Life 2 (3)
Animate Corpse or Parts	Life 2/ Prime 2
Cause/ Cure Disease	Life 2 (3)
Create Body	Life 2 (simple) or 5 (complex)/ Prime 2
Duplicate Body	Life 5/ Prime 2
Grow New Limbs or Other Features	Life 3 (4)
Heal/ Harm Living Thing	Life 2 (3)
Heal/ Harm Vampires	Life 3/ Matter 2
Increase Physique/ Traits	Life 3 (4)
Increase Speed	Time 3
Revive Dead	Life 4/ Spirit 4/ Prime 3
Rot Body	Entropy 4 (or Life 4)
Shapeshift	Life 4 (5)
Soak Aggravated Damage	Life 3
Transform into Another Element	Life 3/(whatever Sphere applies)

### • Fate & Fortune

Cause Decay	Entropy 3+
Spot Flaws	Entropy 1
Twist Fortune	Entropy 2

### • Objects & Elements

Call Storm	Forces 4+/ Prime 2
Conjure Element	Forces 3/Prime 2 (fire, wind); or Matter 3/ Prime 2 (earth, metal, water); or Life 3/ Prime 2 (wood)
Conjure New Object	Matter 3/ Prime 2
Conjure "Physical" Illusion	Forces 2+/ Prime 2
Direct Existing Elements	Forces 2+
Disintegrate an Object	Entropy 3/ Time 3 (or Matter 3)
Harden/ Perfect an Object	Matter 3+
Invisibility Field	Forces 2+
Invisibility on Living Being	Forces 2/ Life 2
Levitation/ Flying	Forces 2+ (or Connection 3/ Life or Matter 2)
Speed/ Slow Velocity	Forces 2+
Transform Objects	Matter 2+ (whatever Sphere applies)
Transform Forces	Forces 3+ (whatever Sphere applies)

### • Perceptions & Psychic Powers

Astral Projection	Mind 4+
Clairvoyance	Connection 2 (or Connection 2/ Mind 3)
Conjure Mental Illusions	Mind 2+
Enter a Dream	Mind 3
Influence Mood	Mind 2
Mind Control	Mind 4
Prophecy/ Hindsight	Mind 2/ Time 2 (or Time 2)

Scramble Thoughts	Mind 3
See Auras	Mind 1 (or Spirit 1)
See Daemon	Mind 3/ Prime 2/ Spirit 1
See Through Another's Eyes	Mind 3
See Through Mental Illusions	Mind 4
Sense Energies	(appropriate Sphere) 1
Share Mystick Perceptions	(appropriate Sphere) 1
Shield Mind	Mind 2
Tear Mind Apart	Mind 3 (or Mind 3/ Life 3 for agg. damage)
Telepathy	Mind 3
Telekinesis	Forces 2+
Translate Languages	Mind 3 (or Mind 3/ Forces 2 for a group)

### Unconscious Influence

#### • Quintessence

Absorb Quintessence	Prime 3
Channel Quintessence Between Things	Prime 3
Create Cray	Matter 3/ Prime 3
Destroy Something with Quintessence	Prime 4 (object) or 5 (creature)
Drain Cray	Prime 4
Drain Quintessence	Prime 3
Fuel New Pattern	Prime 2
Refine Tass	Prime 3

#### • Spirit Powers

Bless/ Curse	Entropy 3
Command Spirit	Mind 4/ Spirit 4
Conjure Spirit	Spirit 3
Create Fetish	Spirit 4
Create Talisman	Prime 4
Drain Spirit Energy	Prime 4/ Spirit 4
Harm Spirit	Spirit 3
Open/ Close Gateway	Spirit 4
Shadow-walk	Spirit 3
Speak to Spirit	Spirit 2
Touch Spirit	Spirit 2

#### • Time & Distance

Affect Distant Item/ Being	Connection 2+
Conjure Earthly Being	Connection 4/ Life 2
Create Multiple Images	Connection 3 (or Forces 2+/ Prime 2)
Create Multiple Objects	Connection 5/ Matter 3/ Prime 2
Open Gateway Between Locations	Connection 4
Set Time Trigger	Time 4
Speed/ Slow Time	Time 3
Teleport	Connection 3 (4)
Time Travel	Time 5+
Ward/ Ban	Connection 2+ (Sphere)

## Documenti Magica: The Three Faces of Hecate

Rachelle's mage Christina forges an alliance with the artisan Louisa Mazarin, played by Courtney. On the trail of the Pagan Hermetic Sebastien de Luxembourg, the pair breaks heads and hearts across Paris....

### • Casting Descriptions

The magi close in. To mask their approach, Christina quietly prays to God for concealment (a casual Spirit 2 spell); soon, a fog rises. The enchantment works too well, though; Louisa needs to be able to see. With a slide of colored glass, she adjusts her lantern to cast light without revealing itself (a casual Forces 2 spell). Readying her repeating crossbow — her mechanical wings have already been greased — the artisan proceeds.

### • All-or-Nothing Spell

The lamps in the alley burn too brightly; the partners will be seen. Christina commands an angel to extinguish the flumes (a vain Spirit 2 spell). In game terms, the Storyteller tells Rachelle she'll need three successes at difficulty 6 — it's a vain spell without witnesses, or 2 + 4. Rachelle rolls three dice for her Arete (Christina has progressed since Chapter IV), but fails the roll. No angel responds, and Rachelle adds a point of Scourge to Christina's sheet.

Had Rachelle rolled three successes, the lights would've gone out; had she won two successes, the lamps would've flickered and one or two might have died. If she had botched the roll, Christina would've been punished for her presumption, and taken three points of Scourge. If she had shown proper reverence or tried to take out the lights herself, the spell might have been casual, and she would have averted the Scourge altogether.

### • Direct Damage

As Christina curses, Louisa notices a griffin high above. With a whoosh of wings, the creature descends.... Before it can reach them, the artisan shoulders her crossbow and fires. The bolt ignites — a vain Forces 3/ Prime 2 spell, Courtney rolls her attack (Dexterity + Archery) and nails the griffin square in the chest.

Her damage (an Arete of 4, or four dice plus one Fortune Die) follows. She gets three successes; the Fortune Die comes up normal. Since the attack featured Forces magick, Courtney adds one more success. The griffin takes eight Health Levels of damage, tries to soak, and fails....

### • Duration

Later, Christina tries to lure an inquisitive guardsman away from her hiding place. He's *sure* he saw something, so the spy employs Mind magick to distract him. Concentrating on the sound of imaginary footsteps, she projects this thought to the guardsman (a Mind 2 spell). He's expecting to hear a noise, so the casting is casual. Rachelle rolls two successes; a one-turn duration. The guard hears a patter of running feet and gives chase.

### • Extended Roll Ritual (plus Resonance)

Sebastien de Luxembourg chants obscure Greek as he carves two new "faces" on a servant girl. The sacrifice to Hecate is nearly complete. The air itself shudders and the lights glow red. Shadows play across the mage's own features, and for just a moment, you could swear *he* had three faces, too.

Sebastien's Arete is 6; his plan involves opening the Gauntlet, summoning hellish spirits from the Underworld and cloaking them in the bodies of three dead dogs — a Spirit 4/ Life 4/ Prime 2/ Spirit 2 Effect. A working this size will take time, effort and 10 successes. For each turn, 10 minutes pass. Pouring the girl's blood into a stone basin, Sebastien beseeches his Summonings to do the task.

Spirit 4 opens the gate; Life 4 and Prime 2 reanimate the dogs; Spirit 2 calls the demons to the site and makes them an offer. Since he's invoking a "demon" (a Pagan goddess, really, but who's asking?) with sacrifices and preparations, Sebastien's spell is casual. The Storyteller rolls six dice against difficulty 7. The first turn, he gets three successes; 10 minutes later, he fails the roll and adds one to his difficulty. Now it's 8. Burning his personal Quintessence (using the blood would demand a Prime 3 spell), he reduces the difficulty to 6. The third turn nets the wizard four successes; three more, and he'll have his wish.

That's when Louisa comes through the window. Borne on mechanical wings (tools for a vain Forces 2 spell), she takes in the situation, then fires a bolt from her crossbow. Louisa hits and the sacrifice is spoiled....

### • Countermagick

As the shaft bursts into flame, Sebastien howls a counterspell. The Storyteller rolls six dice against difficulty 7. Courtney rolled three successes, but Sebastien gets four. The fire dies as the quarrel strikes home. The Storyteller rolls a soak against the bolt and Sebastien takes the shot without harm. Furious, he prepares an attack of his own....

### • Abilities and Magick

"O, Saint Anthony," Christina prays, "guide my hand against this heathen game." Between her hiding place and the wizard lies a barren expanse of marble floor. Preparing to enter the fray, she asks her patron saint for a distraction. Rachelle wants a Mind 2 Effect to feed Sebastien's rage, drawing his attention from her as she sneaks across the room. The casting is casual; the difficulty is 5.

Rachelle gets two successes; rather than depend on them alone, she uses the distraction to reduce the difficulty of a Stealth roll. Normally, that attempt would be difficulty 8 (no cover, plenty of light); now, however, it drops to 6. Rachelle rolls Dexterity + Stealth....

### • Scourging (plus Resonance)

The Hermetic screams as the dagger punches through his back. Up above, Louisa shoots another flaming quarrel. That hits, too. Courtney's Fortune Die in that attack comes up a "10" as well. Sebastien's in real trouble. The Storyteller decides to wrap things up — Sebastien's actually a minor villain in the tale, anyway. Rather than play out the entire fight, he invokes the Scourge. God's whip comes down — hard.

Before the fight, Sebasrien. had piled up 13 Scourge Points; Louisa had accumulated eight. The Storyteller decides to bend the rules and inflict both Pools on the villain at once — a backlash combining a *devils brand*, a spirit and imprisonment. As the wizard screams, Hecate herself comes through the gateway. Sardonicly, she smiles as fire whips across the wizard's body. As he bums, she draws his essence into her three mouths and swallows his soul. The gateway closes. Hecate is gone... but before she left, the spirit nodded at each magus in turn, noted their features, and turned away.

Sebastien might well return — with a new grudge.

## Permutations

*For we, by conquest, of our sovereigne might,  
Arid by esernall dooms of Fate's decree,  
Have wonne the Empire of the Heavens bright*  
— Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen*

Those are the basics; the following systems give your troupe some additional options at the cost of complication. Feel free to keep them, use them or modify them as you will.

## Acting in Concert

Magick need not be a solitary Art. Indeed, some practices require group participation. Really large spells — Summonings, searches, elaborate rituals, Realm-creation,

spirit-bindings, etc. — are easier to cast when you're among mystickal friends. Small spells can be cast this way, too, but they're rarely worth the effort of collaboration.

Before they can work together, each mage must have at least one dot in each of the Spheres in the Effect. Someone who knows nothing about Matter Arts is no help to a wizard who does. The collaborators need to be able to communicate freely during the casting, too. Organizing the rite may take a turn or longer per caster. Once everything has been established, the group may work together in one of two ways:

- If each mystick has the Sphere ratings necessary to perform the Effect, each one makes a normal magick roll, in turn, as if he or she were casting the spell alone. All successes are added together; the result counts toward the total needed.
- If less knowledgeable magi assist a more powerful one, only one roll is necessary. Each "helper" adds one success to the main caster's effort.

Un-Awakened companions may assist, too; the mystick adds one success for every five mortal participants in his ritual. It often takes hours to set such ceremonies in motion, but once the rite begins, it's an awesome sight. These helpers do not count as "witnesses" of vain magick under these circumstances — they *want* things to happen!

Only one option may be used at a time. If one wizard botches, the Scourge comes down on everyone involved, either as a handful of Scourge points or a large-scale backlash. A Boon for one, on the other hand, is a Boon for all.



## Countermagick

Any good fighter knows how to strike and counter. Although few sorcerers are warriors by trade, even fewer manage to get through life without crossing Arts with another magus. Hence, counterspells — magickal equivalents of parries, binds and dodges — were developed.

Some creatures or materials resist magick by their very nature. Mystical Artificer ores and Otherworldly protections turn away occult energies; great Faith does likewise. (See that Merit in Chapter IV.) Charms, wards, spoken counterspells—all give a magus or mortal a fighting chance when a wizard wants them dead.

This section describes several countermagick styles. Each requires a regular action to perform, unless the defender splits his Dice Pool between actions. If the mage is aware of the attack, he may spend his action trying to deflect it before it hits. Basic countermagick's difficulty is 7; most of the variants go to 8, and one rises to 9. Nothing short of a spent Willpower point can modify the roll. Botching any kind of countermagick roll leaves the defender wide open.

To employ basic countermagick, a person must be a magus, a vampiric Thaumaturgist, an un-Awakened magician (see *World of Darkness: Sorcerer*), a werebeast, faerie or a mortal with True Faith. He should have some sort of protective charm or spell handy, too. When the magickal deadfall tumbles, the character needs at least one turn to counter the attack. Non-magus characters with mystical powers (Gnosis, Thaumaturgy or Glamour) roll their Wits + Occult instead of Arete. Mortals with True Faith roll their Faith rating as countermagick. Advanced countermagick is beyond non-magi, although some Tremere vampires (see *Vampire: The Dark Ages*) might remember the old secrets at the Storyteller's discretion.

Some troupes may wish to stick to basic countermagick for simplicity. These variations can get too complicated for beginning groups.

## Basic Countermagick

Countermagick is essentially a soak roll against magick, and it functions the same way. In basic countermagick, a magus with some knowledge of the attack can see the magick coming, like a brawler sees a punch coming. By the same token, the mage must be aware of the attack in order to deflect it. If he can see it, and knows what it is, he can try to counter it.

To attempt basic countermagick, a mystick must have at least one dot in the Sphere(s) involved in the attack; she then rolls her Arete, difficulty 7. Successes scored in countermagick cancel out the original spell on a one-for-one basis.

If the successes exceed the original Effect's roll, that spell completely fizzles. The original spell can also fail if the countermagick reduces it below the original caster's intentions: If the feat required five successes, three successes with countermagick can dispel the casting. The attacker would either have to roll more successes (at +1 difficulty, take a failure) or try again.

## Offensive Countermagick

Generally, countermagick only applies to Effects cast at the defending mage. With an Arete roll versus difficulty 8, he can try to counter a spell turned at someone else. With a little extra effort, he might turn an offensive spell back at its maker!

Such counterspelling requires at least one dot in one of the Spheres in the attack and at least one dot in Prime. Both castings must be done within the same turn. By beating the attacker's successes with an Arete roll against difficulty 9, the defender can reflect the attack back at his opponent. Each success over the attacker's counts as one magickal success against her.

## Sphere Versus Sphere Countermagick

In most cases, a mage must know something about the Spheres being used against her. With this variant, however, she can disrupt offensive magicks with her own knowledge.

Almost any Sphere will disrupt a magickal attack if it's used cleverly. The difficulty for such countermagick is 8 instead of 7. Most forms of Sphere versus Sphere countermagick, however, demand a certain level of expertise on the defender's part; some specific Effect might be necessary. These "attacks," by the way, do no damage — they only disrupt incoming magicks.

When dealing with supernatural creatures, Sphere versus Sphere countermagick is a mage's best bet. Although any Sphere can counter faerie Glamour and vampiric Thaumaturgy, Spirit is the only effective way to intercept Garou Gifts or ghostly Arcanoï. (See the appropriate games for details.)

## Unweaving

Continuous magicks — wards, curses, gateways — may be undone by a magus with enough power and determination. Although normal countermagick is worthless against a spell that's already in place, a skilled wizard could try to unweave what has been woven.

To attempt an unweaving, the wizard needs some basic knowledge (at least one dot) of each of the Spheres involved, and at least one dot in Prime (to see the threads that need untangling). Unweaving is hard — difficulty 8 — but the magus may make extended rolls until he overcomes each of the caster's initial successes. A botch during the process, however, ruins the attempt; the mage must begin again.

Some Effects — Summonings, instant damage attacks, sensory magicks and Gilgul — cannot be undone. Others — curses, sicknesses, transformations, countermagicks and creations — are notably vulnerable to them. These latter types usually have some kind of protection woven into them from the beginning in the form of new attacks or countermagick; a golem's God-given power, for example, turns spells aside. In his case, however, the countermagick simply gives the golem two "successes" worth of resistance to a spell. An enchantment that normally inflicts three successes, for instance, does one instead.

Most tasting spells require at least 10 successes to unweave; wards, barriers, creations, curses and such demand extended rituals to cast, and it's hard to take them apart without doing

the same. Sometimes—again, at the Storyteller's option—a working may not be undone without casting a whole new Effect to change it again. If a man was transformed into a frog, it would be easier to change the frog hack into a man than to undo the initial magick.

## Abilities and Magick

Magick is an extension of the mage. Thus, it stands to reason that the mage's Abilities, properly used, might enhance the magick he or she works. A gypsy sorcerer who dances well might have more success with her enchantments than one who stumbles around the fire. Sometimes, the talents can help cast the magick; other times, the magick gives the talent an edge.

No matter how good a person is at a given skill, her Abilities will only make a certain amount of difference—+3 or -3 to the final roll. You may make only *one* Ability roll during a given casting, and should have a reasonable and creative explanation for combining that Ability with the magick.

## Abilities Enhancing Magick

Some mundane Abilities can improve a mage's chances of using magick successfully. This often ties into the mystick's chosen style; many practices involve singing, dancing, divination, arcane languages, names of power, scientific theories, martial art forms and even weapon skills. (See the "Optional Rules" sidebar and "Ritual Tools" for examples.)

If some Talent, Skill or Knowledge applies to a mage's casting, it should be used in the turn *before* that magick is attempted. The base difficulty for both Ability and magick rolls is the same; no modifiers (Willpower, Quintessence, tools, etc.) apply. Each success made on the Ability roll reduces the magick difficulty by one, up to a maximum of -3, counting other modifiers.

The Storyteller may rule that certain Abilities are essential to certain tasks. Healing a severed limb with Life might require Medicine, while building mechanical wings would certainly demand Invention. If an Ability, like Dancing, Metaphysics or Crafts, is part of a magickal rite, the mystick needs to make a successful Attribute + Ability roll before using die magick. Failing that roll might raise the magick roll's difficulty as well.

## Magick Enhancing Abilities

A mage may also use magick to improve her chances with an Ability; sneaking, gambling, seduction and other mortal games are certainly easier when you've got mystick skills.

Unless the magus makes a big show of her magick, most "enhancing" spells are casual, not vain. Spheres like Entropy, Matter and Mind are especially easy to cloak behind "accidents" and "impulses." (See the example.) Each success scored on the Arete roll drops the difficulty for the Ability roll by one, to a maximum of -3. The magick must be cast in the turn *before* the Ability roll is made, and the mage must cast her spell as her first action before channeling the magick into the second action. Splitting Dice Pools is possible, but ineffective in the long run.

# The Spheres

*The Days and Hours have already been treated of, in general, in the First Book. It is now necessary to notice in particular at what hour accomplishment and perfection should be, given to the Arts, all things necessary having been previously prepared.*

—The Greater Key of Solomon, Book Two

**M**ike Earthbound roots to the tree of Heaven, the nine Spheres define all that is magickal. Are they keystones to reality, political constructs or symbols of the Divine order? The answer is open for debate—and provides endless amounts of it for magi who prefer a theoretical approach to the Arts.

On the practical end, the Spheres allow you to simulate an endless array of enchantments. The Common Magickal Feats table offers an overview of the most obvious spells, but for the most part, the possibilities are limited only by your imagination, your character's expertise and your Storyteller's forbearance.

In story terms, the Spheres are rarely spoken of. The Council debates for nine years before "formalizing" these principles and selecting representatives by their affinities to each Art; even then, however, Tradition magi seldom use Sphere names to describe what they do. Belief, practice and tools define magick much more than "Spheres" do. To the Council, the Nine Mystick Elements are an awkward compromise created to cement an even more awkward alliance. No one credits the real "founders" of the Nine Sphere system—the Craftsmasons who refined it from the Nine Harmonics of the Sacred Principles written in ancient Egyptian texts. Those artisans formalized the teachings of nine disparate elements some 200 years before the Council's existence, and brought their innovation to the Convention of the White Tower. Thus, both adversaries use the same framework for their teachings—a framework God Himself may have laid.

For game purposes, all magi use the Spheres; they just don't describe their spells in those terms. Each Sphere covers an aspect of reality. Each Rank gives a magus new powers connected to that aspect. By running up and down the spectrum and combining the Spheres as you see fit, you can create any spell your magus could conceive. How she describes the Art is up to her—and to you. She *won't* be saying, "I've got Forces 3," instead, she'd mutter about the "Arts of the four winds, the elements and flame." Characters shouldn't talk in gamespeak.

Many spells flow from a single Sphere; complex ones combine two or more Spheres in a conjunctional Effect. Again, the **Common Magickal Feats chart** and the **"How Do You Do That?"** section illuminate the possibilities. The following descriptions simply offer a menu of what you can do at various Ranks, and have been approved for photocopying. For a really simple way of judging a Sphere's capabilities, remember this:

*To sense something:* Level One; *to nudge it:* Level Two; *to affect it in a lasting way:* Level Three; *to do something big with it:* Level Four; *to do something really big with it:* Level Five,

## Connection: Creation's Weave

### Specialties: Conjunction, Gates, Scrying, Warding, Wayfaring

All things are connected. A magus who understands the ties between places and things can step across huge distances, move objects from afar, spy through scrying glasses, open portals or shut other creatures out. An esoteric discipline, Connection allows a sorcerer to keep a safe distance between herself and her subjects.

Some magi supposedly see "threads" holding Creation together; to them, magick is simply a matter of plucking the proper strings. Other seers use mirrors, water or flame as bridges for travel or perceptions. The sages speak of "contagion," the theory that all things that touch retain some tie to each other. In later days, this Art will be called "Correspondence." Now, however, its name recognizes the pattern God has laid — and the illusionary nature of what mortals call "distance." To wise magi, there are *no* distances, only connections.

Since this Art transcends distance, spells that use it employ a different range chart. (See page 240.) Many spells couple Connection with other Spheres, allowing the magus to tie her enchantments to places, beings or things. The chart shows the number of successes necessary to forge a link between subjects; the weaker the connection, the more successes a spell demands.

Sorcerers with a Connection affinity seem distracted but precise; although their eyes focus on distant landscapes, they never seem to trip or falter. Connection spells often require some "link" to the subject — a mirror, a bit of hair, a handful of dirt, etc.; working "blind" is possible, but risky.

#### • Witch's Sense

At this level, a magus can sense nearby things in all directions; discern the four corners without using the sun or a chart; guess the distance between two points or objects; or spot warps or rips in the Tapestry (like those caused by a gate or scrying spell).

#### •• Distant Vision/ Wayfarer's Touch

The sorcerer may now send any of her five senses across a distance, pull small objects (cat-sized or smaller) through tiny portals, or thicken the Tapestry around her to hinder scrying attempts. All of these workings leave traces on the fabric of Creation — traces another skilled magus can spot with Connection 1.

#### ••• Open and Close Gates/ Sight of Many Eyes/ Distant Hand

With this level of skill, the magus may step across great distances, or prevent others from doing the same. This difficult feat opens a gate just large enough for a single person, person-sized object, or several smaller ones, to enter.

The caster can also, if she wishes, see several places at once. Each new landscape blends over the others, creating a ghostly vision or overlapping vistas (which might make keeping track of things difficult; a mage can see clearly in one scene for every point of Wits she possesses; after that, she's courting sensory overload and madness).

Working other Spheres into the spell, our magus could also "slide" things around from afar, levitate people or manipulate objects without being anywhere near them.

#### •••• Rend Space/ The Dancing Shadows

A truly accomplished wizard can tear gates in the Tapestry, allowing large groups or objects to pass through. A really successful "rip" (10 or more successes) might open a permanent gateway at the Storyteller's discretion.

By shifting into several places at once, the magus might appear as dancing shadows of herself. Such entertainment is fun, but can be deeply confusing to the caster unless she separates her thoughts as well (Mind 1). Each "shadow" acts like the original wizard unless she also weaves Life 2 into the casting, granting each "self" independent movement.

#### ••••• Bending the Landscape/ Castle of Many Hills

By compressing the connections between places or things, an archwizard may stretch, shrink or otherwise distort her subjects. Mass remains the same, but proportions become like butter in her hands.

A mighty feat of magick could also transport several places into a single space without harm. Such magicks clearly transcend God's order, and may be punished harshly. Even so, a magus who's mastered such Arts could expand her Perception Trait beyond normal human limitations. (See Life 3.)

# Entropy: The Turn of Fate and Fortune

## Specialties: Fate's Hand, Fortune's Kiss, Decay, Necromancy

All things must die. The wise magician understands this. Rather than cringe from death, he masters its secrets and climbs aboard the Wheel of Fate. The spells that flow from his courage go by many names, but some Council wizards refer to them collectively as *Entropy* — the Art of Turning.

Entropic enchantments involve more than death; a skilled magician may shift the course of Fate (destiny) or Fortune (luck), spot "weak points" and judge the odds of events in motion. Like Connection, this Sphere is fairly esoteric; explanations of Entropic theories seem confusing at best, blasphemous at worst. To those who fear death, Entropic magicks seem Hell-sent; even the Fate and Fortune disciplines appear to usurp the power of God. Hence, most Christian and Islamic magi shun these Arts, leaving them for the alien Hindus, Pagans and Buddhists.

Despite their reputation, Turning spells are more influential than destructive; in game terms, direct Entropy castings do no damage until the Fourth Rank, after which they have the normal effect. Indirect applications of Entropy — accelerated disease, crumbling walls — inflict normal damage.

The Art of Turning leaves definite marks on their masters. Specialists seem either melancholy or unusually sanguine. Some carry an aura of death — *Jhor* (see "Resonance") — while others seem extraordinarily lucky. Even the happiest of them, however, have shadowed hearts; characters with a high Awareness Trait can sense a dark core in these magi. Atropos, the Cutter of Threads, has a branding kiss and all her chosen wear it.

### • Prophet's Vision

With a glance, an apprentice may spot the currents of Fate — weak points, curses, blessings, or the general flow of odds. He could predict the throw of dice, find an old wound or notice a rotting floorboard. These insights aren't precise, but they're reliable enough to use as guideposts for future actions.

### •• Fortunae's Caress

Now the apprentice stops watching and starts Turning. With a bit of effort, he could affect the throw of dice, hit the old wound with a "random" punch or guide someone to step on the floorboard. This command is subtle, not overt — events must be in motion before the magus casts his spell — and it requires more successes to affect large actions. Even so, a clever sorcerer can stack things in his favor with a few minor enchantments.

### ••• Devil's Touch

By "fixing" the Fate of an inanimate object, our magus could wear away stone or break a crossbow; conversely, he could "suspend" decay, making the same objects last quite a bit longer. Brittle or sophisticated things are child's play to "fix," while solid objects take a lot of work.

As always, the greater the feat, the harder it is to accomplish; snapping a bowstring would be easy, but causing a sword to rust quickly would be fairly hard. For the most part, the Devil's Touch is subtle and takes time; very few objects in this world are fragile or complex enough to break with one or two successes.

### •••• Blessing/Cursing

Now the Entropic sorcerer learns to directly help or harm the living and undead. At this stage, the magus could inflict aggravated physical damage, or weave a blessing or curse around a person or beast. With a mighty spell, he could wither a field, rot a man's arm or make a horse "unlucky." Really potent curses could last for generations!

### ••••• Devil's Advocate

The most esoteric levels of Entropy allow a magus to alter ideas. After all, thoughts rise and fall just as other things do; a touch of influence might simply corrupt or exalt a concept all the faster!

To bespell a thought, the magus addresses it to his subject, either by making a statement or by arguing against one. Combined with the Logic Trait, this tactic can be especially devastating. If the enchantment catches hold, the subject fixates on the idea until it warps to the sorcerer's purposes. Some thoughts can lead to enlightenment, others to insanity. (In game terms, this Effect demands a certain number of successes before it takes hold; a whim requires only one or two successes; a fancy, three; a conviction, four to five; an obsession, five or more.)

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# Forces: The Storm Art

**Specialties:** Alchemy, Elements (any or all), Weaponry, Weather-witching

Mighty is the magus who takes Nature by the hand. One of the earliest and most-basic Arts, this Sphere reflects a command of the elemental forces — wind, sound, electricity, fire, light and darkness.

*(Historical Note:* Modern players should remember that concepts like momentum, gravity, velocity and, especially, nuclear physics are centuries in the future. Storytellers should ignore any attempt to manipulate such forces in this setting, other than the obvious “I make it fall up,” or “it suddenly stops moving.”)

Mysticks who understand the Invisible World view Forces as another Spirit Art, one that appeals to the elementals and their ilk. Philosopher-scientists isolate the inanimate aspects of Creation and try to manipulate them with their God-inspired tools. Either way, the Sphere influences the powers of earthly destruction; magi who specialize in mayhem study Forces. In game terms, spells utilizing this Sphere add one success to their damage totals. (See the **Damage and Duration** chart.)

As one of the so-called “Pattern Arts,” Forces may be combined with Prime (to conjure something from nowhere) or with Life or Matter (to alter a substance). On its own, Forces may perceive, change or manipulate existing elemental phenomena. The greater a mage’s expertise, the vaster his control; a Rank Five spell conjures the same flames as a Rank Three working, but on a far larger scale. Really huge Effects demand high-ranking Spheres; a weather-witch could call up a wind with Forces 3, but a full-fledged hurricane requires Forces 5.

There’s nothing subtle about Forces; magi touched by its power manifest Resonances that even mortals can sense. The fire-witch, the ice-wizard, the master of the Four Winds — these sorcerers display their affinities through their very presence. Forces-magi tend to be temperamental and intense, often surrounded by “whispers” of their Art (cold breezes, a crackling touch). Workings often demand a sample of the element in question — a candle, incense, and so forth — before the spell can take hold.

• **Elemental Eye**

A wizard blessed with this power may sense the currents of elemental forces — winds, electricity, water, etc. She can also see in the dark (through heat and cold patterns), and hear things outside mortal perception (by intensifying sound waves).

•• **Prometheus’ Gift**

Now the magus can handle the things she could only see before. She cannot actually conjure such elements yet, but she may manipulate existing Forces to a limited degree. Successful enchantments could direct footfalls to another place, change an object’s color, muffle speech or cause a flame to flare or fade. The magus could raise a mirage, wrap herself in shadows, or speak with the voice of a god. Large forces — anything greater than a wind or a bonfire — are beyond the limits of this Rank.

••• **The Dragon’s Touch**

By communing with the elements (and adding Prime 2 to her spell), our mage may now conjure elements from “nothing,” creating breezes, flame, ice crystals or other spontaneous phenomena.

She could also change one force into another, or reweave Matter or Life Patterns into elemental ones. Fire may be transformed into ice; wind might become sound; darkness could become light. By combining this Sphere with Life or Matter, rock could be turned to air, flesh to fire, or wheat into lightning. As before, this control is limited, this time to areas roughly cottage-sized or smaller.

•••• **Jove’s Favor**

Large workings become possible. Our magus could ignite a grove, melt a glacier, or turn a castle into ice. Naturally, the greater the spell, the harder and more dangerous it is to cast. Really huge workings open the wizard to a powerful Scouring, and require many successes to achieve.

••••• **Master of Tempests**

With almost limitless power, the Magister of Forces conjures storms, snaps frosts, shakes mountains and raises castles to the sky. Such things are not done easily — huge spells disrupt the cycles of Creation, leading to all sorts of catastrophes down the road — and often depend on the elemental conditions of the time. It’s easier to conjure frost near Candlemas than around harvest time. (*Storyteller Hint:* Shake things up a lot after a large working to show the connection between Forces and the world at large).

## Life: Creation's Heartbeat

### Specialties: Transformation, Healing, Improvement, Creation

No magick is older than the mystery of Life. Traditionally associated with women (whose mastery of life puzzles men), this Art promotes healing, growth, change and adaptation in living things — plants, people, beasts, even insects. (The concepts of bacteria and genetics come later; Renaissance magicians do not deal in such things. See the “Modern Medicine” sidebar in Chapter VII.) Life, then, is a blade with a double edge; in a world that depends on reproduction and the harvest, the magus who holds the keys to life and death is a frightening figure indeed.

Life is the province of gods — or, classically, of goddesses. This Sphere allows a magus to take that power and mold new or existing beings, healing or shredding them with a touch (and aggravated damage). Anything that lives is beholden to this Art; if something can be planted or regrown, it belongs to Life. Once-living objects that cannot bloom again — dried fruit, cut hair, lumber — fall under the Sphere of Matter instead. Still, this is a necessary Art if you want to directly affect a living (or undead) being.

Like Matter and Forces, Life is a Pattern Art; hence, a magician can shuffle life with other elements, turning fire into flies, skin into stone or — most blasphemous of all — empty air into a man. On its own, Life can heal, harm, mutate or sense anything under its sway. A magician devoted to Life seems healthier (and often more beautiful) than any mortal should be. Her affinity follows her, too: Plants bloom and illness fades when the Life-witch is around. Her spells demand artifacts of life — seeds, body fluids, skin — and tend to be very direct.

#### • Healer's Intuition

With a practiced eye, the witch can discern the age, health, sex and presence of nearby living things.

#### •• Transform Simple Creatures and Plants/ Heal Thyself

Plants, insects and other invertebrates possess simple Patterns. A magus who understands this Rank can reweave such Patterns, giving a crab new legs or a tree new branches. She cannot transform such beings yet, but may rearrange them as she wants.

Becoming one with her body, the magus also learns how to heal her own wounds and illnesses, to slow her own aging and to “fix” minor imperfections.

#### ••• Adaptation/ Midwife's Touch/ Minor Godhand

Now the witch learns to adapt her body, creating claws, gills or whatever other changes she desires. Though she remains human, her appearance and structure are her decision. She also learns to heal other beings as she healed herself.

Taking Divinity in hand, the magus can alter simple creatures as she wishes. Trees may be turned inside out; grain may be transformed into flowers. With “help” from other Arts, she could create such things from dust or even from empty air. Such creations lack intelligence (unless Mind Arts are added to the spell), but possess rudimentary instincts.

#### •••• Beastform/ Transform Greater Creatures

Self-mastery allows the magus to change into animal forms of her approximate size and mass; she could, therefore, become a deer, but not an elephant. If the beast possesses powers like flight or water-breathing, those abilities must be worked into the spell, too. At this Rank, the spell is problematic (see “Shapeshifting”), but useful.

Greater creatures — lions, dragons, men — now become clay on the witch's wheel; a dog could grow wings, or a man could become a woman. The subject still retains its essential nature, but may be reshaped in surprising ways.

#### ••••• Perfect Metamorphosis/ Greater Godhand

Any shape our witch wants to assume becomes hers (a butterfly, a griffin...). The only limits are her luck and skill; all skills, spells and sentience follow her.

More importantly, our magus learns to create greater beings from nothing, or to alter them as she sees fit. An ant becomes a man; water becomes a lion. Many magi consider this Art blasphemy — these powers should belong to God alone! — and Divinity seems to agree. Such transformations are imperfect; without Spirit Arts, a new body is soulless; without Mind, it is mindless. Such “creations” must be crafted one by one, and carry Resonance from their previous forms.

## Matter: The Shaper's Art

**Specialties:** Alchemy, Shaping, Conjunction, Forging, Transmutation

Just as Life attunes itself to Woman, Matter often belongs to Man the Builder. Stone, lumber, metal — once-living and never-living things shape themselves at the hands of the master of *Materi*, who reworks existing materials or creates new ones.

(Note: Certain materials — plastic, plutonium — have yet to be conceived, let alone isolated. Others — steel, gunpowder — are understood, but remain esoteric. Players and Storytellers should avoid references to modern elements in period games and disallow spells that attempt to use them.)

Although Matter forms the cornerstone of the Daedalean philosophy, many mysticks practice it as well. While scientists lay the groundwork for the later Table of Elements, magicians ply the spirits of earth, metal and water, or reweave the threads binding those elements. In conjunction with other Pattern Arts, this Sphere allows a magus to change air to metal, flesh to mud or electricity to water. Impossible? Not to the magus! All matter is clay to one who understands its essence.

The Matter-magus is a craftsman at heart; his features seem hard, his manners, blunt. Everything he owns displays fine workmanship, but he disdains mere wealth. His Arts display a similar attention to detail; distillation, sculpture, design and construction — these are the rituals of the *Arts Materia*, and technique is far more important than power.

### • Shaper's Glance

Like a fine artisan, the apprentice learns to recognize structures and materials both hidden and plain. Overlapping patterns can be seen, secret drawers spotted, materials analyzed and imperfections noticed with uncanny precision.

### •• Simple Transmutation

An experienced magus may transform one simple substance into another without changing its basic shape or nature (transforming solids into liquids or gas requires Matter 3). Lead may be turned into gold, or stones transformed into bread. The more radical the transformation, the more successes a player needs: changing beer to water is easy (one success); turning rock to stained glass is not (three successes or more). Really huge transformations likewise demand grand success.

With Prime Arts, the artisan could conjure simple objects or substances from “nowhere”; with the other Pattern Arts, he could change other materials or forces into solid matter. The larger or more elaborate the material, the harder it is to create or alter, and complex substances or machines are beyond this Rank. Regardless of the materials involved, this transmutation leaves the essential mass and structure intact. A glass of beer cannot be changed into a wall of stone — yet.

### ••• Craftsman's Touch

Now the artisan turns his hand to shaping. At this Rank, he may alter the mass, structure or dimensions of an object. Stone may melt, while paper evaporates. Such changes aren't permanent (see the **Damage and Duration** chart), but often last long enough to get the job done.

If sculpting is the mage's pleasure, he may reshape solid materials with his bare hands. These changes *are* permanent; with them, an artisan may craft armor, mend broken items or excavate ruins with a minimum of effort.

### •••• Complex Transmutation

A master craftsman might conjure complex items; craft rare, strange materials; or transform Forces, Life or other materials into elaborate objects or substances. A cake could be made from air; alchemical perfections — Orichalum (True Gold), Lunargent (True Silver), etc. — could be refined from imperfect materials; a live cat could be forged into a mechanical toy. Complex organic creations — roasted chickens, leather garments — may also be conjured, altered or transmuted with this magic, and any inorganic substance can be made virtually indestructible. As always, the greater the feat, the harder it becomes.

### ••••• Atomi Distingere

The “distracted atoms” principle allows the magus to rework matter into strange, unnatural forms. Density, weight, boiling points and friction may be altered, creating paper-thin armor, quarrels that slide through steel plate, and oil that can never be consumed. Two materials can be treated so as not to interact with each other at all, enchanting water that flows through stone or horseshoes that never touch the earth.



## Mind: The Dream of Life



**Specialties:** Dreams, Empathy, Illusions, Astral Travel, Communication

What is a magus without will? Beasts and spirits may *think*, but only humans possess the sharp intellect, imagination and will to truly Awaken. Thus, Mind provides the cornerstone for all magicks — it refines the roots of the Art.

And refined it is! A master of the Mind speaks without words, dominates his fellow men and even leaves his body behind to venture into the Otherworlds. Mind Arts include emotional influence, soul-vision, thought-forging and illusions. Mental magicks are extraordinarily subtle; many Mind spells act without revealing themselves to outsiders. Thus, Mind Arts are often casual in their effects — easy to cast, easy to miss.

Such subtle Arts rarely cause direct harm. Mind-spells inflict one success less damage than usual (see the **Damage and Duration** chart), but ride in chariots of thought and word. In game terms, a good Social or Mental roll can hide a Mind Effect completely — a useful trick when intrigue is in the air!

Mind-mastery demands study and discipline; a willworker seems distracted but proves attentive. He often speaks in riddles and finishes other people's words for them. Mental spells glide through logic, dreams, concentration and charms.

• **The Third Eye/ Maze of Perfect Calm**

By opening his inner eye, the willworker expands his perceptions to extraordinary lengths. With a successful roll, he can sense strong emotions, whether they're attached to a person, place or thing.

Early in his training, the magus also learns to shield his mind from unwanted distractions. A successful roll raises a maze or wall to block out such intrusions. At the same time, he gains enough self-control to think about several things at once.

•• **Reading the Bamboo Mat/ Emotional Pulse**

Like a pattern of reeds, the thoughts of other people become clear. The magus opens himself to emotions, and can scan whole thoughts from unshielded minds.

With effort, he can also send brief but powerful impressions — one-word messages like "Help!" — or subtler emotions like sadness or joy. If another Mind-magus joins him, the two willworkers may drop their shields and read each other's thoughts.

Those shields reach a new level of power now; the magus could disguise his aura, or erect a "facade" of misleading impressions to fool other magicians.

••• **Mental Bridge/ Illusions/ Walk Among Dreams**

Now the magus can reach into another person's mind. By sending complex impressions, the willworker can trick his victim's senses, speak in his mind or turn his emotions against him.

A similar enchantment lets the mage enter his subject's dreams, or visit the Dreaming, leaving his sleeping body behind. Either option requires concentration and leaves the willworker open to attack.

•••• **Soul-stealing/ Astral Travel**

With dreadful enchantments, the magus now takes over another person's body and mind. He moves her body; his thoughts drive hers away. With "gentler" magicks, he could infiltrate her psyche, bringing on insanity or altering her memories. The victim may recover once the spell wears off, but her mind and reputation may be ruined by then.

On a kinder note, the magus may rise from his meditating body and skim across the Astral Reaches. (See **Chapters III and VII**, and "Otherworldly Travel," page 257.) For each success the player wins, the wizard may travel for one turn.

••••• **New Soul/ The Jade Lotus/ Untether**

Blasphemous secrets allow a magus to invade a person's soul — or to conjure a new one. With the **New Soul** secret, the wizard reworks his victim's personality (her Nature Trait) and memories, making her his creation. Unlike other forms of domination, this Art is fairly permanent.

The **Jade Lotus** refers to the Art of forging new minds. A master may create true conscious thought in a mindless body, switch existing minds back and forth between "hosts," or increase an existing mind to genius proportions (raising Intelligence or Wits scores to 5 or above), though not without risk. (See "Permanent Changes," page 256.) By releasing his mind from his body, the master might also soar into the Astral Reaches for weeks at a time.

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## Prime: The Fifth Essence

### Specialties: Channeling, Quintessence Draining, Enchantment

Before there was form, there was Divine Essence. Shaped by God's commands, this "Quintessence" wove itself into Patterns. Beneath Creation's sluggish surface, that Fifth Essence still stirs. Strong emotions summon it, Resonance colors it and magick gives it wings.

An enchantress of the Prime channels and shapes Quintessence to her needs. Although more limited than other Arts, this talent provides the cornerstone of magickal creation. To conjure an object or force from "nowhere," a magus must whip Quintessence into a Pattern. A skilled enchantress may shift the energy from one Pattern to another, imbuing some objects with mystick essence while crumbling others to dust.

Some Prime sources are easier to use than others. "Raw" Quintessence gathers into Tass and other material Patterns; "free" Quintessence pulses through Crays, Awakened Daemons and powerful events. With enough skill, a magus can tap either type and draw energy anytime, anywhere.

A Quintessence master betrays her affinity with a powerful glow; some folks shine with golden radiance, while others shimmer like midnight suns. Prime carries an unmistakable presence; when channeled with prayers, alchemy or other weavery, it glows or raises "witchwalks" even mortals can sense.

#### • Traces/ Restoration

To an apprentice, the Fifth Essence reveals itself as tapestries of power. Some see the glowing strands of God's Creation, while others hear the Music of the Spheres. In any case, the magus senses Quintessential flows and may "taste" the Resonance of that energy. Tass, Crays and entities with powerful Prime emanations become clear as day.

Seeing the flow is the first step to controlling it. While any magus can absorb Quintessence through her Daemon Background (see Chapter IV), a magus with Prime I can absorb Quintessence beyond that Trait's rating. For each success on an Arete roll (difficulty 4, one roll per source), she can store an additional point of Quintessence in her Pattern.

#### •• Weave the Ideal/ Creation Spark

Each thing possesses a perfect "reflection" in this imperfect world. A skilled enchantress can create a Platonic ideal — a perfect item composed solely of Quintessence — with this Rank of Prime. By weaving this ideal into form with a Pattern Art, she could conjure an *imperfect* reflection of that ideal in the material world. In short, she could make something where nothing existed before. (See "Transformation.")

#### ••• Channel Quintessence

By becoming a living crucible, the magus can refine "free" Quintessence from Tass, "shake it up" within a living victim (inflicting normal damage) or transfer it between more "solid" Patterns, like people or objects. Thus, she might enchant a broom, distill Prime Force from Tass or fuel a ritual with an endless store of Quintessence. Either option demands a source of readily available Quintessence (a Cray, Tass, the mage's Daemon); pulling life force from other objects demands....

#### •••• Drain the Pattern

Now the magus learns to shift the Fifth Essence within inanimate items. With this Art, she can make an object blaze with power or disappear into nothing. The former spell strengthens an item, making blades that cannot break or wood that cannot burn; the latter consumes the target. A weakened object suffers damage until it falls apart; it takes a lot of work to destroy a large or strong item, but many smaller ones can be annihilated with similar efforts.

By draining Quintessence this way, the magus can also refuel her Daemon anywhere in the material world. Meditation is still necessary, but a Cray is not.

#### ••••• The Living Husk/ Drink of Life

A master can turn the same effect against spirits, living creatures or undead beings. All damage is aggravated, and can only be soaked by magical means (countermagick, vampiric Fortitude, mystic regeneration). Spirits lose Power instead of Health. If the damage overwhelms the victim, he literally fades from existence.

With a mystick draught, the magus could also refresh her Daemon instantly, drawing the life force of others into her own body (inflicting normal damage, not aggravated; each success equals one Quintessence point, and one Health Level of damage). This spell isn't kind, but might occasionally be necessary.

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## Spirit: Breath of the Gods



**Specialties:** Shadow-walking, Spirit Parley, Possession, Fetishes, Necromancy

No magus doubts the Invisible World. In later days, some magi will try to redefine the Otherworlds as "alternate dimensions." In this age, however, all sorcerers believe — even if they define their beliefs in different ways. Magi of the faith dread the ghosts, demons and celestials that populate this half-world, but primal mysticks prefer the soul to the flesh. Some see the Otherworlds as antechambers to Heaven and Hell; others regard them as the breath of Creation.

Spirit Arts are pretty eclectic; a skilled shaman can navigate the Mists, bargain with spirits, open gateways and forge ephemeral tools. To Christians and Muslims, Spirit Arts are black magick, occasionally indulged but never condoned. Shamans, witches and Far East magicians, however, consider such Arts essential survival tools. Our world is the legacy of ghosts.

Because such weavary bridges worlds, most Spirit spells use the local Gauntlet (see page 240) as a casting difficulty, rather than the usual Rank-based target number. Spirit-mysticks dwell in a half-world between flesh and ephemera; they talk to the air and watch unseen sights. Uncanny "witchwalks" follow them everywhere. Shamanic Arts often include excruciating trials — fasting, sacrifice and self-mutilation — which only add to the black magick stigma.

(See Chapters III and VII for details about the Otherworlds, the Appendix for sample spirits, and the "How Do You Do That?" section for fetish, possession and shadow-walking enchantments.)

• **Sense the Invisible World**

Attuned to the shadow, a shaman may see through the Gauntlet, read auras, and discern a spirit's touch on fetishes, possessed folk, etc. The visions she perceives depend on her affinities: A skeptical humanist notes complex astral patterns, while a shaman sees the heart of Nature, and a necromancer views the Underworld.

•• **Touch Ghosts/ Shift the Gauntlet**

For a brief moment (a turn or two), the magus may move, strike or caress something in the Penumbra; with effort, she can call across the Gauntlet, too, attracting nearby spirits. With a lot of effort, she might peer into the sky and extend her view into the Void.

Although the Gauntlet still defies her, the shaman may thin or thicken it as she will. For each success, she reduces the local Gauntlet difficulty by one for one turn. Try as she might, though, she cannot thin the barrier lower than 1 or raise it higher than 10.

••• **Shadow-walking/ Rouse Spirits**

Stripped of worldly trappings, the magus steps into the Penumbra. Her body and possessions become ephemera, but glow with living light. The shaman must cross unencumbered; clothing or bulky gear add one to both the difficulty and the successes needed, and really large items cannot be brought across at all. Her Arts, however, allow her to "build" ephemeral tools and weapons if she has the skills to construct them normally. Such items last for one story, then fade away.

With a loud cry, the magus can rouse or lull sleeping Umbröod. As shamans know, all things contain spirits; an item whose "host" has been roused works on both the material world and the spirit plane, and carries an affinity for its "owner" that a "sleeping" item cannot match. By lulling a spirit, the same mage could temporarily rob a fetish of its power.

•••• **Rend Gauntlet/ Bind Spirits**

By tearing a hole in the barrier, the shaman opens a way for her friends; a similar spell builds a wall between worlds. Each success reduces or raises the Gauntlet by one for one hour. (See above.) Unlike lesser spells, this enchantment can overcome the Gauntlet completely, or thicken it to impassability.

By binding a spirit to an object or person, the magus can create a fetish or inspire possession; by reversing the effect, she can free a trapped (or possessing) spirit. (See "Possession and Exorcism.")

••••• **Forge Ephemera/ Void-walking**

By usurping Divine might, a Spirit master may create new Realms, refresh a spirit's Power Trait, imbue an empty body with a soul, and even destroy a wizard's Daemon. This Gilgul spell — always vain — marks the caster in the eyes of all other magi; no one will ever trust her again, and many will consider her an enemy.

A more introspective shaman may leave the Earth behind and wander into the Void. Protected from the harsh environment (if not from its denizens), she literally walks into the Heavens and beyond.

# Time: The Blinking of God's Eye

**Specialties:** Perceptions, Temporal Control, Prophecy

Sunrise, sunset, planting, harvest, birth, death, a relentless passage leading to Doomsday and eternity, is that how it has to be? Some say "no."

Esoteric doctrines claim time is an illusion. Such heresy stops short of Christian shores but makes fascinating study. According to the mad seers of the East, time is an illusion we choose. When you free yourself of all worldly lies, time falls away and immortality — the dream of every mage — becomes real.

With few exceptions, this is a world without clocks. Sundials, sunsets and the occasional machine measure time in approximate ways, but minute-by-minute precision is rare. "Long ago" and "soon" are relative spans; with a little prodding, it's not that difficult to speed or slow them. Time travel itself remains a mystery — is it possible? Most mages think not, but there have been enough legends to justify a doubt....

Although such magicks puzzle the average mage, the master of Time sees through new eyes. His manners are strange — his speech slides through past/present/future and his gaze hovers far away — but his Arts bedazzle the wizard who thinks of time as a simple, onward progression.

- **Whispering Hours**

Before you can sidestep time, you must comprehend it. An apprentice acquires a precise sense of time. Other folks understand hours; he understands minutes, even seconds. With minimal effort, he can measure relative time — time spent in Faerie, in Horizon Realms, foreign lands, etc. The magus also notices time fluctuations — ripples caused by Time Arts, temporal rifts or Otherworldly shifts. Like waves on a pond, such events stir his sight.

- **Prophecy and Hindsight**

Prophecy is Time Arts' greatest legacy. Though inexact, future sight allows a magus to plan his next move. (See "Prophecy and Hindsight," page 259.)

Likewise, the magus learns to sry into the past. By concentrating on an object, person or place, he may snatch glimpses of that subject's experiences. Doing so often takes a lot of work (many successes), but offers helpful clues. Alone, this Art presents a vision of the mage's location only; combined with Connection 2, it can travel; combined with Matter 2, it can trace the history of an object; combined with Life 2 and Mind 3, it can see the past through another's eyes.

This Rank also allows the magus to "thicken" time around himself, reducing another wizard's chances of affecting him (essentially Time countermagic).

- **Spinning the Wheel**

Now the magus learns to command time itself, slowing or speeding it as he will. This secret allows the sorcerer to speed his own actions (giving himself one additional action for every success over two: two actions with three, three actions with four); speed or slow another; or contract time around an object or site while the rest of the world keeps moving. Faerieland, where one day can pass as a year, is infamous for such effects. Used offensively, Spinning Wheel spells must hit their target before they have an effect; areas, however, are easy to enchant, though they're limited to 10 feet wide.

- **The Endless Moment**

A powerful seer can literally stop time; an arrow may halt in flight, and a drop of water may hang in the air. Again, the area is limited, but the effect is strong. Combined with Entropy 3, it can "trigger" a spell when some circumstance occurs (a prince kisses, a tree falls); combined with other Spheres, it can "hang" a spell until the Time spell passes; tied to an object with Matter 2, it connects that item to a "time drop," where nothing happens to the object until the spell wears off.

- **Plucking Shiva's Bow**

An archmage may remove items or people from one "point in time" and replace them "elsewhile"; step out of time and view the world as a collection of statues; or "pull" himself through time. The mysterious "Dreaming" visitors may have foreseen the landing of white settlers, walked across the world and crossed into the future in no time at all.

In game terms, the magus can sidestep time himself; each object or person he touches reduces his successes by one. See the **Time Duration** chart for successes and spans. Traveling through great lengths of time is exceedingly dangerous; spirits lurk in the void between moments, and the course of history (war, disasters, etc.), can change the world around the magus in ways he never dreamed possible.

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## “How Do You Do That?”

*You can sing the bitter temple song  
You can be the sound or bang the gong  
You can trace patterns in the sky  
You can ride the angels where they fly  
I will awaken you*

—Elysian Fields, “Anything You Like”



Magick is limitless. You're not bound to a “spell list,” but create the Effects you need as you need them. There are, however, certain “classic bits” that cover most of the Weavery your mages will perform. Once you see how they work, you can adjust the process as needed. (For examples of those bits in action, see the “Parcel of Spells” section. For quick reference, see the Common Feats chart.)

## Conjuring, Shapechanging and Transformation

You want to turn a prince into a frog, make your witch grow claws, transform a table into smoke, or whistle up a storm? Essentially, all of these classical spells involve the same game mechanics. By combining two or three Spheres of the right levels, your mage can change one thing to another, alter it, or create it from nothing.

The process is simple:

- Check the Sphere Levels (or the **Magickal Feats chart**) to see what, you can do and which Spheres you need.
- Figure out whether the spell you employ is casual or vain, and decide how dramatic it is. The answer will give you the difficulty of the roll.
- Roll. The greater the change or conjuration, the more successes you'll need to achieve. Don't forget to describe what your mage is doing to make things happen.

To change one thing into another, combine the appropriate Spheres. Creating something from nothing requires the appropriate Sphere + Prime 2. For example, transforming one living being into a different one (or altering his body structure) takes only one Sphere — **Life**. If you're changing him into a solid object — say stone — you'd need **Life + Matter**. If you wanted to create him from scratch, you'd need several Spheres — **Life, Mind and Prime 2** at the very least, + **Spirit** if you wanted him to have something like a soul. The process works the same way with elemental forces and material objects: Turning rock into flesh would require **Matter** (the rock) + **Life** (the flesh); if you wanted to make a person out of fire, you'd need **Forces** (the fire) + **Life** (the body). If you wanted to conjure rock or fire out of nowhere, you would need either **Matter + Prime 2** or **Forces + Prime 2**.

As a rule, assume that something created from thin air or transformed into something else eventually disappears or reverts back to its original form, unless it's been made permanent. (See "**Range, Damage and Duration.**") Hence, Artificers and other craftsmen work extra hard on their creations. A poorly made machine will quickly fall apart or crumble into dust, while a well-crafted one will last for years.

## Shapechanging

Naturally, a transformed object still carries some Resonance from what it once was. A man made from fire is bound to have a really volatile temper, and a stone table changed to glass will be extraordinarily strong. It's a fundamental fact of magick in this era that all things have an essence that cannot be changed. At heart, a man transformed into a toad is still a man — he thinks in human terms and his eyes reflect an uncanny humanness, even if he remains a frog forever. This lingering essence comes through in Storytelling and roleplaying, not in systems, and can come in really handy when the Storyteller's trying to evoke a certain mood. ("*There's something about this toad that isn't quite right....*") On the other hand, that idea cuts both ways; things tend to transform into other things that are a lot like them. A man changed into a toad probably had a bit of toad in him all along.

When a person assumes an unfamiliar shape, he needs to get used to it. The same holds true for an animal that becomes a man. The more radical the difference between animal forms, the longer it takes to familiarize oneself to it: if Alabaster the White became a horse, it might take a day or more before he could gallop; if he became an ape, he could acclimate quickly.

With very basic shapeshifting (Life 4), there's also a danger of getting "lost" in the new form. Alabaster might think he is a horse if he isn't careful! For each day spent in animal form, a human being must spend one Willpower point; if Alabaster runs out of Willpower, he forgets his humanity and becomes the beast until someone teaches him otherwise. To get around both of these complications, a shapechanger can spend two experience points and "buy" that alternate form. For two points, Alabaster may change into a horse without difficulty, and do whatever he likes for as long as he likes.

Life 5 allows a magus to change into a beast without any complications; the people he transforms, however, still need to "keep their heads about them," or risk becoming a beast in all ways.

## Permanent Changes

Typically, a magus needs four to six successes to change himself permanently, or eight to 10 to transform someone else the same way. Even after that, the magick can be undone by the caster, or by another sorcerer with enough Life knowledge. These mighty magicks rewrite the subject's True Form. Classically, a shapechanging enchantment carries a "key"; if a certain thing happens — a prince kisses a frog, a hero repents his lust —

the spell disappears instantly and the subject returns to her True Form. God's creations are more lasting than magickal ones.

A magus who changes into an animal needs to spend Willpower to keep his mind intact. (See above.) If he succeeds, he may stay in that form for as long as he wants. Other "improvements," however, take a toll: unusual modifications — wings, claws, boosted Attributes — add permanent Scourge points to the mage's Pool. (See "**Eternal Scourging**" for details.) Lesser enchantments — like those that raise a character's Attributes within human levels — must be paid for in character points. In this case, they cost one-half the normal amount. (See "**Experience Costs**," page 115.) If this "toll" isn't paid, the subject suffers a rotting disease similar to leprosy, losing one Health Level per day until he either pays the price or dies. This applies only to living (or undead) things, or to spirits. Material objects may be reworked without care or cost.

## Magickal Devices, Fetishes and Talismans

(See also the **Magickal Treasure Background, Chapter IV**, and "**Magical Tools**" in the Appendix.)

The joy of artisan-magi everywhere, a well-crafted treasure contains the stuff of genius. While other sorcerers cast ephemeral spells, the crafter seals her Art inside an item of power. Lousia Mazarin de la Forge shapes her treasures with patience and a steady hand. Her efforts create Devices or Talismans that anyone with mystical skill can use.

## Talismans

In bygone days, mystical items were everywhere — or so the myths say. Given the amount of work that goes into making a Talisman, however, that's doubtful. In story terms, a magus has to prepare a treasure, weigh her will upon it and invest some of her own essence within the item.

System-wise, she makes the treasure (perhaps with the Crafts, Herbalism or Science Traits), uses Prime 4 magick to pour 10 Quintessence into the object; she then casts the necessary spells into it, rolls her Arete (difficulty is the Talisman's Background rating + 3), and spends a point of Willpower. The enchantment takes roughly one week for each level in the Background: A five-dot Talisman would take five weeks to bespell, on top of the time taken to craft the item itself.

In later days, Talisman creation becomes vain (vulgar) magick and demands a sacrifice of permanent Willpower; in this magickal age, the process is casual, and requires temporary Willpower points, not permanent ones.

One-use Talismans — potions, poultices, arrows — are easier to make. A magus with the right Spheres simply makes the item, casts the spell on it and spends a Willpower point. The process takes less time — one day per level — and requires Prime 2, not 4. The Talisman works once, then breaks, dissipates or crumbles to dust.

## Fetishes

By summoning spirit aid, a shaman like Walking Hawk invests a "lifeless" object with mystick power. This requires Spirit 4, extensive roleplaying and roughly 10 successes, with one roll for every hour of game time. Fetish creation is often casual (difficulty 7), but looks like devil worship to Europeans.

## Devices

Lousia's true skill lies in *Machinae* — in Devices crafted by Enlightened hands. To build one, she plies her considerable skills to design the item, craft it, and invest her genius into it. The first part demands skill — several dots in Crafts, Science and Invention, plus a lot of work-time and materials. The second step lasts one month per dot in the Background rating (along with many false starts and tantrums); the final step requires "casting the spell" through the Device — something that demands the proper Spheres. If all goes well, a final Arete roll (difficulty 4+ the Background rating) perfects the Device. No Willpower or Prime is necessary, though alchemists often fuel their creations with Quintessence anyway.

No matter what your sorcerer might be trying to make, a botched roll ruins the process, sends the artisan back to the drawing board and often carries a nasty backlash as well. Talisman botches often result in bums or spirit visitation; fetish botches unleash an angry Iwa; Device botches usually crack the item, bum the magus or destroy the workshop, depending on what's being made and how. Lousia has a dangerous profession. Still, it's rewarding... and lays tracks for others to follow.

## Necromancy

The most dreaded Black Arts bind death to a magician's purpose. Although some shamans practice benign death magicks — calling up dead relatives, avenging slain friends or laying ghosts to rest — most cultures fear the necromancer. He doesn't merely deal in death, he makes it his ally. As close as Death is to Life in the Dark Fantastic world, the Reaper loves to oblige.

In game terms, a necromancer can specialize in the following spells:

- **Ghost-calling** summons the spirits of the dead. Described in more detail under "**Summoning and Warding**," this Art is a good way to get on a wraith's good side (if you provide her with something she wants), or her shit list (if you order her around).

- **Reanimation** imbues dead tissue with the semblance of life. Laughing skulls, ghastrly hands, even the walking dead — these nightmares are easily within reach. Animating dead tissue requires Life 2/Prime 2; manipulating bare bones demands Matter 2/Prime 2. Sadistic sorcerers lock ghosts into these "playthings" with an additional Spirit 4 Effect. Small "samples" are easy to reanimate (one to two successes); the larger and more complex the "prop," the more successes you need (three for a limb or head, four for

several limbs, five for a whole body). Walking dead things continue to rot, and fall to pieces in a few days unless an additional Entropy 3 or Time 3 spell halts the decay.

- **Necrosynthesis** channels the power of Hell into living flesh, Entropy 4/ Life 3 swirls death-energy through a living Pattern, withering flesh or conjuring magickal leprosy. The damage from this attack is aggravated, and follows the Damage and Duration chart. A living creature killed this way falls into a corrupt, festering mass, forever dead; its ghost, however, may return, looking for revenge.

Necromantic Arts stir up Jhor. (See "**The Scourge**" and the example of **Caspar the Alchemist**.) Worse, they make the magician a target for all manner of witch-hunters, wraiths and rival magi. Even death-mysticks like the Chakravanti loathe the necromancers who ply their Arts too freely. Demons, however, love to grant such secrets to their chosen ones.

## Otherworldly Travel

(See also "**The Otherworlds**," Chapter VII, and the **Spirit Gauntlet** chart, page 240.)

There are two ways to travel beyond the mortal world: astral voyaging, when the mage's consciousness leaves her body behind; and shadow-walking, when she steps past the Gauntlet and becomes half-flesh, half-spirit. Dream walking, a rare talent that allows a shaman to step into the dreamworlds, is possible, but largely forgotten among the magi of Europe and Asia.

- **Astral travel** (Mind 4 and 5) unlocks the mind from the body. Thus freed, the magus can speed across the Earth or float into the Astral World. Connected to her body by a stiver cord, the sorcerer loses track of her physical senses and "sees" through magickal eyes. Nude and incorporeal, she carries nothing with her; invisible to normal sight, she hovers in a shining cloud of pure thought. With effort (and a point of Willpower), the traveler could manifest as a ghostly image. Even then, however, she is effectively immune to physical harm. Only Spirit magicks, awakened weapons (see "**Possession**") or other astral beings can touch her, and only Mind sight can detect her presence.

An astral traveler's Mental and Social Attributes replace her Physical ones: Strength becomes Manipulation, Dexterity becomes Wits, and Stamina becomes Intelligence. Willpower replaces the Health Trait, and any damage the traveler takes eliminates Willpower points. If she reaches zero Willpower, the mage's cord snaps and she drifts into the highest Heavens. Supposedly, she is lost forever, but some travelers claim to have returned from such journeys, often half-mad and babbling of wordless sights....

- **Shadow-walking** (Spirit 3) pierces the Gauntlet. Glowing with life-energies, the traveler wanders through the Middle and Lower worlds as if she were an extension of the mortal landscape. The more she wears or carries, the more difficult her passage through the barrier becomes; a heavily armored magus finds it hard to pass through the Gauntlet at all unless she crosses in the thinnest places.

Sometimes a traveler gets stuck; in game terms, a botched roll strands the magus between the mortal world and the Penumbra. She remains there until another Spirit-magus or spirit-being helps her through.

A successful shadow-walk carries the traveler into the Penumbra: from there, she follows spirit paths through the Mists. When she returns to the mortal world, the walker must wander back into the Penumbra; when she emerges through the Gauntlet, she comes out in the material reflection of her final location. In other words, a shaman who entered a gateway in Northamptonshire and crossed back through a Cray in Paris would arrive "out of thin air" in the French city. Many wizards use shadow-walking to cross great distances — although the spiritual hazards might outweigh the mortal ones!

- Gateways (Spirit 4) open rifts in the Gauntlet large enough for several people — magus and mortal alike — to pass through. Such portals rarely last more than one scene, however, and are distinctly vain. Spirits love such "windows of opportunity," and flock to them; after all, gates work both ways....

- **Dreamwalking** works in all ways like shadow-walking. Few magi, however, have the imagination to step into a dream. Instead, many sorcerers employ astral magicks (Mind 3) to cross into the disturbing Sleep-Realms, then retreat when the dreams get too vivid. Spirits, demons and faerie creatures lair in the Dreaming, and many of them get grumpy when mortals intrude. (See **Changeling: The Dreaming, Dreams and Nightmares and Beyond the Barriers: The Book of Worlds** for more details of dreamworlds and beings.)

## Perception Magicks

When Lady Gianni consults her crystal ball or Caesario whistles the **Tune of Pan**, those mages see things no mortal could perceive. More often than not, those perceptions remain the mystick's secret — no one else can see what Caesario sees unless he chooses to share the vision. In game terms, then, such spells are casual, rather than vain.

## Magickal Vision and Scrying

Magickal senses must be "turned on" by the proper spell unless your magus has made some permanent "improvements." (See **"Shapechanging."**) Most perceptual spells simply require a Rank One Effect from the appropriate Sphere; seeing wind currents requires Forces 1, while enhancing your eyes to spot things in the dark is Life 1. For the most part, such spells succeed automatically; any magus worth the name can employ magickal sight without trouble. Noticing things may require an additional Perception + Awareness roll — seeing in the dark doesn't automatically allow you to see *everything* in the area. Once the spell kicks in, it usually lasts for the rest of the scene unless the mage chooses to fade it out. Doing so is often a good idea — it's pretty hard to function when you're viewing things on several different levels at once.

A magus who's taken on more visions than she can stand suffers a penalty to her perception rolls. For each Rank One Sphere in play, add one to perception difficulties (+1 difficulty for one Sphere, +2 for two, etc.). Seers of Chronos are slightly better at this sort of thing; they add one for every new perception after the second (+1 for two, +2 for three, etc.). Oversensitivity becomes a problem, too; loud noises, bright lights and other powerful sensations have an extra kick when magickal perceptions are involved. A sudden flare of flame might startle a person under most circumstances, but to the witch with the cat-eyes, that flare can be blinding, if only for a moment.

Seeing faraway things requires a bit of Connection Sphere magick. Lady Gianni gazes upon places she's never visited through the glass and her magickal prowess. In game terms, her player simply focuses Connection 2 and rolls the dice. The better the roll, the further Lady Gianni's vision. (See the Connection Ranges chart for details.) Because the sorcerer's sight has a dramatic impact on the flow of the game, long-distance scrying attempts should be rolled. It's not a good idea to allow your magi to see *everything* without difficulty.

## Shared Perceptions

Let's say Caesario wants to cast the **Tune of Pan** on his friend Catherine, or to share his vision with her as well as himself. In that case, his magick is no longer as easy as it once was. If the mage is the only one who sees through magickal eyes, it really isn't worth the trouble to make a casting roll; if he shares the spell with someone else... well, better roll, just to be sure he succeeds.

By adding one to his normal casting difficulty, our magus can take his spell a step further and grant it to another character. Each person receiving the vision adds another +1 to the difficulty and another success to the total. If Caesario wants to extend his sight to three other people, he needs to roll at least three successes and add +3 to his difficulty number. No one else could see what those people perceive.

Is such sight vain or casual? That depends on the recipients. If they're magi, night-folk, magicians' companions or other true believers, it's casual. If not, it's an unnatural thing — vain magick.

With an additional Forces 2/Prime 2 Effect, a skillful magus may create a vision that anyone can see. Lady Gianni, for example, weaves such a spell into her glass and conjures an image of her subject in the mirror. Any number of people can watch the image, and no "additional viewers" penalties apply. Depending on the magician's style and her audience's expectations, this kind of magick may be considered casual. A shaman can conjure a vision from smoke and be perfectly within the beliefs of his tribe; Lady Gianni, on the other hand, would seem like some sort of devil if she did the same with her glass.

## Viewing Magick

Given her affinity to magick, a magus can usually sense it in action. A successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6) allows a sorcerer to notice magick in use within 100 feet or so. Really powerful spells might reduce that difficulty to as low as 4, while especially subtle ones might raise it as high as 10.

With a Prime 1 spell, your mystick can sense the "residue" of magickal acts after they occur. This "afterglow" fades once the magick has been cast, and the difficulty of her Perception + Awareness rolls rises accordingly. Small feats "disappear" in a few minutes, but really strong ones can be felt for hours or even days afterward. Mystick items, naturally, do not fade this way, and may be noticed with a good Perception + Awareness roll.

## Prophecy and Hindsight

In game terms, a character with Time 2 may look into the future or past. The further she looks, the harder her roll. (See the **Time Ranges** chart.) So how does a Storyteller satisfy her players without setting up a situation she can't handle? That depends on the Storyteller's view of history and predestination.

In the "official" chronology, certain things will happen. A magus using Time magicks might see the future if the Storyteller wants to take all source material as gospel. If, on the other hand, the Storyteller wants to set **The Sorcerers Crusade** as "year zero" in a brand new chronology, the mage could see one of a hundred possible futures — futures that may or may not come to pass. Frankly, we recommend Free Will over predestination — that way, the future isn't set and your troupe could change history. The visions of a seer, therefore, show events that might never occur. That way, prophecy becomes an uncertain Art, no matter what the dice might say.

Time magick isn't foolproof, nor does it offer the magus an omnipotent view of everything the player wants to know. Visions are fleeting, composed of impressions, symbols and skewed perspectives. Lady Gianni might see a future event, in her mirror, but the prophecy unfolds like a shadow-play: A flaming unicorn dashes into view, pursued by a mass of darkness. Arrows leap from the darkness and bury themselves in its fiery flesh. The unicorn falls into ashes, and a cold wind whips them away. What will happen? Unraveling the vision is Lady Gianni's problem. Prophecies are notoriously vague, and puzzling them out is half the prophet's battle.

The past is easier to decide. The Storyteller simply tells the player whatever she wants the magus to know. Most postcognition is tied to a place, person or object; when she channels her sight through that subject, the magus sees what the subject once saw. If Rebecca Bernal, a Marrano seer, meditated upon a dreidel to find out what happened to its owners, she might see a dark room spreading out beyond the table the dreidel sat upon. Frantic voices cry out as

flashes illuminate the room. Thuds, screams, then silence. What happened? The seer has learned *something* from the past, but the answers are as nearly confusing as the original unanswered questions.

A few hints for players and Storytellers who employ Time sight:

- Use symbolism rather than facts, and let the mage interpret the vision.
- Rather than declare an open statement ("*Rome will burn in 1527*"), give the vision a perspective. ("*You see the Vatican crumbling amid nearby buildings wreathed in flames*" "When?" "You can't tell, but the people are dressed differently...")
- Describe an event that *might* happen, then plant hints that imply the event is coming (like mentioning a strange tree, which later shows up in the background of a scene).
- Let the Storyteller roll the dice and narrate the results. That way, the player has no idea how true the vision might be. Generally, the greater the success, the more accurate the prophecy or hindsight.

## Summoning and Warding

When God delivered wisdom to Solomon, He granted the magus dominion over the angels, demons and other spirits. Shamans, Hermetics, Infernalists and, occasionally, witches use that legacy to call forth earthly and Otherworldly creatures. So how do you handle it, in game terms?

- To call forth a living creature from somewhere else on Earth, use Connection 4, perhaps with either Mind 2 or Life 2 to bring the creature running. A small animal — roughly cat-sized — could be pulled through a smaller gateway (Connection 2) without much trouble. Calling up an earthly being demands between two to 10 successes, depending on the size of the creature (and the gateway).
- To summon a spirit creature, use Spirit 2. To bring it through the Gauntlet, use Spirit 3; to bring several of them through, use Spirit 4. A spirit that is bound into a fetish or possesses the Materialize Charm can manifest on its own; a spirit without either of those options needs a body to inhabit — an additional Life 4/Prime 2 component of the spell. The bigger the spirit, the more successes it demands: a simple Nature spirit only needs to be brought through the Gauntlet (see the **Spirit Gauntlet chart**), while a major Umbrood or elemental must be called from its home Realm (10-20 successes).
- Bringing a ghost back to the living world demands a Fetter (an important object from that person's lifetime) and Spirit 2. To order it around, use Spirit 4; to give it a cloak of living flesh, add Life 4/Prime 2. Since ghosts suffer many strange fates in the Underworld, a sorcerer may or may not be able to call one back (Storyteller's option).
- To bring a mighty Umbrood — a major devil, an angel — into the mortal world, use Spirit 4 and some relic or True Name to connect the earthly plane to the



Otherworldly one. Such Summonings demand 15 successes or more. Binding a powerful creature is generally good idea — greater spirits are notoriously independent

Summoning rituals are dangerous and complex. In dramatic terms, a magickal gateway stirs the entire ares — winds rise, water freezes, candles blow out, and fragile things shatter. A powerful spirit entity literally raises Hell, or brings Heaven to Earth when it appears and leaves a hit of its Resonance behind when it leaves Porthos Fitz-Empress, who often calls up unearthly creatures, has impregnated the walls of his workroom with a spine-chilling essence. Lady Palestrina, an Infernalist, literally darkens her soul with each demon she conjures up.

The ritual itself often demands a pentacle (see "**Ritual Tools**") or some other prepared space. True Names, Fetters, offerings or other links to the entity are often required parts of a rite. A wise sorcerer guards herself with a Ward keyed to the being she summons. Very few creatures enjoy being yanked around by some magickal wise-ass.

- A minor **Ward** demands Connection 2, with either Life 2 (for living things) or Spirit 2 (for spirits). This spell makes the creature uncomfortable, and reduces the being's Dice Pools by one die for each of the sorcerer's successes if the creature tries to cross the Ward.

- A major **Ward**, or **Ban**, requires Connection 3/Life 3 or Spirit 3, five successes and some object or True Name from the summoned being. Each Ban is unique, and must be erected anew before the summoning. For as long as it lasts (typically one scene), the Ban prevents the creature from touching the wizard, or from casting Charms at her. It does not protect her from hurled objects or outside helpers, however....

Once the creature arrives, the Storyteller might want to set up a resisted Willpower roll contest between the summoner and the summonee. The bigger the "favor," the higher the difficulty. Minor tasks are difficulty 5 or 6, while extended service is 9 or 10. If the magus wins, the creature performs a task or two before leaving; if the summoning wins... use your imagination. Obviously, the wizard's manners, Traits (like Metaphysics [Celestigraphy or Demonology] or Spirit Lore), and affiliation makes a big difference. An ancestral ghost is willing to help a respectful shaman; a minor angel compelled to answer a boastful wizard might not be so accommodating.

## Uncanny Influence

Charms and possessions rob a God-fearing person of his rightful mind. A magus who employs such Arts is a frightening figure. Even so, many sorcerers use their craft to sway a stubborn mortal — or to cure him of another's influence. The Arts of Mind and Spirit are too useful to cast aside.

## Charms

Enchantment is the soul of folklore. Always casual, the charm spell is common coin for magi of all types. Depending on the power of the enchantment and the needs of the tale, a Storyteller might let a magus bewitch someone without even making a roll. Caesario wants to seduce a milkmaid? No problem, no need to roll. He wants to make her his slave? That's another story....

A simple charm (Mind 2) inspires feelings but cannot change the subject's will; more powerful ones invade her thoughts (Mind 3), shackle her will (Mind 4) or erase her whole identity (Mind 5). Bewitching someone from a distance requires Connection 2; forging a link between two parries requires Connection 3/ Mind 3 and some sort of item from both of them.

In story terms, such enchantments require a gaze, a command, a token, a potion, or a personal effect from the victim. Once the sorcerer has what he needs, a charm can be woven. Many desperate mortals come to witches when they want a person's full attention; hence, many charms are cast on another parry's behalf. At first, a successful charm seems like a blessing; over time, however, bewitchments either erode (as the spell wears off) or turn to obsession (if the enchantment is permanent). Either way, the charmed person soon learns to hate the object of her affections unless the magus has taken steps to make her love him *without* magick.

A really powerful charm (Mind 4) steals the victim's will and memories without her recollection. To do so, the enchanter isolates himself, opens a channel to his victim and concentrates. What he wills, she does, then forgets. When Caesario's milkmaid comes to her senses, she may have done shocking things, but cannot remember them. This level of enchantment requires a lot of successes (10 or more), but lasts a long time.

Unlike most forms of magick, charm spells use the subject's Willpower as the difficulty; it's easy to manipulate a simpleton, but a stubborn person is much harder. To permanently alter someone's personality, you should raise the difficulty to the subject's Willpower + 3, at the Storyteller's discretion. Similarly, A character with mental defenses (a Mind 2 shield or some other power, like vampiric Domination or Presence) may raise the difficulty to Willpower + 3, or shrug it off altogether. If you, the Storyteller, don't want some crazy mage yanking the prince's puppet strings, you can make a charm very difficult indeed.

A character who suspects she's on the receiving end of a charm can make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to overcome it. If the milkmaid employs a counter charm (see "**Commonfolk Magicks**," page 267), she might get an additional die or two for the roll. She may try this once. If the milkmaid wins more successes than Caesario, the wretch's spell is broken. If not, the enchantment must either wear off or be broken by another magus, through unweaving or Mind 4 magick. Mind 1 allows a witch to spot another's influence, and she may even recognize the caster's handiwork; many sorcerers leave "signatures" that an educated magus could decipher. Caesario is infamous for this sort of thing, and several other sorcerers have sworn to make him pay for it someday....

## Possession

When actual spirits rake control of something — or someone — they tend to do what they please. A skilled shaman or priest, however, can direct them at a target and "suggest" what they do with it. This kind of magick is difficult to control, but among some tribal cultures, it's an essential Art — and a casual one.

Dramatically, the caster opens a channel or vessel up to spirit possession, calls the appropriate beings and makes a bargain with them. Ghosts, demons, Naturae — all spirits with the right powers (the Possession Charm, or Puppetry Arcanos — see **Chapter VII and Wraith: *The Oblivion***) can inhabit a material body. If the spirit lacks the power to possess the host by itself, a skillful sorcerer can do it instead. Such rites usually involve chants, sacrifices and a specially prepared vessel. If Walking Hawk wanted to invite a Hawk-spirit into his hatchet, he would paint the ax with designs, burn tobacco and beseech the hawk to come.

In systems, there are several types of possession magick:

- **Puppetry** (Mind 4), in which a sorcerer takes control of a mortal body. Detailed under "**Charms**," this possession requires absolute concentration, but leaves spirits out of the equation.

- **Rousing spirits** within objects (Spirit 3) awakens slumbering entities and asks them for a favor or two. As any shaman knows, all things have spirits. With the proper incentive, those Iwa may be awakened and befriended. While the object won't be able to do anything really extraordinary, the spirit inside can shift events in subtle ways. The Hawk-spirit might gift the shaman with keen sight when he holds the ax, or keep the weapon's edge sharp as a raptor's talon. Additionally, the awakened item may exist in the spirit world and material one at once; Walking Hawk can carry his ax on journeys beyond the Gauntlet, or use it against an astral foe. Spirits may be roused within objects or places, but not animals or people (their spirits are already awake).

- **Creating a fetish** (Spirit 4) raises this awakening to new levels. Here, the spirit becomes an active force in the mortal world, and conveys its powers through its "host" object. See "**Magickal Devices, Fetishes and Talismans**" for details.

A gruesome variant (also Spirit 4) turns a person into a fetish of sorts. By calling up angry spirits and channeling them into a living host, a shaman can rip his foe apart from the inside. This terrifying assault inflicts aggravated damage as per the **Damage and Duration** chart, and scares the hell out of the victim as well. She can try to soak the damage, but even if she survives the attack of these whirling, screaming Iwa, she's not likely to forget them.

- With self-possession (Spirit 4), the mystick opens himself to spirit "riders." He offers his body, and with luck, they supply him with inhuman powers. A specialty of shamans, Infernalists and even some Christian prophets, self-possession grants the magician three additional Physi-

cal Traits, a Cosmology Knowledge of 4, and whatever Charms the spirit rider has. In return, the spirit gets to play for a while — and "riders" are pretty hard on their hosts!

When the spirits leave, the shaman usually has to recover. He sleeps for days, and often hears scars or "spirit brands" from the experience. Nightmares, odd markings, broken bones and fever are only the most obvious signs of self-possession; a really astute Spirit-magus can see the imprint of demons who have taken a shaman's body as their own. When the shaman dies, all Christians believe, he'll have to answer to God Almighty for each "ride" he has allowed.

## Exorcism

When the spirits enter on their own, a good priest can drive them out. It takes Spirit 4 to fight a possessing Umbrudo, although Prime 3 can help. The battle itself is fought with resisting Willpower rolls (difficulty 7 or 8). Each roll covers an hour or so of game time. A healer who wins can drive out the spirit; a spirit who wins can shift over and possess the sorcerer instead... at which point, he's too tired to resist.

Obviously, a weak spirit is easier to exorcise than a powerful one. Minor entities require 10 successes to defeat; stronger ones, 15; major ones, 20; and mighty ones, 30 or more. Using a boost of Prime energy, the exorcist can add one success to his total for every success he rolls with a Prime spell. In story terms, the two parties wage war over the host body. In the end, the area will be laid waste, the host will be exhausted and the combatants will both be the worse for wear.

## Roleplaying the Magician

*I give thee name, yet keep the blame  
That is my one possession  
Wherein lies the lesson  
— Faith and the Muse, "Caesura"*

We've explored the systems; now let's turn them into play....

## Magickal Styles

To the magician, the Art is paramount. His dedication to it allows him to perform miracles. A Renaissance sorcerer doesn't define what he does as "reality-shaping." To him, there is one reality and one way to weave it. Confronted with the various styles of magick — all of which work — he exalts his own and denigrates the others. It will take the present clash of cultures to rip the blindfold off and force the magician to redefine his Art as one path to a common road. In the meantime, the mortals around him make their own decisions based on faith, folklore, and eventually science. In game terms, those beliefs define a spell as casual or vain.

The following styles mirror the practices of most Old World sorcerers and philosopher-scientists. Each one describes an attitude, belief, common tools and the form the magick takes. A miracle-worker isn't going to be crafting cannons and a physician won't shoot lightning from her fingertips. Consider these listings to be roleplaying notes and "tool selectors" for your magus. Pick one and use it as a template for his beliefs and a guideline for the spells he'll cast.

Many other styles exist, especially in the mysterious East and distant New Worlds, but to the European mind those Arts are pretty vain, if not impossible. It will be centuries before the odd Hindu ways or arcane Taoist practices are even heard of, much less believed in. Although their practitioners — like the Chakravanti, Seers and some Akashics — venture into Europe occasionally, they find their Arts extraordinarily difficult to perform there.

For the record, here's how the following styles break down in Dark Fantastic Europe, circa 1450:

<b>Casual</b>	Miracle-working
	Infernalism
	Pagan Witchcraft (often mistaken for Infernalism)
<b>Vain</b>	High Ritual Magick (likewise)
	Alchemy
	Tribal Shamanism
	Do
	Ars Praeclarus
	Physic
	Other forms of magick

## Future Fate

In the later part of the period — 1500 onward — Physic and Ars Praeclarus may be considered casual, while Miracle-working and High Ritual become vain. The shift in belief mirrors the spread of rationalism. Thanks to the witch-craze of the 1500s to 1600s, Infernalism and Pagan Witchcraft remain casual for another century. Over time, however, even these forms lose their flexibility; powerful magicks of any kind become harder and harder to cast, regardless of style. Eventually, science becomes the only "believable" wonder in the Old World; all others retreat into mythology and "coincidence."

In their homelands, Do, Shamanism and other forms of the Art continue to be "acceptable" until the 1900s. In some secluded places, they remain so. In fact, thanks to the decay of **modernism**, the reaffirmation of traditional beliefs and post-world-wars chaos, belief in magick surges in the late 1900s. As technology breaks its own barriers, a new form of Ars Praeclarus — technomagick — takes the highest ground. As the third millennium dawns, the masters of old Arts and new technomagicks square off.

The future from that point on is far from certain.

## Miracle-working

We are all children of God, says the pious magician. Flawed children, but His nonetheless. To those God favors, He gives gifts of Awakening and power. The miracle-worker turns that power to the Lord's ends.

Temptation rides high on this Path — it's all too easy to see yourself as the source of your Arts. The Holy Word warns against the workings of sorcery, but the miracle-worker knows her grace is ultimately the instrument of God. She takes care to follow His Word, keep His covenants and preach His gospels. She might live well — many clergy do — but at heart, a faithful magus is merely a servant, a conduit to the higher power.

Faith is the key ingredient to this "magick"; most miracle-workers refuse to call what they do by that name at all. Prayer, holy ground, relics, songs, psalms, scripture, blessed water and consecrated wafers are fools of God's will. Sunlight, fire, plague, healing and awesome displays of power follow His disciples. Biblical phenomena — floods, earthquakes, rains, rainbows and such — appear when miracles flow, but everything stops if a magus loses her faith, or sullies her purity and refuses penance.

Most folk identify miracles with the Church, but the fact is, God's hand is everywhere. The greatest prophets come from the common people, and while few laymen have read scripture, they know the touch of Divinity when they see it. While Christianity rules the European heart, the Muslims, Jews, Hindus and even Pagans have their miracle-workers, too. Although they often consider each other's Arts blasphemy, those who seek God with an open heart understand that the Voice of Creation speaks many different languages — heresy to man, but Truth before Divinity.

## Infernalism

Like the miracle-worker, the Infernalist draws his power from another source; unlike her, he freely claims that it is his will that shapes the Art. While the Christian bends his knee, the Satanist shits on the altar. By the teachings of the Church, everyone on Earth is sinful and damned; *if that's the case, laughs the Infernalist, I'm at least going to have a good time before I go, and secure myself a place of favor at the Devil's table.*

Infernal magicks begin with blasphemy; in return for power, the magus profanes the works of God and pledges fealty to Satan or some lesser devil. The Adversary confers the Awakening, and usually grants the wizard a helpmate familiar as well. Some Infernalists commune with older demons — old spirits like Loki or Hecate who once pretended to be gods. Regardless of their patron, Infernalists turn mystick power to destructive ends, What others worship, the black magician scorns. His Arts destroy things: crops wither, skin blisters, curses rise and fire explodes from his fingertips. For raw power, few styles match the Infernalist's Art. Other magicks might he deadly, but his flow from the darkest parts of the soul.

The Black Arts favor sacrifices, bloodshed, weaponry, crossroads, poisonous brews, orgies and other forms of vice (gambling, drunkenness, song, etc.). While other styles employ similar tools, the Infernalist deliberately corrupts whatever he employs. Sex is perverse, sacrifice torturous. Holy symbols from other faiths are desecrated and sacred places defiled. Out of rage, desperation, revenge or perversity, the demonist turns magick into ruin. On his Path of Screams, purity is a joke and soul-debt is the inevitable price of the Arts.

## Pagan Witchcraft

Some folk see their Arts as a link between the Divinity without and the Divinity within. Rather than bend their knees at the altar of the One God, they see the thousand gods of Nature. Dancing to the rhythms of Creation, the Pagan embraces the storm's caprice and the sun's tranquility. Her passions mirror those of the seasons, and magick is just another name for awareness.

Like Nature, Pagan Arts can be cruel. Sacrifice — of the self and of others — is a vital link in the dance of life, death and rebirth. Pain is endured, not avoided, and healing comes with the promise of later suffering. The Pagan mystick enjoys life while she can and accepts her lot with fatalistic resolve. While she lives, she winds the strings of power through the elements, crossways, invocations and sacrifice. Blood and other humours flow freely in her rites, and herbs blend into rich potions. Dance, sex, song — these tools reflect the joy of living, and raise power within. The link between the magus and her surroundings is vital; to cultivate it, she bares herself to the elements and shouts defiance to the devils in her midst. Her Arts bend life itself — prophecies, healings, charms, storm-brews and even shapeshifting come naturally to one who communes with Creation's cycles. When the gods decide to cut her threads, the Pagan feeds the dust, to rise in younger form and join the dance again.

## Tribal Shamanism

Like the Pagan, the shaman weaves his Art from natural threads. Unlike her, he knows he's but a link in a greater chain, a brother to the spirits and beasts, but a lesser thing to the Great Ones above.

Some shamans follow one God; others see gods everywhere. Some call upon the ghosts of their ancestors, while others feel the dead have passed beyond reach. A kinship to the spirits is what links the thousand practices of Africa, Asia, the Americas and other tribal lands. The magician may delude himself into thinking that man is the pinnacle of all things, but the shaman knows better. Ghosts, Iwa and various "Others" command greater powers than man; hence, the truly wise man, aligns himself with them and learns the spirit ways.

Shamanism is a hard Path. To Awaken, one must open himself to visions, cast aside his family, and die. Reborn in the spirit, the medicine man strives to keep the vision true, to safeguard the land and mollify the Others. Some, he befriends; others, he learns to tight. On behalf of his people, he often returns to his community, but even then, he lives apart. The Others' voices rise above the dull speech of common folk. The shaman may be a laughing trickster or a solemn healer, but his ears are often turned elsewhere.

The shaman's tools bind him to the spirits. Drums mirror heartbeats, chanting builds a bridge, herbs and smoke mingle the Others' breath with his own, and ordeals deaden him to mortal concerns. Dance — often with elaborate masks and ritual steps — draws the spirits' favor and sharpens his concentration. When the Arts appear, they ride through spirit patrons. A fire Orisha sends gifts of flame; a hawk-totem turns his chosen to a bird. Shapeshifting, healing, visions, endurance, vigor and shadow-walking come easily to a medicine man, but the greatest powers manifest through insight, not magick. A shaman sees Creation through newborn eyes, and catches sight of things mortals — even magi — are too blind to notice.

## High Ritual Magick

To the High Magus, power is the Art and the Art is power. God blessed the first man with dominion; most people are too lazy, ignorant or fearful to use that legacy, but not the magus! Long years spent studying the secrets, perfecting the instruments and mastering himself give a wizard the confidence to take God's hand and embark on the Path of Gold.

High Magick is not an Art, it's *the* Art. All others are pale imitations of half-heard lore. To learn magick, one must take the tools of man in hand — writing, mathematics, craftwork, song, ritual gestures and complex formulae, deep concentration and precise measurement are essential parts of the craft. This Art is neither clumsy nor fortunate — it is the instrument of will over Creation, the breaking of chains and the elevation of consciousness by application of the mind. High Ritual working takes time and calibration; as sloppy casting is both dangerous and disgraceful. Each spell is a reflection of the mage's self-perfection, and such discipline takes years to master. A true magus never stops learning; until his dying day, he'll be digging through books and experimenting with what everyone said was the best solution to the eternal riddle.

As God promised, the magus wields fantastic power. Channeled through grand rites, the elements tremble at his command. Angels, demons and earthly servants answer his summons, and men quake in fear as he passes. Talismans, crafted by sterling measurements, gleam with unearthly power, and the very fabric of Creation rips asunder and forms new worlds. The magus may be an arrogant man, but his pride is well-earned. After years of toil, first in ignorance, then apprenticeship, he finally holds God's inheritance in his hands.

## Alchemy

A form of High Magick, alchemy refines base materials into perfection. The alchemist is part scientist, part artist and part cleric. Her temple is the laboratory, her bible the tomes of secrets and her gospel the arcane *jabberish* that conceals her lore from outside eyes.

While the riddle of turning dung into gold defines the alchemist, her true goal is far more lofty: to reach an Ascension through wisdom and tempering. Like a solution heated over fire, she allows the sediments to fall away and enlightenment to bubble to the surface. Like the magus, she spends lifetimes in the search. Along the way, she perfects lesser formulae — uncanny potions, refined riches, tricks and Talismans — that make her life a little easier. By her theories, all things have base states and perfect states. Moving from one to the other is difficult but hardly unattainable.

The alchemist sidesteps the limits of the mortal mind. Through symbols, riddles and equations, she speaks a hidden language. Her books — and she has many! — overflow with odd diagrams, incantations, formulae and notes that make sense only to her. The laboratory where she works is filled with glass tubes, cookware, flames and gases, weird substances and disturbing samples. In her kitchen, outsiders get lost — as they should! Her Path has no room for dullards. She studies the works of other alchemists and tries to unravel the puzzles they have left; that search teaches more truth and wisdom than simple statements ever could. True, she creates wonders — what base minds call "magick" — but for her, the real Art lies in wandering the labyrinth and finding her way out without falling to the minotaur. All the rest is vanity — occasionally helpful but ultimately useless.

## Do

The self is an illusion. Ultimately, skin is a fetter and fear a snare. When one studies The Way, he transcends the illusion and learns to shake the cage of bones. By channeling Creation through a finite touch, he reaches human limits, then exceeds them.

The Way is easy; finding it is not. Conditioned by the lies we tell ourselves, the pupil must throw off his old identity and return to the beginning of life. Guided by a teacher, he learns to *Jo* rather than *think*. As he reaccustoms himself to the right Path, his body and mind swell beyond their former bounds. The tools of Do are contemplation, focus, designs, prayers, purification, and physical and mental exercises. Some students pursue a spiritual alchemy, focusing Chi (Quintessence) to special tasks; others reach beyond the body and expand their minds into the cosmic pool. Through discipline, the Doists train himself not to strive, not to think, but merely to contemplate when at rest and act when in need. It's never simple to forget old habits — even masters get mired in passion, hesitation and pride — but he who achieves *true* mastery of Do leaves his body behind and joins the celestial All.

The journey to perfection is marked by great trials and fantastic power. Some students team Do as a means to such power, but wise folk know that "magick" is a trap. The grand stunts and mighty perceptions that come with Do — mind tricks, out-of-body journeys, fabulous martial arts and elemental mastery — are as illusionary as the crippled mortal form. The illusions are occasionally useful, true, but focusing on them impedes the search for a higher state.

## Ars Praeclarus

Nothing happens without cause. The man of reason knows this. While magi babble spells and spew blood, the Resplendent seeks the cause, notes the trigger and prepares a scientific Path to wonders. With time, luck and an inquisitive mind, he may unlock the secrets of Creation and bend it to human will.

Not that the Resplendent is faithless; he knows the world is a giant clockwork set in motion by the Grand Craftsman. By following the signatures of the Lord's hand — the way water flows, the contours of muscle beneath the skin — he discerns the master pattern and learns to work within it. His tools include the book, the lamp, the forge and patience. His fingers craft fine machines — levers, clockworks, gears, lenses — that do what those fingers themselves could not. His inspiration comes from the classics — Daedalus, Aristotle, Archimedes and Ctesibius. Su Sung of China, Heron of Alexandria and the Arabian *Book of Ingenious Devices*. While others cling to the shadows of ignorance, the craftsman searches, discovers, measures and ultimately conquers. By putting his discoveries into plain, simple texts, he encourages others to follow — and improve — his discoveries. Through this, man expands his dominion, as God intended.

Harnessed by artifice, the elements dance to the Respondent's tune. Mechanical wings, clockwork statues, magnifying glasses, coaches, steam engines, ships, refined metals and many other gifts appear in his laboratory. On a more advanced level, his teachings — of history, of business, of language and Nature — shake the foundations of superstition and allow the common man to throw off his ignorance. Every once in a while, raw power is necessary; it is then that the cannons, war machines, poisons, handguns, armor, flying ships and explosives bring Hell to Earth. As the creatures of the night scurry away from his lantern, the man of reason smiles. His Arts may be slower and less dramatic than traditional magick, but their results *last*, and can be used by anyone.

## Physic

Like the craftsman, the physician looks for a cause. While the Resplendent searches the cosmos for patterns, the healer looks to a closer subject — the body — and pries its secrets into the light.

To some, the study of true medicine is blasphemy — that which is, is willed by the Lord. The physician refuses to accept the idea of God's cruelty. Sickness, plague, leprosy, madness — these are not the punishments of a

Divine tyrant, but the ripples of an imperfect world. Just as God gave humanity the means to build shelter, He lent it the wisdom to recognize disease and to cure it. As the midwife, the healer, the parent and the teacher, our physician looks for the cures God has planted, digs them up and puts them to use.

The digging is often messy. A healer spends most of her time elbow-deep in humours and cadavers, brewing foul ales and grinding deadly powders. While mortal "doctors" winge about the prohibitions of the blood, the true physician looks to the ancient textbooks and cuts her own Path through the channels of the body — often literally. Pagan wisdom provides the foundation. Divine guidance the lamp, and human intelligence the flame; with these tools, the healer purges sickness, promotes vitality, repairs damage, isolates plague, and occasionally creates new life or revives the dead. When angered, she can kill as well as heal — her Arts teach her new ways to cause pain. If a shadow-fancy strikes her, she might apply her lessons to "improve" her subjects, thus creating homunculi, freaks or walking corpses. The horror that corrupt physicians inspire brands the whole profession, so the lessons of the true healers take centuries to blossom. Half-wit, half-craftsman, the physician seeks a Path through nature, walks it with knowledge and teaches the steps to others like her. By curing the sick, mapping the body and expanding the mind, the healer hopes to find immortality.

## Ritual Tools

If The Sorcerers Crusade is a play, ritual instruments are its props. As a player, you'll define many of your wizard's actions through the tools he employs; as a Storyteller, you'll make judgment calls based on the things your players do. Rituals make a spell come alive; as the magus sets the circle and calls the corners, his ceremony becomes a fabulous tale. No amount of Dice Pools or modifiers can capture the essence of magick like a cool set of tools.

A tool works because it's a symbol; that symbol links the mage's belief to his Arts. Although each style favors certain tools, no two sorcerers use exactly the same things. When you select the instruments for your magician, find ones that appeal both to your imagination and to your character's outlook. Like clothing, instruments make the mage.

## Using the Tools (Optional)

The time it takes to use a tool is the time it takes to cast a spell. Generally, the bigger the spell, the longer it takes to cast. A curse can be passed with a glance, but a storm must be brewed for hours. Assume that a complex or powerful working demands several tools and a lot of concentration. Some practices take longer to get results than others, but that comes with the territory. All Arts are not created equal.



Ritual magicians who expect trouble often prepare their spells ahead of time, then "store" those enchantments in a tool. If the magus needs the spell, he simply casts it from there. In game terms, the player needs to specify which spells he "stores" and where he "puts" them. When the spell is cast, the player makes the Arete roll at that time. Once the spells are cast, they're gone. New ones must be worked on the spot.

Really enlightened magi learn the truth behind the symbols. In game terms, a character who reaches Arete 7 can cast her tools away and work from will alone. For details, see "Game Uses of Arete," page 106.

Common implements of magick include:

- **Alchemical Laboratory:** Housing a complex collection of tubes, charts, tables, ingredients and containers, the laboratory is as much a reflection as it is a workplace. Some alchemists keep spotless shops, while others strew their rods haphazardly around the room. Although alchemical lore insists on many special tools — beakers, vessels, burners and books — it's the shop itself that shapes mundane materials into magical elements. Through the laboratory, those materials are transformed, broken down and rearranged to the magician's expectations. Thus, the shop becomes the instrument. No alchemist can work his Art without processing the elements through his laboratory.

- **Blood and Other Humours:** The blood is the life, as they say, and the fluids of the body carry that life even after they're removed. Fresh fluids are best, but some spells call for "fermented" humours instead. The most common sacred element, blood often flows from live sacrifices, ritual mutilations, small incisions or deadly cuts. Blood seals pacts, creating bonds that can only be broken by death. (See "Essences," Chapter IV, for descriptions of the humours.)

- **Bones, Skin, Relics and Other Remains:** Like humours, bones form the foundation of a living thing. Carry the bone and you carry the being. Bones get ground up into powder, carved into other tools (see below) or snapped to pass a curse onto a living person.

Skin protects its "wearer": by extension, it also protects a magician who dons the skin after its "owner" is finished with it. Skins are stretched over drums, fashioned into garments, boiled in cauldrons or simply eaten to carry their protective powers onward. Many shapeshifters dress in pelts or jewelry made from the animal — or person! — they wish to become.

The same is true of hearts, eyeballs and other organs, which pass their purposes on to whoever consumes them. Many primal practices employ cannibalism; hearts are eaten for valor, eyeballs for vision — the list is as endless as it is obvious. Other, more "civilized" practices use animal remains or symbolic representations — like the Catholic Eucharists — to embody the same qualities.

In this age, relics — supposed remains from saints and martyrs — carry great significance. Supposedly, miracles nestle in the bones of saints. "Tamer" magicks use bits of hair or fingernails to connect a spell to its recipient. No matter what you use or how, body parts make potent mystick tools.

## Commonfolk Magics (Optional)

Sleepers are not without their own resources. While grand magicks are obviously beyond them, commoners employ folk charms, minor divinations and simple remedies. Such talismans aren't reliable, but can make a difference nonetheless.

Dramatically, certain items and elements carry magical power — power anyone can use if he knows how. (See the **Hearth Wisdom Trait**.) In game terms, this power provides a plot device when the Storyteller wants to keep his players guessing (or give his mortals a little protection!). Any item on the "Ritual Tools" list can grant an un-Awakened character an edge at the *Storyteller's discretion*. A sprig of wolfsbane might drive away a man-wolf; a cup of holy water might scald an Infernal wizard. In short, a common man might obtain a slight, surprising advantage over mystical adversaries with a little help from God, Nature and the Storyteller.

Unlike the Magical Treasures of magicians and the fae, these "wild cards" aren't foolproof. Their effects kick in when and if the Storyteller wants them to. "Common charms" aren't measured in damage dice or Effect rolls; they usually protect rather than harm, and work at the Storyteller's whim, which is as it should be. To the common people, magic (with a "c") is a capricious bird, alighting when it pleases, flying off on a fancy and shitting on your shoulder just when you need it most.

- **Books:** As bearers of writing (see below), books trap thoughts, wisdom, observations and confessions, and set them down for others to see. Most mystical texts are written in code or lost languages, either to protect them from the authorities or to safeguard their wisdom. Magick is all about understanding, and some truths are too sacred to be read by common people. The sorcerer employs hooks for study, spellcraft, meditation and reflection. In the Western traditions, it's a poor magician who cannot read or write.

- **Brews, Potions, Powders and Poultices:** By mixing herbs, remains and toxins into often-revolting concoctions, magi blend the various essences into a more powerful whole. Once that's done, the results can be drunk, eaten, sprinkled or smeared to pass on the magical power — a specialty of alchemists, witches and physicians.

- **Cards, Dice, Straws and Lots:** The term "sorcerer" comes from "one who casts lots." Hence, various roots — cards, dice, carved bones, sticks, shells, etc. — form the backbone of divination, blessings and curses. Typically, the magician sets out a selection of lots, mixes them and draws a series of them to determine what will happen. By fixing a certain lot with an intention — concentrating on drawing a "bad card," for example — the sorcerer can turn events in her favor if her magick succeeds.

- **Celestial Alignments:** While it may be said that "Our fates are not in our stars but in ourselves," many magicians would disagree. Many practices depend on astrological conjunctions, celestial influence and precise "windows of opportunity" opened by the planetary dance.

The intricate symbols and formulae connected to planetary influence are way beyond the scope of this book. Most of the basic connections are pretty obvious — Mars for hostile spells, Venus for emotional bonds, Saturn for Fate and Time-based workings, the Moon for mystery, etc. If you're interested in the deeper significances, check a good book on astrology or symbolism. (See "Resources" in the Appendix.)

- **Circles, Pentacles and Other Shapes:** A universal symbol of infinity, unity and wholeness, the circle finds its way into rituals of all types. Sorcerers from all over the world link hands, carve circles and dance in the round. Other tools, like rings, belts and diagrams, often take the circle's shape in order to pass its qualities off to the magician.

Other shapes, like squares, triangles and pentagrams, represent different qualities. The square represents stability; the triangle directs intentions upward or downward; the rectangle creates a base for earthly matters; the cross reflects an intersection. Magicians draw the shapes into symbols (see below), trace them in the air, lay them out in powder or liquid, or work them into Talismans, charms and artwork.

- **Crossroads and Crossing-days:** As one thing gives way to another, the bounds of Creation loosen. At the junctures of time and place, the weave is a bit thinner, the possibilities a bit more ripe. (See the **Spirit Gauntlet chart**.) By casting spells at rural crossroads, at midnight or dawn, or during certain holidays, a magus takes advantage of the shift. Hence, hunters and night-folk wait at crossroads for the magician who tries to set his works in motion.

- **Cups, Chalice and Other Vessels:** Cups represent the feminine principle, carry water (see "Elements") and symbolise mystery. Larger vessels — tubs, cauldrons, buckets, gourds — provide excellent cookware for "witch's brews."

- **Curses and Blessings:** Invoking maledictions or benefice is a time-honored magical practice, especially among those who refuse to call themselves "sorcerer." More spellcraft than tool, the curse or blessing begins with an invocation of a greater power, then directs that being's attention to the subject, and seals the pact with a "so shall it be." The magus likes to think he's a conductor for his Lord's will, but it's really the other way around. In practice, a curse or blessing provides a willworker with an instrument for his *own* favor — or anger. God is the messenger, not the message.

- **Dance and Gesture:** Dancing is fun, especially when it's done with partners. Besides its obvious sexual overtones, adance combines physical exercise, emotional passion and artistic expression. The combination raises lots of power, stirs the dancers and pleases the gods and spirits. Most practices, especially Pagan ones, employ dances of

some kind. More "civilised" styles prefer a ritualized set of movements that become significant gestures and poses.

- **Drugs and Poisons:** To transcend mortal vision, many sorcerers employ toxins. The shock to the magician's system (hopefully) brings on visions. From Catholic ceremonial wine to the moldy bread eaten by prophets, from Hindu soma to Celtic woad, magicians eat, drink, smoke or smear themselves with a wide variety of minor — and major! — poisons. (Please note that this sort of thing is best left to Storytelling description, not to live roleplaying!)

- **Elements:** What could be more powerful than Nature? By working raw elements — earth, air, fire, water and sometimes wood, metal, ash and ice — into a ritual, magicians of all kinds evoke the spirits of the natural world and bind the materials to their commands.

- **Evil Eye:** Looks *can* kill, charm, sicken, or bestow favor. With a baleful stare, a witch may make her victim ill; with a coy glance, she could give him luck. Commons folk fear the Eye, and have invented a variety of wards against it — hand signs, blessings, spitting on the ground and other, odder customs.

- **Gems, Stones and Minerals:** Everyone knows that gems hold mystical properties — diamonds are invincible, coral blocks poison, jade drives away misfortune... literally hundreds of stones and minerals carry significant powers. By tapping these reserves, a magus channels the stones' Resonance into her own workings, or wards herself against another's Arts. A component of most counter-magicks, gemcraft adds an extra incentive to fashion.

- **Group Rites:** "Raising power" is incredibly important. By gathering a group (magicians and non-magicians alike), focusing its attention toward a certain thing and then riding the wave of energy, priests and antipriests alike enhance their workings. (See "Acting in Concert.") Ideally, the sorcerer works his helpers into a frenzy with music, chanting, prayer, speeches or sex; from there, he directs the energy as the participants reach a climax. When they drop from exhaustion, he absorbs their power as his own (often through a Prime Sphere spelt).

- **Herbs and Roots:** Like the elements, plants hold living bits of Creation; like toxins, they often retain some special properties of their own. Magicians of all kinds mix potions, brews, salves, wines, powders and such out of herbs, roots and other plants. By drinking, smoking, earing, painting or dusting these concoctions, a sorcerer can invest a bit of the plant's essence with the object of the spell.

- **Household Tools:** As extensions of the hands, tools become obvious magickal instruments. Brooms, plowshares, sickles, mirrors, knives, butter churns, pots, cauldrons, horseshoes, hammers, nails and hourglasses have long supernatural pedigrees. A sorcerer simply uses her tools to create a bridge between the mundane activity — like cleaning or reflecting — and her magickal intentions. Most magicians keep their ritual tools away from

mundane tasks, but rural wise-folk use their instrument; in everyday chores as well.

- **Inventions:** Imagination is magickal; to invent things is the pinnacle of Renaissance Arts. While crabby wizards ply their ancient trades, modern Resplendent; create new wonders. Flying machines, clockworks, steam-driven engines — these fruits of genius are the ritual tools of new magick. They take time to design, materials to build and effort to employ, but they're worth it. Unlike many mystick items, inventions can be used by the common folk; the more people use them, the easier they are to use.

- **Knots:** By tying a knot into a rope or thread, a magus binds mystickal energy into the weave; by untying it, she releases that power. Although a common part of witch-lore, knot-magick also features prominently in Greek philosophy, Arabian lore and Chinese puzzles.

- **Numbers:** Like writing, mathematics unlock the code of Creation. Architecture, mapmaking, navigation, divination — all require an understanding of numbers; this, in turn, breeds magickal theories. Enochian, the language of the angels, uses mathematical formulae to discern the names and purposes of God's servants; numerology draws connections between people, places and events through significant equations; "lucky numbers" and "magic squares" help diviners pick auspicious omens. Although Daedaleans specialize in math-magick, Hermetics and other ritual magi also employ number-craft to prepare their most elaborate spells.

- **Offerings and Sacrifices:** To receive, you must give. Magicians ask for a lot, so the best (and worst) of them return the favor. Depending on the magus and her faith, a sacrifice might involve vows, valuables or living things. Most offerings are consumed in the rite, but some are given away (like the Church's tithes) or returned (like the life of a shaman, who dies and is reborn). In really drastic spells, the magus must offer herself; Christ's martyrs provide the obvious examples, though Pagan lore is full of self-sacrifice. The more the offering is worth, the better the "gift"; a worthless sacrifice isn't terribly effective.

- **True Names:** Everything has an identity before God; if you know what it is, you have a tie to that subject. Some sorcerers compile archives of True Names (or false True Names) for their spells; these records come in handy during summoning rites, curses, healings, creations or threats. Any magician worth the title takes a new monicker (see "Shadow Names," Chapter IV) to protect himself. After all, a person who speaks or writes your name defines a part of you.

- **Sex:** Sex is power. It carries intimate connections, breaks down inhibitions, makes people lose their minds and opens their senses. Anything that powerful deserves the name "the Great Rite," and every magickal practice employs (or denies) that unharmed power. Orgies, abstinence, intercourse, stimulation without contact, even genital

## A Parcel of Spells

mutilation — all these too focus sexual energy to mystical ends. Even the Church, which condemns the sin of Lust, employs "helpmates" whose greatest skills are sexual favors.

- **Symbols:** All tools are symbols of greater things; some tools, though, are symbols in the most literal sense: labyrinth patterns, crucifixes, swastikas, Hermetic designs, runes, alchemical sigils, hexagrams, mandalas, yantras and other complex designs embody a magickal truth and fix it to a place or object.

- **Voice:** The chant, the song, the prayer, the wail, each type of magick employs a spoken invocation that carries the magician's thoughts out into the open, declaring them to Creation. Few magicks, even subtle ones, work without a spoken component, and some employ the voice alone.

- **Wands and Staves:** By lengthening his reach, a wand, staff or other masculine tool directs the magician's will. Whether the tool is carved from ivory, shaped from wood, or crafted from stone, glass or even bones, it serves as a badge of office. Waved during a spell, a wand gathers the mystick energy and sends it on its way.

- **War Machines:** Like weapons, war machines sow destruction; unlike them, these cumbersome monstrosities — siege towers, rams, cannons — inspire terror in ways swords and arrows never could. Such devices demand specialized crewmen, but the dramatic results — crushed walls, flaming projectiles, and so forth — are worth the effort. (See **Chapter VII for artillery, and Crusade Lore for other war machines.**)

- **Weapons:** Like a wand, a weapon extends the hand past the reach of a mortal arm, carrying force to the magician's target. Mystickal weapons include blades, hammers, axes, spears and arrows. Since most gods favor a particular weapon (Thor has his hammer, Diana her bow, Michael has a flaming sword), religious sorcerers often employ their deity's favorite weapon. Scientific magi, on the other hand, prefer to channel force of will through guns, crossbows or razor-sharp fencing blades.

- **Writings and Incriptions:** As students of the mysteries would tell you, language is the greatest magick of all. Writing, which captures that magick and sets it into a permanent form, channels thought into reality. By writing a phrase, carving a rune or pressing a holy glyph into clay, the magician sets her intentions into the material for others to see.

Whole practices are built around writing of various kinds. In Muslim, Hebrew, Taoist and Hermetic styles, written symbols capture a sacred essence and keep it ready for use. Such tools are especially powerful in a world where literacy is rare and many ancient languages (i.e., Egyptian and Sumerian) are effectively lost. Only through writing can a magician study the early rites when man reached out for Creation, sealed it and made it his. "So it is written," the saying goes, "so it is done."

*This rough magic*

*I here abjure...*

*I'll break my staff,*

*Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,*

*And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,*

*I'll drown my book.*

— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*



As we've said before, Mage magick is not limited to spell lists. The following "bag of tricks" gives a few simple examples of what can be done with the systems described in this chapter. For those who want more extensive lists, there are literally hundreds of spells offered in **Mage: The Ascension**, the various **Tradition** supplements and **The Book of Shadows**. The best workings, however, come from you.

Different magi do the same things in various ways. Although each spell description features a group known for that kind of magick, there's no reason why a sorcerer from another group can't do the same thing. Likewise, most spells have variations; the core Spheres are given first, and different "options" are included afterward. Game systems are [bracketed] for clarity.

### Heart's Blood (• Prime)

In desperate straits, a sorcerer can reach into his very Essence and pull Quintessence from his soul. By praying to whatever God or gods he follows, the mystick concentrates his inner reserves into much-needed power. As that power flows outward, so too does his life. A true martyr can literally burn himself away from within while performing a final miracle. While miracle-workers and Pagans are notorious for this sort of sacrifice, any magus — even a Daedalean — with the right Arts can perform it.

[In game terms, each magus has 10 points of Quintessence above and beyond his Daemon rating and/or Quintessence score. Each one of these points translates to a Health Level; the last three take the magus below Incapacitated. If he uses these points, he dies.]

[Through this weavery, the magician can lap those reserves. A successful Arete roll drains Quintessence points — and Health Levels — according to the **Damage and Duration chart**. Each Health Level equals one point of Quintessence. This self-inflicted damage cannot be healed magically — only normal rest and recovery can restore the lost life force. Once channeled, the Quintessence may be used normally. This spell does not allow a magus to tap another being's reserves, only his own.]

### Read the Soul (• Mind or Spirit)

Some practices, especially holy ones, teach the ways of soul-sight. With a sharp gaze (often following a short prayer or meditation), a mystick might view the "soul colors" that

## Soul Colors

### Temperament

Calm	Light Blue
Corrupted	Black
Cowardly	Yellow
Envious	Green
Excited	Violet
Faith-filled	Blazing Gold
Fearful	Orange
Greedy	Dark Green
Grieving	Silver-gray
Innocent	Blinding White
Joyful	Silver-white
Loving	Deep Blue
Lustful	Dark Red
Melancholy	Gray
Sympathetic	Pink
Wrathful	Bright Red

### Night-folk

Faerie	(Sparkling; Either Very Bright or Very Dark)
Infernalist	(Black Ripples)
Magical Creature	(Bright "Ghost" of the Beast's True Shape)
Maraud	(Swirling Colors)
Risen/ Possessed Person	(Exceedingly Pale Colors)
Using Magick	(Sparkling)
Vampire	(Pale Colors)
Werebeast	(Deep, Intense Colors)

surround each living thing. From those colors, she may be able to puzzle out her subject's feelings or intentions.

Some creatures take on human guise; an astute magus, however, may see through such obfuscations by peering at the night-folk's "true colors." If she's skillful enough (see **below**), she might penetrate even magical disguises and spy the hidden beast.

[See "Perception Magicks" for system details. A successful roll betrays the soul colors, while a failed one muddles the image or reveals nothing at all.

[If a magus is trying to see through some night-creature's mystic disguise (a Discipline, Gift, Cantrip, etc.), she might have to make a Perception + Awareness roll to see through the protection. That roll's difficulty would be the target's skill with the power + 4; a vampire with Obfuscate 4, for example, would present a difficulty of 8. A failed roll would lead the magus to accept the illusion as real.]

### The Tune of Pan (• any Sphere)

By whistling a simple tune, a follower of Sh'zar learns to attune himself to what he calls "The Lakashim," expanding

his perceptions to new levels. Different tunes bring on different visions: A low, mournful song shows the world's fragility (Entropy); a happy, lustful air summons the essence of life (Life); by mimicking the sound of elements, the Seer might see them in action (Forces or Matter), while a wistful refrain brings on memories of the past (Time). For as long as the magus whistles, he may see, hear and feel things beyond mortal kin. When the song ends, his senses return to normal.

Daedaleans often use specially ground lenses or spectacles (rare but not unknown in this period) to use, the same Effects. To do so, the Resplendent must employ a different lens for each Sphere viewed. Obviously, lenses cannot impart enchanted hearing or smell, though special brews or listening horns might do so. Many witches use a variant, Darksight, to see plainly after nightfall.

[Again, see "Perception Magicks" for details. A skillful magus could open his eyes to many different sights at once, but risks overwhelming himself by doing so.]

Daedalus' Wings (•• Forces, or ••• Life; sometimes with ••• Life added)

A specialty of the Artificers, this "spell" involves elaborate metal-and-canvas wings, muscle power and a jumping-off point. Once these tools are in place, a skilled flyer can soar into the air, glide, or dive straight into the jaws of Hell, Some "Icari" (a disparaging name for flying Respondents) strengthen themselves with invigorating potions before they begin; flying, after all, is tiring work.

The classic witch's broom, flying carpet or even magical wings (grown with Life 3) allow a mystick to take to the air, too. Once airborne, the character might need to hang on for dear life — humans, as a rule, are not born to fly.

[Forces lifts and carries the magus. Once airborne, Dexterity + Athletics rolls (for brooms and such) or Dexterity + Invention rolls (for mechanical devices) help him guide his flight. A magical flyer can move 20 yards per turn; takeoffs, landings and other basic maneuvers are difficulty 7, while complex evasions may be 8 or 9.

[If the magus uses his own strength to fly, the Storyteller may wish to limit his flight time to three turns per point of Stamina. "Magick potions" may add to that time — see the **Titan's Power** spell.]

### Divine Aura (•• Mind)

By investing herself with the power of God (or some other patron), an enchantress may make herself the center of attention. As her spell unfolds, an almost physical presence draws all eyes her way. Only strong-willed folk may look away — if they care to. A majestic orator may invoke the same spell by reciting verse or making some profound declaration.

[A powerful but subtle Mind Effect sends a wave of charisma radiating outward from the magus. For each success on her roll, one person is compelled to see the sorcerer in her most favorable light. The spell does nothing about appearances, it simply screams "Look at me!!!" A successful

Willpower roll may counter the spell, of course, but the Aura is subtle enough to be mistaken for sheer personality, rather than magick. A good Attribute + Ability roll may enhance this spell to grand levels; it cannot, however, make people act against their will.]

**Survivor's Charm (•• or ••• Life)**

Life is dangerous for anyone; the Enlightened, however, have developed ways to cope. By chanting, praying, dressing in reinforced clothing or imbuing a potion, a sorceress may harden herself against the elements, hunger, pain or extreme temperatures. Until the enchantment ends, she stands resolute — able to feel, but immune to the worst effects.

[Life magick deadens sensations to manageable levels, soothes shivers and deflects minor burns. Used with other intentions, the spell may *enhance* sensations and make the character unusually sensitive to harm. (This variant doesn't inflict damage *per se*, but may stun the character at the Storyteller's option.) Life 2 affects the caster; Life 3 allows her to protect other characters, or lets her withstand really hazardous environments (fire, ice, torture, etc.)]

**The Golden Lion (•• Matter; sometimes with ••, ••• or •••• Prime added)**

Artisans and alchemists are masters of refinery. By boiling or forging base materials through special processes, such magi craft exquisite crystals, precious metals and powerful alloys, or strengthen existing materials to legendary hardness.

Hermetic wizards share similar secrets, and disciples of Arabian or Taoist sciences boast that all such innovations came from the principles they discovered. The roots of such Arts seem to go back to ancient Egypt, or to the China of the Yellow Emperor; the creations of those bygone eras seem as new today as they did when they were crafted centuries ago.

[Matter simply refines the material to its toughest state, or transforms it into a similar but more valuable form. Stone becomes crystal; glass becomes jewelry; wood becomes textured stone. An object crafted with such Arts becomes exceedingly fine and tough, andean withstand much more punishment than a similar, unrefined item. St. George's Plate (see **Chapter VII and the Appendix**) is a perfect example of what can be done. Used on an object or structure, this spell raises the difficulty for an Entropy 3 attack against it by +3. (Or, if you want to get complicated, by +1 for each success the artisan wins when refining the object.) Craftsmen and Artificers routinely enhance their creations with such processes.

[By adding Prime 2 to the process, the artisan may reweave the object's innate Quintessence, giving it a "second state" on the spiritual plane. So treated, the item may strike spirits, inflict aggravated damage on vampires and werbeasts, and protect an Umbral traveler as if it were mail armor. Refining an object to this degree requires at least five successes; once enhanced, the item appears normal but glows with a slight sheen when viewed with magickal sight. Prime 3 may turn the item into a Talisman or Device. (See "Magickal Devices, Fetishes and Talismans," page 256.)

[Prime 4 can shift the item's nature entirely: A sword may be enchanted to slide past armor and strike flesh (negating the armor bonus); a stone wall may be made sick as ice; a wooden spear might become fireproof. Such items are largely left to Storytelling. If one enhanced item clashes against another, treat both "refined" objects as equals: The sliding sword, for example, would be slowed by St. George's Plate.]

**Wayfarer's Reckoning (•• Connection, • Forces, • Matter)**

Creation's size boggles the mind. Resplendents from the Celestial Masters and Void Seekers soon realize exactly how expansive God's handwork can be — and how easily one can become lost in it. By charting his location or aligning advanced navigation instruments, a Skyrigger can "get a feel" for his surroundings, or find his bearings in the mortal world. The results might not get him home, but they'll keep him from becoming hopelessly lost on Earth — or from losing complete sight of it as he spans the Void.

[Connection "spots" the mage's location, and gives him a gut feeling about the surrounding terrain. Material obstacles and geographical features — volcanoes, forests, chasms — become clear; the Daedalean may not be able to actually see the obstacle, but with a successful Arete roll, he knows it's there.

[Moving elements — weather patterns, rivers, (ires, etc. — may be spotted the same way; likewise, the four directions may be tracked. With a bit of effort, a skilled Daedalean can find his way back to familiar ground — or at least travel in the right direction.]

**Blight/Farmer's Favor (••• Life, •• Time, or •• Connection, •• Matter; sometimes with •• Spirit or •• Prime added)**

This ancient Pagan ritual either destroys plant growth, or accelerates it. As the witches dance, chant and sprinkle the fields with herbs, blood and water, crops erupt from the soil or whither into husks. A similar spell (Connection 2/ Matter 2) spoils milk and rots food, or protects that food from decay. With such powers, the Pagan mysticks curry favor, feed their people, or punish their enemies.

By invoking helpful or harmful spirits, shamans accomplish similar things; Cosians, with their arcane formulae, have learned to do the same. In some provinces, the battle between the old mysticks and the scientists can be measured by the wild growth or blighting of the fields.

[In the common version of this rite, Life feeds or kills the plants while Time accelerates the process. If the mage desires, she can grow the crop to unnatural size in the bargain. The Connection/ Matter variation protects or destroys harvested food stores from a distance — in fact, Connection 2 can be added to the Life/ Time variant, also. Spirit 2, meanwhile, summons Naturae to do the caster's bidding — often adding an unpredictable element to the spell. Prime 2 keeps the soil healthy; without it, the sudden acceleration robs the fields of nutrients.

[No matter which version the magus uses, this spell is more potent when cast with extended rolls and extra help.

The greater the casting, the larger the area affected. For each success, assume the rite affects 10 square feet. As sudden as it is, this spell is often vain; a version cast *without* Time 3 is casual, but the crops will take several days to grow or die.]

**Mercury's Bridge (•• or •••• Connection; some times with •••• Spirit added)**

Using the secrets of Hermes (also called Mercury), the wizards who take his name step across vast distances in no time at all. Such spells allow the mysticks to assemble their Council. While it's wise to visit a faraway land the old-fashioned way first, a magus who does so can jump back to his homeland through this powerful spell.

The basic **Bridge** allows a wizard to travel from one place to another; an advanced version lets him open a gateway to bring other people and animals across. A Spirit Arts variant opens a path into the Otherworlds, bridging the mortal lands and an Umbral Realm with ease. The wizard prepares for such magicks by purifying both his person and the proposed gateway; he then inscribes various pentacles and sigils, calls upon winged Mercury or the archangel Gabriel, and rends a door in the fabric of reality. A shining bridge appears in that rent; the magus steps through and thanks his patron. If Fortune is kind, he emerges in the location he desires.

Advanced geometric theories (forbidden secrets of Pythagoras) allow skilled Craftsmasons to construct such doorways between important meeting sites and lodges. The inheritors of the Wyck understand shortcuts to their Paths,

and Hindu mysticks wave away the illusions of time and distance long enough to cross them without trouble. Without these oft-vain Arts, neither the Council nor the Conventions would survive for long.

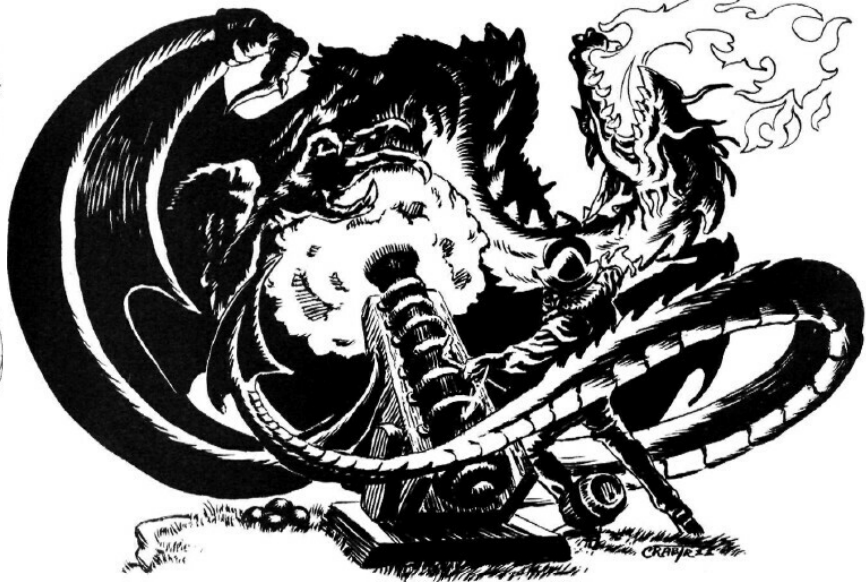
[Connection 3 opens a temporary gateway long enough to let one person through. Connection 4 creates a large doorway that can, with enough successes, last for days or even years. Spirit 4 pierces the Gauntlet; without it, a Bridge spans mortal dimensions only. Although difficult and vain, such spells are pretty common among powerful wizards.]

**St. Vitus' Kiss (••• Time)**

By smoking hashish, dancing or praying herself into an ecstatic state, a Seer may speed or slow her reflexes. For a short period of time, she may act much faster or far slower than the people around her.

Some potions have been known to have the same effect; in far-off lands, shamans invite wild spirits to ride them through brief spells of hyperactivity. Before Gabrielites go into battle, some pray to St. Vitus or Gabriel to grant them inhuman speed, the better to smite their foes.

[For each success over the first, the caster gains one additional action; three successes win two actions, four allow three, etc. The reversed application slows the character by the same rate — three successes now give her one action every two turns, four give her two every three, etc. She can use His spell either on herself, on another character, or on an area of roughly three square yards. This spell lasts the normal duration.]



**Titan's Power (••• or •••• Life)**

From the bubbling vessels of alchemical science come elixirs of grand potency. With these, a magus may invest himself (or his companions) with inhuman strength, speed, endurance or beauty. Initiates of the mysterious Arts of Do can enhance their bodies in marvelous ways, too; demon-bound sorcerers often receive boons of this kind, and holy warriors (especially Gabrielites) can pray for Divine strength in desperate straits. Among the witches, such charms are common. The important thing is not the elixir itself, but the result — a strong, supple or more beautiful body.

[Life 3 allows the mage to raise his Strength, Dexterity, Stamina or Appearance Traits beyond their usual levels; Life 4 lets him do the same to another person's Traits. Each success raises the chosen Trait (or Traits) by one dot, for the duration of the spell.

[It's tempting to try to make that improvement permanent; doing so, however, requires an investment of time, magick and experience points. (See "Permanent Changes," page 256, for details.) Even then, obviously inhuman Traits bring bad luck upon their possessor. (See "Eternal Scourging," page 236.)

**Witch's Vengeance (•••• Entropy, ••• Life, or both; sometimes with •• Connection added)**

Hell hath no fury like a witch enraged! As she tears an image of her victim to pieces, he withers into a skeletal mass, explodes into seething boils, or feels his skin come away in tatters. A skillful enchantress can cast this devastating curse at a distance, killing a man who never sees his *dame noir* coming....

Arabian mysticks know fearsome curses that accomplish similar ends. Gypsies are infamous for long-distance murder, and Cosians and Ksirafi assassins brew deadly poisons that achieve the same effects. No matter who the killer may be, the **Witch's Vengeance** offers a horrible way to die.

[The Entropy variant ages its target in seconds, inflicting aggravated damage as per the chart. Life is more direct; with it, the magus can rip her victim to pieces in whatever way she chooses — gashes, boils, leprosy, etc. Again, this option deals out aggravated damage.

[Connection simply allows the witch to act at a distance; see the **Connection Ranges** chart for details. Without it, the magus must see or touch her victim. This enchantment is often casual if the people know the victim has angered a witch — such spells are common parts of folklore.)

**Spirit Wall (•••• Spirit)**

When he calls up angels or demons, a Hermetic wizard inscribes the summoning area with pentacles; different designs contain different entities. Once this spell is in place, the wizard opens a gate into the mortal world, then seals it, trapping the spirit on this side of the Gauntlet. The borders of the pentacle form a prison that only the strongest Umbrood can escape.

Craftsmasons use similar designs to ward their guild halls against hostile spirits. Shamans and witches of all kinds create wards like this to aid their commerce with the Iwa. In

the Dark Fantastic world, ghosts, demons and elementals are everywhere; a wise wizard learns how to deal with them.

[A mighty Effect calls the spirit, opens a gateway and forms a wall around the pentacle. To break through, the entity must roll more successes with its Rage than the summoner gained with his Arete roll. The more successes you have, the stronger the Wall becomes; a smart sorcerer, therefore, spends a lot of time — an extended roll — making his Wall. For more details, see "Summoning and Warding," page 259.]

**Dragonstorm (•••• or ••••• Forces, •••• or ••••• Prime)**

Alchemists of all kinds use this deadly elixir to ward their laboratories. When all else fails, a batch of Dragonstorm, hurled or shot from a bellows, leaves literally scorched earth behind. A potent distillation of Greek Fire, the Dragonstorm elixir ignites not only combustible materials, but the Fifth Essence as well. As the Quintessence flares, the flames grow hotter. All materials in the blast area are consumed. A really potent variant sucks the Primal Force from living things, as well. When the flames die down, only ashes remain.

Miracle-workers and Infernalists alike employ a **Dragonstorm**-like spell. Calling down their patrons' wrath, these magi crisp their foes with Hell-fire. The end results are the same, but the Resonance left behind tells the tale. Burned places become *Regio* — areas marked by Divine or Infernal favor. Some become wastelands, while others sprout bright and wondrous harvests. Years after the firestorm, the essence of the deeds still lingers.

[Forces magick, fueled by Prime, creates a superheated cloud of fire. Prime, meanwhile, draws the Quintessence from everything in the area and keeps the tire burning. The initial blast radiates outward 10 feet for each success the caster rolls; a Forces 5 variant covers 20 feet for each success.

[The Prime 4 version deals out (successes x i) in aggravated damage; the Prime 5 option deals out (successes x 4). Either way, the firestorm lasts one turn per success. Every inanimate object (barring magickal items or ores) in the area is reduced to ashes by the time the fire burns out. Magickal creatures, magi or night-folk within the **Dragonstorm's** area can try to soak the damage, but mortals are out of luck. Non-magickal fires may rage for hours after the Quintessence has been drawn from the area; in a world built from timber and pitch, this spell can be deadly indeed.

[Some flame-attuned creatures, like fire-breathing dragons, may be totally immune to the Prime 4 spell at the Storyteller's discretion; the Prime 5 version inflicts harm as per the **Damage and Duration** chart against such creatures. (The damage comes from the Prime, not from the Forces.) Spirits — including demons, angels and elementals — are completely immune to this spell unless either Spirit 3 or Prime 5 is used.

[Given the **Dragonstorm's** size, destructive power and reliance on great amounts of Quintessence, this enchantment is always vain — a clear demonstration of unearthly power.]



# ppendix

*For we are all strangers before thee,  
and sojourners, as were all our fathers:  
our days on this earth are as a shadow,  
and there is none abiding.*

— 1 Chronicles, 29:15

## A Manifold Path

"The Turks are remarkably enlightened," Karel explained as their ship sailed south and east. "The Ottoman Empire is a state of Islam, but it welcomes Jews and Christians who pay a head tax. Women may own property, and co-wives must be maintained in an equitable manner. The physicians here are the finest in the world, as are the libraries at their disposal. I think we will find a welcome here."

"Yet are these not the same Turks who slew the Byzantines to take the city we seek?" Agnesa asked.

Karel laughed bitterly. "Oh yes, the same Christian city the Crusaders ravaged in their time. I heard that women and girls threw themselves from the city walls rather than submit to the excesses of God's warriors." He fell silent.

Finally, Agnesa spoke. "Ritter von Ulm's last words to me were of kismet, Karel, of a fate against which we cannot prevail.

*I know you think such things are foolish, but I have had a glimpse of what that fate holds for us. We were spared, and made the journey here for a reason; you and I must be the first ones to show that our beliefs can find accord. We may follow different Paths, but have united goals. I think many, many years will pass ere the Order of Reason and the Council of Nine find peace. Indeed, it may never come, but the search can begin with two."*

Karel peered at her as if she were mad. Finally he smiled, like sunshine through dark clouds. "Aye, lady," he replied, "and then with our pupils, and those who follow them. I will join in your pact."

Agnesa laughed and offered her hand in manly greeting. Grimacing, Karel shook it like a burly lord. With them, the boat wound through the Dardanelles, carrying its cargo toward the dawn of peace and hope.



n the world of the Dark Fantastic, opposition comes from all sides. Rival magi, churchmen, soldiers, unearthly creatures and frightened villagers are only the beginning.

More often than not, conflict does not lead to battle. How often, in your own life, have you "crossed swords" with someone without coming to blows? On the darkened stage, conflicts grow more epic; even so, it often skirts the line of battle and come to rest somewhere in between hurt feelings and a bloody corpse. The following antagonists will probably take the harder road in such fights, but remember: Today's enemy is often tomorrow's friend.

(*Storyteller's Note:* Crusade Lore, the Storyteller's screen and book, contains detailed information about night-folk (the faeries, vampires, werewolves and ghosts) who keep a mystick's life... interesting. The elaborate games, powers and politics of such creatures are too complex to fit into this Appendix; Storytellers who wish to run a crossover chronicle should seek out the aforementioned supplement. A host of magical beasts — complete with character creation rules — can be found in **World of Darkness: The Bygone Bestiary.**)

## Mortals

Once upon a time an arrogant wizard underestimated the strength of the mortal folk. Convinced of his superiority, said wizard dominated the surrounding towns, forced the nobles to bow before his throne and slew all who displeased him.

So they killed the bastard.

There's a lesson in that somewhere.

True, the Sleeping folk lack the rawpower of Weavery, but they've got numbers on their side — numbers, determination, and sometimes Faith as well. (See **Chapter IV.**) A lone magus may be able to mop the floor with a handful of mortals, but sooner or later, they'll catch up with him. No apprentice is a match for an angry knight, and few sorcerers can muster the political resources of a prince or a priest. Even a Magister can be tricked by a thief, cheated by a merchant or seduced by a country wench. In short, don't let magic go to your head.

Most mortals live in small towns or villages. These communities tend to be pretty close-knit; the residents recognize strangers and often distrust them. When new faces come to town (or old ones start acting oddly), people talk. It's hard to keep a secret in a village, especially if that secret walks in and starts demanding things. Rural folk may seem simple to an outsider, but on their home ground, such people are more knowledgeable than a seer and more canny than a hunted fox.

City folk seem more sophisticated; the comings and goings of armies, merchants, foreigners and kings keep gossip flowing. City people combine a taste for the rare with

survival instincts and jaded eyes. Chances are they know a few foreign words, and they have seen their share of harsh punishments — public torture and executions are to them what TV sports are to us. The common people are hard to impress, and the nobility and clergy have their own games at hand. Very few city people act alone, either; there's usually a gang of some kind waiting just out of sight, whether they're tavern toughs or wealthy allies. Each city seethes with its own intrigues. A native understands the flow of power, and a stranger should beware of it.

Human beings aren't sheep or chessboard pawns — they've got passions and purposes that rival any mage's own. Even a mob *wants* certain things, and will raise Hell to get them. What mortals can't accomplish through force of arms or magic, they'll do with stealth, wit, cash and favors. Most artists, philosophers, clerics and nobles have patrons, too, and some of those patrons can become... irritated... when something interferes with their allies' good health.

In short, the un-Awakened can provide any number of obstacles and aids to a group of magi. The roles they play and the tactics they use will depend on the sorcerers, their goals and the manner in which they treat the common man.

## Clergy

Despite the inroads of science, this is still the age of faith. Agents of God (whatever god that might be) are often the most powerful folk around, and woe be to the mage or mortal who crosses them! Across the board, such folk are educated and respected; they make sacrifices for their religion and often take it tenets seriously.

In Europe, the Christian Church dominates the landscape, driving the Pagans into hiding and the Jews and Muslims into second-class status. Clustered in their own communities, rabbis and mullahs minister to the faithful; until 1492, both faiths practice openly in Spain, but the decree of Torquemada drives them into exile or underground. The true rise of Protestant denominations begins in the early 1500s; until then, the majority of European clergy are Catholic.

The history and practices of the Church are too detailed to go into here; suffice to say that by the mid-1400s, the Vatican itself is divided between those who serve the Lord and those who serve themselves. The latter send agents — Pardoners — across Christendom, selling indulgences to finance the Church. Harsh Inquisitors root out heretics, witches and innocents throughout Spain, Italy and Portugal, and witch-hunters stalk the same targets in Northern Europe. As a whole, the Church views dissent as a sin; while many clerics *are* merciful, the official tenets of the Church are anything but. As the Vatican's excesses alienate its own priests, challenges arise. Former champions (like Henry VIII and Martin Luther) rebel, creating splinter religions. These Protestants are more fervent in their faith than the Catholics, and often make their points with the end of a club — or a sword.

Churchmen and nuns from this period are torn between a duty to their Lord, the policies of their institution, and the weaknesses of their flesh. Whole convents are corrupt; whole monasteries are dens of vice. By the same token, ministries and missionaries perform great acts of kindness and devotion. A cleric might be a deeply faithful person, a fanatic, a pawn or a gamesman. His motives come from within, but his actions often carry the weight of an entire religion.

The ministers of other faiths tend their people in secret. Rabbis wield considerable influence in Jewish communities, but keep a low profile in most other places. Mullahs, for the most part, lead their people to Muslim lands after Islam's expulsion from Spain. In the Middle East and Ottoman Empire, the Prophet's followers remain strong. Pagan priests and priestesses keep the old fires burning in the Northern Europe, but the flames are often subtle, hidden behind Christian rites and the names of saints. The Council and Order of Reason allow non-Christian clergy to practice openly, but for most of Europe, the Church has locked and barred God's door.

Whatever faith he practices, the man (or woman) of God has been trained in the ways of faith. A custodian to the common folk, the cleric watches over the believers and shuns the unbelievers. Some clergymen heal, some fight, some plumb the mysteries of Creation while others suppress imagination. Ultimately, the cleric is both an individual and a pillar of his faith; what he does with that position is between him and his god.

**Character Creation:** Attributes 6/5/3, Abilities 10/6/3, Backgrounds 8, Willpower 6

**Suggested Attributes:** Physical ratings of 2; Social and Mental at 3 to 4.

**Suggested Abilities:** Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Expression 3, Instruction 2 to 4, Intrigue 2 to 4, Logic 2, Crafts 3, Etiquette 3, Leadership 1 to 5, Academics 4, Law 3, Linguistics 2 to 4, Lore (various) 2, Occult 2 to 5 (possibly many other Traits, depending on the religion and the cleric)

**Gear:** Robes of office, crucifix or other symbol, books, Church seal and other tokens of office.

## City Guardsman

The forces of law and order are everywhere — not as organized or skilled as 20th-century cops, but proficient in their own ways. Renaissance-era societies aren't big on prison? or rehabilitation; city guardsmen often beat their targets into submission, haul them into stinking gaols and let the sheriff? have their not-so-gentle way with the culprits in the morning.

Although it's easy enough to see them as brutes, many guardsmen are honest, devoted or at least ambitious. More often than not, they're crafty and streetwise, too. It takes a lot to fool a wise guardsman, and a stupid one won't live long.

**Character Creation:** Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 13/10/3 Backgrounds 5, Willpower 5

**Suggested Attributes:** Physical ratings of 3 or even 4 all others at 2.

**Suggested Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Larceny 2, Craft 2, Melee 3, Torture 1, Linguistics 1 or 2 (for large trade cities), Occult 1

**Gear:** Light armor (boiled leather, possibly with a mail shirt), club, pole arm (usually a spear, occasionally a halberd), short sword or dagger,

## Commoner

From beggars to serving maids, the commoners have the general run of the world. Their Craft Traits vary with their jobs; an English manservant and an Arabian horse-tamer will have two very different sets of skills. Common people tend to be pretty direct unless confronted with an obvious authority; if that authority gets out of hand, the average person ducks out the door, sets up an ambush... or stirs up a mob. The latter can be extraordinarily dangerous to magi. A crowd can burn a manor house to the ground in less time than some wizards can cast a spell.

**Character Creation:** Attributes 4/3/3, Abilities 10/6/3, Backgrounds 2, Willpower 3

**Suggested Attributes:** Most ratings at 2, possibly with one or two at 3, but rarely above that.

**Suggested Abilities:** Alertness 1, Brawl 2, Crafts 2 to 4, Melee 1 or 2, Hearth Wisdom 2 (possibly a range of other Abilities — Artist, Expression, Subterfuge, Etiquette, Survival, Academics, Seneschal, etc.)

**Gear:** Tools, clothing.

## Knight

They are the glorious guardians of chivalry, if Mallory is to be believed. Naturally, life is a touch more complicated than the tales would admit. Some of these skillful warriors carry on the legacy of their good breeding; others are as foul and capricious as any wizard. From the elite guard of France to the samurai of Japan, dedicated knights stand high above the common rabble. Most of them know it, and take advantage of that fact.

A good knight is skilled in the arts of social discourse as well as warfare. Arts, letters and grace are considered essential parts of his training, and he is constantly expected to live up to the ideals of his office. If he seems contemptuous, it's just part of his pedigree. After all, every knight wants to be the next Galahad or Gawain — or so he would say.

**Character Creation:** Attributes 8/5/4, Abilities 16/12/5, Backgrounds 6, Willpower 7

**Suggested Attributes:** Physical Traits between 3 and 5; Social ratings of 2 to 4; Mental scores between 2 and 3.

**Suggested Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Seduction 2, Subterfuge 2, Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Melee 4 to 5, Riding 3, Survival 2, Academics 2, Law 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1

**Gear:** Plate armor, sword, shield, lance, horse, dagger, possibly a mace or flail.

## Man-At-Arms

The knights might get the credit, but the man-at-arms is the true hero of the battlefield. Armored in leather and mail, ranked beside others of his kind, this sturdy fellow gives his life — or takes others' — for a cause, a kingdom or a small hag of silver.

It's a living... of a sort.

Surviving a medieval clash of arms takes luck, strength and guts. The skill is less important. A veteran warrior is a tough customer; he brooks no shit and often looks down on "softer" folks. Such a man takes what he wants, and respects power and courage more than honor or office. He may be a mercenary, a guardsman, a barbarian, or a member of a skilled levy, but he's not a pushover.

**Character Creation:** Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 15/10/3, Backgrounds 4, Willpower 5

**Suggested Attributes:** Physical Attributes of 3 or 4; Mental ratings of 2 or 3; Social scores of 1 or 2 (most of these guys are nasty by gentler standards).

**Suggested Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2 or 3, Crafts 2, Melee 3 or 4, Survival 3, Torture 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1, (Firearms 2 or Artillerist 2, in rare cases)

**Gear:** Mail and leather armor, pole arm, bow or crossbow (occasionally a gun and supplies), sword, dagger, food, wine and gambling dice.

## Noble

Power demands skill; it's one thing to be highborn, another to be true nobility. This goes double for women who secure great influence in a male-dominated world. Powerful people have driving goals, sophisticated methods and an array of backup plans and resources. No noble worth the name will dirty his hands in a fight when he can call upon friends and servants to trounce an offender, destroy her social standing or render her helpless before the law.

Rumors, money, favors and intrigue are the weapons of the noble classes; even those who choose not to use them understand *how* to use them. Some nobles work for greater patrons — vampires, magi, kings, the Church — but most have an eye on their own fortunes as well. Rare is the incident that does not afford some nobleman, priest or merchant an opportunity for profit. A party who interferes with that opportunity (or who treats the lord or lady disrespectfully) will learn how powerful a mere "Sleeper" can be.

**Character Creation:** Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 15/9/5, Backgrounds 10 to 15 (high Allies, Influence and Resources), Willpower 5 to 10

**Suggested Attributes:** Social and Mental Traits tend to be higher than Physical ones; assume 3 or 4 in both, with 2 in the Physical scores.

**Suggested Abilities:** Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Intrigue 3 to 5, Subterfuge 3 to 5, Etiquette 3 to 5, Fencing or Melee 2 to 4, Research 2, Survival



(hunting) 3, Academics 3, Law 2, Linguistics 2 to 4, Lore (Vampire or Magus) 1, Moneylending 3, Occult 1, Poison 2

**Gear:** Money, retainers, horses, hawks or hounds, rich clothing, dagger, (possibly a rapier or pistol).

## Rogue

Living on the **outskirts** of the law, the beggar, cutpurse, gypsy and the traveling player ply their shadowy trades. These ne'er-dowells range from honest souls to bloodthirsty killers. Shunned by day, such hardy people nevertheless manage to make friends — especially among the night-folk who share their outcast state. Many magi, vampires and the like do, in fact, hail from the outlaw ranks, and hide among them for protection and solace.

Outlaw society is harsh; Church and crown deny sanctuary to a known rogue; thus, she lives by her wits and her friends. "Honest people" drive her from town to town, and her own kind conspire to take bread from her mouth. Without a common law or king, vagabonds make their own laws; woe to she who defies it — at best, she may be exiled from low society, at worst, she might be killed in any number of gruesome ways.

Still, vagabonds often stick together, if only out of shared misery. The Word of the Church damns them to eternal Hell, so most rogues try to live this life for all it's worth. Rivalries are common, as are betrayals and purges; still, given the choice between a crofter's farm and a wanderer's ways, our rogue would choose the life she leads. At least it isn't dull.

**Character Creation:** Attributes: 6/4/3, Abilities 13/9/4, Backgrounds 5, Willpower 3

**Suggested Attributes:** High Physical and Social Traits (3-5); lower Physical ones for the most part, although players, spies and bandits may be exceptions.

**Suggested Abilities:** Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2 to 4, Larceny 2 to 4, Melee 2 to 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Secret Code Language 2, Occult 3; plus: (*Bandit:* Subterfuge 2, Medicine 1); (*Beggar:* Dodge 2, Etiquette 1, Medicine 2); (*Gypsy:* Expression 2, Crafts 2, Dancing or Singing 2, Hearth Wisdom 2 to 5, Herbalism 2, Linguistics 2, Lore (of some kind) 3); (*Trawling Player:* Artist 2, Expression 2 to 4, Acrobatics 3, Crafts 2, Dancing or Singing 2, Etiquette 3, Linguistics 2); (*Spy:* Awareness 2, Intrigue 3, Disguise 2, Seduction 2, Academics 2, Investigation 4, Linguistics 2, Lore 1); (*Whore:* Expression 2, Seduction 1 to 5, Subterfuge 3, Etiquette 1 to 4, Culture 1 to 3)

**Gear:** Whatever seems appropriate, but not much stuff at any rate.

## Witch-hunter

The bane of wizards, this holy man (or sometimes woman) takes *Exodus* 22:18 as gospel. Although the Christian priest comes immediately to mind, the people of Moses and Mohammed have their enforcers, too. Blessed is the hunter's work.

Such folk are hardy and brave; with weapons, allies, fire and Faith, they stalk the Awakened Ones, false innocents and all the creatures of the night. Most die in the process; the ones who survive become formidable adversaries. They ask no quarter and

employ all forms of ambush, diplomacy and treachery to get the job done. Although the Cabal of Pure Thought has a small army of witch-hunting Brethren in its ranks, many Daedaleans tall victim to the faithful, too. After all, science is just another form of magic to true men of God. Most witch-hunters are just as apt to burn a printing press as a witch's cottage.

Several official groups — the Spanish Inquisition (1480-1808), the Society of Leopold (1231-20th century), the Order of Saint Joan (1230s-20th century), the Iron Knights (1425-1672), the Pristine Silence (1325-1892), the Hammer Society (1490-1800), the Wolves of God (1510-1750) and the Lions of the Prophet's Sword (1256-1804) — pursue witches under the banners of various Churches. Others too numerous to mention spring up through sudden inspiration, do their work and dwindle over the course of the next few centuries. In the Burning Times, there are few sounds more terrifying for mage or mortal than the thunder of boots and the cry "*Sorcerer! Come forth!*" Shouts of "*Burn the witch!*" cannot be far behind.

The following template is for an experienced witch-hunter — one who has spit in the face of the Adversary and lived to hunt again.

**Character Creation:** Attributes 8/6/3, Abilities 21/12/7, Backgrounds 8, Willpower 10

**Suggested Attributes:** Most successful witch-hunters have high Physical and Mental Attributes; assume all other Trait ratings to be 2.

**Suggested Abilities:** Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Larceny 1, Subterfuge 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Melee 4, Ride 2, Stealth 2, Torture 3, Academics 2, Hearth Wisdom 3, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Lore (various types) 3, Metaphysics (Celestigraphy and Demonology) 3, Occult 4

**Gear:** Rope (in England, witches are hanged, not burned), torches, crosses or crucifixes, guns, swords or pole arms (often silver), Bibles, armor and instruments of torture. Many also have several dots of True Faith.

## The Seven Thunders (1490-1501)

- 1: *And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven,...*
  - 2: *And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,*
  - 3: *And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.*
  - 4: *And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.*
- Revelations 10: 1-4

A ragtag collection of rebel prophets and disgruntled peasants, the Seven Thunders of the Coming Apocalypse believe that Judgment Day begins in 1500. As that year approaches, these Faithful folk, in their quest to cleanse the world for Christ's return, topple lords, magi, churchmen and philosopher-scientists.

A simple gang of rable could never achieve that task; the Seven Thunders, however, are not normal peasants. A powerful Faith flows Through them, annihilating their enemies' spells before the enchantments can do much harm. Strong prophecies, powerful exorcism powers (not magick but anti-magick) and acts of God seem to follow these zealots wherever they go. Unlike the Gabrielites, these antagonists brook no compromise; to them, all magi are evil, all magicks are tainted and all science is a blasphemy against the Lord. A large sect of men and women, the Thunders take on all comers and often win.

The leaders come from all over Europe, and display impressive powers. The most famous of them is, of course, **Girolamo Savonarola**, the charismatic friar who leads the bonfires of the vanities in Florence. Preaching to the masses in the city square, he rails against the excesses of the day and the corruption of the Church. **Antonio Casrovinci** comes from Prato, where he echoes Savonarola's sermons. **Glaucus** appears in Rome one day, spreading Vatican secrets among the common folk. **Father John Ploughman** wanders the English countryside foretelling a return of the Great Plague. **Vincente Giacomo** fights alongside Isabella of Castille, driving the Moors into Hell through force of arms. **Fredrich Die Festung** commands an army in Bavaria and rules a small province there. Finally, **Friar Philippe de Gassen** burns down his own abbey rather than tolerate the excesses of the monks and nuns nearby. Each man possesses prophetic gifts, a sharp mind, devastating charisma and grand Faith — enough to make the goddess burn. Each one also commands a legion of followers — common people inspired to rise up for God. Together, these men control an army; a scattered army, true, but one devoted to its cause.

Spurred on by their leaders' visions, these soldiers of the Apocalypse sweep through their native lands, burning magicians' towers and looting throne rooms. With the Final Trump just around the corner, the faithful — men and women alike — have taken on a form of madness. Dressed in rags and robes, they gather for hours at their prophets' feet, then charge off to dismantle some offending monument or run some sinister creature to ground. Many smudge their faces with ash, wear black robes or live wild in the woods; others conceal their devotion until the night comes, then hide behind their former lives at dawn. Like a silent ride, they wash over their targets, then disperse. Without a central meeting place or single leader, the Thunders prove impossible to control.

In game terms, the Thunders are mortals gifted with True Faith and total conviction. The leaders possess Faith ratings of 5 or 6; most lay members have between 1 and 4. Although the Holy Spirit (*or something...*) drives them into occasional frenzies, most Thunders seem perfectly normal, if a bit dogmatic, in casual meetings. A few live like animals, but the majority are hardworking folk with a love for God and a fear of Hell. They're absolutely convinced that the Savior's return is immanent, and will do anything to assure their place in the Book of Life.

**Future Fate:** The year 1500 is a sort of Armageddon for the Seven Thunders. A showdown with the Council of Nine leaves one powerful prophet dead; another falls to the Nephandic Cauls and two more are terminated by the Order of Reason. Savonarola falls out of favor and is tortured and burned in 1498. Robbed of their leadership and disgraced when 1501 comes and goes, the cult disperses... only to return in a slightly different form in 1992, when Antonio Casrovinci's final prophecies come to light.

## Animals

Beasts are everywhere in the Dark Fantastic era. People literally share their homes with dogs, cows, sheep and goats. Knights ride horses into battle. Mysticks shapeshift themselves into wolves or hawks, or turn other people into roads or asses. In short, animals provide essential parts to the setting — helpers, antagonists or even alternate forms. They might not seem as intelligent as human beings, but they're crafty in their own ways.

The following Traits represent a variety of animals in pure systems format. Use them as guidelines when necessary. For simplicity, assume that all wild animals also have Mental Traits at 1, Perception of 2. Trained animals can have a variety of Abilities, from Empathy to Hunting.

- **Bear:** Strength: 5, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 5  
Willpower: 4, Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 3, -3, -5, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Claw for 7 dice; bite for 5 dice  
**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Stealth 1  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 5/20
- **Boar (wild):** Strength: 4, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 4  
Willpower: 3, Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -2, -4, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Bite for 4 dice; gore for 5 dice  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 2  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 7/20
- **Cat (farm):** Strength: 1, Dexterity: 3, Stamina: 3  
Willpower: 3, Health Levels: OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** (Claw or bite for 1 die (can rake for 2 dice when cornered)  
**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Acrobatics 2, Climbing 3, Stealth 4  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 5/20
- **Cougar/Leopard/Panther:** Strength: 4, Dexterity: 4, Stamina: 4  
Willpower: 3, Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 2, -3, -5, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Claw for 6 dice; bite for 5 dice  
**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Acrobatics 2, Climbing 4, Stealth 3  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 10/30

MAGE:  
THE SORCERERS  
CRUSADE



- **Cow/Bull:** Strength: 3/5, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 3/5  
**Willpower:** 2, **Health Levels:** OK x 2, -1 x 2, -3 x 2, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Bite for 3 dice (bulls gore for 4 or 6 dice)  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2 (Brawl 2, Intimidation 3 for bull)  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 10/25
- **Crow/Hawk/Owl/Raven:** Strength: 2, Dexterity: 3, Stamina: 2  
**Willpower:** 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1 x 2, -2, -5, Dead  
**Attack:** Claw for 2 dice; bite for 1 die (desperation)  
**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2 (*Trained birds:* Brawl 3, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4)  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 1/2/20
- **Deer/Stag:** Strength: 2/3, Dexterity: 3, Stamina: 2/3  
**Willpower:** 3, **Health Levels:** OK x 2, -1 x 2, -4 x 2, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Gore for 3 to 5 dice (none for deer)  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Stealth 2  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 7/30
- **Dog (large or guard):** Strength: 3, Dexterity: 3, Stamina: 3  
**Willpower:** 5, **Health Levels:** OK, -1 x 2, -2 x 2, -5, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Bite for 5 dice; claw for 4 dice  
**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Stealth 2  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 7/25
- **Frog (bullfrog-sized):** Strength: 1, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 1  
**Willpower:** 2, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, Squished  
**Attack:** None (some have poison that can paralyze a person who fails a Stamina roll, difficulty 7. The victim must either eat the frog or suffer a wound treated with the frog's poison glands to be affected)  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Dodge 3, Stealth 3  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 1/1/2
- **Horse:** Strength: 5/4, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 4  
**Willpower:** 3, **Health Levels:** OK x 3, -1 x 3, -4, -5, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Trample or kick for 5 to 6 dice; bite for 3 dice  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 1  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 10/35
- **Kraken (Giant Squid):** Strength: 8 to 10, Dexterity: 3, Stamina: 10  
**Willpower:** 10, **Health Levels:** OK x 5, -1 x 3, -3 x 2, -5 x 2, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Squeeze for 8 to 10 dice; bite for 9 to 11 dice (difficulty 7); mass grab (difficulty 6; each success over the first adds 1 die to squeeze attacks as the creature wraps one more tentacle around its prey)  
**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Camouflage 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 10, Stealth 2

**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 0/0/25

- **Lion:** Strength: 4, Dexterity: 3, Stamina: 3  
**Willpower:** 5, Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 3, -2, x 2, -5, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Claw for 5 dice; bite for 6 dice  
**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 5, Stealth 3  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 10/30
- **Rat:** Strength: 1, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 2 to 3  
**Willpower:** 4, Health Levels: OK, -1, -5, Crunched  
**Attack:** Bite for 1 die  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Stealth 3  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 5/10
- **Spider (large):** Strength: 1, Dexterity: 3, Stamina: 1  
**Willpower:** 2, Health Levels: OK, -1, Splat  
**Attack:** Bite for 2 dice + venom for 3-6 additional dice (ar 1 die/turn) if the target does not soak the bite. Stamina roll, difficulty 6, required to soak venom damage  
**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Stealth 5  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 2/5
- **Wolf:** Strength: 2, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 3  
**Willpower:** 3, Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -3, -5, Incapacitated  
**Attack:** Bite for 4 dice; claw for 2 dice  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Stealth 2  
**Move:** Walk/Run/Other: 7/28

## Other Magi

In many ways, a rival mage is the worst enemy a wizard can have. The following templates can serve as inspiration for Storyteller characters of varying power.

### Sample Templates

- An **Apprentice** has either not yet studied the principles of magick, or has begun study, but has not yet achieved Rank One in any Sphere. He's more important for who he may become than for what he can do at the moment.  
**Character Creation:** Attributes: 6/4/3, Abilities: 10/8/3, Backgrounds: 3, Willpower: 3, Spheres: none, Arete: 1-2
- A **Disciple** seeks enlightenment, and has achieved moderate prowess in at least one Sphere (Rank Three and lower).  
**Character Creation:** Attributes: 7/5/3, Abilities: 13/9/5, Backgrounds: 5, Willpower: 5, Spheres: 6, Arete: 1-4
- An **Adept** has reached a level that has transformed her perception. She has gathered personal power in at least one Sphere (Rank Four) and usually others as well.  
**Character Creation:** Attributes: 8/6/3, Abilities: 19/10/5, Backgrounds: 7, Willpower: 8, Spheres: 15, Arete: 4-6

• A Master has achieved Rank Five or higher in one Sphere and probably commands several others at Adept status or higher. Master mysticks have expanded their vision beyond human concerns, while Daedaleans have either achieved monumental influence or retreated into solitude to pursue great dreams.

**Character Creation:** Attributes: 9/6/5, Abilities: 22/10/6, Backgrounds: 10+, Willpower: 8-10, Spheres: 15-30, Arete: 8+

## Infernalists

*He shutteth his eyes to devise forward things: moving his lips, he bringeth evil to pass.*

— Proverbs 16:30

"Witch" is the ultimate curse in the Dark Fantastic era. With it, you can damn an innocent soul to horrible death. Lashed by the terror of Satan's minions, witch-hunters stalk the night, looking for the black magicians they know are waiting nearby.

The hunters are not always mistaken.

The tales of the Black Mass are true. Across the land, hopeless, greedy and malignant folks turn to the Devil for power or solace. In return, some of them receive unholy powers — plague touches, bar wings, fiery fingers and the Evil Eye. In later days, some of these creatures will be called "Nephandi"; many, however, are simply deluded souls with nothing to lose — they think.

Infernalists traffic with devils and wield hell-born magicks. While not nearly as commonplace as the witch-hunters believe, these corrupt mysticks perform unspeakable acts. All the traditional tools of the Black Mass (human sacrifice, mutilation, blasphemy, sexual deviance and demonic servitors) play their parts in the Infernal Arts, and cataclysmic spells (storms, horrific curses and demon-summonings) are their calling cards.

Stereotypical black magicians, Infernalists deliberately turn from the Path and stab their eyes out with the thorns — often symbolically, sometimes literally! They claim such mutilation allows them to see more clearly; surely, their Hell-born magicks compensate for lost sight when some mad Infernalists actually destroy their vision. Many enter repulsive cocoons known as *Cauls*, turning their souls inside-out to better serve the darkness. Although the Christian Church preaches the loudest sermons against such beings, Infernalists are universal. Across the seas, malefic sorcerers — like the cannibalistic Shu-chu and Nhang, the Tzitzimime leopard-people and the Kuat soul-eaters — strike pacts with demonic overlords. On more familiar ground, packs of antichristians, corrupted Pagans and mad Arabs call up damned souls in return for unearthly aid. Infernalists — epitomized by the screaming hordes of Tezghul the Insane — embody everything the common people fear about sorcery and the devil-spawn who wield it.

In game terms, Infernalists are magi or un-awakened cultists who literally serve the forces of the Hells. While some of them follow obscure creeds that justify their damnation — one must have darkness to have light, after all — many simply sell their souls out of desperation, greed or rage. Some do it just for fun, but the rigors of true Infernalism and the ever-present spectre of damnation tend to weed out thrill-seekers. (Their kind become more common in later days.) Most Infernalists form cults, and stage huge, blasphemous orgies that turn Christian and Pagan practices on their heads. Although many cultists are mortal, the truly wicked actually Awaken to the Fallen Path or convert from a higher goal to serve the darkness.

Recognizing an Infernalist isn't always as easy as it might seem. True, some of them *are* blood-crazy maniacs; these folks usually set up forlorn villages or grisly fortresses in remote locations, creating literal Hell-on-Earth's for their amusement. More often, however, a crafty diabolist conceals his true allegiance behind an innocent mask. To all appearances, the devil-worshipper is a kind, possibly even heroic person; behind the mask, a demon laughs. The infamous Baron Gilles de Rais, for example, lived like a lord and practiced private horrors. For Storytellers, an Infernalist provides all kinds of nasty fun. He may lead a bloody cult, summon demons within his hidden sanctum, or undermine an entire court through subterfuge and seduction. By all outside standards, the devil-worshipper is a self-made monster; he may have a perfectly valid reason for his allegiance, but he willingly perverts everything he once held sacred. He may be capable of redemption, but most magi — Council mysticks, Daedaleans and independents alike — won't think the bastard is worth the trouble.

**Future Fate:** In time, the Nephandic sect rises, rivaling the Council and Order in its scope. Right now, these ancestral foes of the Ahl-i-Batin congregate in small cult-webs across the known world. Scattered and disorganized, the Nephandi offer only one face of the Infernal hydra; in the bloody years of plague and warfare that are to come, those cults twist together under the leadership of powerful *Gilledians*. Taking name and inspiration from Giles de Rias, these sorcerers establish a council of their own — the Fellowship of the Eye. United, these legendary corrupters begin a semi-organized campaign to undermine the other magical societies. Given the Nephandic skill with deception and the natural hubris of their targets, this is not difficult. By the 20th century, these Infernalists will have all but won the Ascension War.

## Diabolical Cultist

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Larceny 2, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Hearth Wisdom 2, Occult 3, Poisons 2

**Spheres:** none

**Willpower:** 3

**Quintessence:** none

**Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

**Armor Rating:** none unless they wear some

**Attacks/Powers:** In many cases, they have none; some cultists possess Demonic Invitations (see *Bygone Bestiary*), which make them far more dangerous than normal mortals. *Note:* In numbers, these adversaries are best handled with narrative combat and general action rolls; individually, run cultists as skilled characters.

## Infernalist: Tezghul the Insane

**Nature:** Sensualist

**Demeanor:** Monster

**Essence:** Furo

**Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6, Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

**Abilities:** Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 5, Intrigue 4, Larceny 3, Firearms 2, Melee 5, Survival 4, Torture 4, Lore (Demons 4, Spirits 3, Vampires 3, Werewolves 2), Occult 4, Poisons 3

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Daemon 4, Covenant 5

**Spheres:** Connection 2, Entropy 3, Forces 4, Life 4, Prime 3, Spirit 4

**Arête:** 7

**Willpower:** 8

**Quintessence:** 6

**Scourge:** 8

**Image:** Tezghul is a gigantic Slavic diabolist who combines inhuman strength, demented ferocity and magical power. He has sworn to wipe the "Christian weaklings" from his sight; to that end, he heads a horde of screaming mad-folk (men and women alike) across Europe. Gorged on blood, sex and maddening drugs, these Renaissance Huns bum villages, strip fields, ear their victims alive and sacrifice their souls to Hell.

Tezghul's quest began in the forests of Lithuania. Disgusted by the inroads of the Christian religion, Tezghul's clan dedicate themselves to the demons who flock across the lands (see the **Vampire: The Dark Ages** supplement **Transylvania by Night**). The details of the monster's life (including his birthname) have been lost to posterity; around 1450, however, he emerges at the head of a mad army. Over several years, they establish a corner of Hell — Kupala Alka — along the cold lakes near the Baltic Sea. Ravaging the border towns, they drag live captives back for torture, sacrifice and other entertainments. By 1460, Tezghul's horde spills out across the land, bringing their Infernal allies with it.

Huge, cunning and cruel even by medieval standards, this monstrous stands nearly seven feet tall, carries a jagged war ax, and bedecks himself with heads and twisted armor. A brutish face squats atop his massive shoulders; a greasy black topknot flows down across rock-solid muscles and ragged

mail. The scars and tattoos Tezghul bares accent his unearthly visage. Though he fancies himself a Pagan, the mad-kin of the frozen wastes reveres Kupala the Cornipter and his minions. Ugly as he is, Tezghul might be half-demon himself; tale-tellers claim as much, and the ungodly magicks he fashions do seem to flow more from unholy parentage than from mystick enlightenment. Worst of all, he's intelligent, cunning and gifted with prophecy. If Tezghul is indeed insane, his dementia has made him strong.

**Future Fate:** Tezghul leads his armies across Poland and into Germany and Hungary, killing as he goes. In 1472, a huge battle near Harz, Germany, brings Tezghul down. A large company of Artificer artilleryists and Gabrielite Templars is decimated in the process, but when the morning dawns, the demons have fled and the Infernalist has joined his masters.

## Marauds

*Still I sing bonny boys*

*Bonny mad boys*

*Bedlam boys are bonny*

*For they all go bare and they live by the air*

*And they want no drink nor money*

— Steeleye Span, "Boys of Bedlam"

Some magi wander so far off the Path that they step off the precipice and stumble into the air. Floating like bubbles in a stew, they drift further and further from the roads of sanity, unwilling to Fall but unable to Seek. Other, saner wizards call these madmen *Marauds*, and fear their whims. As unpredictable as demented cats, these magi warp Creation with their very presence.

The generic name "Maraud" comes from a frightening incident: The Irish Covenant of Fuar Drochit was attacked one night by a screaming horde of lunatics. The Mad Ones turned the walls to flower gardens and set fire to the wells. Only two of the Covenant's hosts survived the attack, which came without provocation. "They were like unto the mad, these dread Marauds," went one survivor's account, "an' would not take leave nor take quarter till all were slain therein." Significant as it was, this incident was somewhat misleading; most Marauds work alone, not in packs. Nevertheless, the name stuck. The Traditions and Conventions alike call demented sorcerers Marauds, in left-handed "honor" of the tall of Fuar Drochit.

Mad magi can be found anywhere; the insight that draws them from saner Paths strikes Awakened and mortal alike, often without warning. Some manifestations of the Scourge turn a "normal" mage crazy, but most chronicred Marauds arise from nowhere and depart in secret. In between, however, they wreak havoc on a formidable scale.

Marauds appear to twist the natural order simply by existing; their magicks are as wild as their eyes, and seem immune to the ravages of Scourge. These powers tap into a cosmic madness, stirring beneath the crust of the world, yet are set apart from the Abyss. It's as if they were spawned in the

dreams of God and act out his sleepwalking whims. If Marauds' deeds are reflections of Divine humour, Creation may be in trouble; most often, these demented souls appear like lightning on a clear day, destroy some place or undertaking, and vanish like smoke. Most Mad Ones are loners, and are frightening to encounter. They babble like lunatics, or mutter like an underground stream beneath a crumbling wall. In short, Marauds seem merciless, aimless and without compassion.

In game terms, Marauds do not receive penalties for vain magicks; all their spells are cast as though they were casual. Scourge effects hit the entire area rather than the individual mage — the Maraud himself often seems immune to the backlash of his magicks.

This immunity isn't total: A bad back lash will drive a Mad One crazier than he already is. Each Maraud has a Madness rating — a score from 1 to 10 — instead of a Scourge Trait. (See Chapter IV.) The higher the score, the deeper the insanity. For each botched magick roll, a Maraud receives one point of Madness for every "one" rolled. Three "ones" add three points of Madness to the Maraud's total Madness rating.

Despite the common image of the drooling lunatic, many Marauds appears somewhat normal. The Madness Trait reflects the state of the sorcerer's mind. A "normal" Maraud has a low Madness score; a really demented one rates pretty highly.

Marauds rarely act in conceit. Most simply wander the world until something sends them into fits. Given time and solitude, a Mad One might remain somewhat sane; under stress, he'll fly into a demented state, laughing, weeping, storming into a rage or giggling like a child. A deranged sorcerer is terrifyingly unpredictable, and the Storyteller should run him that way. In many cases, odd things should just *happen* without magick rolls or chart-checking when the Maraud goes by. The only sure thing about a Maraud is that sooner or later, chaos will rise in his presence.

**Future Fate:** The Mad remain pretty much the same up to the modern era — sometimes bonding, often alone, and always unpredictable.

## Madness Chart

- 1 The odd hermit at the edge of the village.
- 2-3 A holy lunatic who speaks loudly to himself and sees things that no one else can see.
- 4-6 A prophet dwelling in a world that seems real only to him. He may speak to you, but will call you by a different name-
- 7-9 A babbling madman who tears holes in Creation as he passes by. Rocks melt; rain falls upward; clothing tatters, and gold becomes water. He cannot see you, except perhaps as another laughing dream.
- 10 With an unholy scream, the Mad One falls through the Tapestry of Creation and disappears into some Heaven or Hell.

## The Skull-Child

**Nature:** Unknown

**Demeanor:** Waif

**Essence:** Mare

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Awareness 5, Dodge 4, Intimidation 5, Meditation 3, Stealth 3, Survival 5, Lore (Spirit) 4, Occult 5

**Backgrounds:** Allies (Spirits) 4, Arcane 3, Daemon 4

**Spheres:** Entropy 4, Forces, 3, Life 3, Prime 2, Spirit 2

**Arete:** 5

**Willpower:** 10

**Quintessence:** 4

**Madness:** 5

**Image:** Who is this wandering hoy, and why do disasters follow him everywhere he goes? Barefooted, dressed in rags, this nameless orphan totters from town to town, bearing a tall, black walking stick topped by a skull. The child never speaks, nor does he respond to anything anyone says. Most people who've heard of him run away when he appears — things always go wrong as the child passes by. While an act of kindness might stall the bad luck, the child's curse follows anyone who deals with him in any way. Is he, as some say, the vengeful Savior, or a cruel boy who taunted Christ on his way to Calvary? Is the child a demon, a ghost or the Scourge incarnate? No one has been able to find out.

Pale and blonde, the Skull-child appears to be about seven years of age. His angelic good looks make the skull on his staff seem all the more gruesome. The stick itself is smooth, carved from a piece of glossy black wood and inscribed with timeless nines. Tales say the wood comes from trees growing on the banks of Hell's rivers. The skull appears to scream in pain; though it never makes a sound, witnesses claim they can hear distant wails as the child shuffles silently past.

**Future Fate:** No one knows. The Skull-child reportedly wanders until the late 1800s. Several stories place him in Flanders, Ypres, Stalingrad, Dachau, Dresden, Laos and Kuwait City, but those tales could be fabrications.

## Elemental Spirits

Summoned by alchemists and elementalists, these minor spirits are more sophisticated than folk tales would have one believe. Temperamentally suited to their elements, such entities appear from large quantities of the appropriate materials and may shift those materials around at will.

### Gnome (Earth)

**Willpower 10, Rage 3, Gnosis 4, Power 40**

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Armor, Cleanse the Blight, Element Sense, Materialize, Meld, Tracking (only for things that touch the earth)

**Materialized Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 2,

**Abilities:** Alertness 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Crafts (Farming) 5

**Image:** Like a gnarled little man, the gnome trundles along with a deliberate gait. His warty skin resembles loose soil and his eyes are as dull as coal. Shoots of grass form his hair and beard, and bare rocks serve as his teeth. His voice is a grumble, scraping like slate in slow, emphatic phrases.

Like the stone, a gnome is stubborn; he'll do *what* he wants *when* he wants to, and cannot be hurried along. Though kindly to strangers, this earth-spirit has a suspicious nature. It is the way of man to move the earth, and the gnome wants no part of such nonsense. He'll move when it is time — no sooner.

### Hamadryad (Wood)

**Willpower 4, Rage 4, Gnosis 5, Power 25**

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Cleanse the Blight, Element Sense (within woods), Materialize, Meld, Soul Reading

**Materialized Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Awareness 4, Brawl 3, Stealth 5, Survival 5, Herbalism 5

**Image:** Oddly formed and nearly skeletal, this wood-spirit vaguely resembles a woman twisted into impossible shapes. Deeply affronted by corruption or disease, the hamadryad looms out of the trees she inhabits — silent, curious and bending in eternal breezes.

Oriental, African and Native American mysticks are fairly familiar with wood spirits and know them by a variety of names. European sorcerers, tilted with tales of beautiful tree-women, see hamadryads (or simply *dryads*) as fetching young lasses. In all cases, they're shy entities. Unless threatened, they tend to remain beyond the Gauntlet, watching but not interfering in mortal lives.

### Ondine (Water)

**Willpower 4, Rage 6, Gnosis 7, Power 20**

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Cleanse the Blight, Element Sense, Flood, Materialize, Meld, Waves

**Materialized Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Crafts (Fishing) 5, Seduction 5, Stealth 5

**Image:** The inspiration for mermaid legends (*one of the inspirations, anyway*), the ondine frolics like a naked wench. She loves to play with mortals, but some of her games — like dragging sailors under for a drowning kiss — have dark overtones. Like the sea she embodies, this spirit is graceful, strong and sensual. When she speaks, her words hiss and flow.

Fresh rivers and seas give rise to clean-limbed ondines; stagnant waters, swamps and fens produce the dreaded hags that, according to the tales, sport with children before filling their lungs with water. The friendliest spirits are said to come from mountain springs and hidden creeks, where the water runs clean and pure.

## Salamander (Fire)

**Willpower 5, Rage 8, Gnosis 4, Power 30**

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Armor, Blast Flame, Create Fires, Element Sense, Materialize, Meld

**Materialized Attributes:** Strength 3/6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3/6

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Brawl 5, Intimidation 6, Enigmas 4

**Image:** A fiery lizard with scales of bronze, the salamander waddles across the ground, setting things ablaze as it moves. When it speaks — and it can — the creature's words ride on puffs of smoke. A happy salamander remains small and smoldering; if someone angers the lizard, it grows to a dragon's size and burns the whole area to ashes.

Salamanders are consumers, always thirsty and ravenous. A magus can get on a fire-spirit's good side by offering it a meal. Oddly enough, these spirits love to talk; in crackling voices, they cheerfully insult everyone and offer up riddles without solutions.

## Sylph (Air)

**Willpower 4, Rage 4, Gnosis 6, Power 30**

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Appear, Cleanse the Blight, Create Wind, Materialize, Soul Reading

**Materialized Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 6, Stamina 2

**Abilities:** Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Awareness 5, Brawl 1, Dodge 6, Stealth 8, Investigation 6, Occult 4

**Image:** An ephemeral girl with winged ankles and flowing hair, the sylph rides an ever-present wind. When the spirit is calm, a smooth breeze blows; if something upsets her, a tempest swirls into being.

Insightful beyond human limits, the sylph communes with the greater spirits and observes Creation from the winds blowing between worlds. Unless she wills otherwise, such a spirit remains invisible. Her voice, if she chooses to speak, is a whisper only a magus can hear.

## Yundao (Metal)

**Willpower 8, Rage 4, Gnosis 3, Power 30**

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Armor, Materialize, Meld, Shapeshift, Soul Reading

**Materialized Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 8

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 5, Crafts (Smithing) 5, Metaphysics (Stone Lore) 6, Occult 4 (silver yundao only)

**Image:** A huge, malproportioned head with blind eyes and spindly arms and legs, this elemental shines like polished steel. Completely hairless, the yundao's limbs jut from the sides of his skull-body. When he moves, this metal-spirit clashes like armor plates. His voice echoes as if from afar, and his words seem sharp and stilted. Metal is the shaper and the craftsman's guide. With a bit of prodding, he will reveal helpful secrets and techniques of forging.

Different metals give rise to different yundao; iron spirits are warlike, gold ones kind; silver ones have mystick insights, while quicksilver yundao move and speak quickly. The brass elementals have nasty tempers and sneaky dispositions, and copper or bronze yundao display carnal tendencies (a frightening thought, even for an Ecstatic!) Lead-spirits are, of course, slow, dull and very, very thick.

## Magickal Treasures

*If all men were virtuous, I should with great alacrity teach them all to fly.*

— Leonardo da Vinci

**Note:** See **Chapters IV** and **VIII** for details. The "Cost" listing reflects the Background points required to buy the item. An "N/A" Cost means the item cannot be purchased by player characters.

## Talismans and Fetishes

### • Fencing Square

**Arete 2, Quintessence N/A, Cost 2**

Although Gerald Thibault's *L'Academie de L'Espee* would not be published until 1629 (a year after his death) the Pythagorean principles of fencing are being secretly developed in the time of **The Sorcerers Crusade**.

The magickal Fencing Square is a training tool. A diagram rather than a device, the Square is composed of a circle or square drawn upon the floor. Its size depends on an exacting formula calibrated by the mage's size and reach — his thrust, his sidestep, etc. Once the calculations have been made and the Square created, it can be used to perform and perfect fencing maneuvers, somewhat like the martial arts *katas* of the Far East. Such exercises are more than simple physical athletics. (They're spiritual training tools to experientially teach the mysteries of three-dimensional geometry). They are, in other words, the Arts of the Connection Sphere.

Although the system's most famous practitioner, Thibault (a Guildsman), would publish a modified Spanish style, many different styles can be applied to the methods. Indeed, some claim the Square originated in the Ahl-i-Batins' swordsmanship training. The Batini emissary Daud-Allah Abu-Hisham reputedly uses such designs, and has been seen teaching them to his Akashic friend Fall Breeze.

[When used on a daily basis, this Talisman "teaches" the Connection Sphere as if it were a five-point Library-Background. (See **Chapter IV**.) To employ the Square properly, its user meditates for at least a half-hour, practices for at least an hour and meditates again for another half-hour after the exercise is done. Each week spent this way allows a mage studying Connection to make one roll. The design will *not* teach a magus to exceed her usual Sphere powers, or to transcend the Arete limitations; it grants an increased awareness, not a sudden magickal boost.]

• **Hare's-foot Ward**

**Arete 2, Quintessence 10, Cost 4**

The hare is ever the enemy of the dog. In most cases, the dog wins; this fetish, however, allows the spirit of the hare to strike back — in a way.

A respectful hunter may beg the hare-spirit to linger in her remains for a time. After a sacrifice to the hare's family (usually an offering of food left near the warren) has been made, the spirit may stay within her severed leg; there, she gifts the hunter with silent feet. If any dog should notice the fetish-carrier, the spirit silences the canine, too. Obviously, a hunter who employs dogs cannot use such a fetish — especially if a dog was used to kill the hare in the first place. After a time, the hare considers her job done and leaves the fetish behind.

[In game terms, this fetish adds its "Arete" to the character's Stealth Dice Pool; additionally, it silences any nearby dog (for the rest of the scene) before the animal can bark. This works for one foray per point (if Quintessence; after 10 uses, the spirit departs and the foot becomes useless (as the Storyteller's discretion, though, it may still give the hunter a hit of luck at odd times).]

•• **Twilight Balm**

**Arete N/A, Quintessence 10, Cost 4**

This odd poultice, meant to be wrapped about the forehead, is said to relieve the fever caused by "ell-shot," the invisible poison arrows employed by vengeful faeries. Such venom is beyond mortal cure and wrecks a painful wasting death on its victims. Some Umbrood use similar toxins, or infect their prey with spiritual rot; such attacks are likewise immune to mortal remedies.

An old Pagan concoction, this poultice is efficacious against all forms of spiritual wounding. It requires a mandrake root and clean linen, wrapped with 47 herbs gathered at dawn, and must be applied by the light of the moon. By dawn, the patient will be cured.

[Each point of Quintessence represents one application of the balm; the Background Cost covers one large batch, which may be made into poultices as needed. The cure takes one night, and nearly always works. A single batch lasts for one moon-cycle; after that, it must be discarded and a new balm must be concocted. The Storyteller may disregard the Cost if she wishes, and simply give this finite Talisman to her players in the course of the tale.]

•• **Anulus Vigil (the Watchful Guardian Ring)**

**Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Cost 6**

Treachery is a common thing in the courts and markets of Tuscany. To ward off assassinations, magicians craft Guardian Rings for their aides, their friends and themselves. Often made of gold and studded with rubies, such rings glow in the presence of poison; the magic cannot reveal the would-be killer, but if can discern the instrument of her game. The closer the poison, the brighter the ruby glows.

For obvious reasons, golden rings are popular jewelry among the Italian nobility; many of the so-called "prince's friends," however, are non-magical fakes. Runic sorcerers from the cold North craft similar protections out of drinking horns, wooden tankards and iron cups; an Algiz rune on the vessel, once blooded, glows or bleeds in the presence of treachery.

[If the wearer encounters some poisoned item or food, the Storyteller rolls the Talisman's "Arete" against difficulty 7; a successful roll makes the ruby (or rune) act appropriately. A failed roll lets the poison pass undetected.]

•••• **Sleepwalker's Drum**

**Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Cost 8**

With the steady beating of a drum, an owl-shaman can put a man to sleep and ride his spirit for a time. Within the drum, a slumber-spirit dwells; the thumping of the drumstick rouses the spirit and bids it to go forth into the shaman's enemy. Once there, the being enters the victim's body and compels him to sleep. He then opens a channel between the drum's owner and the victim. The shaman leaves her body behind and follows the spirit of the fetish. For one night, the enemy becomes the vessel of the shaman; she may walk in his body, plumb his memories and speak with his voice. In the morning, the two spirits depart, and sleep for a full day afterward. The victim of possession remembers the night as a long, terrible dream, but cannot recall who was responsible for it.

[The shaman beats her drum to begin a possession spell; her player rolls the fetish's "Arete"; the difficulty for the roll is either 7 or the target's Willpower rating, whichever is greater. If the roll succeeds, the victim belongs to the fetish owner for one full night. During that time, the shaman lapses into a death-like trance. In the morning, the trance becomes a deep but normal sleep, and the drum becomes a simple instrument again. The spirit inside rests for at least one week afterward. A failed roll deflects the spell and a botched one puts the shaman to sleep instead. Since the spell is effectively invisible, this magic is casual.]

••••• **Bolingbroke's Cathedra**

**Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Cost N/A**

Roger Bolingbroke (a magus of House Tytalus) is famous in England for his ritual items. After the magus is accused of a plot to murder King Henry VI, and is locked away, his magical artifacts are put on display for the public; soon they are pilfered and replaced by fakes.

Chief among these items is the Golden Cathedra, a large wooden chair painted with mystical sigils and hung with woods and copper images. Within that chair, it is said, "he was wont to sit when he wrought his necromancie." Supposedly, the enchanted seat allowed Bolingbroke to scry faraway places, commune with spirits and cast distant magicks from his protected sanctuary. Surely, such an item would be quite valuable, especially within the Hermetic ranks. Yet the Cathedra has disappeared from mortal and magical sight. Who knows where it might be now? Or to what purposes it might be put?

[A unique Talisman, the Cathedra provides its "owner" with the following powers:

- An effective Arcane Background of 5;
- A **Farsight** spell at Arete 5;
- A **Mercury's Bridge**, also at Arete 5;
- A **Ward** at the same effectiveness;
- A **Spirit Wall**, again at Arete 5.

According to rumor, the seat is possessed by a malicious spirit that demands a blood offering each time the magicks are employed. Bolinghroke supposedly captured peasant children and fed the chair with their warm blood each full moon. The truth behind these rumors is left to the Storyteller's discretion, but no magus gets something for nothing—]

## Machinae and Devices

### • Abundanti's Oil

**Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Cost 2 per barrel**

Through strange refinements, the Craftsmasons distill a lamp-oil that lasts for weeks instead of days. Flammable in the extreme, Abundanti extract makes a volatile but efficient energy source. Daedaleans use it to light lamps, produce incendiaries, grease clockworks and stoke furnaces. Some ingenious artisans have even begun to incorporate engines into their Machinae — engines that run on this "eternal" fuel. The formula remains a closely guarded secret, of course — one that several Grand Financiers would love to get their hands on. In the meantime, the Craftsmasons keep their lodges solvent with a brisk trade in Abundanti's Oil... and distribute free fuel among the common folk each winter.

[This Oil is, for all intents and purposes, high-test gasoline. Compared to the truly inefficient energy sources of the time, however, the extract seems miraculous. A barrel of Abundanti's Oil explodes for 15-20 dice of fire damage and burns for an hour or more.]

### • Titan's Armor, or Saint George's Plate

**Arete 4, Quintessence N/A, Cost 6**

First crafted by the Milanese Artificer Julianni Tibaldo (1367-1401), Titan's Armor combines the best refinements of articulated plate with the so-called "dragon's egg" ore. Refined through alchemical secrets, this ore provides the foundation for Tibaldo steel; master armorers work that steel into massive suits of plate armor. Crafted into impressive designs, these shells can withstand almost anything. Greatswords bounce off leaving hardly a dent, and moiningstars barely scratch the finish.

A warrior in Titan's Armor is indeed impressive — so impressive that a "latent effect" in the steel awes anyone who gazes upon the carapace. Each suit of Saint George's Plate (named for the legendary dragon slayer) turns a man into a mountain; craftsmen build upon the warrior's true muscles, but exaggerate them to godlike proportions. Although heavy — over 60 pounds — the armor is less unwieldy than it looks. A warrior can jump, run and fight

almost as well in the armor as he could without it. Such plate is ridiculously expensive; it costs more than some villages harvest in a year and takes over six months to craft. The most elite Gabrielites, Artificers and Guildsmen feel the price is worth it, however; possessing surpassing beauty and uncanny strength, each Titan suit is a masterpiece. Even the thrifty Craftsmasons concede that such extravagance is sometimes necessary when the hordes of Hell walk the land.

[In game terms, Saint George's Plate offers its wearer an Armor Rating of 8 and a Divine Aura enchantment (roiled with the "Arete" of the armor). The character's Perception and Dexterity Dice Pools are reduced by two; it takes at least 15 minutes to strap the wearer into his suit, and almost that long to remove it. As a rule, Titan's Armor is custom-made; no one, short of a near-identical twin, could fit into another person's plate.]

### • Horatius' Thunder

**Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Cost 6**

Though guns will not attain real practicality for another century or so, the Order of Reason is in an experimental frame of mind these days. Many firearms, ranging from the efficient to the ridiculous, appear in Daedalean hands. One of the most common of them is the five-barreled pistol called Horatius' Thunder. Roughly a foot-and-a-half long and fairly heavy, this wheellock weapon spins its chambers after each shot. Although it takes a while to reload, the gun's rate of fire surpasses anything else available during this age.

The pistol's shot is impressive, too. Horatius' Thunderbolts (round iron balls impregnated with sulfur) burst into flame as they leave the gun and continue burning in the target's flesh. If those shots strike flammable materials, they're sure to start a fire. Some artisans craft balls of silver or cold iron, too, or have them blessed by a priest before a fight. While the latter is difficult — most men of God abhor firearms, even if both belong to the Order of Reason — such "holy teardrops" are very popular among monster-hunters. The ammunition can be hard to come by. Therefore, many Thunder-bearers learn to mold their own — and to repair the notoriously finicky wheellock mechanisms.

[This five-barreled wheellock fires superheated ammunition with the impact of a Forces 3/Prime 2 spell. Even the normal bullets cause aggravated damage, and "holy teardrops" prey on the weaknesses of werewolf and fae. The Quintessence rating reflects a batch of ammunition, which must be replaced once it's gone.

[The Thunder shoots five rounds in succession — one per turn. After those five shots, the Thunder must be reloaded; this takes several minutes, as the barrels must cool before the next bullets can be chambered. On a botched roll, the pistol either jams (requiring some impromptu gunsmithing) or explodes (Storyteller's option). Vulgar in most places, Thunder pistols are prone to Scourge lashings.]

••• **Viasilicos**

**Arete 6, Quintessence 30, Background Cost 9**

Scrying Devices from Craftmason workshops, Viasilicos (VEE-a-SIL-i-cos) help keep the Order of Reason together. Through arcane correspondences, these crystal "speakstones" allow Facilitators and Magistrates to speak over long distances. As sunlight illuminates the patterns etched in the glass, images glow within the designs. Through these phantoms, Daedalean masters discuss their plans.

To the untrained eye, a Viasilicos resembles a large quartz cut and polished into a perfect geometric shape; some are simple — pyramids, cubes, and so forth — while others take on complex forms — hexagons, decagons, etc. The shape plays a key role in the Device's function; the craftsmen who make the stones claim each Viasilicos is carved to attune to its surroundings. Moving a stone severs its link to the *pathway* (the "network"); the geomantic principles that guide the Devices rely on absolute placement. The rooms where "speakstones" rest are also shaped to channel the energy of the stones, and to admit just the right light at the proper times. Communication after nightfall is impossible — Viasilicos requires sunlight, and artificial illumination will not suffice. Several stones can be linked together at once, but since each of them requires sunlight, the conferring parties must share the time of day.

To employ a "speakstone," a Daedalean must meditate upon its designs for an hour or more, project his thoughts to a distant key in the "network" and trace the designs with his fingers. The recipient must be watching her own stone to see the message; most Facilitators send a messenger ahead of time, bearing a conference announcement and setting the appointed time for it. Viasilicos may only communicate with stones keyed to the same correspondence; several pathways exist, most unconnected to the others. To reach a pathway, a Daedalean must possess the proper stone; thus, many Magistrates own several Viasilicos, each in its own room. These rooms, it should be noted, are heavily locked and often guarded.

[Through a Connection link, a clutch of Viasilicos sends instantaneous messages to each other. The "Arete" roll establishes the link, which lasts up to four hours at a time. Any mark upon the stone, or any movement it suffers, destroys the connection forever; until some disaster occurs, though, any Viasilicos can communicate with another one on the same pathway. These Devices, it should be noted, are vain, but hardly anyone ever sees them in action.]

••••• **Skyrigger**

**Arete 5, Quintessence N/A, Cost 10**

When the Celestial Masters plumbed the so-called "firmament" in the early 1400s, they discovered that what everyone believed was a black shell actually extended farther

than anyone had imagined. In a quest to reach "the end of the skies," the Masters sent Celestial Craft — soon dubbed "Skyriggers"—into space. The horrors they discovered there so appalled the Masters that many of them went mad or burned their records and devoted themselves to the Church.

Those who refused to give way before the cosmos went on to perfect a small armada of Skyriggers, train a brave (if somewhat fatalistic) marine corps — also called Skyriggers, as well as Void Masters and other, less flattering names — and wed the one to the other. In an age where explorers are beginning to disprove the "ends of the Earth" theory, the *Profundum Expeditio* has no lack of volunteers. The ships in service during the early years of the *Expeditio* are sturdy vessels crewed by hardy men (and the occasional woman in disguise, too). The requirements for such service are pretty strict, but Skyriggers don't require large crews. The average craft "sails" with 40 men — far fewer than a sea-bound vessel would require.

In form and function, a Skyrigger resembles a sea-ship of grand design. Outfitted with balloons, fins and sails jutting out at odd angles, the average Rigger's hull reaches 100 feet from end to end. Balloons pull the ship from the ground and carry it into the heavens, where the starwinds bear the ship into deep space. Three decks, luxuriously appointed, house the crew, the guns and enough supplies to last a year. In place of the usual waterline and topsails, the craft sports vanes, windows and armaments. Since the concept of the airless void has yet to be conceived, Skyriggers need no life-support facilities; many crewmen, however, wear protective gear — a cross between armor and the diving suits of later centuries — when they go wandering across strange planers.

Ah, yes... "strange planers." They *are* inhabited, you know, and many Celestial Masters meet the natives — sometimes the hard way. While the civilization on Mars is long dead, a mysterious valley on the Moon continues to give the Skyriggers trouble. Other, more remote places have offered shelter to the intrepid Celestial Masters, but the inhabitants have been less than accommodating. A mandibled *thing*, larger than a Paris cathedral, demolished two out of three ships on a recent expedition to Venus. To ward off such creatures, the Masters equip their Skyriggers with huge blades, cannons, spike-throwers and razor-edged spines. The few ships that survive long enough to return home bring back tales of unimaginable horrors in an endless space — not angels in an ordered Heaven, but demons in an eternal Void.

Skyriggers lift off from shipyards in the dead of night. In fleets

oftwo to five, they rise toward the Moon and keep ongoing. Lit by Abundanri's Oil, the ships' lamps glow like tiny stars. Wrapped in thick clothes and blankets, the brave crewmen navigate with odd Devices that change their coordinate; throughout the journey.

[Like a sailing ship, a Skyrigger is effectively a plot device. For damage purposes, the ship's hull has an effective Armor Rating of 8 and can sustain 15 Health Levels before rupturing. Explosive decompression is not a real worry in the odd "space" of the Void, but a leak can be fatal if it isn't fixed quickly.]

## Resources

The following works have helped us, and may prove helpful to you as well. Especially worthwhile, influential or intriguing works have been marked (\*) accordingly. Enjoy!

### Books

- Ahmed, Rollo, *The Black Art*.
- Agrippa, Henry Cornelius, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. Very heavy going.
- \* *Ars Magica* (published in four editions by Lion Rampant, White Wolf, Wizards of the Coast and most recently Atlas Games) provides the groundwork from which many Mage ideas, most notably the Order of Hermes, were drawn. *ArM* takes place several centuries before The Sorcerers Crusade, but offers fertile ground for Storyteller; who want a really detailed world setting.
- \* Artwork by: Sandra Botticelli, Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Breughel (the Elder), Michelangelo Buonarroti, Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Durer, Hans Holbein, Andrea Mantegna, Raphael, Tintoretto, Tirian and Paolo Veronese; as well as post-Renaissance painters like Gustave Dore, Alan Lee, Lord Leighton, Sir Edward Bume-Jones, Gustave Moreau, Dante Rossetti, J.W. Waterhouse and Joachim Wiewael.
- \* Archiry, Kenneth, *The Renaissance Reader*.
- \* Bruce-Mitford, Miranda, *The illustrated Book of Signs and Symbols*. Great stuff, especially for Storytellers. Two other symbolism books, Udo Becker's *Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols* and David Fontana's *The Secret Language of Symbols*, are very helpful, too.
- Camoens, Luis Vaz de, *The Lusians*.
- Castiglione, Baldassarro, *The Book of the Courtier*.
- Cavendish, Richard, *The BlackArts; History of Magic*.
- Cellini, Benvenuto, *Autobiography*.
- Diaz, Bernal, *The Conquest of the New World*.

• \* Dummett, Michael, *The Visconti-Sforza Tarot Cards*. The Tarot was born during the Renaissance, and the designs on this earliest surviving deck are both beautiful and inspirational. An excellent way to combine the arcana of Renaissance magic with the opulence of Renaissance politics.

- Durant, Will, *The Renaissance*.
- Eliade, Mircea, *The Forge and the Crucible*.
- French, Peter, *John Dee*. Although Dee lived at the tail end of the Renaissance, he was a true Renaissance man — astronomer, cartographer, mathematician, spy and ceremonial magician to Queen Elizabeth I.
- \* Giles, Frances and Joseph, *Cathedral, Forge and Waterwheel, Life in a Medieval Village and Life in a Medieval City*.
- Hugo, Victor, *Notre Damn de Paris*
- \* Huizinga, Johan, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. Cultural history of the late-Middle Ages and early Renaissance — more interested in how people lived and thought than in which king killed whom. His *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation* gives an intellectual history of **The Sorcerers Crusade** period in Europe.

• \* James, Peter and Thorpe, Nick, *Ancient Inventions*. Great Daedalean idea book.

- \* Machiavelli, Nicolo, *The Prince*.
- \* **Mage: The Ascension**, and its supplements **The Fragile Path**, **The Book of Mirrors**, **The Book of Madness**, **Horizon: Stronghold of Hope** and the various **Tradition** books, offer a great deal of back history from varying perspectives. The Mage Classics collections also contain two helpful resources: **The Book of Chantries** and **Ascension's Right Hand**.

• \* Manchester, William, *A World Lit Only by Fire*. A masterpiece of "dramatic history," and a huge influence on **The Sorcerers Crusade**.

- \* Marlowe, Christopher, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*.
- Parry, J.H., *The Age of Reconnaissance and The Establishment of European Hegemony*. Excellent studies of the "imperialistic" side of the Age of Exploration.
- Ross, James Bruce and McLaughlin, Mary Martin, eds., *The Portable Renaissance Reader*.
- \* Shakespeare, William, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night* and many others.

Historically, Shakespeare lived and wrote roughly 50 years after the Sorcerers Crusade period ends. His plays, however, are period pieces, histories, tragedies and fantasies set "long, long ago" — in other words, within the proper time frame for this setting.

- Time/Life's "Great Ages of Man" series, Renaissance. Another easy-access hook for players and Storytellers (not to mention writers and game designers).

- Trevor-Roper, H.R., *The European Witch-Craze*. Short, solid, and readable history of the witch hunts that begin in the Renaissance and continued for nearly 200 years.

- \* **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, and its supplements **Book of Storyteller Secrets**, **Three Pillars** and **The Dark Ages Companion**, present a lush, sinister portrait of the world that birthed the Ascension War. The rulebook details the magi of the time on pages 248-254-

- \* Wind, Edgar, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*. An intriguing work of art history that establishes the depth of "occult" understanding in the Renaissance artists.

- Vess, Charles, *Ballads and Sagas*. An ongoing graphic novel series based on contemporary songs and poetry.

- \* Yarbrow, Chelsea Quinn, *The Palace*.

- Yates, Frances, *The Art of Memory*, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, and *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.

## Music

Altan

The Benedictine Monks (*Chant*)

- \* Carl Orff (*Carmiria Burana*)

- \* The Changelings

- \* The Chieftains (barring their modern pop work)

- \* Dead Can Dance

Fairport Convention (esp. *Liege and Lief* and *Full House*)

- \* Faith and the Muse (heavy influence on this book)

- \* Hildegard von Bingen

- \* Paul Mc Cartney's (!) *Standing Stone* (dump preconceptions; this classical symphony is great stuff. Not pop, not sappy)

Pentangle

Maggie Sansone

- \* Sonus

- \* Steeleye Span/Maddy Prior

...and various soundtracks (*Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *The Name of the Rose*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Conan the Barbarian*, etc.)

## Films

Sadly, there aren't many good movies set in the Renaissance. The most influential films often bookend the period by 200 years or so. Still, there are many dramatic nuggets to be mined from the following works:

- \* *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*. Not period, but very Mage.

- \* *Dangerous Beauty*. Exquisite tale of love, sex and power in old Venice.

- \* *Dangerous Liaisons*. Again, not period. Still, it offers a grand glimpse of sordid court intrigues and affairs of the...heart?

- *Dragonlayer*

- \* *Flesh + Blood*

- 1492: *Conquest of Paradise*

- \* *The Horseman on the Roof*. A French tale of romance, plague and class privilege. Not Renaissance, but close enough to have an influence on **The Sorcerers Crusade**.

- \* *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. (Universal or Disney)

- \* *The Seventh Seal*

- \* "Shakespeare films" — Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, Branagh's *Henry V*, Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (*The Tempest*). Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (*Macbeth*) and Ran (King Lear), the Fishburne-Branagh *Othello*, and the Branagh and Gibson versions of *Hamlet*,

- \* *The Three Musketeers* (1970s version) and *The Four Musketeers*. Although out of period by a century or so, this classic swashbuckler (shot as one film and edited into two) offers a great view of court intrigue, low society and high adventure.

## Those Who Deserve Credit

No ship is built with a single set of hands. The wrights whose handwork helped launch this craft include:

The first edition team (Stewart, Steve, Rob, and all the rest), who pulled a lot of all-nighters to deliver the initial concept of **Mage**; Sam Chupp (who helped create the Council of Nine); Brian Campbell, Judy McLaughlin and Chris Hind (who crafted the background of the Technocracy); Bill Bridges and Kathleen Ryan (who brainstormed up more metaphysical weirdness than you can possibly imagine); Kevin Andrew Murphy (who helped rework the Spheres, and added flavor to the original **Mage's** 20th-century brew); Jim Moore, Tina Jens, Beth Fischl, Owl Goingback and Nancy Kilpatrick (who helped create the First Cabal, and chronicled their adventures in **The Fragile Path**); Steven Brown (who laid many foundations with **The Book of Chantries**); Emery Barnes, Sam Inabinet, Allen Varney and J. Porter Wiseman (who, in various books, added bits of mythology including the Himalayan Wars, the Ahl-i-Batin, Horizon's history and the Chakravanti's foundations); Nicky Rea, Jackie Cassada and Wendy Blacksin (for endless moral and creative support); this book's writing and research team (see the credits page); Rich Danksy (for solving the name dilemma); and all the various **Mage** artists I looked to for inspiration, especially Anthony Hightower, Mark Jackson, David Leri, Larry MacDougal, Rob MacNeil, Heather McKinney, Paul Phillips, Alex Sheikman and Josh Timbrook.

We did good, folks!

— Phil Brucato



Name:  
 Player:  
 Chronicle:

Nature:  
 Essence:  
 Demeanor:

Concept:  
 Affiliation:  
 Cabal:

## Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●○○○○
Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●○○○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●○○○○

## Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	○○○○○
Artist	○○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Culture	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Lore	○○○○○
Instruction	○○○○○	Research	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Riding	○○○○○	Metaphysics	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

## Spheres

Connection	○○○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

## Advantages

Backgrounds	Arete	Health
_____ ○○○○○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Bruised -0 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○		Hurt -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○		Injured -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○		Wounded -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○		Mauled -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○		Crippled -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○		Incapacitated <input type="checkbox"/>

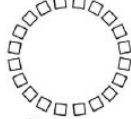
### Other Abilities

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Willpower

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### Quintessence



### Scourge

### Experience

## Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus

### Preferred Enchantments

### Weaveries

## Magickal Treasures

Name	Level	Arcane	Quintessence	Appearance

## Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Conceal

### Brawling Table

Maneuver	Difficulty	Damage
Body-check	7	(Special) Str. +2
Disarm	8	0
Grapple	6	Str. + Spec.
Kick	7	Str. +1
Parry	6	0
Punch	6	Strength
Shield Parry	6	0
Throw	(Var.)	(Weapon)

Special Maneuvers	Roll	Difficulty	Effect	Notes

### Armor

Type	Protection	Penalty

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North Sea

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Ireland

Wales

England

Netherlands

Denmark

Sweden

Baltic Sea

Holy Roman Empire

Brandenburg

Silesia

Saxony

Moravia

Bavaria

Austria

Tyrol

Salzburg

Swiss Canton

Milan

Savoy

Venice

Pisa

Papal States

Venetian Territories

Adria Sea

Florence

Siena

Napes

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Tunis

Mediterranean Sea

Muslim Lands

Portugal

Spain

Navarre

Portugal



Livonia

1500

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hungary

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Aegean Sea

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