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MAGE

The Ascension™

The Ascension™

A Storytelling Game of Modern Magick™

by Stewart Wieck
with Chris Earley
and Stephan Wieck

Truth Until Paradox™

Mage™ uses the Storyteller™ Game system
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Dedication

This game is dedicated to Robert M. Pirsig, author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) and *Lila* (1991). Many people talk of paradigm shifts, but Pirsig makes them real. In this game, mages are the people who draw us onward toward their own Dynamic Quality. Pirsig is a mage of this kind, and I highly recommend both his books.

"What is in mind is a sort of Chautauqua — that's the only name I can think of for it — like the traveling tent-show Chautauquas that used to move across America, this America, the one that we are now in, an old-time series of popular talks intended to edify and entertain, improve the mind and bring culture and enlightenment to the ears and thoughts of the hearer. The Chautauquas were pushed aside by faster-paced radio, movies and TV, and it seems to me the change was not entirely an improvement. Perhaps because of these changes the stream of national consciousness moves faster now, and is broader, but it seems to run less deep. The old channels cannot contain it and in its search for new ones there seems to be growing havoc and destruction along its banks. In this Chautauqua I would like not to cut any new channels of consciousness but simply dig deeper into old ones that have become silted in with the debris of thoughts grown stale and platitudes too often repeated. "What's new?" is an interesting and broadening eternal question, but one which, if pursued exclusively, results only in an endless parade of trivia and fashion, the silt of tomorrow. I would like, instead, to be concerned with the question "What is best?", a question which cuts deeply rather than broadly, a question whose answers tend to move the silt downstream. There are eras of human history in which channels of thought have been too deeply cut and no change was possible, and nothing new ever happened, and "best" was a matter of dogma, but that is not the situation now. Now the stream of our common consciousness seems to be obliterating its own banks, losing its central direction and purpose, flooding the lowlands, disconnecting and isolating the highlands and to no particular purpose other than the wasteful fulfillment of its own internal momentum. Some channel deepening seems called for."

Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

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The Awakening

WHERE HAS MY PET GO
Don't worry, your Rose has not
gotten about you. Call me when y
get this. *No. 3982*

MADAME WO, practitioner of the magick arts, can help you. Are you looking for knowledge and canno
find it? Do you seek wisdom and it
cludes you? Call today for an ap-
pointment. *No. 3984*

AUTHENTIC TIBETAN HEAD-GEAR is a fashion fantasy no longer. Many styles, colors available. 4598 Stonegate Place, from
2 p.m. - 5

Raphael looked first one way and then the other in the city's dying light. The heat of August had only just begun to abate, but an icy chill ran up and down his spine, making him shiver. Reaching under his trenchcoat, Raphael fingered his hidden katana hilt. Its strength, its need to cut, reassured him.

He crossed the street, checking the newspaper he had with him, looking at the personal ad (and the hasty scrawl next to it), making sure the address was right. He hoped that he was imagining the sensation of being watched, and carefully ascended the steps of the small Greenwich brownstone.

He stepped up to the top floor, Number 3, and rapped on the door carefully, quietly, looking back at the stairwell below, unable to escape the feeling that he was being followed.

The door opened. Raphael smiled at the short, clearly Asian woman. "Hai," Raphael said to the woman.

* * *

Wo had the sudden urge to close the door and end this here and now: even after so much time and so much work trying to get him here, was he truly ready? The young man smiled a sure smile, like that of a used-car salesman or a television evangelist. Self-involvement shone plainly on his face. His eyes gleamed with the fires of power lust. Still trying to touch the Tapestry on his own. Nonetheless, he was the best they could find — the only one who would be able to endure the months ahead.

Wo scanned his astral aura; no sign of her hunters. Wo looked up and down the man. She immediately noticed the katana under his coat; its presence was no surprise. His trenchcoat and the silver chain with the yin/yang symbol were pure affectation. His arms would most likely become entangled if he tried to draw his weapon. His mind was awash in mystic formulas, Zen koans and the secret names of spirits. He was meticulously trimmed, as if every hair snipped had been done so on purpose, every whisker cut to tremendous effect. His smirk grated on her.

She almost closed the door. "No. He cannot be the one."

Wo had to fight her dislike of this one: the others in her cabal had demanded that she initially train him, and she expected a certain element of arrogance in an apprentice. But was this going too far? Would his mundane achievements as a fencing master cloud his true calling?

Slowly, carefully, she opened the door, peering out again.

The man did not blink, but instead made a slight bow in the manner of a samurai bowing to his lord. Wo chose not to be offended: this man was clearly Hispanic in origin, an American, but he had been trained by a master swordsman, one whom she respected.

"I am Raphael. I am here about the ad." He smiled.

"Tsiang Wo. Follow me."

Wo turned and walked back down the corridor, taking a step up into the kitchen. She paused for a moment at the French doors that led to the courtyard, looking back at him. He still stood in the hall, looking puzzled.

"Follow." She motioned with her hand.

She watched Raphael across the floor. She smiled slightly as he stumbled on the step up. Obviously the boy was nervous — and why shouldn't he be? She led him into the courtyard.

Out in the courtyard flourished what seemed to be a peculiar kind of Zen garden, much more complex than any Raphael had ever seen. Wo stood poised silently, effortlessly, completely at ease next to a strange sculpture that seemed to have water flowing out of it.

"Raphael."

"Sensei?" The man said reflexively. Her voice had the tone of command to it.

She pointed to a pebble on the ground several feet from either of them. "Lift the stone."

* * *

Raphael thought to himself, "She's testing me. How does she know that's the one mystery I could never solve, the one thing I could never make my *chi* do? How could she know?" His hands began to shake, and he had to clamp down on them with his mind. His heart beat faster. Raphael looked up at Wo, who seemed serene and very serious.

Raphael removed his trenchcoat and carefully laid his sword aside. He loosened his clothes and did a brief stretching exercise. He closed his eyes and began to inhale and exhale deeply; dragon's breath was what his teacher called it. Breathing in the chi, breathing out the *chi*. Making it part of him. He felt the world moving under him, cupped his hands and felt the essence of the stone underneath them, far away. He breathed again, taking a step forward. He thrust his hands over the stone, breathing out as he did. He felt its presence underneath his palms this time, tangibly. Could he do it? Could he lift the stone with just his force of will? He left behind doubt and plunged headlong into the idea of the stone, seeking to know it fully and thus own it. His hands thrust out again, and he yelled, feeling his power lashing out as he did.

His heart fell as the stone quivered, but did not rise.

The woman shook her head slowly. "I will lift the stone now. Watch."

Wo closed her eyes and extended her hands in mockery of his actions. She then took one step forward, seized the rock with her hand, and lifted it off the ground. Opening her eyes, she showed the stone to Raphael.

"See. You failed. You failed because reality would not allow you to move that stone, not with all the powers at your command. Despite your many initiations, degrees of proficiency, and your mastery of the sword, you are unable to do something as simple as levitate a stone."

She tossed the stone at Raphael. He caught it easily, but he was thunderstruck.

"Why are you here?" she said, looking intently at him.

"To learn, sensei. To learn magick. To learn to wield power."

"Power to what purpose?"

Raphael smiled his con-man smile again. "Enlightenment."

Wo smiled back, her smile cold, her eyes glinting. She moved softly past him as she went back into the penthouse. "You are a fool."

By the time Raphael realized what she had said, the old Asian woman had already stepped through the French doors into her kitchen. He heard the sounds of running water and the *chop-chop-chop* of a kitchen knife. Raphael looked back at the sculpture, then at the stone in his hand, feeling his anger grow within him.

Throwing the stone down and gathering his trenchcoat and sword, he stalked into the house. Raphael's temper got the best of him, and he erupted. "You call me a fool, and yet I have beaten the best warriors in the world. You challenge me to lift stones and then deride me when I can't! What sort of teaching is this? What kind of sensei are you?"

* * *

Wo continued chopping the shittake mushrooms she was preparing for her lunch, her face a mask of calm. She checked her spirit sense once more, casting around as she was wont to do. Her house was still safe; the wards were still in place.

Raphael spun on his heel, his sword and coat bunched in his arms. He stalked back down the stairs, toward the corridor and the door to the street. Wo smiled and stepped over to the pantry, opening the door to the pantry at the same time Raphael opened the door and left.

Wo grinned.

Slowly, Raphael opened the door again. He stepped out of the closet and walked into the corridor, looking at it again as if for the first time.

"Stay, Raphael. I'm making your favorite kind of stir-fry for lunch."

"How did you..." Raphael said at first, then steeled himself. "Where's the door out?"

Wo gestured in a general direction. "That way."

Raphael stalked off into another part of the house. Wo smiled again, and picked up a piece of celery. With a single snap, she broke it in two.

There was a crash in the other room, and a yelp.

"Be careful." Wo called, her eyes shining. Raphael came stalking back into the kitchen. "Which way?" he asked curtly.

Wo smiled. "Do you really want to leave? Your questions haven't been answered. Why don't you stay? Things are just getting interesting."

"I'm sorry, ma'am. I'm afraid that all of this has been one big unlucky occurrence. Now if you'll just show me the way out, I'll be glad to take my leave of you, and you'll not have to see my face again."

Wo shook her head. "How's your dog?"

"What?"

"Your pup. A wonderful animal. "Beast," isn't it?"

Raphael smiled, perhaps for the first time today, perhaps the first genuine smile he'd had for a while. "Yes. I named him after Crowley. How did you know about him? Telepathy?"

"Your computer file."

"What?"

Wo gestured to the wood-panelled study behind her. Beyond the door, Raphael could see the pale light of a computer monitor.

"I have a friend who helps me. Dante. Tell me, Raphael, how is your new job?"

"It's... it's fine. Why do you ask?"

"And you like your apartment."

"Yes. I got an incredible deal on it. By chance, the previous tenant had to take a job in Saudi Arabia just as I needed a place. I was able to sub-let for next to nothing."

"Yes. Quite a coincidence. And was it *coincidence* that caused your place of business to burn to the ground, out in California?"

"That was an electrical fire."

"Oh. Yes. And was it coincidence that caused your — *ahem* — companion to part ways with you?"

"That — she and I had a misunderstanding. How does my computer file know all this about me?"

Wo smiled, and shook her head a little. "Raphael. Doesn't it strike you as strange that every step you've taken for the past year has been surrounded with circumstance, coincidence and "lucky" breaks? Haven't you felt the sense that you were somehow treading a pathway, one that was taking you to a very definite destination?"

Raphael shook his head slowly, but Wo could see him thinking. Finally! He looked at her again, for the first time seeing something beyond his first impression of her.

Wo continued chopping, smiling as he sat down on the barstool next to the kitchen, smiling as she saw his face change slowly. "Raphael. What is magick?"

"Um, the art of changing consciousness with will. That's simple."

"Don't quote Crowley to me. Tell me what it means to you."

"Magick is knowledge. Magick is power. Magick is the ability to shape reality."

Wo slammed the knife down. "Exactly." She said, smiling. Perhaps there was hope for this one! Wo held up her hands. "Reality. It's all around us. We cut our fingers, we bleed. We drop a stone, it falls. We don't go sprouting wings. There are no such things as vampires, or werewolves, or faeries. Ghosts aren't real. And yet — yet we have someone like yourself. Surely you believe that magick exists?"

"Yes... with all my heart."

"And yet, with all your vaunted belief, your long years of training, your Zen koans, your meditations, your spiritual quests, you are still largely unable to affect the nature of reality."

Wo walked around to Raphael and whispered softly. "What if I were to tell you that magick was all around you? That indeed, you use magick on a regular basis?"

Raphael's eyes narrowed in disbelief.

Wo opened a cabinet and took out a huge, leather-bound tome. She slammed it down on the bar. She flung open the book, which fell immediately to a diagram of a model of the earth orbiting around the sun. "Copernicus. Kepler. Faraday. They are all here. Authors of our reality, today." She gestured to the lithographs of the three great men. Looking up, her spirit sign scanned the ceiling, the walls, hoping that her hunters would not hear their patrons called aloud so.

Raphael looked puzzled. "But those — those scientists discovered reality, investigated the truth."

Wo dipped her hands in the sunlight streaming through the glass in the French doors. "They shaped the truth for what they wished, as light is shaped by my hand here. They cast long shadows onto our future. We live it, their twisted mechanistic dream. The war for our reality is over, my child," Wo said, looking up at Raphael, a glint in her eye, a tear at the corner. "They have won." She turned away from him, walking into the study. He felt compelled to follow her.

Inside the dark, musky, wood-grained study were two tapestries, their patterns nebulous in the dim light. At the far end, a large oriental dragon sculpture stood poised, an onyx globe in its left paw.

"Once," Wo said, her voice cracking, "dragons ruled the mountains and the skies. My ancestors summoned and interacted with the *kami*, the great spirits of nature. Our people learned of power from the source. We sang to the Celestials and they gave us knowledge in return. Once, the world was pure. Once, the Great Ones, whom we call the Pure Ones, made magick with the stuff of their breath, the Quintessence of their reality. But they fell to mating with us, our beautiful race, and we grew to be as gods with them."

As she spoke, the dragon seemed to glisten a little more in the light, and the onyx sphere glittered. She turned to Raphael. "Once we were the grand wizards of legend. Once our power reigned supreme." Wo caressed the dragon's head, feeling the warmth of the protective wards that coiled around it. At least the Enemy would never take this relic: it would disintegrate in the face of their reality.

She turned and looked at him. She stared deep into his eyes. "Once we were the bringers of fire, the illuminators, the ones who planted the first seeds and the ones who baked the first bread. We were the teachers, the shapers, the wise ones."

She turned and, with a careless gesture that Raphael could only take for stage magic, caused one of the candles on the table to blaze into light. She took the black candle and held it out to the tapestry on the left wall, looking at him all the while. "And yet... yet there were those who were not satisfied with that. They wanted more. They wanted to introduce their own ideas, and in their hubris they called a great doom upon this world. They seized the very fabric of reality and rent the old Tapestry asunder. They then wove a new reality, investing it with reason. Suddenly, all across the world, humanity began to doubt that which, up until then, it had trusted completely." She paused. "It didn't happen overnight. It wasn't planned, no..."

Her hands played over some embroidered panels, and Raphael saw the emaciated figure of Death clutching the reaper's sickle and the bodies that were piled in gruesome haystacks.

"Then came the Plague. The great Black Plague, that not even the greatest of mages could fight. We lost our power and we lost our hope. We were unable to reply in force, and thus we lost our hold on this world. All over the world the veil of magic was torn, and it was as if a thousand glass shards had fallen onto a great gong. The powers of magick that we enjoyed failed, and we were forced to submit to the whim of "The Dead Ones" — those we know today as the Technomancers.

Wo turned to Raphael and smiled at him. "So you see, Raphael, whenever you turn on a light, or start your car, or use your computer, you are furthering the cause of those who would make reality theirs."

"That's preposterous. If that's true, then what you're saying is that I should quit my job and go live in the woods. I refuse."

"You misunderstand me, boy. I am not saying that the work of the Technomancers is bad. As a whole, it is ultimately detrimental to the well-being of humanity, but some of their stable gains are very useful. This computer, for example. As my friend Dante says, 'If it isn't broken, don't fix it.'"

"Ain't."

"Excuse me?"

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Wo looked at her student. "I see."

Wo gestured to another tapestry, this one depicting a wheel divided into nine sectors. "Just as light divides into many colors, so does Power." She gestured at the sunburst that started the wheel. "From pure energy it flows, emerging from the Sphere of Prime." Her hand rested on the eclipsed moon of the next panel. "To Spirit, where our wills forge it into existence." An hourglass was drawn in the next sector. "To Time, the delineation of our consciousness."

Continuing down the wheel, Wo explained, "Power flows through the Mind and opens up consciousness." She then gestured to the square symbol farther down the wheel. "Matter is the Sphere of the fundamental structure of reality." She pointed to a male and female symbol united. "Life provides our fundamental living structure."

"Yet we are at the mercy of Forces, always. Gravity pulls upon us, and electricity flows through our homes," she said, tracing a lightning bolt symbol. "Where they all interrelate is the Sphere of Correspondence, which orders things in their proper place." She gestured to the sigil for Correspondence, a point with arrows approaching from all directions.

She paused for a moment. "Correspondence... it is very strong in you."

Raphael replied, "I always like to know where I'm going."

"Finally, there is Entropy, which is the end of the circle. That which leads back to Prime." The dark sector for Entropy showed Raphael nothing.

Raphael's eyes kept returning to a lit glass case in the wall. He stepped over to it.

"What are these?" he said, pointing to the green silk cord and dazzlingly bright and sharp wakizashi.

"My foci. I used to need those to make magick work."

"And you don't now?" Raphael said looking down at his sword.

Wo reached out and pinched him. "This, this flesh that you wear, do you think it will last?"

Raphael looked quizzically at the woman and pulled away. "What? Of course not. We all die. It's part of the cycle."

"Exactly. Now, give me your sword." Giving her a wary look, Raphael held up the sword and passed it to her. "Careful. It has been meticulously enchanted for seven years."

Wo smiled at him. "Meticulously? Enchanted for seven years?" She inspected the sword, which was scribed with many symbols and runes. Grasping it firmly, she brought it up in a traditional fighting stance. Raphael's eyes widened and he smiled. This woman held his blade with great grace and obvious power. She turned and with one single, lightning-fast move, dashed the sword against the stone floor. Raphael cried out as the sword shattered.

Wo smiled at him. "Start over," she said, and moved past him back into the kitchen.

Raphael charged her, enraged and cursing.

She stopped, turned, and pointed her finger at him. "Watch how you address me, boy." She showed him eyes from which a tiger would flinch.

"But — but why? What did you hope to gain by doing that?"

Wo smiled. "I hoped to gain nothing."

She turned and walked back into the kitchen, moving much more quickly than her aged body suggested possible. Raphael followed, panting. Wo turned to him as she walked, looking up at him. "I hoped to relieve you of the burden of carrying it around. It was dead in your hands — a crutch, not a tool."

"But... how can you... you made my decision for me!" Raphael demanded.

"I broke the sword: how you decide to deal with its loss is up to you. I only know that it will take another seven years for you to embark on such a foolish proposition."

"But... my power... my essence... it's lost." Raphael complained.

Wo stopped. "You still haven't been listening to me, have you boy? You can no longer rely on the old way of doing things."

"You seem fond of speaking in metaphors and talking about the past in vague terms. You've yet to tell me one single thing that I do not already know. You've yet to teach me anything. You've yet to show me any display of true power. I'm having a hard time believing anything you say."

Wo stopped. "You require some kind of display of power? That I knew your innermost secrets, that I was able to arrange to have you move from California to New York in two weeks' time, that you still haven't found your way out of my house... none of these things are enough? You require still more of me? Am I your trained monkey then, to do magick for you at your whim? To be your tutor only when you feel like opening your eyes?"

Raphael smiled. "If you were truly powerful, then this wouldn't be such a hard request." His smile was unabashedly smug.

Wo smiled slowly. She knew the boy was baiting her, but she had had enough. A quick astral scan registered no enemies. Wo walked slowly and quietly to the fireplace. She grasped the pale bamboo fan that rested, handle down, on the mantelpiece. "Power, is it? You wish to see a display of power?"

Raphael grinned. "Yes. I do."

"Very well, then."

Wo gestured with her arm, and her eyes lit with fire. A dragonfire halo burned from the back of her head, igniting a nimbus of amber power around her. Jade wings extended, brushing the ceiling. Onyx claws glistened. Coiled in the living room, in the spot where the light from the glass doors streamed, was an ancient, winged oriental dragon, glistening with power. Its fiery tongue lashed out and touched the pieces of the sword on the floor. The shards blazed white-hot — even after the tongue had retreated they glowed with the heat.

Raphael fell back, shielding his eyes from the bright light and great heat. He scrambled back toward the wall. At first he screamed his battle yell and tried to resist, but he was finally reduced to mindless pleas for help and prayer. As the dragon roared and bent its head in Raphael's direction, he screamed and curled into a fetal ball, cold sweat staining his shirt.

Then, suddenly, all was as before. Only the red-hot shards of steel remained. Wo shaped the warping energies in her hands and held up the result — a grey snake with sightless white eyes. "Raphael? Get up. That will be the least of the sights you will see if you follow my path. Stand."

Slowly Raphael got to his feet. He walked across the room, his eyes on Wo. "You — you spared my life?"

"I did. I did not wish to kill you."

"Great sensei, I thought I had offended you."

"You did not offend. It often takes just such a thing to pull an apprentice through the curtain of the Tapestry."

"Oh, powerful sensei... I beg your forgiveness!"

"You do not have my forgiveness. You are ignorant. Fortunately, this can be remedied. You have my attention. That is far more valuable. However, don't think that I do not see the lust for power in your eyes. Well, take this, and see the cost of power." She held the grey snake out to Raphael.

Raphael, hesitant, coiled the snake into his hands. It moved slowly in his hand, and its eyes were like an untuned television "What is this?" Raphael said, knowing instantly that it was a creature of magick.

"A spirit. A mindless servant of reality. You see, Raphael, one cannot perform such tricks of power without paying the cost... and one of those costs has to do with reality itself. When I showed you my shape of old, I hearkened back to the Mythic Age, when the power of old flowed more freely. I used the knowledge of that time. I also used the power of Mind, so that I would not have to manifest completely in order for you to understand the full extent of my power. Still, it was quite draining, even here in my sanctum." Wo took the snake back, holding it in her hand as she watched it begin to writhe more quickly. "Come." She walked into a darkened room down the hallway, and slid the leather cover off a great glass aquarium filled with tiny grey snakes. They twirled and twisted, feeding

on each other and reforming. She opened a small hole in the lid and slid the snake in. It immediately dropped and began twining around its brothers.

"Those of us who work magick call this force Paradox, but it exists to resolve the unknown, not to reveal it. It exists to smooth out reality. It exists to prevent our power from manifesting except through its rules. Paradox demands an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. In order to weave magick like I did, I must attract the attention of Paradox, as it tries to prevent me from shattering local reality. We take Paradox into ourselves, into our very souls. It rests there... just like a cobra waiting to strike. Unless we deal with it, it can be our instant undoing."

Wo ran her hand along the glass. "One day I will have to handle each of these snakes, each in its own way. But while the container holds, I may hold them off for a time."

"Bad checks."

"Excuse me?"

"You're writing spiritual bad checks. Buying off the cosmic bill collector until your credit is overextended and they take you to court."

Wo smiled. "In a manner of speaking, yes. But I have plans for these little grey sisters and brothers. Believe me. I have plans."

"Power is wonderful, is it not?" Raphael said, smiling.

Wo narrowed her eyes and looked hard at Raphael. "You still don't understand me, do you?" She pinched her own flesh. "I am not a goddess. I am a mortal. A human. You are human as well. Yet there are... things out there. Our power is not here to serve us. We serve it."

Raphael stiffened, smiling. "Oh, yes, I understand the responsibilities of power. I hope one day to take all the authority and responsibilities that power brings me."

"You do not understand the duties of this Power. Because we are who we are, we must protect our human friends from harm. There are terrors out there, horrific creatures that would love to convert the earth into their home. There are things that would see all reality dissolved. And there are those who would see it changed into a perfectly orderly, perfectly oppressive world of steel corridors. I, for one, seek balance. It is the only way to achieve our dream."

"What dream, sensei?"

"The dream of Ascension. We seek to lead humanity to the higher place. We are all the children of the Pure Ones, Raphael. Our myths, our legends, are real and have form because we believe in them. Magick is our birthright, and magick can be our downfall or our salvation. I intend to see humanity pulled out of the mire and set on the path to Ascension. I believe there is still hope, or I would have left this realm long ago."

"There are other worlds?"

"There are worlds within worlds, of course. And we will visit some of them. The shadowy spirit world that surrounds this world, which we call the Umbra, is a way to reach many distant realms. We can walk through the Umbra to visit my ancient Chantry house, where my cabal will greet you... even now if you wish..."

Before Wo could finish speaking, one of the snakes in the aquarium caught her attention. It had been growing all along, finally consuming each and every one of its brethren. Wings sprouted on its back, and it grew. The lid of the aquarium first cracked, then shattered. Wo tried to bring her power to bear, but she felt the Paradox sucking her power like a great leech.

The winged serpent spoke, its scratchy, electronic voice reverberating through the room. "Long have we hunted you, Wo. Now we have found you. The Will of reality will be appeased." The serpent turned to Raphael. "Thank you, mortal. You have served our purposes well! Your disbelief let us discover her hiding place!"

"No! I must continue my work!"

"Your time has come, and Paradox will claim your soul."

Wo whirled and looked at Raphael. "You will come for me," she said. The coils of the great snake wrapped around Wo, lifting her up in the air. Wo held out her hand and opened it. A drop of light fell, coalescing into a decahedral shape as it splashed to the ground.

With a soundless implosion, reality smoothed. Wo and the snake both vanished.

{center these marks}* * *

"Sensei?" Raphael called out. His heart sank as he realized her defeat was because of him. A life debt was owed. "Sensei?" he repeated, looking around.

The computer on the desk blurred, and a bright white light shone through the monitor for a second. Then the face of a man wearing a headset of some kind, with a lens over one eye, materialized on the screen. "Hi there," the dark-skinned man spoke, his voice crackling through the computer's speaker. "Where's Wo?"

Raphael looked at the man in disbelief. "Who are you?"

"Dante. You know, like the Inferno. Where's the Dragon Lady?"

"She's gone. Paradox took her."

"What?" Dante looked worried, and his eyes began to glow. He refocused on Raphael. "She's nowhere around here. Raphael. You've to get some things and get the hell out of here. Big Brother's gonna come after you next, as soon as they realize you're her 'prentice."

"What things? Who's Big Brother?"

"Hold on, hold on. One question at a time. Let's see... stuff. I don't know. I tell you what: pull a V and run a search routine. Ah, I mean — use your Correspondence and find the most important things that Wo has lying around."

"What? Wo said I was strong in Correspondence, but I can't do magick!"

Dante shook his head. "I can't stay online too much longer. I've got to secure the block and set up interference for our Techno friends. They're big bad paranoid watchers. Call themselves the New World Order, if you can believe that.

Hmmm. Wo shoulda woke you up. See if you can't look around. Did Wo leave you with anything?"

Raphael looked at the glowing decahedron. "You could say that."

"Great. Check it out. I'll be back."

The computer screen lit up again, and then it fell dead, dark.

The decahedron glowed as Raphael walked over to it. He closed his eyes and reached out to touch it. As he touched it he felt his entire body transcend. His spirit felt as if it were on fire, and in his mind's eye he saw the serpentine body of a dragon rising up around him, curling and coiling. Yet this dragon was different: instead of the jade green wings of the one which had attacked him before, this one had no wings and its scales were basalt, black. Silver eyes gleamed from its head, and it held him in its coils.

Raphael felt power pouring through him, raw Quintessence that seemed to fill him. He suddenly saw the world as it was: he saw the potential of reality throughout the room. Holding the decahedron, he felt as if he was waking after a long sleep, as if he could finally see that which had forever eluded him. Some force inside the decahedron had finally connected him with the answers to all his questions.

He reached out with his mind, forming in it his need for direction. Building up his power, he released it. The desire in his mind took shape in the three-dimensional world. What he sought was higher...

He found stairs up just where he knew they would be — he saw them in the picture in his mind, as if he was standing on them already. Walking up the stairs, he discovered an attic filled with artifacts from a lifetime of exploration, a cornucopia of antiques, curios and relics.

Hanging in the darkness was a sword. He knew immediately that it was a sword of great power, made by one who knew the ancient art of Japanese swordsmithing. The ripple-patterns were undeniable, and the intricate carving of the hilt was something straight out of ancient myth and legend: a black dragon coiled around the hilt and its silvery eyes echoed the light that he had seen upon his own Awakening.

The sword was slightly curved, a katana. He took a deep breath and reached out his hand to it, knowing it was for him, knowing it was needed, knowing it was vital. It seemed alive in his hands, not dead like his old sword had.

"The lines that cut, the cut that breaks, the boundary that forms, all these are the Do of Correspondence. All things are here, now. Find your way. Travel through space. Cut through reality." Wo's voice, within the gem, spoke.

Raphael said, "Sensei? How do you speak to me?"

Wo's voice came back: "The gem. It contains a portion of my Avatar.

"Will I know how to use this power of Correspondence?" Raphael asked.

"You already have," Wo's voice came. "But there isn't much time. The power in this crystal wanes. Hurry!"

Raphael looked further and saw an amulet with the hourglass of Time on it. "This Talisman will also aid you. Take it."

Then there was an ancient silk sash with mystic characters embroidered on it. Wo's voice came through the gem again, warm and purring. "Forces. Raw, violent forces are our tools and our great aid. Take the sash, which is a warrior's gift of old."

Carrying the sash, the amulet and the sword, Raphael returned downstairs. "The Power of this crystal is all but gone. You must flee, Raphael! Be wary. Be careful! Go to the airport, and get on a plane to San Francisco as soon as possible. Once you are in the air, my cabal can protect you. Farewell, my new son... I will try to give you what wisdom I can with the power that is left." With that, the decahedron faded into darkness. Raphael immediately felt knowledge pouring into him, he closed his eyes and realized the full extent of the nature of reality around him: how to see it and understand what it could be.

Raphael found the door out this time, and paused there to tie the sash around his waist and hang the amulet around his neck. The sword rested in the trenchcoat sheath that his old blade had ridden in. He walked along the street, feeling that same sense of being watched wash over him again.

He looked up and down the street. Nothing. A truck was turning around the corner, a big black van, but that soon vanished from sight. He walked quietly through the streets, looking to either side of him. He passed an alleyway and saw glowing yellow eyes watching him in the darkness. He stopped for a moment, and then realized it was an old tomcat. The cat brushed past him as he walked on.

Pulling up the collar on his trenchcoat, he proceeded. He passed a department store with a huge display of televisions on the side. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw one of the televisions flash over into static as he passed it. Then the next one. Then the next one, one-two-three as he walked past. Finally he got to the end of the line and a fourth television flashed into static as he walked near it. The darkened storefront provided an eerie backdrop. Then, suddenly, all was as it was before. It was the Manhattan News broadcast.

"...and, in other news, Wyck Industries chairman Thomas Willis, an influential market trader in the Big Apple, was killed today during a drive-by shooting in the Bronx. Mr. Willis is survived by...."

Raphael's eyes were distracted by the newscaster's... as he walked past, the man seemed to be following him with his eyes. When their gazes locked, the newscaster's eyes seemed to squint, as if the sudden glare of the screen affected him too.

Fear steeled Raphael and he began to run down the street. As he went, the street lights, long deactivated to save money, began to light, one by one. They spotlighted him wherever he went, each sodium light coming on just as he passed underneath. Raphael stopped. What was this? Were they truly watching him? So far, no one had attacked him. He had to get to the airport soon. He had no way of knowing how they were

tracking him, or who they were. Assuming "they" were the Technomancers that Wo had mentioned, he would be in their domain, their reality here in the city.

He snapped his fingers. If only he could find a cab! A Yellow cab barrelled around the corner, stopping. "Where ya wanna go, Mac?" the cabbie said.

Raphael opened the door and jumped in. "La Guardia. Immediately."

As the cab accelerated through the streets, Raphael looked into the mirror. His heart froze as he saw the doors lock of their own accord. The cabbie looked surprised as the car picked up speed and began to weave through traffic on its own. Then a blue smoke issued from the air conditioner and the man's eye lids began to flicker.

It didn't take much for Raphael to decide to leave. Rolling down the window, he threw his bag on the roof of the cab, still holding on to it as he pulled himself out. He felt the window trying to roll itself back up, cutting into his legs. Throwing himself backward, he flung himself out of the speeding car onto the street.

Raphael felt Forces ripple through his body as he lofted into the air, ignoring gravity for the second necessary to allow a seemingly impossible leap.

The cab careened down the street and did a bootlegger reverse, the driver unconscious at the wheel. Raphael calmed himself. This was no different from facing down an opponent with more strength, or more skill than you. Your best bet is to out-think them, he forced himself to believe. He waited, watching the car coming closer. The car's headlights stabbed him, sending beams of bright light to dazzle his eyes. Still he waited. In the seconds that followed, Raphael felt the car moving closer, felt his body lifting in another jump he did without thinking. He tumbled end-over-end in the air, higher and higher.

The cab lost control, careened a few more feet, and slammed full-force into a telephone booth. Electricity from the booth arced out into the street and grounded right next to Raphael... there was some kind of Power at work here. The cabbie had miraculously survived the crash and was climbing out of the wreck.

Raphael ran down the alleyway, hoping against hope that he would find a way out. His senses told him that there were three ways to go, but that the safest way was up. He mounted a ladder and began to climb, sheathing his sword and making his way up. The cabbie now followed him, his eyes glowing a dull green. As he walked, the cabbie touched a wino that was passed out on the street. The wino got up, his eyes now glowing green too.

Raphael moved across the rooftop of the building and jumped again, clearing an alleyway by a foot. He looked up at a giant electronic sign which continually re-broadcast its message.

"TIME: 10:23 P.M., TEMP: 82 DEGREES. RAPHAEL YOU SHOULD JUST GIVE UP. JOIN US. WE WILL RULE THE WORLD FOREVER. WE ALREADY CONTROL YOUR MIND, YOUR IDEAS. IT IS FUTILE TO RESIST. TRY AN I.R.A. AND SAVE."

Raphael was so angry that he lashed out in his rage. Suddenly the lightbulbs in the sign began to explode one by one. "Yeah, well, when I get old enough to retire, I'll call you guys."

The distraction cost him, however. Turning around, he saw a security guard, a homeless person, a mugger, the cabbie, and a wino walking their way across the rooftops, apparently having climbed up the fire escape in pursuit. All of their eyes glowed. The security guard took a shot at him: Raphael threw himself prone, and rolled the rest of the way to the side.

Screaming his rage, the mugger jumped at him. Drawing his blade from his trenchcoat in one smooth motion, Raphael backed away from the man. The mugger dove for him with a switchblade, trying to cut him once, twice, three times. Raphael felt the others move closer, and knew that he would have to make a decision: kill this man and survive or hesitate and be lost.

With one smooth motion, Raphael cut. It didn't take much of skill to separate the man's head from the rest of his body. Blood fountained all around him, some splattering on his coat. Raphael felt bile rise up in his throat — never in his long training in martial arts had he ever killed a man.

Still, the others were coming. The guard took another shot, this one miraculously ricocheting off his amulet. Grabbing the ladder with both hands, Raphael slid down the rails of the ladder. He ran to the street and tried the door on the first car he saw. By some strange coincidence, the car door was unlocked. He didn't have the key, but he knew how to hotwire it. He started the car, and began to drive off. The radio was on and blared, "Now for another four hours of continuous music to die by," said the announcer. Raphael turned it off.

A black van pulled up behind him, its lights shining through the back window. The front windshield of the van was completely blackened. The car Raphael had stolen was too slow to shake it. Up ahead, he saw the light begin to change and a wall of opposing traffic start to move.

"NO!" He yelled, as the van rammed his rear bumper. He grabbed inside the rucksack, and the amulet fell into his hand. Maybe this so-called Talisman could help. The traffic did suddenly seem to move more slowly for an instant, an instant long enough for him to slip through the intersection.

"Damn," Raphael said as he saw the black van still behind him, having trailed him through the busy intersection. Raphael began to sweat. Looking back, he knew that only by taking control of the situation would he be able to reach the airport. Closing his eyes and holding the wheel loosely, Raphael

meditated. The car he was driving kept going straight, turning when necessary. Summoning his will, Raphael cast his Quintessence out in a power blast of Forces to the rear. A glittering, shimmering, twisting, curling bolt of pure electricity grounded itself into the hood of the van. There was a brief period of smoking from the engine before the entire van blew. Other cars on the road swerved.

At the same instant, Raphael felt a cold chill whip into his body. He felt his center of being strain at the seams of his mortal flesh, as if his soul sought release. Raphael knew this must be Paradox — the price he paid for magick. The chill spread to his entire body and while it didn't disappear, it did subside.

Fragments from the van continued to come down, littering the road behind him as he turned into the La Guardia exit.

The airport was a gloomy and cavernous place, filled with places where the Technomancers could find him, but he made his way to the ticket counter and purchased a ticket. Leaving for the gates, he noticed the pay-television turning on as he went by, static blurring and re-forming into the news broadcast. "And, in a related story, you better not try to leave Raphael. Because we'll track you wherever you go. You're foolish if you think you can live without us. You have been warned. And now for weather with Beth Jordan..."

Raphael ran for the gate as the intercom blared: "Flight 102, departing for San Francisco, is now boarding." Raphael checked his watch. It flashed for a second, and a small digital face appeared on it.

"Dante?" Raphael whispered. The face blurred and words began to spell out on the watchface. "GOOD LUCK, RAPH. WILL KEEP AN EYE ON YOU. BE CAREFUL. THESE GUYS PLAY FOR KEEPS."

"Paging Mr. Raphael Rodriquez. Raphael Rodriquez, pick up the white courtesy phone." The voice came from the page system. Raphael knew better.

BEEEP! The metal detector went off. "Will you please empty your pockets, sir?" The security guard said. Peering into the man's very soul, Raphael realized the man was just a normal guard, doing his job.

"There must be something wrong with your machine..." Raphael said.

"Sure buddy. Sure there is. Take off your coat, please." Did the man notice the drops of blood on Raphael's coat?

Raphael took off his coat, with his sword still inside, and put it on the conveyor. He would have to risk more Paradox. Holding the Forces Sphere firmly in his mind, Raphael hoped he could mask the presence of the sword. The guard watching the machine glanced away for a moment, so maybe the magick wasn't even necessary. Either way, the guard didn't detect the sword and he stepped safely through the detector. Raphael ran down the corridor toward his flight gate.

He stepped up to the steward, handing over the ticket. "I'm sorry, sir. You're going to have to go to the information desk and get your boarding pass."

Raphael stepped up to the woman at the desk. "I'm supposed to get a boarding pass..." he said, frustrated. The woman took his ticket and entered a few numbers from it into the computer.

"I'm sorry sir, but your ticket has been cancelled. I can't issue a boarding pass with a cancelled ticket."

"Impossible! Check again... maybe you're looking at the wrong ticket number?" Raphael said.

"No, sir, there's no problem with the ticket number. The ticket has been cancelled..." Raphael's face fell, and he checked his watch. Two minutes to departure.

The watch flashed. Words began to appear on it again.

"TRY AGAIN, AMIGO."

"Check one last time for me? Please? This is important."

The woman smiled. "Okay, sir. One more time."

"Muchos gracias."

The loudspeaker announced, "This is Flight 102. Last call for boarding." Raphael's eyes darted across the room, looking at the electronic schedule-screen. One of the lines changed to "YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH THIS" for a split second.

"Oh! I'm sorry, sir. Apparently your number was misflagged. Your ticket is valid. Here's your boarding pass! Better hurry." Raphael ran down the boarding ramp onto the waiting plane. As he passed onto the plane, he felt a change in the world around him. No longer was he in the domain of those who sought him.

As the plane taxied down the runway, Raphael's eyes were drawn to a laptop being worked by a nearby passenger. The man who had been using it had fallen asleep. Dante's face flashed on the screen for a moment. "GOOD LUCK, KID." Words flashed on the screen. "I'VE GOT YOU CLEAR ALL THE WAY TO FRISCO. YOU'LL MEET WO'S MASTER THERE. DON'T WORRY, WE'LL GET YOU TAUGHT. HAVE A GOOD FLIGHT."

Raphael smiled and said, under his breath, "Thanks, Dante."

"Don't mention it."

BOOK ONE

She is the one.

A charity ball, rich and decadent, the last bastion of the waltz… Amanda dances slowly to the antiquated tune with her target. Other couples surround them — aging tycoons leading women gaudy as parrots.

Jeweled clockwork. Even the dances are machines now.

Sanders has told her nothing of her target, but she can tell that the kill will be easy. The man's every move, every gesture conveys his lust. A vacuous smile, a deliberate blush, and he responds, slides an arm around her waist. Soon, she knows, he will lead her away, and no one will see.

Skillful. But this child has a heart of steel… her eyes are empty…

Amanda watches the window, tracks his reflection. She sees her own, her gloves, her gown — floating, white, feather-light silk — gilt on Sanders' perfect trap. It hides the stiletto. She drifts across the room to the window, draws the curtain.

Style…grace…a Gift well given.

She turns to face him. His jacket off, he struggles with cummerbund and trousers, shackled in cloth. Helpless. She slips the knife from her thigh, glides closer… attacks. The motion is so smooth and swift he never sees the blade.

It is time. She must learn the true meaning of death.

She backs away to let the meat fall, but he still stands, shocked. To her horror, too late, she feels the difference in her hand — the wrong weight — sees the useless, dull blade, and reaches for the speechless man, determined to finish what she came to do.

"No."

I emerge from behind the curtain, touch the strands of their minds. He will forget; she will be calm enough for reason.

Amanda stands mute and furious as the stranger strides regally into the room. The heavy drapery settles into place behind him like a cloak. In one lined hand he casually shakes a matchbox, and his dark, ancient, honest face radiates warmth and confidence.

"It is not his time. It is yours. Your Awakening is at hand."

She is my chosen.

MW KALUTA
1993

Chapter One: Introduction

My personal feeling is that this is how any further improvement of the world will be done: by individuals making Quality decisions and that's all.
— Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

Mage is a game of make-believe, of pretend, of storytelling. Although **Mage** is a game, it is more about storytelling than it is about winning. If you've never roleplayed before, you may be confused by the whole premise of a storytelling game. Once you understand the basic concepts, however, you'll find that storytelling isn't all that strange, and is, in fact, eerily familiar.

You, along with some of your friends, are going to tell stories of exploration and discovery in a world of darkness. Stories of shadowy alleyways and distant realms. Stories arising from the dark recesses of your mind, but reaching toward the light. At the heart of these stories are mages — humans blessed (some might say cursed) with the gift to work magick.

These stories will capture your imagination far more readily than any play or movie; likewise, they are of a more immediate nature than the children's fairy tales you might remember. This is because you are *inside* the story and not just watching it. You are creating it as you go along, and the outcome is always uncertain.

Mage is about the tragedy of a world gone awry. It is the tragedy of a decayed and squalid landscape of lost hope. The tragedy of forgotten wisdom and a growing appetite for lies. The tragedy of a culture determined to destroy itself. It is the bitter legacy of the Technomancers, the secret masters of the modern world. While these mages claim perfection of purpose they are in truth motivated by megalomania and greed. In your battle to save not just the Earth, but magick itself, from their crystalline chains you must confront and overcome such human frailties not only in others, but in yourself.

Storytelling

The fatal shortcoming of this age is that it has no heroes.
— Sho Fumimura, *Sanctuary*

Long ago, before movies, TV, radio and books, people used to tell each other stories: tales of the hunt, legends of the gods and the great heroes, or gossip about the neighbors. They would tell these stories aloud, as part of an oral tradition of storytelling — a tradition that has been lost.

We no longer tell stories — we listen to them. We sit passively, waiting to be picked up and carried to the world they describe. We have become slaves to our TVs, permitting an oligarchy of artists to describe our culture to us.

However, there is another way. Storytelling on a personal level is becoming a part of our culture once again. That is what this game is all about: not stories told to us, but stories we tell others. **Mage** is about bringing stories home and making the ancient myths and legends a more substantial part of our lives.

Storytelling allows us to understand ourselves by giving us a tool with which to explain our triumphs and defeats. By looking at our culture, our family and ourselves in new contexts, we can understand things we never before realized. It is entertaining because it is so revealing, and exhilarating because it is so true. Storytelling plays such an enormous role in our culture that it can't be accidental. Our obsession with stories has a purpose to it: of that there is no doubt.

Roleplaying

Mage is not only a storytelling game, but a roleplaying game as well. You not only tell stories, but actually act through them by assuming the roles of the central characters. It's a lot like theatre, only you make up the lines.

To understand roleplaying, you have only to go back to your childhood and those wonderful afternoons spent playing Cops 'n' Robbers, Cowboys and Indians or Dress-Up. What you were doing was roleplaying, a sort of spontaneous and natural acting that completely occupied your imagination. This play-acting helped you learn about life and what it meant to be a grown-up. It was an essential part of childhood, but just because you have grown up doesn't mean you have to stop.

In **Mage**, unlike pretend, there are a few rules to help you roleplay. They are used mainly to avoid arguments — "Bang! Bang! You're dead!" "No I'm not!" — and to add a deeper sense of realism to the story. Rules direct and guide the progress of the story, and help define the capacities and weaknesses of the characters. The essential rules for **Mage** are described in Chapter Four.

Mage can be played with nearly any number of players, but roleplaying games in general are best when the number of players is six or fewer. Much of the mystery and flavor is lost when players must compete for attention.

The Storyteller

Mage is structured a little differently from the games with which you might be familiar. In the first place, there is neither board nor cards. Second, one player needs to be the Storyteller — the person who creates and guides the stories.

Being the Storyteller is something like being the Banker in *Monopoly*™, except it is even more important. The Storyteller describes what happens to the characters as a result of what the players say and do. She decides if the characters succeed or fail, suffer or prosper, live or die. Storytelling is a very

demanding task, but it is also most rewarding, for the Storyteller is a weaver of legends.

The Storyteller's primary duty is to make sure the other players have a good time. The way to do that is to tell a good tale. Unlike traditional storytellers, however, the Storyteller doesn't simply tell the story; instead, she must create the skeleton of a story and then let the players flesh it out by assuming the roles of its leading characters. Storytelling in **Mage** is a careful balance between narration and adjudication, between story and game. Sometimes the Storyteller must set the scene or describe what occurs (such as when the characters are asleep), but mostly she must decide what occurs in reaction to the words and actions of the characters — as realistically, impartially and creatively as possible.

As the Storyteller, you are in charge of interpreting and enforcing the rules, yet you are also an entertainer — you must struggle to balance your two roles. Most of this book was written to help you do just that. It won't make being a Storyteller easy, because it never will be easy, but it will make you better at it.

The role of the Storyteller is explained in much more detail in Chapter Three.

The Players

Most of the people who play this game will not be Storytellers, but rather players who assume the roles of the central characters in the story. Being a player does not require as much responsibility as being a Storyteller, but just as much effort and concentration.

As a player in a **Mage** chronicle, you will take on the persona and role of a mage (or sorcerer, wizard, shaman, witch, etc.), whom you invent and then roleplay over the course of a story. The life of your character is in your hands, for you decide what the character says and does. You decide what risks to accept or decline. Everything you say and do when you play your character has an effect on the world. This is especially true when your character is a mage.

You must be both an actor and a player. As an actor, you speak for your character and act out whatever you wish your character to do or say. Whatever you say, your character says, unless you are specifically asking a question of the Storyteller or are describing your actions. By announcing and describing to the other players what you are doing, you become a part of the ongoing story.

As a player, you try to do things that allow your character to succeed, so as to "win the game." This strategic element of the game is essential, for it is what so often creates the thrill and excitement of a dramatic moment.

Often, after describing the actions "you" want to take, you will need to make dice rolls to see if your character succeeds in doing what you have illustrated with words. Your character's Traits, descriptions of her strengths and weaknesses, dictate how well your mage can do certain things. Actions are the basic elements of **Mage**, for they describe how characters change the world and affect the course of the story.

Characters are central to a story, for they alter and direct the plot; without characters you can't have a story. As the story flows, the characters, not the decisions of the Storyteller, direct and energize the progress of the plot.

To some extent, you are a Storyteller as well as a player. You should feel free to add ideas and elements to the story, though the Storyteller may accept or reject them as she sees fit. In the end, the story, not your character, is most important. The character is a tool for telling a good story.

Characters

Many different elements compose what we like to think of as the "self": too many, in fact, to separate or identify. In truth, we really don't know who or what we are. We wear many masks. It is from this essential diversity of self that our desire and ability to pretend to be someone else originates.

Characters are the literary versions of real people — they are not real, but they do capture some aspects of reality. Only when you enter the world of the story can your characters become complete. They are real only with you as the animating force — the soul if you wish. Never treat your characters as projections of yourself (even if that's all they are). Treat them as unique individuals, as works of art, or as fragile expressions of your poetic sensitivity. You must treasure the characters that you create.

Mage characters are easy to create. It takes only 30 minutes or so to choose all the Traits that describe your character. It takes much more time and effort to turn this collection of numbers into a living, breathing character. You must reach deep inside yourself to find enough that is real and true to produce a complete character. The Frankenstein monster was easily assembled from available body parts. It was the breath of life that proved difficult.

Character creation is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

Cabals

Mage stories generally assume that all of the characters are close allies, and that they will operate as a tightly knit group. This is not to say that the characters will always get along, but only that they tend to share the same goals and motivations. Such groups of mages are not unusual; indeed, they are the most common familial units in mage society. The term "cabal" is used to refer to any group of mages, whether such a group remains intact because of ties to a Chantry or Tradition, bonds of friendship, or some other reason altogether.

The goal of almost all cabals is to found a Chantry, a mystical dwelling where the mages can work their magick more freely. A Chantry is a place where mages can congregate, build their libraries of arcane lore, and conduct magickal research and experimentation. Most importantly, a Chantry

is a place where mages can conceal themselves from the dangers of the world.

Indeed, self-preservation is a strong motivation for the formation of a cabal. Many evils face mages in this world of darkness. Besides the ruthless Technomancers, mages must overcome insane Marauders, cunning demons, and inscrutable Paradox spirits. Sometimes they must even battle their brethren for rights to the dwindling magickal resources of the world. Survival depends on the absolute unity of the mages in a cabal.

Winners and Losers

A finite game is played for the purpose of winning, an infinite game is played for the purpose of continuing play.

— James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games*

There is no single "winner" of **Mage**, for the object is not to defeat the other players. To "win" at all, you need to cooperate with the other players. Because this is a storytelling game, there is no way for one person to claim victory. In fact, **Mage** is a game in which you are likely to lose, for the task before you is almost impossible. For millennia, mages have failed to achieve Ascension (the ultimate state of enlightenment toward which all mages strive). Furthermore, never has there been a greater threat to Ascension than that posed by the Technomancers. The whole idea is to survive as long as possible and eke out the most drama from the ongoing tragedy.

The only true measure of success in **Mage** is survival. However, if the character has some overwhelming motivation, such as a need for vengeance, accomplishing this goal is also a measure of success. Additionally, stories have conclusions that either benefit or harm the characters. If the characters learn that a celebrated scientist is actually a Technomancer bent on enslaving the minds of the local leaders, and manage to foil her plot, then they "win." If they never even discover who was behind the plot (much less manage to stop her), then they lose, though they may not know it until it is too late.

In order to achieve even a partial victory, the characters must usually become friends. They must look out for one another and have a modicum of trust in each other. The World of Darkness is so dangerous that trustworthy allies are essential.

Playing Aids

For the most part, **Mage** was designed to be played around a table. Though the game does not require a board, there are a number of props that require a table to use properly. You will need dice, pencils and paper, and photocopies of the character sheet. The dice required are 10-sided; these you can purchase in any game store. The Storyteller may also want to have paper on hand in order to sketch out a setting (to make it easier to describe to the players), as well as a few other props to show the players what the characters are seeing (photographs, matches, scarves — anything to make the experience more vivid).

Live-Action

Live-Action roleplaying can be the most dynamic and fun part of playing **Mage**. Live-Action roleplaying is similar to improvisational theater, wherein the actors (the players) act through the scenes created and introduced by the Storyteller. This makes a much more intense and immediate storytelling experience.

Players in a roleplaying game generally describe what their characters do and even say, but during Live-Action roleplaying, they do what their characters do and say what their characters say (within limits). They can stand up, walk around, hold up a letter, shake hands, or rush to a window to see what is going on. Of course, imagination still needs to be employed, and the Storyteller may still interrupt the action to describe objects and special situations.

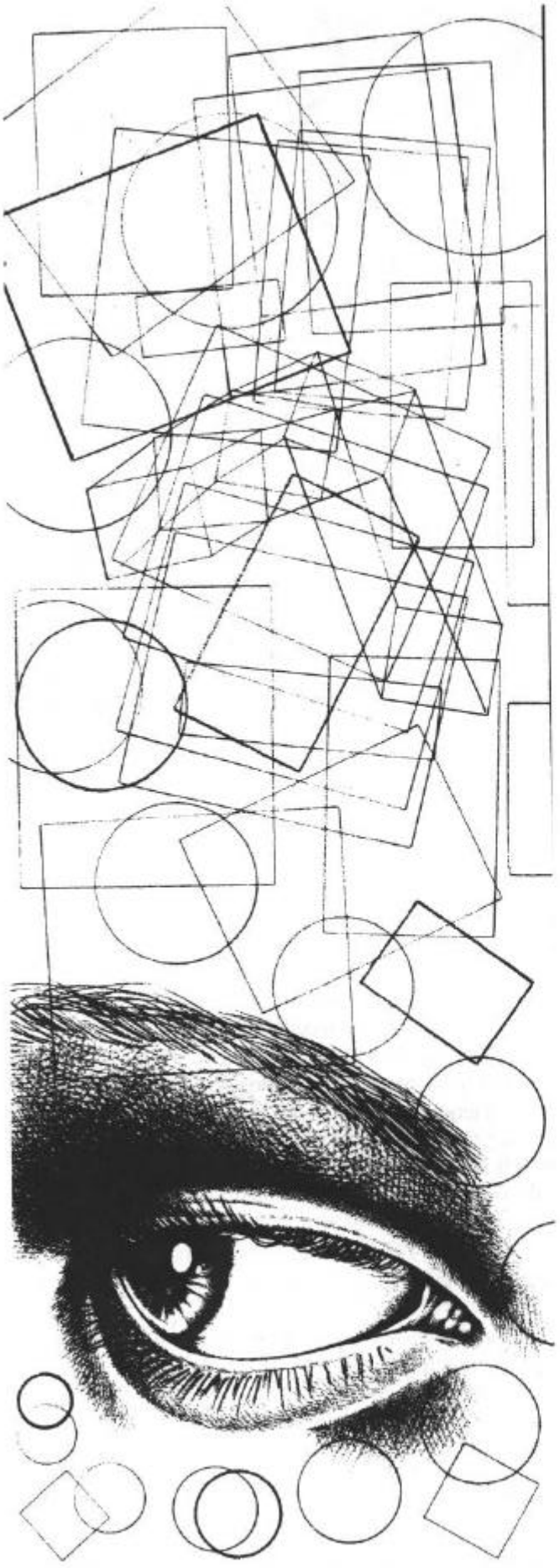
No dice are used during Live-Action (especially in White Wolf's **Mind's Eye Theatre** line of Live-Action products). Instead, everything is decided through acting. The Storyteller simply uses the characters' Traits to decide how well the characters manage to perform certain mechanical actions (such as picking a lock). The Storyteller must also decide how the other Storyteller-run characters react to the players' characters.

Rules

You must follow a few basic rules to ensure that Live-Action roleplaying progresses smoothly and safely. These rules must be obeyed if you intend to run any Live-Action roleplaying at all. Safety is always a primary concern.

• **Don't Touch:** A player should never actually strike or grapple another member of the troupe. No sort of combat should ever be performed — that is one thing you should leave for the dice to decide. Live-Action playing involves only talking, not fighting. If players or Storyteller assistants are getting too rambunctious in their roles, the Storyteller should call a time-out from the acting and remind everyone of the rules of play. Repeat offenders should be asked to leave, or the action should be returned to a table and conflicts resolved through dice rolls.

• **No Weapons:** No props can be used if they must touch another player to be effective. No real weapons of any sort can



ever be handled at any time during Live-Action roleplaying. Only those toy guns that can be easily identified as toys can be used; even then, the no-touch rules must still apply.

• **Play Inside:** Play inside your own home, or in whatever private area the game normally takes place. Make sure that everyone else in the area understands what you are doing. Never perform Live-Action if passersby may be confused or frightened by the event.

• **Know When to Stop:** When the Storyteller calls for a time-out, all action must immediately stop. Even during Live-Action (especially during Live-Action), the Storyteller's word is final.

Combat and Magick

While combat and other physically active tasks should never be acted out in a Live-Action session, they can be imitated without breaking the flow of the ongoing acting. Methods for imitating and resolving such actions are presented in **The Masquerade**, our first **Mind's Eye Theatre** product.

Players portraying mage characters can signal the use of magick in a Live-Action scene by making offhand remarks followed by a hand signal or snap of the fingers. Examples: "I wonder what you think of his plan?" (Mind-Reading); "Sure seems dark in here. Did someone turn off the lights?" (Creating Darkness); "I hope that waiter doesn't trip as he delivers John's drink." (Mind Control or Life magick); etc. A player targeted by the magick can usually be trusted to judge whether his character is indeed affected, but sometimes the Storyteller must very briefly narrate the effects of the magick.

The Meaning of Mage

And from this chasm, with seethless turmoil seething.
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan"

Mage characters are not the purveyors of parlor tricks and fireballs depicted by most traditional sources. Of course, in the course of day-to-day life, mages will most certainly evoke such magickal manifestations — and would hardly be enjoyable roleplaying subjects if they did not. Even so, mages of the Storyteller System, and their magickal powers, represent much greater philosophical truths. Such truths may never arise in a direct way within the game, but they permeate the setting nonetheless.

Belief and Paradigms

Paradigms and worldviews are changing overnight. Yesterday's certainties are today's superstitions.

— Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly*

The underlying premise of magick is that the human soul, or Avatar, lets a person use his or her force of will to alter reality. Because everyone has some fragment of Avatar, everyone, even Sleepers (mortals who remain ignorant of magick), may shape reality to some degree. While mages affect reality through conscious and focused effort, mundane humans affect it only through unconscious belief. An individual's belief, the set of "truths" by which she explains existence, is known as her "paradigm." The unconscious consensus of belief among all humans (the "facts" about which humanity as a whole agrees) is the paradigm that creates reality — the world as we understand it.

Mages, however, live outside this static world-view. In fact, their willpower allows them to impose their own paradigms upon the universe from time to time. Thus is magick permitted in static reality.

Static Reality

Science is truth for life
Watch religion fall obsolete
Science will be truth for life.

— 10,000 Maniacs, "Planned Obsolescence"

Each idea, substance, or other aspect of reality (dogs, the color red, the Social Contract, fear) can be thought of as an individual grain of sand; together, these various grains of sand compose a vast beach. By accepting a given world-view as absolute truth, people are scooping up a handful of sand and thereby ignoring the rest of the beach. Grains may occasionally slip through humanity's collective fingers, and over time people may scoop up additional quantities, but this give-and-take is gradual enough that humanity's overall picture of the universe is never questioned.

Humanity's reality, its particular handful of sand, is the mystic and mundane Gothic-Punk world described in Chapter Two — a world created largely by the Technomancers (the harbingers of science who seek to regulate reality). The world has taken its present, twisted form because the Technomancers have hardened the world against change. The Technomancers are the truest embodiments of the stereotypical cold, calculating scientist. This is how they approach the world. Science is a valuable part of reality, but the Technomancers have perverted science into an all-consuming juggernaut.

In so doing, the Technomancers have stifled humanity's growth and vision. People are unable to comprehend, or even

consider, the vastness of reality. Eternal questions such as "Where did I come from?" can in fact be answered, and some enlightened mages have found the answers, but the Technomancers have ensured that the mortal populace will ever be their dupes.

The Technomancers know that existence does offer more, but harnessing reality under the reins of science suits their purposes and hampers the efforts of their rivals, so they struggle to reinforce humanity's blinders. Other mages are trying to shatter the static monolith of science, but the going is slow.

Mages as Dynamic Forces

Dynamic Quality is the pre-intellectual cutting edge of reality, the source of all things, completely simple and always new.

— Robert M. Pirsig, *Lila*

The Technomancers seek to subjugate reality under a stagnant, static reign of oppression. Mages are the human legacies of the dynamic forces that oppose such a future. It is their task to shape reality, to lend the inspiration for what the Sleepers come to believe and disbelieve about the world. They must be careful to mold reality in small increments, lest they disturb humanity's sense of overall continuity. To return to the above analogy, humans see only their handfuls of sand, and would be overwhelmed to discover that they stood in the midst of an entire beach.

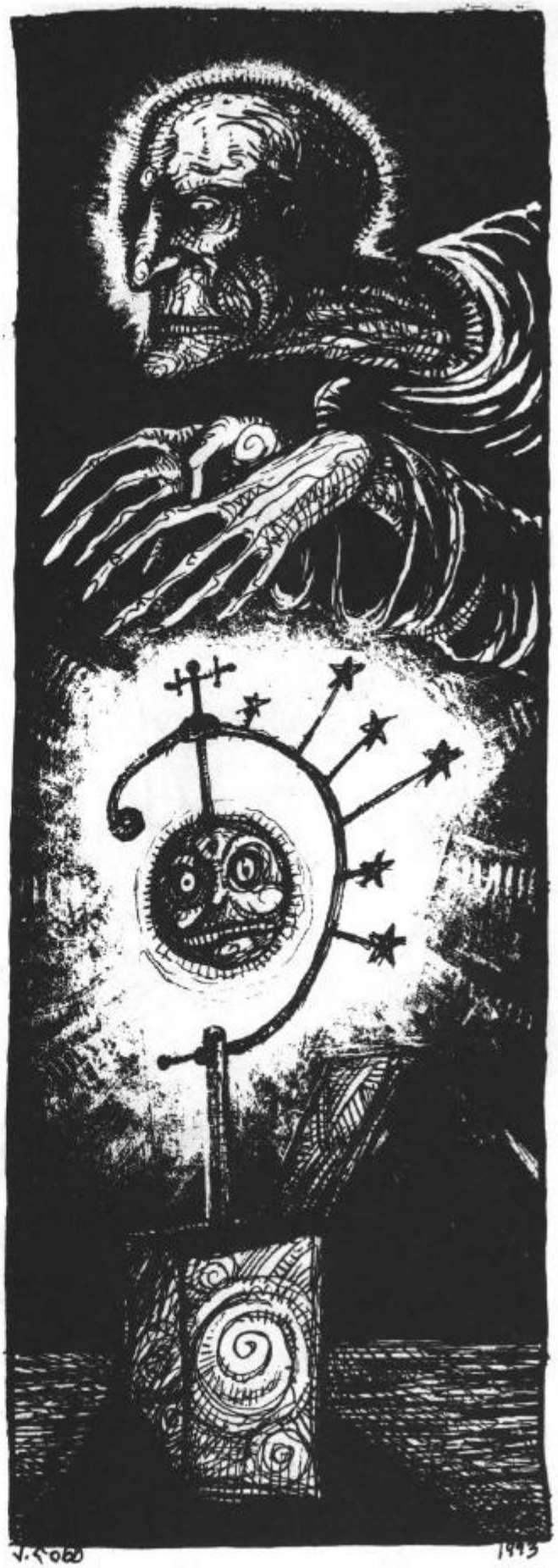
Mages, as personified dynamic forces, walk a fine line with their magick. Too great a dependence upon "new sand" undermines the crucial foundations of static reality, whereas too much control of "old sand" hampers the efforts of other mages, making reality too rigid to change.

Indeed, uncontrolled dynamic force is as undesirable as the dystopian vision of the Technomancers. Certain bizarre mages known only as Marauders embody such chaos. They seek to destroy the work of the Technomancers — and, indeed, any semblance of order or stability. They would see the universe scattered to the wind.

The Nephandi

Besides the polar threats of the Technomancers and the Marauders, mages face a third group of foes — perhaps the most enigmatic and deadly of all their enemies. These foes are the entities known as the Nephandi. The nature of the Nephandi is a mystery — many seem to be mages corrupted by pacts with foul extradimensional beings, while other Nephandi seem to be altogether alien to our reality. One thing is clear: the Nephandi seek neither to dominate reality as do the Technomancers, nor to warp it beyond recognition as do the Marauders. The Nephandi seek to destroy reality outright.

In this task the Nephandi appear to be allied with/controlled by a malign otherworldly force. The Nephandi speak of this force by many names, but some mages use the word given to it by its werewolf foes. They call it the Wyrm.



The Ascension

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one.
— John Lennon, "Imagine"

Mages view themselves as sculptors of reality. Though a surprising number remain ignorant of the macrocosmic implications of their craft, the most enlightened pursue an ideal known as Ascension. Ascension is spoken of often, but rarely analyzed or explained. Ascension has different meanings for different mages. In general, Ascension is viewed as the goal of perfecting not only one's own soul, but all reality. Mages view Ascension as the journey toward ultimate enlightenment.

Many mages believe Ascension to be all-or-nothing, that everyone and everything must be sculpted before reality as a whole is able to Ascend. Others think it can be attained in bits and pieces. A few mages think that Ascension requires only an important subset of humanity, others that it is a state reserved for mages alone, and yet others that it does not exist at all.

Some mages note with wry humor that the Technomancers, the Marauders and even the Nephandi all seek Ascension of a sort, though in their own dark and twisted ways. Mages must be ever wary of what they seek to accomplish by Ascension, lest in their hubris they fall into the same traps as the aforementioned beings.

Quintessence

What do we need to make our world come alive?
What does it take to make us sing
While we're waiting for the next one to arrive?
— Sisters of Mercy, "Vision Thing"

One of the most important concepts in **Mage** is Quintessence. Superficially, it is the raw fuel of magick. More deeply, Quintessence is the very basis of reality. Quantities of Quintessence are the building blocks of reality (and potential reality). Continuing the "beach" analogy, Quintessence is the substance from which the beach is formed — all the sand that can ever be created.

A minuscule amount of Quintessence exists in raw mystical form, such as magick mushrooms, and may be used as "fuel" for the working of magick. This "raw" Quintessence, known as Tass, is by far the rarest form of Quintessence. The vast majority of Quintessence has been commandeered to create the physical world. Earth, the universe and its conventions, the spirit world and other supernatural elements of the Gothic-Punk setting — all rely on Quintessence for their continued existence.

Paradox

Do not call up that which ye cannot put down.

— H.P. Lovecraft, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*

The other defining force of magick is Paradox. The use of blatant magick within the constraints of reality can create an anomaly within that reality — a paradox. As an example, it is against the mandates of reality for a solid wall simply to dissolve. Any mage who causes this to occur may create a paradox. Such is the power of the Technomancers' obsession with science. When the "facts" of reality are violated, reality itself retaliates to set things right. The agents of this response are known as Paradox spirits. These inscrutable, ferocious forces of reality punish those who transgress reality's laws. Many mages are crippled by a pathological fear of these spirits.

Paradox spirits can be avoided if magick occurs out of sight, and thus out of mind, of the Sleepers. Essentially, the falling tree does not make a sound if no one is listening.

Even if Sleepers are present, Paradox can be avoided through creating magickal effects that appear to be mere coincidences. In the above example of the wall, perhaps the mage "coincidentally" finds a loose stone that enables her to peer through the wall. "Rationalizing" magick in terms of such coincidences means that the mage was crafty enough not to force Paradox's involvement. Using magick without the benefit of such coincidences can produce some spectacular effects, but such use targets the mage as a source of anomaly in reality. Eventually, Paradox will destroy the offending mage.

Lexicon

A mage's world contains many strange and unusual things, and mages have adopted or invented various words to describe the weirdness of their daily life. The next three sections list the most frequently used terms (Common Parlance), the vocabulary of ancient mages (Old Form), and the ever-evolving slang of the younger generations (Vulgar Argot).

Common Parlance

Acolyte: An un-Awakened servitor of a mage.

Adept: A mage who has achieved Rank Four in a given Sphere.

Ascension: The enlightened state of being to which all mages aspire.

Apprentice: A mage who has not yet been initiated into a Tradition. Not typically applied to Orphans.

Arcane: A mystical veil erected by mages to guard their identities.

Avatar: A soul, said by some to be a fragment of the Pure Ones who originally inhabited the Tellurian. An Awakened Avatar enables a mage to perform magick.

Awakened, The: This term describes any supernatural creature of at least partially human origin, including mages, werewolves, mummies and vampires.

Awakening, The: The moment at which one realizes and accepts that reality can and does contradict one's previous experiences.

Branding: A punishment in which a mage has her Avatar marked (using the Spirit sphere) because she has violated a Protocol.

Cabal: A group of mages bound by loyalty and a common purpose.

Caern: A Node controlled by the Garou.

Celestine: The greatest of the spirits, equal in power to the ancient gods; they rule the Shard Realms.

Censure: A common mild punishment among mages. It is similar to being on parole.

Chantry: The stronghold of a mage or cabal. On Earth, this may be a normal building, or a magickally fortified and enhanced structure. These mundane places are often located on Nodes and connected to strongholds in the Umbra.

Coincidental Magick: This is magick performed in such a fashion that it is effectively indistinguishable from a mundane event. Coincidental magick is also known as static magick.

Continuum, The: All mages.

Convention: One of five groups of mages that form the Technocracy and enforce its policies. The Conventions are: Iteration X, the Syndicate, the Progenitors, the New World Order, and the Void Engineers.

Deacon: One of the founding members of a well-established Chantry.

Deep Umbra: The aspects of the Umbra that are only found away from the Earth. The Shard Realms are scattered throughout the Deep Umbra.

Demon: One of the Hordes of Darkness who await beyond the Horizon to devour the world.

Disciple: The lowest rank among the Tradition mages. Disciples can perform magick and have joined a Tradition.

Dream Realm: A world created out of old dreams kept alive by the Oneira, or Dream Lords.

Dynamic Reality: Reality in flux. It may be changing quickly because of vulgar magick, slowly because of coinciden-

tal magick, or simply because it is the reality of the Umbra (where anything can happen).

Errant: A mage whose Chantry and cabal have been destroyed. Errants are frequently shunned by other mages, as they are usually both hunted by and seeking revenge upon their enemies.

Fellow: A full member of a Chantry, but not a founding member and therefore of lower status than its Deacons.

Focus: An object, action or gesture required to perform magick. Foci vary from Tradition to Tradition.

Gaia: The Earth and its Near Umbra.

Gate: A temporary magickal "bridge" between two places. Frequently created at Nodes. See *Portal*.

Gauntlet, The: A mystical barrier between the Earth and the Near Umbra. The Gauntlet was created by the Technocracy to prevent free travel between the physical and spirit worlds.

Garou: The term that werewolves use for themselves. (Also used by mages who want their respect.)

Gilgul: The destruction of a mage's ability to work magick by removing or destroying his Avatar. This is the most horrible crime or punishment possible, as it essentially takes away the mage's soul.

Horizon, The: The magickal barrier separating the Near Umbra from the Deep Umbra.

Horizon Realms: Artificial Realms on the border between the Near Umbra and Deep Umbra. Umbral Chantries are built within them and earthly Chantries connect to them by way of Portals and Gates.

Incarna: Greater spirits; the servants of the Celestines. They roughly correspond to demigods.

Initiation: A combined test and ceremony that marks a person's transition from apprentice to mage among the Traditions.

Kindred: The term that vampires use for themselves.

Lord: An Umbrood spirit; less powerful than an *Incarna* but more powerful than either *Preceptors* or *Minions*.

Magic: Stage tricks, illusions, etc.

Magick: The act of altering reality.

Master: A mage who has attained Rank Five in a Sphere.

Marauder: An utterly unpredictable mage who has turned to chaos. Marauders believe in personal Ascension and a return to the age of legend.

Mentor: An older mage who Awakens the Avatar of a Sleeper. More often, any mage who teaches another mage magick.

Minion: One of the least powerful Umbrood spirits.

Near Umbra: The part of the spirit world that exists around each Realm. Usually used to describe the area of the Umbra that is around the Earth.

Nephandus: A mage corrupted by the forces of Entropy. Nephandi work closely with demons.

Node: A highly mystical place. Nodes collect and store Quintessence. The Gauntlet is thinner in their vicinity. Many Chantries, Gates and Portals are built on these sites.

Oracle: One of the legendary mages who have neared Ascension.

Orphans: Sleepers who have Awakened spontaneously, without the assistance or guidance of other mages. They have taught themselves magick and are disdained by the mages of the Traditions. There is only one known organization of Orphans: the Hollow Ones.

Ostracism: A punishment that completely divorces a mage from Tradition society.

Paradox: An anomalous state of reality, caused when the reality of un-Awakened observers conflicts with the reality a mage imposes on the universe. Quite simply, if the innocent bystanders couldn't believe it when they saw it with their own eyes, it generates Paradox.

Paradox Realm: A small Realm created by Paradox spirits to entrap a mage and thus prevent any further disruptions of reality. The Realm traps the mage inside an altered world and prevents her escape.

Paradox Spirit: A spirit formed from the collective beliefs of humanity. Mages who are careless or unlucky with their magick in front of Sleepers will find themselves hunted by these spirits.

Pattern: The mystical composition of an object, entity, place or idea.

Pedagogue: A tutor of great fame, usually surrounded by students and quite powerful.

Pure Ones: The original, primordial beings of the Tellurian. Mages believe that all souls are fragments of these shattered entities.

Pogrom, The: The systematic purge of all opposition by the Technocracy. The Pogrom primarily affects the mages of the Traditions, as there are few Marauders on Earth and the Technocracy believes the Nephandi confined to the Umbra.

Portal: A permanent Gate. Portals are usually guarded by powerful spirits that require a task to be performed or a puzzle solved before they will allow safe passage.

Postulant: A mage who has Mastered a Sphere and serves the Oracles, trying to gain admittance to their ranks.

Preceptor: An Umbrood spirit that is less powerful than a *Lord*, but still more powerful than a *Minion*.

Prime: The original unified force that composed the universe. It is still present in the Tellurian and may be manipulated by mages.

Protocols, The: A code of honor customarily followed by the Traditions. Violation of this code is punishable by *censure*, *branding*, *ostracism*, death, or *Gilgul*.

Quiet: A state of insanity caused by the excessive use of magick.

Quintessence: The stuff of magick; the raw substance of the universe in condensed form. See *Tass*.

Realms: The worlds of "solid" reality that exist within the Tellurian. Sometimes referred to as Domains.

Rogue: A renegade mage-turned-mercenary.

Rote: An effect used in instruction.

Seeking: A mage's Avatar-guided quest for enlightenment.

Sentinel: One of the guardian mages of a large Chantry; not typically a member herself.

Shade Realm: The Umbral "shadow" of a Shard Realm.

Shard Realm: One of nine Realms said to have been part of Gaia in ages past. They roughly correspond to the other planets (including Luna) and the nine Spheres of magick; each is ruled by a Celestine.

Sleeper: A person potentially capable of magick, but who is not yet aware of its existence.

Sphere: A particular element of reality manipulated by mages.

Static Reality: The laws of reality on Earth, as created and enforced by the beliefs of mundane humanity. At this time static reality is very strong because of the Technocracy's enforcement of its precepts.

Symposium: A monthly meeting of the Technocracy. At these meetings members of the Conventions gather to chart the course of reality.

Tass: Quintessence stored in physical form. It tends to collect in Nodes, and takes various forms based on its surroundings — i.e. mushrooms at a wooded caern, water from a specific spring, or magickal garbage mold at an urban Node.

Talisman: An object that stores Quintessence and uses it to create a specific magickal effect — i.e. magick carpets, wishing wells, or etheric ray guns.

Technocracy, The: The group of mages that currently controls earthly reality. The Technocracy's magick is based on the rule of science, and it destroys or subverts any opposition. See *Pogrom*.

Technomancer: A mage who supports the Technocracy. Such a mage will probably practice a rigid form of magick.

Tellurian: The whole of reality.

Tradition: One of the nine groups of mages that oppose the Technocracy, resist the radical changes of the Marauders, and fight the evil of the Nephandi. These are: the Akashic Brotherhood, the Celestial Chorus, the Cult of Ecstasy, the Dreamspeakers, the Euthanatos, the Order of Hermes, the Sons of Ether, the Verbena, and the Virtual Adepts.

Tribunal: A gathering of mages to discuss matters important to the Traditions; usually held in times of strife.

Tutor: Mages who have become known as proficient teachers. They are highly regarded by other mages.

Umbra: The astral plane that exists around each Realm.

Umbrood: Any non-human not born or created on Earth. This includes both the spirits that roam the Umbra and the inhabitants of other realms.

Vulgar Magick: This is the fireball-and-lightning kind of magick — magick visible as such to normal observers. Also known as dynamic magick.

Old Form

Certámen: A magickal, non-lethal duel between mages.

Consors: A non-mage who works closely with a cabal. The *consors* may or may not live in the Chantry.

Curtain, The: The reality in which most Sleepers believe; when a Sleeper is Awakened she is brought "through" the Curtain and sees that things are not truly as they seem.

Custos: A non-mage who works for or with a cabal as a warrior or bodyguard. A modern *custos* may be anything from a rent-a-cop to a fellow gang member.

Grog: A familiar form of *custos*.

Magus: A mage.

Pawn: A unit of raw *vis* or *Quintessence*.

Turb: A group of Grogs, used as one would use a "pride" of lions or a "murder" of crows.

Vis: Quintessence.

Vulgar Argot

Beelzebub: A Nephandus mage.

Black Hats & Mirrorshades: The Technocracy, taken from the traditional uniform of the enforcers of the Technocracy. "Looks like the land of Black Hats and Mirrorshades, folks..."

Bloodwork: Any magick that requires a tremendous amount of effort and involves risk to life and limb. Also: Verbena magick.

Copperfield: Slang for a mage adept at performing vulgar magick in plain sight.

Corpses: Vampires; considered especially derogatory.

Crowley: Term used to describe a flamboyant and pretentious mage.

Crystal Wavers: "New Agers" who have no idea what true magick is, but capitalize on it anyway; charlatans. Occasionally used as an insult to the Dreamspeakers.

Dram: One Tass of Quintessence.

Faust: A mage who bargains excessively with spirits, especially dangerous ones.

Freak: A dangerously insane mage; often applied to Marauders and Nephandi.

Fry: To attack someone with magick, specifically with the sphere of Forces.

Gremlins: Mages adept at using technology to cover their coincidental magick.

Greyface: A Technomancer, taken from the *Principia Discordia*. Describes any anti-dynamic mage or scientist, specifically those who most focus on conformity.

Juice: Quintessence.

Merlin: An old mage, especially one who very rarely visits Earth anymore.

Mundane: A normal human; a Sleeper.

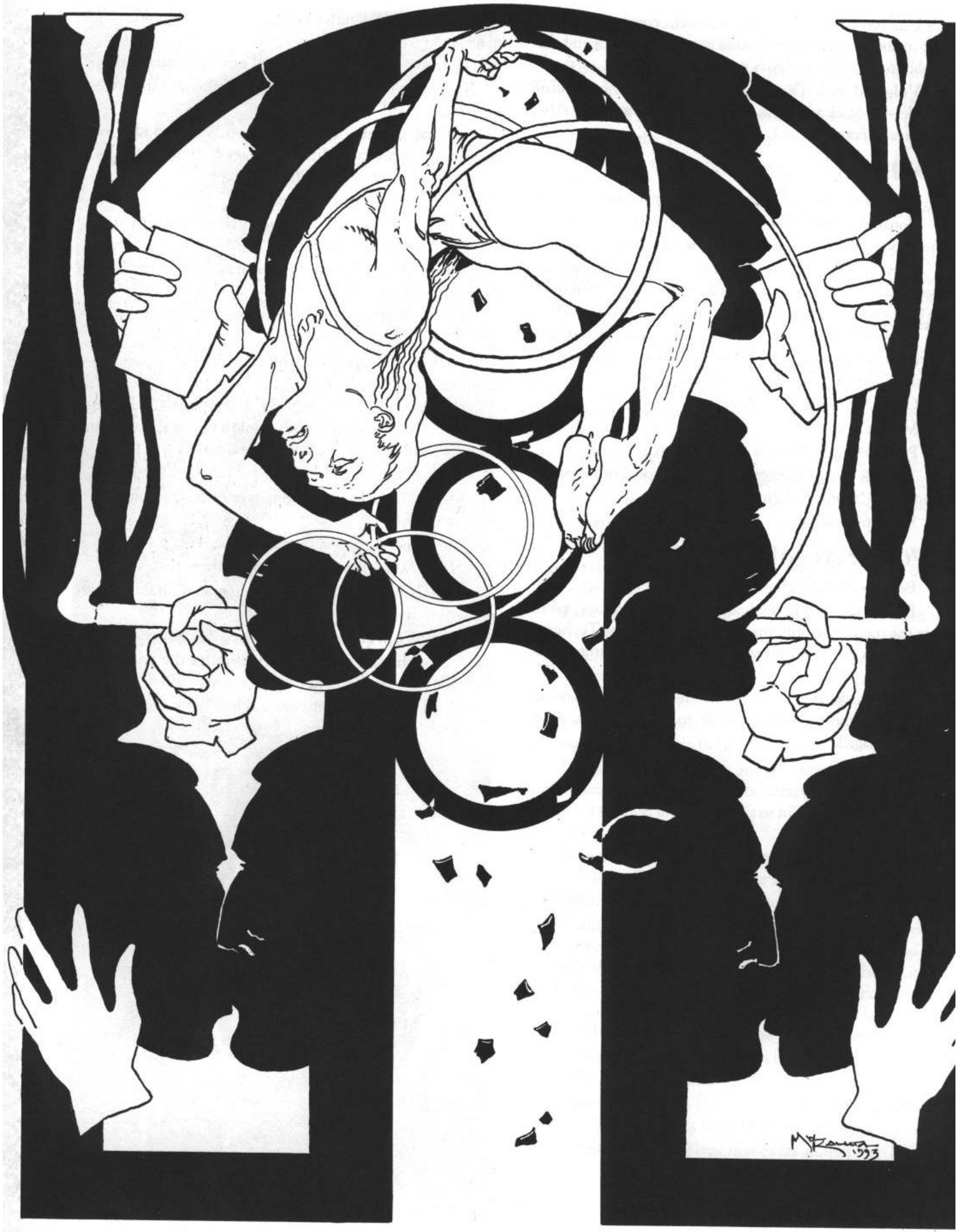
Nuke: What Paradox spirits do to those they attack.

Paraphobe: Someone who is desperately afraid of accumulating Paradox. Derogatory.

Pit Bulls: Werewolves; considered derogatory.

Technobabble: A derogatory term for the propaganda and inflexible magick used by the Conventions.

Wyld & Fried: An insane and highly Paradoxed mage. Often applied to Marauders.



Chapter Two: Setting

We gaze continually at the world and it grows dull in our perceptions. Yet seen from another's vantage point, as if new, it may still take the breath away.

— Alan Moore, *Watchmen*

The world of **Mage** is not our world — at least not quite. **Mage** is set in a Gothic-Punk version of our world. Here, things are just a little bit darker, a little bit more sinister. CDs are still in, vinyl is out, the ozone layer is disappearing, and the same banal sitcoms are broadcast into our living rooms. The faces on Mount Rushmore are the same and the Lady still stands proudly in New York Harbor. But here, the fathers of the city embezzled the funds earmarked for the restoration project, so the Lady never got her facelift. The government is corrupt, the culture is bankrupt, and the decadent mortals revel in the flames of the final days.

Very few of the established institutions — the political, social and religious organizations within society — differ from those of the real world. The overall mood of this World of Darkness, however, is very different — very grim. The creators of this world, the mages, have made many mistakes throughout history. Much of the horror of this world stems from their errors and conflicts.

This chapter details the world in which **Mage** is set. It begins with an overview of the World of Darkness. It then discusses the social structures of modern-day mages and the nature of magick.

The Gothic-Punk Milieu

The Gothic-Punk milieu is a *film noir* environment, a world of extremes. The bureaucrats are all corrupt, the rich are filthy rich, and the homeless clog the streets. A sense of eerie foreboding hovers over everything, and there always seems to be a storm brewing on the horizon.

Gothic describes the world in bleak terms — things are massive, brooding, gloomy, and ominous. Buildings are huge and looming, and are often encrusted with gargoyles and other occult or morbid statuary. The sense of corruption and conspiracy is even greater than in our world; everyone always seems to have an ulterior motive. City Hall rarely keeps complete records on all the shadowy figures who

own the cities piece by piece. Odd excavations, building code violations, and bribery are rampant.

Many cities have an iconic, almost medieval feel. Corporate and government agents are faceless, impersonal figures, dressed severely in black suits and drab ties. The Church is enormous and ritualistic, with tightly controlled dioceses and power plays between its clergy.

Punk is the other half of the equation. Despite the gothic trappings, this is a post-modern world. Crime is common and overt; people are tougher and more cynical. The youth, sick of the oppressive physical and social landscape, rebel against society through words, dress, music and sporadic violence. The garbage-choked, alley-riddled downtown cores sport underground clubs, street gangs, posers in leather jackets with nose rings and facial tattoos, and anarchic bands screaming at 100 decibels about revolution. The youth, ignored and disaffected, dance to the entropic chords of oblivion.

The mages are partially responsible for this nightmare. They have far-reaching control over the destiny of humankind, shaping the world's cultures and molding the world's reality. Clearly, they've made mistakes. Their vaunted goal of Ascension is nowhere in sight.

The rivalries among the various factions of mages, their all-consuming greed and pervasive decadence, are the most profound signs of their faltering. The state of the world itself may well be a reflection of their inner corruption.

In the end, you, as the Storyteller, must decide what this world is like. You must convey your own particular vision of the Gothic-Punk milieu with the descriptions, characters, stories and themes of your chronicle.

Mages

At no other time in history have conditions been more exciting – or more filled with promise – for beings on a small planet hurtling through the vast darkness of space toward an unknown and unimaginable future which they, themselves, are creating.

— O.B. Hardison, Jr., *Disappearing through the Skylight*

Lurking between the gleaming towers of glass and the crumbling industrial parks is a secret society of wizards and sorcerers. Powerful beyond human ken and part of a tradition older than recorded history, these mages seldom concern themselves with mundane prestige or wealth. They seek a greater power, a power over reality itself.

Mages are, in some ways, bridges between the mundane and supernatural worlds. While they are ordinary humans in mind and body, they have been Awakened to their magickal powers. Though they are born from human stock and will someday die of old age, they possess a special gift. This gift grants them fundamental control over the laws of reality, and the ability to range farther afield into its wondrous depths.

Origins

Modern-day mages can only conjecture about their origins. They feel their Awakened spirits within, forces that both give them great powers and drive them toward Ascension. Still, mages can only speculate why they are chosen to bear the gift and burden of magickal power.

Most mages believe that all reality was originally unified into a primordial force, to which mages refer as Prime. Prime spawned a race of beings known as the Pure Ones. These Pure Ones presided over the nascent reality until some unknown force rent them asunder. Pieces of the Pure Ones' essences are believed to have been thus incorporated into human beings. These shards of the Pure Ones became something akin to souls. The Pure One shards retained their power to guide and shape reality, but now that power could be wielded by humans. Thus, it is believed, the first mages were born.

All humans possess a shard of the Pure Ones within them. Mages call this shard an Avatar. When a human realizes that she possesses an Avatar within her, she is said to have been Awakened. She now realizes her ability to shape reality, and her Avatar begins its hunt for Ascension. From that point onward, she can begin to develop her potential for magick. Mages use the terms "Sleepers" or "mundanes" to refer to humans whose Avatars are un-Awakened.

The Awakening of a mage's Avatar can be a traumatic event that occurs spontaneously; more often, however, it occurs as the mage-to-be learns magickal theory under the tutelage of an experienced mage. Mages believe that all supernatural creatures possess Awakened Avatars. The inborn Avatars of such creatures are Awakened through special means, or transferred to them, such as through the Embrace of a vampire.

The Ascension War

Against the run of the mill
Static as it seems
We break the surface tension
With our wild, kinetic dreams.
— Rush, "Grand Designs"

Driven by their Avatars, mages search for enlightenment — the universal understanding and harmony that they call the Ascension. Unfortunately, not all mages share the same view of Ascension. Factions of mages fight a neverending battle on the fringes of society, concealed in a shroud of coincidence and happenstance. They fight ferociously to advance their view of Ascension and thereby claim the soul of reality. This Ascension War consumes the energy and wisdom of all mages and Awakened beings.

The Ascension War is fought by many factions of mages, including the Technocracy, the Marauders, the insidious Nephandi, and the Traditions. Each seeks its own version of Ascension and tries to convert or destroy all that stand in its way. The Ascension War is a battle between the mythic and the monolithic, between order and entropy, society and individuality. In the past there has been limited cooperation between factions, but today the war is fought with no quarter asked and none given.

The Technocracy

The principal element of the modern world is the supremacy of science. Indeed, in the modern age science defines reality. God is dead, and magick does not exist. Long live science.

In truth, however, technology is a form of magick. From Dial-a-Spell on a cellular phone to a witch's familiar that lives inside a computer hard drive, science and technology have become forms of magick acceptable to mundane humanity.

It is no accident that science has achieved such dominance — it is the work of mages. Since the time of Copernicus, a faction of mages that now calls itself the Technocracy has shaped human destiny on Earth. It has forged its magick of science into a huge body of knowledge accepted by most mortals purely on faith. Today is the age of science, and the Technomancers are its high priests.

Technology was originally intended as a means of allowing humans to overcome the caprices of nature. Since the Victorian era, however, the Technocracy has transformed science into something far more sinister.

The Technocracy believes that Ascension can only be achieved through absolute control of reality. Society itself must be perfect and unchanging. Order must reign supreme. To create their perfect world, the Technomancer mages are driving humanity into a world without imagination, without hope, without faith. Imagination breeds change; hope implies imperfection; faith embraces the undefinable. The Technocracy systematically pares away society, destroying that which it does not or cannot control. The Technocracy's view of Ascension requires a dehumanized world that runs like clockwork, where nothing is variable or unpredictable.

To accomplish this Ascension, the Technocracy has tightened its control over Earth. Mass media indoctrinates the population. Computers store financial transactions and thousands of other facts and figures to record the individual. Governments and corporations under the auspices of the Technocracy use science to mold the culture — indeed, the very face — of Earth. The Technocracy is the most dominant force controlling humanity, and it brooks no intervention by other factions of mages. To ensure their continued dominance, the Technomancers and their servants brutally enact the Pogrom, a systematic repression and purge of other mages.

As science marches on and technology inexorably spirals ahead at a faster and faster pace, the methods of the Technomancers become more and more brutal and horrific. Where once humans armed with machines served the Technocracy's aims, lately the Technocracy's ranks have been augmented by terrifying beings concocted in deep and secret labs — hybrids of man and machine, bizarre clone beings, and other entities.

The Marauders

The insane Marauders are the most ill-understood faction of mage society. They embody all that the Technomancers are not, taken to the level of lunacy. The Marauders embrace change, disorder and individuality. They are darkly humorous madmen whose sporadic visits to Earth rip normal reality apart. Where Marauders appear, randomness reigns and destruction soon follows.

The Marauders believe that Ascension is an entirely personal achievement. What is good for a given individual is good for Ascension, and damn those who get in the way. Marauders care nothing for society, though individual humans make ideal fodder for their experiments. The Marauders poke and tug at reality to find better ways of manipulating it without suffering the consequences other mages must endure. In the pursuit of their vision of Ascension, the Marauders will stop at nothing to gain more personal power and knowledge. They are megalomaniacs of the highest order, for they believe that only by having absolute command of reality can they Ascend.

This pursuit of individual power devolves most Marauders into raving madness. They live within their own wild versions of reality, which they have created but cannot always control. The Marauders have rocketed so far ahead of other mages that they have lost touch with any sane conception of reality.

The Marauders are rarely seen on Earth; the Technomancers will not allow it. The Marauders stand for disorder and personal progression, everything the Technomancers hate. When Marauders appear on Earth, the Technocracy attacks them, provoking bloody battles. These battles usually drive the Marauders from Earth's physical reality, but leave the Technomancers licking their wounds and trying to restore reality ripped apart in the conflict. Naturally, the carnage inflicted upon unfortunate Sleepers caught in the middle is often terrible. The Marauders normally dwell within Earth's spiritual counterpart, the Near Umbra. This spirit world will be described later.

The Nephandi

An evil more insidious than the Technocracy lurks in the world of darkness. Though it often hides amid the shadows, make no mistake; it exists. Certain mages have made pacts with the forces of corruption, trading their souls for the power to command the minions of Entropy. Mages from the Technocracy, Marauders, and Traditions alike have fallen prey to the whispered promises of darkness, and become the half-human beings known as the Nephandi.

The term Nephandi is now used to describe the entire faction of mages (and allied beings) who have embraced the raw forces of corruption, despair and destruction. While Nephandi often veil their wickedness behind postures of kindness, they hold only one thing dear — universal decay.

The only view of Ascension espoused by the Nephandi is the utter destruction of reality. When nothing exists, when the universe itself is destroyed, Ascension has been achieved.

However, the Nephandi rarely speak of Ascension, except to taunt other mages for following such an idealistic and unreachable goal. Far better to accept promises of power, true enlightenment, and comfort among the forces of the Nephandi. *Do not live in fear of evil; embrace it and it will forever protect you.* Such promises lure mages into alliances with the bizarre and horrific minions of Entropy.

The Traditions

With the forces of the Technocracy, Marauders, and Nephandi herding reality toward their own radical views of Ascension, it would seem that there is little hope for enlightenment. Yet there is a voice against despair. One faction of mages still preserves ancient views of a glorious Ascension that unites cultural enlightenment with personal fulfillment. This faction is made up of nine Traditions of magick; each Tradition stems from a different culture and a different part of the world.

While each Tradition holds its own beliefs about Ascension, all agree that the views and motives of the other factions of mages are wrong. This realization has formed a common ground between the Traditions, and has given them a foundation for cooperation against the Technomancers and the other factions. The Traditions have united against common enemies, and form a significant force in the Ascension War.

Even in concert, however, the Traditions are sorely outmatched by the powerful Technocracy, much less the nightmarish Nephandi or incomprehensible Marauders. The Tradition mages are forced to live on the outskirts and in the shadows of the world, hiding from the Technocracy's Pogrom and fearing to tread too far into the spirit Realms, which are haunted by the other factions.

Still, while they may be outnumbered by their enemies, the mages of the Traditions are not to be trifled with. Their magick is the most versatile of all factions, and individual Tradition mages hold greater potential for power than any of their opponents.

Magick

Do you believe in extra-sensory perception, ectoplasmic manifestation, reincarnation, the Bermuda Triangle, poltergeist activity, the Von Daniken hypotheses, psychokinesis, ancestral memory, and the lost continent of Atlantis?

— Janine in *Ghostbusters*

Although few in the post-modern world would believe it, magick exists just as it always has. Magick takes many forms, from technological miracles to bizarre "coincidences" to the fiery explosions of mythic wizards. Fundamentally, however, magick is the ability to reshape reality. Mages are humans who have Awakened their Avatars and therefore possess the potential to perform magick.

The Nature of Magick

I never believed in things
That I couldn't see,
I said if I can't feel it
Then how can it be

— America, "You Can Do Magic"

Magick is the alteration of reality by force of will. Those with Awakened Avatars are able to understand, mold and shape reality. Magick takes two major forms: static and dynamic. Dynamic magick is the sort with which most people are familiar — the flashy effects and blunt manipulation that most people commonly think of as "magic." Dynamic magick is burning someone to a crisp with a ball of fire, or flying through the air to reach a third-story ledge. This sort of magick is commonly called vulgar magick, for it is an obscenity to the laws of reality.

Static magick, while far more commonly used, is less known. Also known as coincidental magick, static magick attempts to insinuate itself into the fabric of reality. Everything done via static magick must fit within the limits of reality, remaining indistinguishable from the events of daily life. Static magick manifests as extraordinary coincidences that work in a mage's favor. A mage who performed static magick with the intent of acquiring money might "suddenly" win the lottery (as opposed to the vulgar magick alternative of conjuring showers of gold from the heavens).

The Spheres

While an Awakened Avatar gives a mage the potential to shape reality, magickal knowledge shows her how to do it. Mages divide their knowledge of magick into nine Spheres: Correspondence, Entropy, Forces, Life, Matter, Mind, Prime, Spirit and Time. Each Sphere represents a facet of existence, and understanding a Sphere gives the mage power to control that aspect of reality. For example, mages who pursue the

Sphere of Time gain mastery over chronological aspects of reality.

Often, a mage must possess knowledge in several different Spheres to manipulate reality as he desires. A magickal feat that requires knowledge of more than one Sphere is called conjunctional magick. Conjunctional magick gives a mage much more diverse control over reality, Still, mages find it nearly impossible to master all nine Spheres, so they inevitably specialize in one or two areas of knowledge.

Mages gain status by mastering the Spheres. A mage who is learning the earlier stages of a Sphere is termed a Disciple of that Sphere; one with a large base of knowledge is an Adept, and one who has become proficient with all a Sphere's common properties is a Master of that Sphere. Regardless of faction, Tradition or background, most mages respect those who have Mastered a Sphere with which they themselves are only familiar.

Some mages have advanced the notion that, while these nine Spheres largely define reality, some holes remain unaccounted for. These mages postulate that there must be a tenth, as yet unrecognized, Sphere.

The Oracles

Once Mastery of a Sphere has been obtained, most mages leave Earth to pursue a place among the Oracles. The Oracles are a select group of mages who dwell in the distant reaches of Earth's Umbra. There are nine Chantries (houses) of Oracles, one for each Sphere. A mage who has Mastered a Sphere will often seek a second apprenticeship among the Oracles of that Sphere in order to pursue further knowledge of that Sphere. The Oracles are purported to possess secrets beyond the ken of other mages, and unimaginable powers that come with such knowledge.

Joining the ranks of the Oracles is no easy task. The Oracles' nine Realms are located deep in the Umbra. If a prospective apprentice even finds the Oracles (by no means certain), he may be accepted into their ranks, made a Postulant and accepted on a probationary period, or rejected. It is rumored that the Oracles mark the Avatars of those whom they reject. Mages of the Traditions also rumor that the Oracles do not allow another into their ranks until an existing Oracle dies or Ascends.

Little is truly known about the Oracles. Occasionally, Oracles visit lesser mages to offer cryptic explanations of events or request services. More commonly, the Oracles send their Postulants to conduct such errands.

Paradox

Paradox is the mysterious force that preserves reality. Paradox attacks and punishes those who tear or unravel reality — which occurs almost every time magick is performed. Whenever a mage performs a magickal feat that is impossible according to the laws of reality as mundanes understand it, human minds unconsciously signal the forces of Paradox to appear and fix the problem.

Paradox has many methods of fixing the disturbances mages create in reality; none is pleasant for the mage involved. Paradox can even appear in personified form as Paradox spirits — entities whose sole purpose is to remove the problem — the mage — from reality.

Mages may use coincidental magick without much fear of reprisal, for in so doing they conceal their activities from possible watchers. When mages attempt vulgar magick, however, Paradox spirits often manifest to stop them. The worse the transgression against reality, the more powerful the Paradox spirit.

Paradox spirits' primary goal is the "correction of reality"; punishing the mage is but a side issue. However, correction usually entails getting rid of the source of the problem. Paradox spirits sometimes create a second reality for the mage, a Paradox Realm similar to the physical world, but torn from it. These Paradox Realms become hellish prisons for the mages taken there. On occasion Paradox spirits simply slay an offending mage outright.

Quintessence

The essence of magick is the spiritual energy mages call Quintessence. Quintessence ebbs and flows through and about every conscious creature in existence — especially mages. It is drawn from the origin of reality, Prime. Any act of creativity or imagination adds a sliver of Quintessence to the world. Creative and self-possessed individuals, such as most mages, virtually radiate Quintessence. The soul is an aspect of Quintessence, spirits are formed from it, and all of reality is created by it.

Earth is the only known source of Quintessence (and thus all mages must eventually return to Earth, no matter how far afield they may stray). Significant supplies of Quintessence are exuded at certain earthly locations called Nodes. Quintessence is such a vital commodity in the Ascension War that most battles are fought for control of Nodes.

Talismans and Foci

Talismans are objects programmed to evoke specific magickal effects. They take a great deal of time and Quintessence to create. Most Talismans contain reservoirs of Quintessence that are tapped each time the Talismans are used. Once all a Talisman's Quintessence is depleted, the Talisman may not again be used until more Quintessence is introduced. Because Talismans store Quintessence to power magick, even Sleepers can activate them. Marauders commonly leave their arcane Talismans in physical reality to be discovered and accidentally activated by Sleepers; rarely are the effects pleasant for the unfortunates who activate such devices. Details of Talismans are given in Chapter Eight.

Mages also employ another class of objects known as Foci. Unlike Talismans, Foci are not necessarily magickal objects.

Foci are props that beginning mages need in order to perform their magick. They are "items of power," such as rings, amulets or computers, which must be wielded by inexperienced mages to evoke magick. Foci can also take the form of special arrangements that must be made ahead of time, like the drawing of a magickal circle on the ground. As mages become enlightened they outgrow the need for such things, but beginning mages appreciate the help the objects provide.

The Supernatural World

Anyone involved in the twilight world of the occult must, so the argument goes, be weird or unusual because occultism in the popular imagination conjures up visions of incense-filled temples, naked virgins on altars, bizarre rituals, secret initiations and...the worship of the Powers of Darkness.

— Michael Howard, *The Occult Conspiracy*

The World of Darkness is more than a simple mood or a texture. The supernatural is native to this setting — ghosts haunt opera houses, vampires roam the night streets, faerie changelings seek a return to Arcadia, and a race of shamanistic werewolves protects the few remaining wildernesses. Each competes to shape the world for its own ends, and in its own image. Yet this struggle for dominance takes place outside the perceptions of the average person. The supernatural forces war with one another behind a veil.

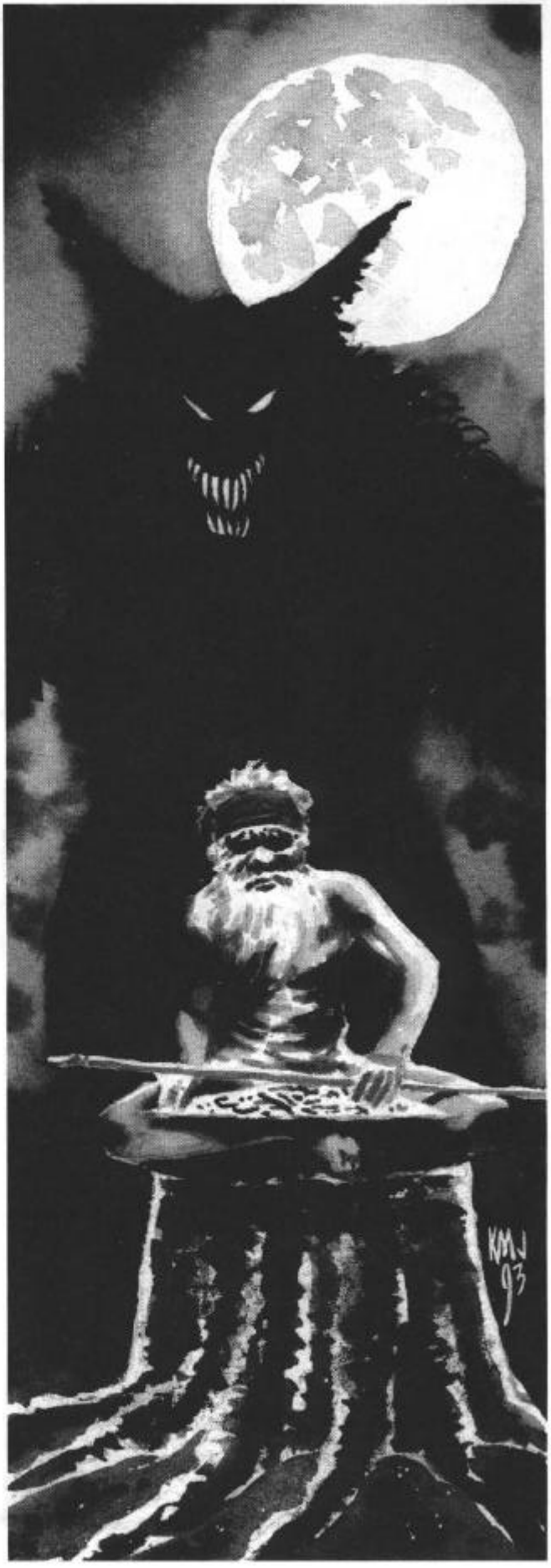
Not only is humanity blind to the supernatural elements of their world, which control them like marionettes on strings, they are also blind to any real conception of the universe. The Technocracy has rewritten the history books and the astronomy books to teach humanity a false version of the world. There is far more to reality than the physical world called of Earth.

The Tellurian

And when we shoot for the stars
what a giant step
have we got what it takes
to carry the weight of this concept?

— Tasmin Archer, "Sleeping Satellite"

Mages do not describe reality as "the universe." They instead refer to reality as the Tellurian. The Tellurian represents the entirety of reality — everything that exists, including the spiritual worlds that mirror the physical. The various groups of mages constantly debate about the true nature of the Tellurian. Much is speculated, but little is known for certain.



Most of the Tellurian remains uncharted by human mages, but some of its wonders are known.

The Near Umbra

We sometimes catch a window
A glimpse of what's beyond
Was it just imagination
Stringing us along?
More things than are dreamed about
Unseen and unexplained
We suspend our disbelief
And we are entertained.
— Rush, "Mystic Rhythms"

The physical world as humanity knows it is not the only facet of existence. There is an entirely different world, a spirit world that mirrors Earth, yet remains unseen by all but a few Awakened beings such as mages. This spirit world is called the Near Umbra. It is a world in its own right, existing parallel to the physical world and covering the same space simultaneously.

In some ways, the Near Umbra looks much like the mundane world, because physical reality reflects the spirit. However, the environment of the spirit world is more revealing than the physical world of earth. In the Near Umbra, the effects of the Technocracy's control can more clearly be seen. Cities in the Near Umbra are barren, lifeless voids covered with the webs of spidery spirits that serve the forces of order. The vitality of these places has been choked dry. Only in the more remote locations of the world does the vibrancy of the Umbra become evident. In these rural areas, still free from technology's influence, colors are brighter than in the physical world and everything seems more "real." This is the true world of spirit, which the Technocracy is slowly diluting and defining out of existence.

While the "geography" of Earth and the Umbra are similar, not everything appears in both worlds, and some things are bizarrely different. For example, a mage steps from a busy city street into a nearby back alley. She puts her magickal knowledge to work and shifts into the Near Umbra. Here the skyscraper to her left is gone. In its place is an apartment building demolished two years ago. The old building was a home, and its spirit or memory is still here — the planet still dreams of it. The building on her right is gone entirely; only an empty foundation shows that it exists at all.

Though the environment of the Near Umbra does not always match that of the physical world, reality itself is not so different. When mages cross into the spirit world, their bodies are transformed into spiritual essence. They may move and talk just as if they were in physical reality.

Realms

The Tellurian contains a multitude of Realms, of which Earth is but one example. Earth is, in fact, the Realm at the

center of the Tellurian; many supernatural beings refer to it as Gaia, the Earth Mother. Other Realms do exist; each has its own laws of reality, which can be wildly different from the reality of Earth. Many of these Realms possess both a physical and spiritual reality, just like Earth. For example, most mages believe that the other planets in the solar system have their own Near Umbrae. It is unknown whether the surfaces of these planets are truly as lifeless as the Technocracy would have humanity believe. Most mages at least agree that Earth's moon, known as Arcadia, exists in the Tellurian outside Gaia's Near Umbra. It is believed that faeries inhabit the world of Arcadia and are ruled by a powerful spirit known as Luna.

Gaia is at the center of the universe, and is the lodestone around which all other Realms orbit. Though Prime is the only true source of souls, Earth is home and birthplace to the vast majority of known souls. This has made the human race instrumental in forging the nature and structure of the Tellurian — indeed, human mythology has created many of the spirits and phenomena known to populate the Tellurian. It seems that humanity's collective unconscious can actually shape the world of spirit. Thus, the gods and monstrosities of ancient legend are said still to dwell in the Realms of the Tellurian.

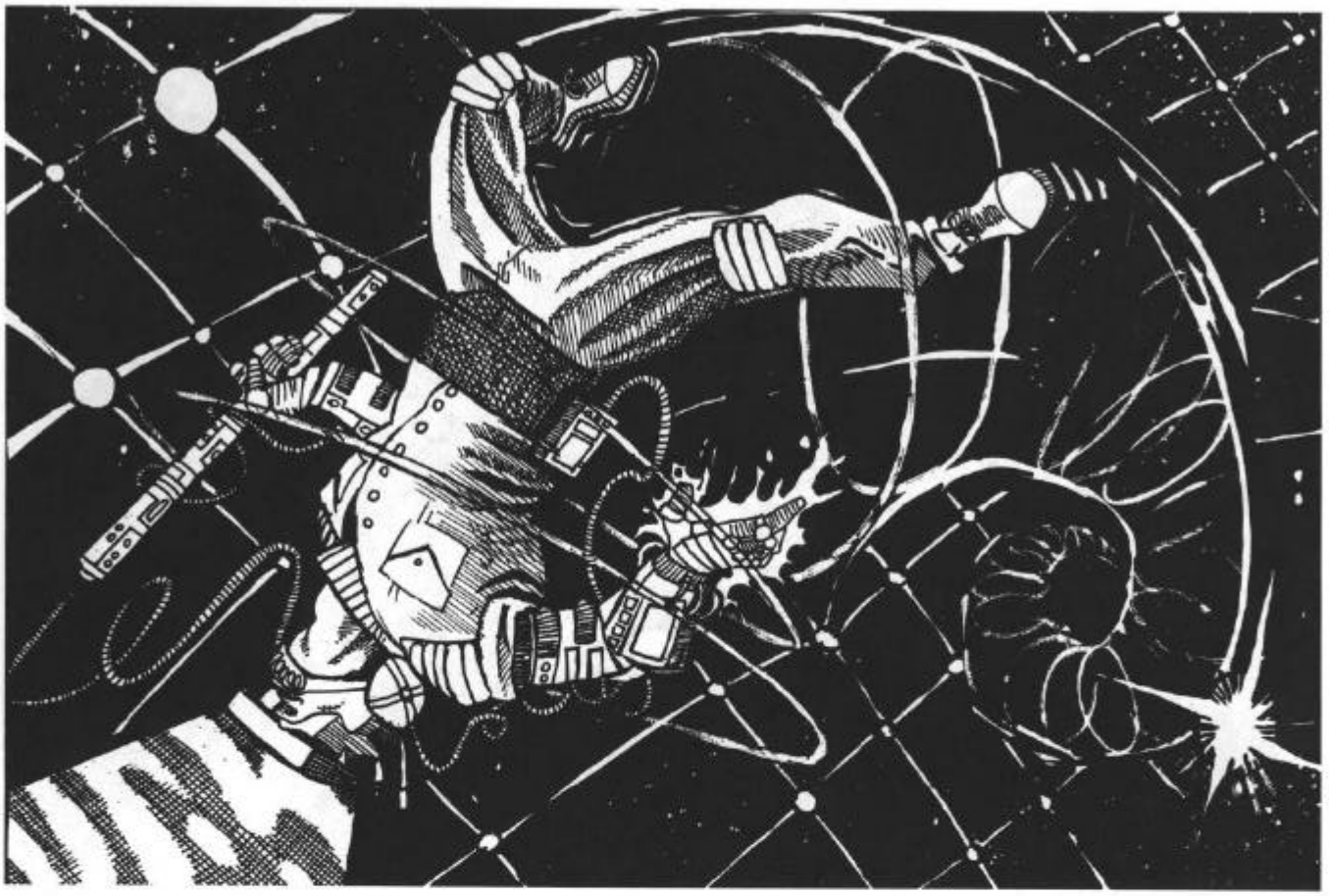
Realms are pockets of reality. Some, like Gaia, are very large, while others, like dreams, are merely small bubbles that drift in and out of existence. Mages have categorized several Realms, including Horizon Realms, Shade Realms, Shard Realms, Paradox Realms and Dream Realms.

• **Horizon Realms:** The Horizon is Gaia's spiritual equivalent of the ozone layer. It shields and contains Gaia's Near Umbra from the void beyond. Horizon Realms, then, are small pockets of reality resting on the rim of Gaia's Near Umbra. Horizon Realms are usually created by mages or other spiritual powers to serve as havens against alien realities. Mages commonly create Horizon Realms to house their Chantries (described later). These Realms are ideal locations for magickal study, as they do not suffer the effects of Paradox that plague earthbound mages.

Horizon Realms are rare, because it requires a concerted effort of several powerful mages to fashion such a Realm. Vast resources must be expended, but the result is a Realm wherein a mage is creator and god.

Another factor contributing to these Realms' rarity is the fact that they must be linked to one or more Nodes on the Earth's surface. Nodes are sources of Quintessence, which is required to sustain the existence of the Horizon Realm. Such a connection also makes it easier for mages to create Portals allowing travel from Earth's physical reality to the Horizon Realm.

• **Shard Realms**: There are only nine of these primary Realms in the Tellurian. Shard Realms are so named because most mages believe that they used to be part of Earth until the rise of the Technomancers. The Shard Realms are now flung



throughout the Tellurian and correspond both with the nine Spheres of magick and with the celestial bodies of Earth's solar system. These Realms are very large and are imposing destinations for exploration. The average mage knows very little about the Shard Realms.

• **Shade Realms:** Mages who pursue the Sphere of Spirit frequently explore the Umbra. Many of these mages claim that eight "Shade Realms" exist somewhere along the Horizon at the edge of Gaia's Near Umbra. These Shade Realms connect Gaia's Near Umbra to the Shard Realms. These insubstantial lands have characteristics of both the earthly and the Shard Realms. Shade Realms are said to be the safest conduits to the Shard Realms.

• **Dream Realms:** Dream Realms are created from the dreams of humanity. Each dream exists for a brief moment in the Umbra as the dreamer unfurls her story landscape, which is then severed from its source as the dreamer wakes up or switches to a new dream. Dreams Realms are weird and wonderful places that manifest the subconscious of the dreamer in a very real way. Mages and other Umbral creatures occasionally enter dreams by stepping into a Dream Realm while it exists in the Umbra. The Nephandi are infamous for entering the nightmares of their foes and weaving them to their own ends.

Powerful spirits of the Umbra have been known to weave their own semi-permanent Realms out of dreams. A pantheon of spirits calling itself the Oneira, or Dream Lords, collects the severed wisps of dead dreams and resuscitates them, weaving them into a distorted, phantasmagoric wonderland of linked Realms known as the Chimerae or the Dream Worlds. The masters of the Chimerae often patrol this country of living dreams, and have on rare occasions interacted with dreamers. Some Oneira are even powerful enough to control humans via dreams.

• **Paradox Realms:** The final variety of Realm is a kind wherein no mage desires to find himself. When the forces of Paradox strike out against an offending mage, they sometimes find the easiest means of defending reality to be the removal of the anomaly and all its effects to another place entirely. Thus is a Paradox Realm created. The mage, and the region in which he changed reality, will be moved to a place outside Gaia's Near Umbra. Then, Paradox will smooth reality back to its original form.

The Deep Umbra

Between the Realms, like the vacuum of space separating one planet and its atmosphere from another, lies a vast spiritual void called the Deep Umbra. There is only one Deep Umbra, and its mysteries extend into the infinite reaches of the Tellurian.

The Deep Umbra is inhospitable to travel. Like the void of outer space that it mirrors, the Deep Umbra does not sustain life, at least not life as humanity knows it. Still, there are said to be creatures that roam the Deep Umbra, nightmar-

ish horrors of gargantuan size and indescribable features. Some mages believe that if such entities indeed exist, they must be allied with the Nephandi.

Some Realms, such as Shade Realms, often contain bridges linking them to other locations. Such connections, known as Portals, allows congress between Realms without traversing the inhospitable Deep Umbra that lies between. Some of these connections are difficult to use. Some have never been used and await only the required ceremonies to be opened. Unfortunately, some of these ceremonies require elements from the destination itself. Acquisition of such elements involves a difficult journey and negates the benefit of the connection, at least for the first traveler.

The Barriers

The Technocracy has actively pursued an isolationist agenda with regard to the Tellurian. It has fortified the natural barriers that exist between Earth and different segments of the Tellurian. The Technocracy fears many of the strange and bizarre elements of outer reality. Its members seek to segregate Earth from the alien and unknown forces of the Tellurian.

Earth is separated from its Near Umbra by a mystic barrier called the Gauntlet. The Gauntlet is a wall created by the energies of Earth and reinforced on an ongoing basis through the efforts of the Technomancers. Designed to protect Earth from the chaos of the spirit world, it prevents easy ingress and egress and reduces the contact between Umbral reality and physical reality. Because they maintain the Gauntlet and bar the Marauders from Earth, the Technomancers believe themselves heroes and guardians of peace and security.

In addition to overseeing the Gauntlet, the Technomancers also maintain the Horizon, which separates Gaia's Near Umbra from the void of the Deep Umbra. The Horizon serves as a barrier to the Nephandi, who mainly exist outside Gaia's bounds and constantly seek entrance to Earth.

Both the Gauntlet and the Horizon present hurdles to those who attempt to enter the Tellurian from Gaia. While the Tradition mages don't discourage the Technomancers from keeping the Marauders and Nephandi at bay, they recognize that the Technocracy's motives are purely xenophobic and self-serving. Much of the life and vitality of spiritual reality is no longer mirrored on Earth. In the long run, this is a worse fate than even the Nephandi might pose.

The Tapestry

Since time immemorial, mages have used the metaphor of the Tapestry to describe reality. They often speak of the Tapestry as the "true" fabric of the world. Such a definition of reality supersedes the division between the spiritual and physical. Dozens of metaphors of this type are used or have been spawned by mages. People think of sorcerers as "weavers" of spells. Power travels the globe along "ley lines." The effects of the Life, Matter and Forces Spheres all result from Quintessence channeled through a "pattern." These metaphors are accepted as fact by mages. The Tapestry is a theory as basic to magick as evolution is to science. The physical world owes its very shape and nature to the Tapestry.

Nodes

Just as the sun has its sunspots, places where the magnetic field creates a dense knot of unseen pattern affecting the blaze of gases around it, so too does earth have its places where the raw essence of Prime is thickest. Menhirs. Burial mounds. Occult libraries. Churches. Temples. Sacred caves. Haunted houses. All such places on earth are known as Nodes.

In terms of the Tapestry, Nodes are where ley lines intersect and knot. Quintessence often collects at the Nodes as it travels along the lines. As the primary repositories of what little free Quintessence still exists, many Nodes suffer raids by mages in pursuit of vulgar might.

Nodes are important to many other beings as well. The Garou, a race of werewolves, center their culture around the Nodes they call caerns, and travel about the Umbra using "moon bridges" that connect the caerns together. Stealing from a werewolf caern is very dangerous, but highly profitable.

Nodes are important strategic locations. Extradimensional beings can most easily reach Earth through Portals connected to Nodes. Technomancers naturally use this fact as an excuse for shutting down the Nodes of others, stealing their Quintessence in the process. In so doing the Technomancers are able to close an entry point for potentially hostile beings, strike against their mage enemies, and collect large amounts of Quintessence — all at the same time.

Spirits

A great many spirits roam the Umbra. Those known as Lords are very powerful entities who often carve out worlds of their own, or who appoint themselves spiritual protectors of various ideas, locations or peoples of the earth. Slightly weaker entities known as Preceptors serve and advise the Lords, and are more easily contacted than those remote rulers. Below the Preceptors are more prolific spirits collectively called Minions. Among the Minions are elementals and a host of miscellaneous entities fitting no known pattern of hierarchy. Spirits cannot manifest in the physical world without first acquiring physical bodies, or being summoned by mages or others who desire to harness their powers. Some mages claim that the race of Garou, the werewolves who now live on Earth, are actually a race of spirits who have taken physical form, and who sometimes temporarily return to their spirit home.

Mages are uncertain how spirits are created, but many believe it has something to do with the collective unconscious of humanity. Many spirits have assumed the appearances and personalities of gods from ancient myths, elementals of

the real world, and even figures out of popular culture. Humanity somehow personifies its own beliefs into spirits, which themselves take on lives of their own within the Umbra.

The Technocracy

If you believe they put a man on the moon
Man on the moon
If you believe there's nothing up their sleeve
then nothing is cool.
— REM, "Man on the Moon"

One of the direst threats to true Ascension is the Technocracy, a legion of mages who follow the banner of science. Once, the Technocracy's goal was to protect humanity on its path to Ascension, to defend humans from the dangers posed by the other inhabitants of the universe. To achieve this goal, the Technocracy created barriers between the worlds of spirit and matter, making matter itself a safe haven of physical "reality" wherein humanity could pursue its path to Ascension.

In the Technomancers' utopia, no more would humans be plagued by spirits and Banes or faeries and dragons. The world of spirit would be a world apart, separated by the Hadrian's Wall of the Gauntlet. Traffic between these worlds would be closed to humanity as a whole, and the dangerous creatures on the other side of the veil would be kept out. The Technomancers even swore to protect humanity from magick itself.

This goal, however, became an obsession, perverting the Technomancers' thought. They ignored the negative effects of this cosmic schism, the severing of humanity from spirit. They are now desperately xenophobic of all non-physical beings. Anything on the others side of the wall is "other" and thus to be feared: *They are different from us. They want what is ours. They want to stop us.*

The Traditions want to raise humanity, to guide it toward the lofty ideal of Ascension. The Technomancers, however, want to pare humanity down to the lowest common denominator, to set everyone at a low standard. When all are equal, either in misery or comfort, then the Technocracy's Ascension will arrive.

Toward this end, the Technocracy promotes the value of materialism, of placing importance in one's property rather than oneself. Everyone can thus be equal, with no individual different from the masses. The mass-mind is all-important; it is through the collective state that Ascension will come. By promoting physical matter over intangible ideas or spirit, the Technocracy enforces the protective Gauntlet that keeps out the "bad influences."

Only the laws of science are allowed to dictate the path to Ascension. All things must conform to established fact.

Spurious thoughts and whimsical feelings are dangerous to the delicate weave of reality; even dreams are considered to be invasions from outside the Gauntlet. If the Technomancers could banish dreams from the mind of humanity, they would. In fact, Freudian psychology was the Technomancers' attempt to reduce dreams to mere physical urges, but this failed when Jungian psychology responded by stressing the importance of myths upon the human psyche. Unable to influence humanity's dreams, the Technomancers instead attempt to influence their own, using technological devices to regulate their dreaming and prevent themselves from entering R.E.M. stage sleep. This has had terrible psychological effects upon them, making them cold, cruel and unimaginative beings.

Make no mistake, science has a legitimate place among the means to achieving Ascension; the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts prove this point. But the results of science, the toys of technology, have become a distraction to an end. The Technomancers have turned science into a terrible dogma.

Rise of the Technocracy

Deep in the human unconscious is a pervasive need for a logical universe that makes sense. But the real universe is always one step beyond logic.

— Frank Herbert, *Dune*

Long ago, the first Technomancers (though they were known by a different name then) began to engineer reality into the image they desired. They were the first to devise the metaphysical separation of mind and body, spirit and matter. The result of this separation was the Gauntlet, the barrier between the spirit world and the physical world.

Originally, the Gauntlet was weak, and many spiritual beings and fanciful creatures still breached it to tread the earth. As the Technomancers' powers grew, however, the Gauntlet thickened. When the Technomancers finally usurped the Earth in the late Middle Ages, it became impossible for most beings to pierce the membrane between worlds.

The Middle Ages, known to mages as the Mythic Age, ended with the Technomancers' victory over the other Traditions and conquest of physical reality. The Mythic Age had regressed into a fractious period of wars between the mages who supported a magickal reality and those who sought a religious reality. As these mages argued among themselves, the followers of science made their move.

So well orchestrated was the Technocracy's maneuvering for power that all the other Traditions were caught unaware. The mythic wizards and religious saints worked toward Ascension through personal power. The mythic wizards would raise humanity by choosing a select few to apprentice, thus spreading enlightenment and power through individuals. The religious saints provided examples of their own lives for others to emulate, believing that those who mimicked their enlightened acts would achieve Ascension themselves.

The Technomancers instead appealed to humanity as a whole, through the objective, repeatable magick of science. Inventions such as the Gutenberg printing press brought power into the hands of many. Here was knowledge to be possessed not just by a few who could afford laboriously drawn illuminated manuscripts, but by any who could buy one of the much cheaper printed Bibles. While the lower class, illiterate and poor, still did not reap the benefits, the middle class — a whole segment of European humanity — rose a significant step toward enlightenment and thus Ascension. Step by step, the Technomancers' power waxed, while the collective mind of humanity was enamored and moved as never before.

The religious community moved to suppress this dangerous threat to its own plans, but no matter how many scientists its members censured, they could not stop the mind of humanity. The thrill and glory of science had infected the masses — there was no going back. It was full steam ahead for humankind, with the clarion call of science and reason leading the way.

Perhaps if the other mages, both mythic and religious, had not been so slow to commence their own plans for the whole of humanity, things would have been different. As it was, the mages of the Traditions had long paid attention to their own personal gains, while the masses lagged behind. Finally, here was science to free the masses — one man's scientific discovery could be shared by all of humankind. No waiting period, no long and arduous apprenticeship. Instant empowerment.

Copernicus was a Technomancer who fought hard against the previous paradigms that had ruled reality. With the release of his paper "De Revolutionibus Orbium Caolestium" in 1453, he placed the sun at the center of the universe, and thus placed reason over the physical earth. His heliocentric innovation freed humanity from the medieval bonds of ignorance and fear. Reason promised to solve all of humankind's problems. Many Tradition mages revile Copernicus' name to this day, blaming him for the current state of the world. But it is not his fault that reason went too far, choking the soul.

The instant empowerment offered by the Technomancers quickly led to arrogance. Drunk with its own power, the Technocracy began to dictate just how humankind would proceed. The Technomancers made the same mistake all other mages did before them: enslaving humanity to their own personal vision.

By the time the other mage Traditions began to retaliate, the Technomancers had gained a psychic hold over Earth. The hand of science had spread to monopolize and reshape the physical world, squeezing out any shadow-truths that did not fit into its beliefs of objective reality.

The Technomancers' magick became "normal" and expected in human society. The magick of technology was supported by the human race, while other forms of magick

became scorned and disbelieved. Mundane observation began to trigger the forces of Paradox when "miracles" happened without the trappings of science to explain them. Tradition mages became dissidents within an established reality rather than co-navigators with equal access to reality. Much like Benjamin Franklin's statement that the last act of any democracy would be to elect a dictatorship, the last act of human belief since the fall of the Mythic Age may well have been the creation of the Rational Age.

The Traditions believe that the Technocracy gravely imperils Ascension. If nothing can be done to right this wrong, the universe is doomed. The Technocracy is dangerously close to the completion of its plans. If the Technocracy can effectively shut out the lingering vestiges of magick from Earth, the universe and all of reality will be forever pinned beneath the Technocracy's boots.

Spirit and matter are not the separate things the Technocracy wants to make of them, but one whole. Spirit and matter combine to create reality; severed from each other, reality cannot exist. The Technocracy does not recognize this, and will not recognize it. The fight seems impossible to win, yet the Tradition mages, so few in number, must continue the battle at all costs.

Grip of the Technocracy

You're a well-paid scientist
You only talk in facts
You know you're always right
'Cause you know how to prove it step by step.
— Dead Kennedys, "Well-Paid Scientist"

Magick, true magick of the sort practiced by the Traditions, has become an intruder on the turf of science and is downplayed in importance by humanity itself. The mages of science have implemented their views to such a degree that almost every display of magick that appears to be technological will be accepted by modern humans. Technology is itself magick; it is just a kind of magick that people have learned to accept.

The Technomancers have overseen humanity's progress in leaps and bounds from its state at the close of the Middle Ages, to the Renaissance, to the Industrial Revolution, to the Space Age, to the Information Age and beyond. At some point along the way this heady mix of power and complexity grew to fascinate the Technomancers in its own right.

The Technomancers latched onto their technology and their detailed "truths" about the machinery of the Earth Realm. In the process they convinced themselves of humanity's insignificance and their right to ignore social imperatives in

pursuit of the intellectual imperatives of science. Science became the end-all and be-all of the Technomancer mages. They mistook the form for the function, and now strangle humanity with the very device they used as a stepping stone to Ascension.

Thanks to the secret control of the Technomancers, the world is made smaller every day by technology. People become isolated from one another through habit rather than distance; two neighbors in an apartment house may never exchange any words over years of residence. By downplaying the significance of the human aspects of society, society grew into a cold giant to be served for its own continuance. Worse yet, the Technocracy began to deride the use of imagination and romantic notions, stunting many aspects of the human soul. History was even revised so completely that none today believe the Mythic Age ever occurred, or that magick other than that of science ever existed.

The Technomancers have thus systematically implemented a mystical rigor mortis that impedes all who seek Ascension. When imagination is finally removed from humanity as a whole, the Technomancers will be safe from their enemies, and the mass can Ascend — by crushing its members down to a common level.

Political Agenda

I never saw no miracle of science
That didn't go from a blessing to a curse.
— Sting, "If I Ever Lose My Faith in You"

To secure its dominance over the physical world, the Technocracy strives for a completely static, unchanging reality. It vies with the Traditions for total control over this world. Groups of Technomancer mages patrol the boundaries between this world and the Umbra, and seek to keep the outsiders out. Any gateway opened reduces the overall stability of the world, threatening the master scientists.

Specific Goals

• Bring stasis and order to the universe. Predictability brings safety. Once all is discovered and all is known, the Ascension shall be won.

• Convince the masses of the benevolence of science, commerce and politics, and of the power of rationality. Conflict and suffering will be eliminated in our utopia.

• Preserve the Gauntlet and Horizon. Chaotic individuals who open gateways with impunity threaten the stability of our world. Uncontrolled Portals also allow outside forces such as the Nephandi access to our world. This must never happen.

• Define the nature of the universe. Knowledge must be absolute or chaos will envelop all. The elemental forces of the universe must not be left to the caprices of the unknown.

• Destroy the Traditions. Their recklessness threatens our security and our progress toward Ascension. Their Quintessence must be captured lest it fall into the hands of the Marauders or Nephandi.

The Conventions

I am not a number. I am a free man!
— #6, *The Prisoner*

Today, the Technocracy is divided into several Traditions of its own. To separate themselves from other mages, Technomancers call their Traditions "Conventions." Unlike the Traditions of mages who have assembled against the Technocracy, these Conventions are almost homogenous in their goals and means. This is not to say that they are identical, but simply that they know not to buck a good thing.

Each Convention specializes in a field of technology, and possesses this technology at a level far more advanced than that of the world at large. This technology is the medium of power for the Conventions, and they guard it zealously until such time as they decide to release it to the world through the guise of a "new discovery". With their technological devices, the Technomancers are able to reproduce many of the magickal feats performed by the mages of the Traditions with their Sphere magick. Furthermore, each Convention has a few tricks of its own.

Iteration X

Listen and understand.
That Terminator is out there.
It can't be bargained with,
It can't be reasoned with,
It doesn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear,
And it absolutely will not stop...ever,
Until you are dead.
—Reese, *Terminator*

Iteration X exploits mechanical and cybernetic technology in order to make a better human. Some biological functions suit its needs, but Iteration X feels the path to Ascension will be achieved by merging biological intelligence with artificial intelligence. Rumors abound of the artificial mind that directs the Convention — a mind that achieved intelligence at the Xth iteration of a sentience-expanding algorithm (the Convention is unwilling to reveal the exact number of the iteration where the intelligence evolved — perhaps it thinks that would be like revealing a "true" name). Some members of the Convention certainly have visions of a society where all wants and needs are seen to by automatons, but these well-wishers feel that all individuality and choice must be removed from humanity before this can occur.

Mages of Iteration X are rarely seen by other mages. There have been only a few confrontations that directly involved mages of the Convention. More commonly, Iteration X uses servant creations to enforce the Pogrom. Some of these murderous automatons are known all too well by the Traditions. Iteration X prefers to enforce the Pogrom in only one

way — extermination. Any alien element, especially a mage, that the Convention discovers on Earth is immediately targeted and servants are dispatched to kill it.

Autochthonia: The Umbral "machine Realm" of Autochthonia is a source of power for Iteration X, and gives the Convention a staging ground from which to impose its reality upon earth and neighboring Umbral Realms. Autochthonia originated from a theory of Kepler that positioned a machine Realm near the sun in the center of the solar system. Through humanity's temporary belief in such a theory, the founders of Iteration X were easily able to construct a Realm within the Deep Umbra, a Realm of pure machine.

As a whole, Iteration X conducts most of its research in Autochthonia. There it perfects its theories and lets ideas trickle out into society a little at a time. Already there was a scare about the effects of future shock, so the Technomancers are playing it safer now. Although most of the cutting-edge technology found in this Realm is at least a century away from mundane revelation, the Traditions fear that with each new technological advance on earth, Iteration X gets more powerful. Rumors say that UFO sightings are the Convention's way of preparing people for the next great leaps.

HyperIntTech Mark V, "HIT Mark": The most feared agents of Iteration X are the Hyper Intelligence Tech Mark Vs, or HIT Marks. These are cyborgs programmed to seek out and destroy the enemies of the Technocracy — Tradition mages, Marauders or Nephandi. Half living flesh, half mechanical construct, these killing machines look relatively human — on the outside. They are designed to look like normal humans (as long as they wear trenchcoats and other concealing clothes), enabling them to walk among Sleepers and carry out their missions of extermination. When HIT Marks enter combat mode, however, their weaponry is unconcealable: chain guns pop from their arm cavities, laser sights slide down over their eyes, and razor-sharp tungsten talons unsheathe from their fingers.

Despite the name, these cyborgs are usually of only human-level intelligence. They all have internal computers, however, which can add greatly to their database of information or perform combat calculations (range and angle calibrations for gunfire) that make them deadly hunters and killers. They do require energy to maintain full power; otherwise they become mere humans with body parts too heavy to lift with their meager muscle power.

Most models are designed to be anthropomorphic, the better to hide in human society. Occasionally, though, other forms are designed. Cybernetic dogs are often unleashed to prowl the alleyways surrounding Technomancer factories. These "animals" are as intelligent as any other HIT Mark.

New World Order

Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of our own choosing.

— George Orwell, *1984*

Referred to as "Big Brother" by the mages of the Traditions, this Convention exemplifies all that is bad about information technology. More than any other Convention, the New World Order is responsible for streamlining Earth's reality. When mages speak of the Technocracy, they often mean the New World Order. This Convention has a vision of the earth as a giant honeycomb of steel corridors, constantly monitored by swiveling cameras. It pursues invasive, information-based technology.

The New World Order exploits and damages wherever possible. It views people as machines to be used as its members see fit. Members of the Convention are themselves depressed and paranoid, living as they do in constant fear of superiors who do not balk at taking credit for something an underling accomplished. If the world could be black-and-white instead of color, the New World Order would see to it. Think of the movies *Metropolis* and *Kafka* and you have an idea of the nature of this Convention. An old rumor says that Queen Victoria herself was the founder of this Convention; some mages say that she is still alive today and she is not amused.

The New World Order enforces the Pogrom through techniques of abduction and brainwashing. Mages who are taken away by the servants of the New World Order are unfortunately seen again years later — after they have been transformed into servants of the Convention, biological robots living out an existence programmed into them by the New World Order. It is not easy to break the will and mind of a mage, but no one who has been abducted by the New World Order has survived the brainwashing ordeal with his personality intact. The New World Order takes great pride in its ability to erode a human being's creativity and personality, especially another mage's. It guards its methods fervently.

Men in Black: The dread footsoldiers of the New World Order are the mysterious Men in Black. These dark-suited agents in sunglasses, bearing black briefcases and riding black Cadillacs, seem to be omnipresent whenever an affair that threatens the New World Order arises. Rumors say that the Men can somehow follow Paradox spirits, arriving on the scene and attempting to stop any Tradition mage from performing magick. Men in Black rarely speak and their exact motives are always secret, but all Tradition mages know that a black Cadillac in the rear-view mirror is bad news.

The Progenitors

I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term of Natural Selection.

— Charles R. Darwin, *The Origin of Species*

The science of genetics is on the verge of making several mind-blowing breakthroughs. For the Progenitors, these breakthroughs are old news. A very careful Convention, the Progenitors have been setting the stage for people to believe that virtually anything is possible through genetic engineering. Of all the Conventions, the Progenitors are the most aware of the intricacies of the power they wield. Very soon, the Progenitors plan to make their move and change the face of humanity.

The science of cloning is one of the Progenitors' most powerful weapons. Tradition mages have slain Progenitor mages, at great cost to their own ranks, just to find the same Technomancers later appearing to face the Traditions again. Progenitor mages seem to have endless supplies of cloned bodies for themselves, making them frustrating and nearly unkillable opponents. The Traditions nickname the Progenitors the "Hydras" after the mythical beast which would grow more heads when one was hacked off.

Furthermore, the Progenitors have found an even more nefarious use of cloning, which they use to disseminate paranoia among the ranks of their foes. So good are the Progenitors at duplicating other beings through cloning that many of their enemies, and even their allies in the Technocracy, never know when they are addressing a real person or a Progenitor clone. These doppelgangers are not perfect (Joe now has a second cup of coffee in the morning, which causes his office mates to wonder), but they are good enough to cause fear among those aware of this Convention, and fear is a powerful weapon indeed.

The Progenitors prefer to implement the Pogrom through the use of their clones. By replacing a mage with a clone, the Progenitors do far more than merely remove an opponent. Through their planted clone, they can proceed to spy on their enemies, sabotage enemy plans, and breed distrust among the ranks of the allied Traditions.

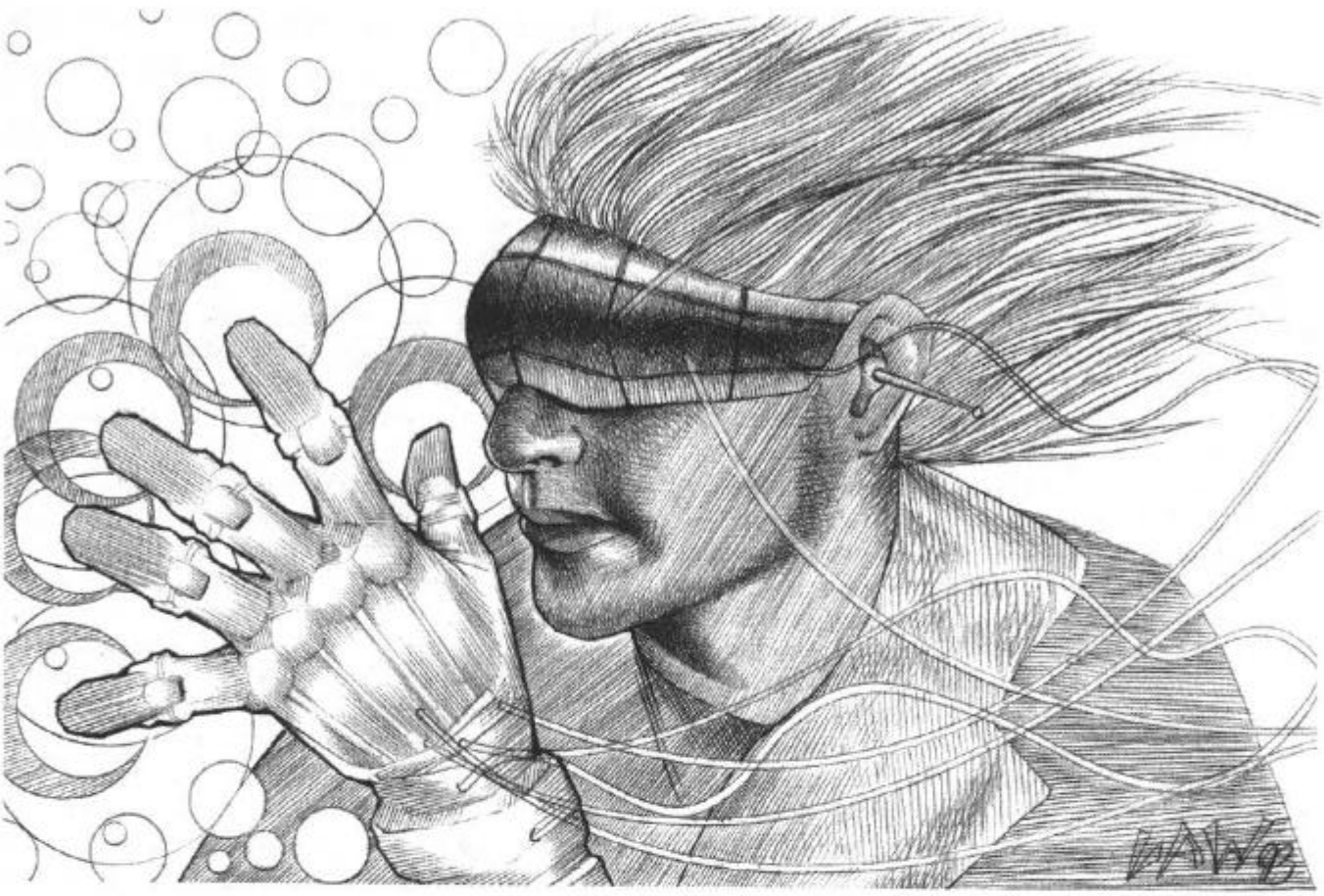
The movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (especially the remake) captures the feel of this Convention very well, as do any of the "red scare" films of the '50s. The fear and paranoia of "commies" in our homes is similar to the worry this Convention engenders in all.

The Syndicate

We are out to get America by the pocketbook...the whole Syndicate.

—Abe Reles a.k.a. "Kid Twist" (Murder, Inc.)

Money and power have become words freely associated with access to and control over technology. This is because of the Technomancer Convention known as the Syndicate. The members of the Syndicate are sometimes called the "robber barons" because their mindset and ambitions first came to the



forefront during the mid- to late 19th century, when men such as Rockefeller and Carnegie made a killing by convincing people to embrace the wonders of technology. The Syndicate seeks to entrap people in the snares of loans and credit. To this day, the Syndicate remains more interested in technology's ability to generate money and maintain power than anything else.

Of all the Conventions of the Technocracy, the Syndicate is the one most concerned with weaving technology into the static, mundane reality of Earth. The Syndicate controls much of the world financial market; it is the Syndicate who decides the rules of engagement for the economic wars of nations. It also pulls the strings of many crime organizations the world over, from the Mafia to the Yakuza. You mess with the Syndicate, you may wind up on the bottom of the river in concrete shoes.

Without the Syndicate, the Virtual Adepts would have never gotten computers into the hands of so many people. The Syndicate constantly fumes over this mistake and now tries to rectify its error by merging the major computer companies, thus controlling the variety of programs to which common users have access. Hackers really annoy the Syndicate, and the ignorance and fear most nations have of computers and those who use them is because of the Syndicate. The Syndicate wants fiat to lock up any hacker it pleases.

The scariest thing about this Convention is that it is essentially faceless. It obviously exists beyond its gangster puppets and captains of industry, yet no one leader has emerged. The real movers and shakers of this Convention are unknown. No Tradition mage has yet been able to ascribe a name or face to the leader(s) of this Convention. Who runs it? Where does he (she or they) reside? How come no one has ever seen him (her, it)? Even the Technomancers' Symposiums have been visited only by representatives of this group. What is the Syndicate's real secret?

The Syndicate is mainly responsible for enforcing the Pogrom against earthbound mages of lesser power. The Syndicate seems to take great delight in systematically destroying every aspect of a mage's life. First it will ruin the mage financially, impugning credit, making bank accounts disappear, etc. Then it will proceed to frame the mage, destroying his reputation among all he holds dear. Finally, the killing begins, starting with the mage's most distant friends, then relatives, then the mage himself. The Syndicate delights in destroying a person even before it ends his life.

Void Engineers

My God, it's full of stars.

—2001

This, the smallest Convention of the Technocracy, is very vocal and very persuasive. Its members are concerned mainly with the exploration and consequent exploitation of

the Deep Umbra — or "outer space" in the paradigm the Technocracy has rooted into reality so well. By conquering the last physical frontier, the Void Engineers can shut the final gate on the Umbra.

The Void Engineers seek to convince humankind that outer space is an empty void and the planets are lifeless orbs. By doing so, the celestial beings associated with the planets will become mere physical entities, not cosmic powers that control humankind's destiny through their positions. All the spiritual inhabitants of the Deep Umbra will become mere alien races. The Void Engineers have already convinced most of humanity to fear the existence of these beings; many people fearfully imagine invasion fleets of aliens bent on conquest of the Earth and enslavement of humanity. It is actually the other way around: the Void Engineers want to exploit the beings and places of space.

Unfortunately, the Void Engineers are overly impetuous, and the Technocracy has often had to rein them in. The 1969 lunar landing is the best example of this. When Neil Armstrong first set foot upon the moon, millions were finally shown evidence that the moon was a barren, lifeless place, not the realm of mystery it was believed to be (although many still say the moon landing was filmed in a TV studio). Still, this landing, rather than strengthening the Technomancers' hold on the Gauntlet, only opened a gateway to Arcadia, the land of the faeries. The magic of the fey infected Earth, and the idea of space exploration quickly took the form of a sublime experience for human consciousness. Rapt with the wonder of Faerie, many humans believed that space was the answer to all of humanity's problems. "Out there," wars would not exist, new worlds could be colonized and peace would reign in the galaxy.

This idea was exactly what the other Technomancers did not want. The Void Engineers, unwilling to postpone their plans for space travel, were punished with the fall of Skylab, and later the Challenger explosion. The space program was set back and people began to fear space travel.

Other punishments were also levied as warnings: the abandoned MIR Soviet space station and the flawed Hubble telescope. The current financial problems threatening the US space station are the Syndicate's warning to the Void Engineers: shape up or lose your proposed station.

No one is certain what the long-range plans of the Void Engineers are, but rumors say the Convention as a whole has been infected with the magic of the fey. Some mages believe the Void Engineers have accepted the utopian beliefs of what space exploration can hold for humanity and Ascension, and that they can even be lured to the Traditions. Other say that this is exactly what the Technocracy wants others to believe. Regardless, the Traditions view the Void Engineers as the least of the Technocracy's evils, as the Convention does not directly contribute to enforcing the Pogrom.

Techno Tangents: Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts

The magic of our science shines brighter than a thousand suns.
— Killing Joke, "Rubicon"

The science of the Technocracy has sprouted many divergences and false branches throughout the years. However, only two or three of those branches have evolved any degree of independent authority.

One such tangent of science is practiced by a group of Tradition mages known as the Sons of Ether. The Sons came to power in the 19th century, espousing the belief that science as it stands is just one path to a unity of self-expression. They eschewed more rigid and sophisticated aesthetics to pursue a sort of "weird science" that was ugly, unwieldy and utterly inspired. The Sons broke from the Technocracy in the early 1900s when a Technomancer Symposium voted, and thus "proved," that there is no ether in space, a postulate against which the Sons obviously fought. Factions within the Technocracy wanted to establish the theory that light was a particle, and ether had to go if this was to be. Faced with the loss of nearly all their beloved theories, the Sons of Ether retreated to the fold of the Traditions.

But the Sons were not completely beaten. Indeed, they have recently managed to insinuate quantum theory, that fly-in-the-ointment for Technomancers, into modern science. Quantum physics has brought the study of mysticism into the corridors of science. Its wild success has ruined many of the Technomancers' plans, and thus the Technocracy seeks the heads of the Sons of Ether.

A second important tangent is that of the Virtual Adepts, a recently enfranchised Tradition. The seed of the Adepts' existence was the computer, Babbage's very first prototypical analytical machine. The Adepts have waited patiently for the blossom they knew would later sprout. In the 1970s, when a sufficient number of computers began to find their ways into the homes of Sleepers, the Virtual Adepts made their move.

Well in advance of virtual reality's appearance in the timeline of reality as planned by the Technomancers, the Adepts developed their virtual environment. Such a move without the mandate of the Technocracy caused the Adepts to be heavily censured. The Virtual Adepts responded by defecting from the halls of power. Their audacity and exuberance for the possibilities inherent to computers gained the Adepts acceptance among the Traditions — though some Tradition mages feel the whole computer issue was staged by the Technocracy in order to plant the Adepts among them.

Fiction of the cyberpunk genre was an important step in conveying the Adepts' vision of science. In cyberpunk fiction, people are as cold as technology, and paradoxically, technology is as wet and natural as humanity. Using cyberpunk

as a foundation, the Adepts have managed to build a Realm right on earth, within the heart of Technomancer territory — a virtual reality world existing only as information flowing through computer minds.

The Virtual Adepts, under the Technomancers' very noses— and they refuse to recognize it even today — have implemented a dynamic change as great as Copernicus' heliocentric theory.

Not that the Technocracy is willing to let the Adepts be. The Technocracy fears the Virtual Adepts' defection, for the Adepts knew many of the access codes and passwords of the Technocracy's own computers. As soon as the Adepts were declared rogues by the other Technomancers, a purge of the Technocracy's computers was performed, and all the passwords were changed. Still, the Conventions fear that they may not have fully succeeded, and that the Adepts have left many "backdoors" in the system, allowing them access to the secret plans of all the Conventions.

In response, the Technocracy has stepped up its Pogrom against the Traditions, which has in turn caused many Traditions to blame the Virtual Adepts for their new troubles.

Symposiums

Science can make the world seem surreal; a symptom of culture lagging behind technological reality...

— Gregory Benford, *Fantasy and Science Fiction*

Once every month, the Technocracy holds a Symposium — a meeting where nothing less than the future of reality is determined. The Symposium is held in a different Node each time. It is the greatest social and political event of the Technocracy.

Each of the Conventions details its plans and progress, speaking in its own complex lingo of statistics and scientific jargon to shape the lives of others in a way that suits the Technocracy. Through complicated negotiations, the separate Conventions all agree upon what unified steps must be taken to ensure the Technocracy's reign never ends.

These meetings were once held without incident, but in the last few years they have been beset with attacks by younger members of the Traditions. Not much harm has been inflicted, but considerable status has been accorded the victorious raiders. Regardless of these seeming successes, some mages feel the Symposium is nothing but a farce to lure other mages out of hiding.

The Marauders

What did you see there?
I saw the saints and their toys.
What did you see there?
I saw their knowledge destroyed.

— Joy Division, "Wilderness"

If the Technomancers personify absolute rigidity, then the mages known only as the Marauders are surely their opposite. The Marauders have delved so deeply into the alluring seas of chaos that they have lost the desire ever to return to reality.

On the positive side, these mages have managed to unite with their Avatars as no others have. On the negative side, they did this at the expense of their ability to understand and be understood by humanity. As a result, the Marauders are a feared, inhuman group of magickal bandits who effect unpredictable and constant changes in the environment. Marauders are rumored to be under the influence of other factions in the Tellurian, but normal mages have yet to figure out who controls them, or why.

Wherever the Marauders appear, plans come undone, chaos reigns, and the cause-and-effect fabric of reality begins to unravel. A Marauder of appropriate power does this simply by virtue of her presence; lesser ones cause these effects on purpose, using a wild form of magick. Their goals are beyond the understanding of rational individuals. The Marauders are insanity incarnate, and thus are the antithesis of the Technocracy. In fact, their escapades are so frightening that they almost justify some of the rigidity of the Technomancers. Even the worst enemies of the Technocracy know that its stable foundation prevents the greatest Marauder atrocities. The impact of the Marauders on reality can be so damaging that mages find themselves compelled to stop or at least contain the Marauders' activities.

Unfortunately, the activities of the Traditions also occasionally allow Marauders to enter Earth's reality; this is one major reason why the Technocracy hunts the Tradition mages. Whenever a mage opens a Portal or in any way pierces the Gauntlet, there is a chance that a Marauder may also use the Portal, slipping past the Tradition mage to disappear somewhere down the streets of physical reality.

It is believed that one of the Marauders' purposes (inasmuch as beings so psychotic have purposes) is to bring back the Mythic Age — with a vengeance. If that means a world where humans daily interact with unicorns and dragons then so be it. Unfortunately, Marauders are not stable enough to understand that even myth has its own rules and laws — the Marauders want only chaos.

The Nephandi

Won't you be my friend, Mr. Faceless Creature of Evil?
— Frankie Ferret to Sir Real, from *Darkwing Duck*

Of the Traditions' many enemies, the Nephandi are the vilest, most evil and mysterious force opposing the Ascension. These immensely powerful mages have sold their souls to the darkest forces of the universe in a bid for supreme mastery of reality. None understands their true motives or the extent of their power. What is known is that their allies are fearsome, grotesque and come from beyond the borders of the known world.

These allies, the Demon Hordes, were expelled from the Earth centuries ago by the Technomancers' purge, which exiled them beyond the barrier of the Horizon. They now desperately want back in. Only the true Quintessence of Earth can give them ultimate power, a power from which they lust like a vampire for blood. The Demon Hordes have sustained themselves over the centuries by devouring the souls of human beings, but as the nutritional content of human souls diminishes (a side effect of the Technomancers' work), they can no longer wait Outside — they must break through the barriers.

To this end, the Demons tempt and pervert mages to their side with promises of great power and even godhood. They sign contractual bargains, promising a prospective mage absolute power — in return for her soul. Those who sign the bargain become Nephandi, the generals of the legions of darkness.

Numbered among the Nephandi's servants are the cunning and deceitful Demons of the Inferno, and the corrupt Banes of the Umbra. Beyond this, little is known of the mysterious Nephandi and the forces at their beck and call. Rumors tell of Nephandi who have carved out whole Realms for themselves and rule these with iron fists; other whispers speak of tainted Dreamspeaker mages who have joined the ranks of darkness and marshal the forces of Entropy.

The Nephandi also use human (or once-human) agents. These are called the fomori, and though they gain supernatural powers from their evil masters, the fomori are marked by physical and mental deformities — outward signs of a corruption most terrible. The least deformed hide within society, furthering the Nephandi's influence by seducing other mortals. The heavily deformed hide in the shadowy places of the world, waiting for a chance to open a pathway to the netherworlds, where their masters wait for a chance to invade Gaia's reality.

The Traditions

Finite players play within boundaries; infinite players play with boundaries.

— James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games*

A Tradition is the way in which a mage externally manifests her working of magick — from the dolls and feathers of voodoo to the meditation and disciplines of Oriental philosophers. The Tradition's procedures and tools are required for each magickal effect the mage wills into reality.

Over the years, most Traditions have achieved identities of their own, outside the cultures from whence they arose. The Traditions are the primary social units of mages. Each Tradition determines the customs to which its members adhere and recruits new initiates into its body. In fact, a Tradition sometimes views itself as the guardian of the culture from whence it originated, especially if it remains in the same geographical location and recruits apprentices only from within that community.

Nine Traditions of mages currently operate in the world. These are:

• **Akashic Brotherhood** —

These monastic martial artists treat magick as a product of their internal light. They explore the Sphere of Mind to divine why the body and soul can never be united. Though somewhat detached from mortal affairs, these ascetics are becoming ever more involved in the Ascension War as they see the Technocracy destroying humanity's chances for true enlightenment.

• **Celestial Chorus** —

Though it has lost considerable influence in recent years, the Chorus still holds to its basic tenet — that the Great One is the true source and the true destination of Ascension. Its members live within the labyrinths of ancient cathedrals, seeking to understand the Sphere of Prime, the source of creation.

• **Cult of Ecstasy** —

Lovers of music, dance and art, these mages practice magick as a way of life. Rock music was their creation and is still their passion. In their quest they have mastered the Sphere of Time, the better to allow them to escape the physical world.

• **Dreamspeakers** —

Continuing the most ancient tradition of magick on earth, the Dreamspeakers are shamans of considerable mystery and potency. They are masters of the Sphere of Spirit, and use their powers to converse with the great spirits and thereby divine the secrets of reality.

• **Euthanatos** —

Misunderstood and distrusted by the other Traditions, the Euthanatos is thought of as little more than a death cult.

Its members use their mastery of the Sphere of Entropy to kill and destabilize.

• **Order of Hermes —**

Once the proud masters of reality, the members of the Order of Hermes have fallen far since the Middle Ages. Practicing the magick of ritual and calculation, they rigorously pursue ultimate power. Toward this end they have mastered the Sphere of Forces, which grants them power over the essence of the universe.

• **Sons of Ether —**

Many believe the bizarre Sons of Ether to be offshoots of the dreaded Technomancers. Parasites who feed upon the ideas the Technomancers discard, these mad scientists seek to create a science that adapts to the will of humanity instead of oppressing it. They are masters of the Sphere of Matter, giving them great control over physical reality.

• **Verbena —**

This ancient Tradition is concerned mainly with the substance and power of life, and is fascinated with life's primary constituents, such as blood and the other bodily biles. Its members specialize in the Sphere of Life, as they study how mortal life grows from a lifeless world.

• **Virtual Adepts —**

Though partial members of the Technocracy, the Adepts are accepted by the other Traditions. They are the masters of the Sphere of Correspondence, personified by their cyber-reality computer net. Working through that growing net, they view technology as the means to break the boundaries of reality.

Life in the Traditions

All the still point of destruction
At the centre of the fury
All the angels all the devils
All around us can't you see.
— Sting, "Love Is the Seventh Wave"

Mages of the Traditions are in an unenviable position despite all the power they wield. They are trying to survive against foes more powerful than they. They strive toward a goal that may not exist. They act on behalf of people who help the Technocracy with every breath they take. Still, mages are people of great will and confidence. They may voice worries and concerns in their quiet moments alone, but in general they have no doubt of their mission.

When a Sleeper becomes a mage, he must deal with a large number of facts of life that were previously invisible to him. Discussed hereafter are the most important of these elements — the things that occupy the daily lives of mages in the World of Darkness.

Social Status

The various ranks among the Traditions are based purely on knowledge and wisdom, or lack of it. The highest status is reserved for the Oracles, who epitomize the quest for Ascension. By contrast, the outcast Orphans are accorded the least status.

• **Orphan:** Mages of no Tradition, who had no Mentor and taught themselves the mysteries, are known as Orphans. Orphans are held in disdain by those of the Traditions and are considered to possess no honor.

• **Apprentice:** Mages who are still in training and have not been initiated are known as apprentices. They can remain such for as long as a decade, though this is rare.

• **Disciple:** A mage of full status who has been accepted into a Tradition.

• **Adept:** A mage who has attained Rank Four in a Sphere — any Sphere — is known as an Adept and is accorded honor among his peers. It is ironic that the Traditions, like the Conventions they hate, reward focus over breadth — a mage who has attained Rank Four in a single Sphere is deemed superior to one who has attained Rank Three in half a dozen.

• **Master:** A mage who has attained the fifth rank of a Sphere attains the exalted status of Master.

• **Oracle:** The most senior and respected of the mages, these great tutors have mastered the highest strata of the Spheres.

Search for Ascension

Free mind, free soul
It's time for liberation to flow
Free mind, free soul
It's time so let your future unfold.
— The B-52's, "Bad Influence"

The primary motivation of all true mages is the search for Ascension.

Ascension refers to the goal of perfecting reality and thereby allowing it to achieve or regain its potential. However, each mage has a unique vision of what Ascension is, and

mages' views often conflict. Most agree that there must be a balance between the forces of stasis and change, also referred to as the static and dynamic elements of reality. The Technomancers deny that stasis can become too strong, and the Marauders see no limit to the everchanging dynamic. The Technomancers are out to reshape society, while the Marauders desire only to achieve personal apotheosis. The Nephandi seek to unite stasis and change in utter oblivion.

The Traditions hold the middle ground. They are the focal point between all factions. They recognize a strong need for personal development and growth, but they also recognize the need to orient all humanity toward Ascension. Unless all humanity becomes enlightened, reality itself will not move forward. So the Traditions seek both personal perfection and a perfect world. Each Tradition has its own ideology regarding how such Ascension can be best accomplished, but the Traditions as a whole agree that reality is currently in jeopardy if the Technocracy is allowed to continue unchecked.

Thus, while mages often discuss Ascension, the time for mere debate has passed. The Traditions realize that Ascension has gone from being a lofty ideal to being a very real goal for which they must fight. They are rising to the challenge.

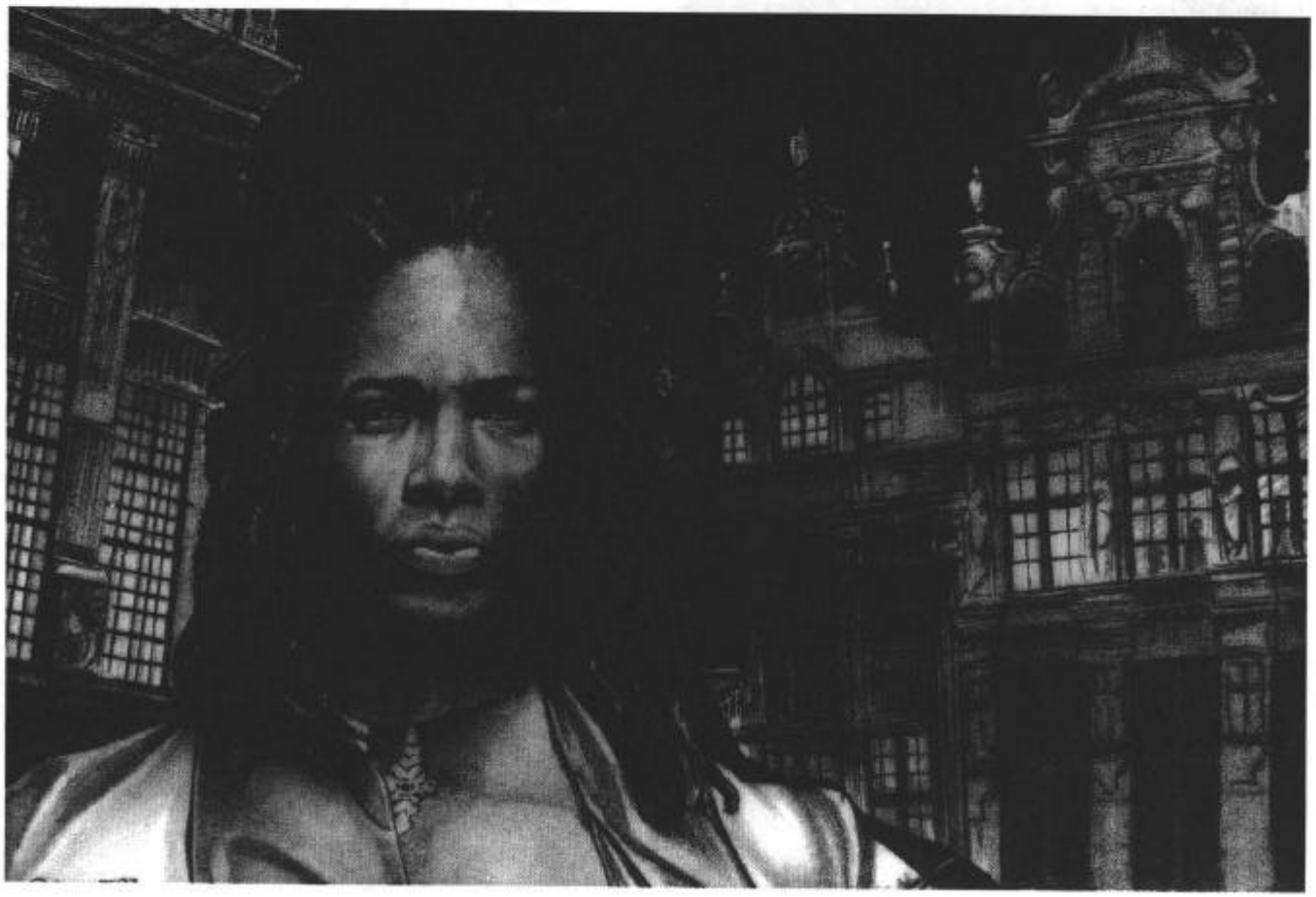
Humanity's Role

We are the normal
We live and we die
No reason why.

— Goo Goo Dolls, "We Are the Normal"

The Traditions see Sleepers as integral components of Ascension. Even mages who believe that only the Awakened will truly achieve Ascension still acknowledge the fact that they cannot attain their goal without using humans. Humanity is the vessel on which mages sail. They adapt that vessel to their needs — and sometimes swim far away from it in their explorations — but they could not reach their desired destinations without it. Earth's reality is home base, and human souls are quite possibly the centerpieces of the Tellurian.

This puts the Traditions in a difficult position. They must protect and nurture a humanity that has become blinded by the Technocracy's propaganda. The Traditions must wrest humanity from the stifling grip of the Technomancers while at the same time protecting them from the Marauders and Nephandi. Of all mage factions, it seems that the Traditions are the only ones who possess true compassion for their un-Awakened brethren.



Cabals

Mages commonly work together in compact groups known as cabals. A cabal is a purely social grouping. In fact, cabals of inexperienced mages will not necessarily even have a headquarters, instead holding clandestine meetings in abandoned warehouses, the back rooms of bookstores or nightclubs, forgotten steam tunnels, catacombs beneath churches, laboratories, libraries or alleyways. Cabal members are often secretly contacted and given complex coded instructions for the meeting time and place. Young cabals cannot be too cautious when it come to avoiding the Pogrom.

In the past, cabals were fairly homogenous subgroups within a given Tradition, but today, mages from disparate Traditions often band together, creating more versatile groups. These mixed groups have become the vanguard of the Traditions' opposition to the Technocracy. Such mixed groups are still predominantly small in membership and low in resources. The Tradition is still the major framework of political cohesion and social obligation.

Sadly, some of these mixed cabals have become rallying points for mages dissatisfied with their Traditions. These groups scorn the teachings of their respective Traditions, and instead become violent and greedy wild cards in the Ascension War. Most mages refer to these magickal mercenaries as Rogues. Unable to share in the resources of any faction of mages, Rogues will sell their services to the highest bidder. They are masters of magickal warfare and espionage, operating in tightly knit cabals and serving any master, even the Nephandi.

Chantries

A sacred cavern to call my own
A darkness fit to skin my bones.
— The Jack Rubies, "Falling"

Highly successful cabals that evade the Pogrom long enough to gather resources often establish a Chantry, or seek to join an existing one. A Chantry serves as a permanent headquarters for the cabal; it can be anything from a simple shack in the woods to a network of sites tied into a Horizon Realm.

While any building or location can serve as a Chantry, few cabals will bother establishing a Chantry unless it is at the site of a mystic Node. By establishing a Chantry at a Node, the cabal claims the site and the supply of Quintessence found there. Eventually, most cabals use the power of their Node to create a Horizon Realm in Gaia's Near Umbra. Such a Realm gives the cabal a place of relative safety from the reach of the Technocracy, and frees its members from the confines of Earth's reality. In their Horizon Realm, the mages can practice magick without interference. The Node also allows the cabal to create a permanent Portal connecting the Horizon Realm with the Chantry's physical world Node site.

Truly powerful Chantries may have Horizon Realms that connect with several Node sites in Earth's physical reality. Such a Chantry might control Nodes in Rome, Constantinople, New York City, and a cave in the Grand Canyon. Each Node site has a portal connected to a single Horizon Realm in the Near Umbra, and each Node feeds the Horizon Realm Quintessence to sustain it.

However, Node sites are difficult to find. Locating a Node requires an extensive search in the Near Umbra for the ley lines that interweave at a Node. This forces many cabals to join the ranks of an established Chantry in order to share in its resources. Powerful Chantries may have as many as a dozen different cabals as members.

Naturally, membership has its price. Each Chantry has a list of Covenants, or laws, that govern how the Chantry is to be run. These Covenants are created by the cabal that first established the Chantry, and therefore the rules generally favor the old guard. New cabals normally have to spend a great deal of time performing services for the older cabal that established the Chantry before the new members see any of the resources of the Chantry used on their behalf. Chantry Covenants have therefore created a system of social distinctions among its various members.

Chantry Society

Most Tradition Chantries recognize certain titles among their members.

• **Pedagogue:** Some Chantry colleges produce teachers who become so renowned within mage society that they are termed Pedagogues. These tutors are so instrumental to their Chantry's success that they inevitably become the rulers of the Chantry either through influence or direct control. All too often, these Pedagogues abuse their power, ruling the Chantry with an iron hand and discrediting all who dare to disagree with them.

• **Deacon:** Deacons are the leaders of a Chantry, and are usually the very same mages who founded the Chantry. Deacons normally have great power given to them by the Covenants of their Chantry. They generally possess the authority to dole out the Chantry's supply of Quintessence. If the Chantry is also a college, the Deacons often have the final say in curriculum and student admission.

• **Fellow:** Members of a Chantry who are not Deacons are known as Fellows. Members of cabals that successfully join a Chantry will usually be made Fellows of the Chantry. Fellowship grants the mages use of the Chantry's facilities, access to its Horizon Realm, and some access to its Quintessence.

• **Sentinel:** Most Chantries have guardian mages who protect the Node sites on Earth. These guardians are called Sentinels, and their duty is to protect portals leading to the Chantry's Horizon Realm. Sentinels are organized in cabals associated with the Chantry, but are not usually themselves members. Chantries usually send Sentinels to perform a variety of earthly missions. Such missions include the collection

of overdue "tuition" to a college Chantry, envoys to other Chantries, and even out-and-out war parties. It is also the duty of the Sentinels to maintain the secrecy of the Chantry's Node sites, lest the Technomancers discover the Chantry's existence.

• **Errant:** Errants are mages whose Chantries were destroyed or taken over, and whose cabals were eliminated, usually through the Technocracy's Pogrom. These mages have lost everything that meant anything to them — all they ever worked for or held dear. Thrust into the mundane world with few friends and many enemies, Errants are known as harbingers of sorrow, for wherever they go they bring their enemies with them. Moreover, most Errants have sworn vengeance against their enemies, and will use anyone and do anything to achieve it. Few Chantries or cabals dare to harbor such mages, so Errants wander alone, hunting their enemies.

• **Rogues:** Scorned as the most violent, honorless and greedy mages to be found, these mercenaries sell their bloody services to the highest bidder. Though Rogues are nominally of the Traditions, they have been known to serve Technomancers and even Nephandi. Rogues are proficient with the magick of war and espionage, and generally operate alone or in tightly knit cabals tied to no Chantry or Node.

Types of Chantries

There are many types of Chantries, established for a variety of reasons by a variety of mages. Chantries are an organization indigenous to the Traditions, though other factions have similar institutions. Described below are a few of the types of Chantries that exist in the World of Darkness.

Ancestral Chantries: Some Chantries are Tradition-specific, pockets of homogenous culture that keep the Tradition alive. Since their very inception they have functioned as political and social centers for their Traditions. Because many of the Traditions have been around for centuries, such Chantries are known as Ancestral Chantries. Most are aging and stagnant but incredibly powerful. Ancestral Chantries tend to be located in the most remote and desirable mystical landscapes of the world, from the Tibetan Plateau to the heart of Rome.

College Chantries: The majority of Chantries are places where Tradition mages can go to improve their magickal knowledge. These colleges are described in more detail later.

Squatter Chantries: This is an unpleasant nickname for any Chantry that does not rest upon a Node. Beginning cabals that cannot find their own Nodes and refuse to live by the rules of an established Chantry form their own Chantries from any building, cave, glen, etc. that meets their needs.

The Net: In some ways, the Net is like an Ancestral Chantry in that it is run by one Tradition, the Virtual Adepts. However, the Net is hardly a traditional Chantry. Its Horizon Realm, if such exists, is said to be a computerized virtual reality. Virtual Adepts who have access to the Net are able to enter it without the use of a Node Portal. The Net is a recent phenomenon, and few mages even know of its existence.

Technomancer Chantries: The Technocracy has its own institutions, which are in many ways similar to Chantries. These are primarily strongholds where the Technomancers conduct scientific research, but some of them do tie into other Realms through Portals. For example, Iteration X's Chantries often connect to the Convention's machine Realm of Autochthonia.

Protecting the Chantry

Life in a Chantry once exempted a mage from the Pogrom, but no more. The conflict on Earth has spread to the Chantries and engulfed them. Because the Technomancers rarely venture into the Near Umbra, they have difficulty identifying where Nodes lie on the Earth's surface. Therefore, the Technocracy discovers Nodes by finding the Chantries of the Traditions, or the caerns of the Garou, and taking them over. This forces mages to guard the locations of their Chantries' earthbound sites zealously. If a Chantry is discovered, a swarm of HIT-Marks and Men In Black will shortly arrive.

Things only go from bad to worse when mages retreat to their Horizon Realms. Positioned on the Horizon, the mages are ideal targets for both the Marauders from the Near Umbra and the Nephandi from the Deep Umbra. In addition, Horizon Realms are ideal sources of Quintessence, especially for the Nephandi and Marauders, who find it difficult to break into Earth's physical reality to steal Quintessence directly.

Horizon Realms are artificial and need constant supplies of Quintessence to exist. They receive this Quintessence through the Portals that connect them to their Nodes on Earth. By invading a Horizon Realm, Marauders and Nephandi not only get a supply of Quintessence, but also an easy route to Earth. This is another reason the Technocracy desires to control all of the Nodes on Earth.

Apprenticeship

While each Tradition uses its own title to describe a human who has had her Avatar Awakened, the process of such apprenticeship is shared by all Traditions. Mages who take on apprentices are called Mentors. They gain great respect among mages if they successfully Awaken a Sleeper, especially if the apprentice goes on to become a mage of note.

Each Tradition selects its apprentices in different ways from different cultural pools. An apprentice is assigned to one or more Mentors who begin teaching the student the fundamentals of magickal knowledge. When an apprentice is deemed ready (this can take 10 years or more), she is taken through her Tradition's initiation, which Awakens the apprentice's Avatar. Thereafter, the Sleeper has become a mage.

Acolytes

Throughout history, mages have gathered their Acolytes. These Acolytes are the guards, the advisors, the assistants, the ones who hold back the darkness while the mage channels power and sends it burning into the night. Acolytes are mundane humans who serve a specific mage, a cabal, or an entire Tradition. Seldom do Acolytes fully understand the true nature of their masters, but they glimpse enough to realize things are not altogether normal. Apprentices are often recruited from the pool of Acolytes.

Acolytes can be any type of people. They are bums, stockbrokers, policemen, hookers, secretaries, shop owners, and ordinary people who have a sliver of something pure inside them. Perhaps the old woman who cleans your house has secret insights into your past? Perhaps the man who takes your fast food order dreams a little more vividly than most? Perhaps that fortuneteller you see on the way to work every day really does get flashes of the future from time to time? Maybe the artist that you love so much might be drawing on the power of her Avatar to work a special kind of magic through art? Although Acolytes are Sleepers whose Avatars have not yet Awakened, their inner magick often manifests itself in one way or another.

Mages need their Acolytes, because Acolytes are mages' lifelines to the real world. Mages often don't have time to deal with the mundane details of existence, and they are thus often ignorant of the machinations of the Technocracy. Acolytes can pass unnoticed through the halls of the Technomancers, serving as a mage's eyes and ears in places where he could never go himself. Acolytes act as a mage's street contacts, provide a source of influence over society, and even provide resources for equipment and supplies.

Protocol

The society of the Traditions is not highly structured, much less hierarchical; however, there are some customs all mages are expected to follow. These ancient social taboos and expectations are known as the Protocols. They are simple rules of behavior taught to all apprentices. Each Tradition interprets the Protocols slightly differently, but most of the maxims hold true for all.

Generally the Protocols revolve around behaving honorably. Some of the most common and well-known Protocols are described below:

- Respect those of greater knowledge.
- A debt to a tutor must be repaid.
- A mage's word is his honor; never break a sworn vow.
- The will of an Oracle must always be obeyed.
- Do not betray your cabal or Chantry.
- Do not conspire with the Technocracy or other enemies of Ascension.
- Protect the Sleepers; they are ignorant of what they do.

A mage who breaks a Protocol is rebuked and told what is expected of him. If he continues to violate the Protocol, a number of things can happen depending on the mood, power and status of those offended. The offensive mage may be shunned. Word of the mage's violation will quickly spread, and many mages will refuse to teach the offender. Whole Chantries may refuse to associate with mages guilty of breaking the Protocols.

This informal system of justice is generally effective. Occasionally, more drastic measures must be taken against serious offenders and habitual miscreants. In this case, a mage's own Tradition will call a Tribunal against him.

Tribunals

A Tribunal is a gathering wherein mages discuss matters important to all members of a Tradition. In recent times, some Tribunals have hosted mages from all nine Traditions. A Tribunal can be called at any time, but is usually convened during times of turmoil, such as when a Protocol has been broken. Only mages who have Mastered a Sphere have enough respect among their peers to call a Tribunal.

Tradition Tribunals are held in one of the Tradition's Ancestral Chantries. Inter-Tradition Tribunals are held in mutually accessible locations. The mage who calls the Tribunal brings it to order, but other Masters actually conduct the Tribunal.

Trials are often conducted at Tribunals, and formal punishments are meted out to those who are found guilty. While the defendant in such a trial is usually a mage who has broken a Protocol, trials may also be called to judge other creatures such as spirits, mages defecting from other factions, or even Acolytes. Punishments range from the simple and polite to the unforgiving and harsh. Example punishments are listed below:

- **Censure:** The mage is formally rebuked. A censured mage is on probation of sorts for an indefinite period, and must often follow a set of strict and precise instructions or suffer further punishment. These orders vary widely, but generally include restrictions on travel and associations with others, as well as requirements for services.
- **Ostracism:** The mage is formally made outcast, and none who are of the Traditions are allowed to associate with her in any way. She is completely exiled for a period ranging from a month to the rest of her life. Those who dare to associate with the outcast risk censure or worse.
- **Branding:** Masters of the Sphere of Spirit are able to place a "sigil" upon the Avatar of a mage. Such sigils forever mark a mage as an offender of a particular Protocol.
- **Death:** Mages, especially those of the Euthanatos Tradition, don't trifle with those who consistently break the rules. Mages who hinder Ascension are slain so that their Avatar spirits can recycle themselves into new, unborn children. The gift of an Awakened Avatar is to be reserved for those who wield power honorably.
- **Gilgul:** Gilgul, the deliberate destruction of an Avatar (see Chapter Eight), is the most extreme form of punishment known to mages. It is only performed when the Tribunal has reason to believe that a mage's very Avatar has become polluted or warped. An Oracle visits the Tribunal to enact the punishment, ripping the guilty mage's Avatar from her and utterly destroying the spirit. The mage is left physically unharmed, but her ability to work magick is forever lost.

A Love of Knowledge

...the chance reading of a book or of a paragraph in a newspaper, can start a man on a new track and make him renounce his old associations and seek new ones that are in sympathy with his new ideal; and the result for that man, can be an entire change of his way of life.

— Samuel Clemens, *What Is Man?*

Mages operate in a society based around a respect for education and a profound love of knowledge. The quest for Ascension is, in many ways, a search for truth and wisdom. The pursuit of Mastery over the Spheres certainly stems from a desire for knowledge. Even the Ascension War is waged over a difference in philosophies. This love of lore emerges from the very source of mages' being.

Teaching

Teaching is the closest thing to a sacred institution that mages possess. The relationship between student and teacher is the basis of many old legends and stories. Teachers can be both benevolent and manipulative, however, and some misuse their authority and position. Most conflicts among mages are begun by respected tutors who teach the ways of war.

Tutors vie with one another for respect, and respect is usually measured in terms of the number and quality of the students a tutor attracts. Competition is fierce for the brightest students, for their achievements reflect upon their teachers. Moreover, a teacher can also learn from bright, energetic and curious students. However, most tutors are far too busy to teach all those who wish to learn from them, so they pick and choose. To be accepted by a good tutor a student must convince the teacher he is among the best and the brightest young mages.

Colleges

Mages of similar philosophies sometimes form colleges, usually inspired by the teachings of one particular tutor. Colleges support, defend and propagate a particular philosophy. Many are innocuous clubs of like-minded enthusiasts; others are large Chantries that preach a specific dogma and conduct classes with militaristic codes.

One example of a college is the Order of the Burning Light, which is affiliated with the Celestial Chorus and the Order of Hermes (one of the few lasting areas of cooperation between these two Traditions). Led by an ancient tutor named Abelard, the Order is dedicated to integrating the Spheres of Prime and Forces. The Order holds secretive meetings in Paris on a regular basis. These meetings are excellent sources of information about potential tutors, particularly those in the Chorus or the Order.

Mentors

A mage's first tutor, his Mentor, has a profound effect on the rest of the mage's life. A good Mentor can be a positive influence, while a bad Mentor will cause a mage no end of problems. A mage instructed by a poor Mentor may actually have to unlearn part of a Sphere before he can learn it properly. Because a student owes the fact of his Awakening to his Mentor, however, he will always be in her debt. Only the most twisted and cruel Mentors are not given this kind of reverence. Often a Mentor will aid her ex-apprentice when no other quarter will offer help.

Many mages remain in close contact with their Mentors, and actually seek to further the Mentors' original plans and ideas. They often become involved in the social and political affairs of their Mentors, and may be asked for assistance from time to time. Mentors in turn provide continuing support and advice for their former students, and may occasionally serve as tutors.

Tuition

Education is never free. Often a tutor will require a potential student to perform various tasks for her, tasks that range from the menial to the impossible.

Still, the opportunity to learn under the tutor forces the student to do whatever is asked of him. This can lead to embarrassing, dangerous and terrifying situations. Missions to deliver messages or recover a lost tome are typical. Tutors, especially those tutors who spend all their time at a Chantry, often have limited perspective regarding the feasibility of their tasks: they might just as easily request payment in the form of an unhatched dragon's egg as in the form of a crate of authentic Venetian glass or a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud.

Some tutors require that their students be of a specific Tradition, or have specific values or morals. These tutors often conduct exhaustive background searches, inquisitions and other information-gathering techniques in order to determine whether someone should be taught.

The Spontaneous Gift

In recent decades, a new phenomenon has arisen in the Gothic-Punk world. Sleepers have been born with the gift to work magick already Awakened. These "spontaneous mages" are called Orphans by their educated brethren. Some mages see Orphans as harbingers of a new crisis, while others view their presence as an omen of impending Ascension.

Orphans need no mage Mentors to initiate them, and their Avatars are thought not to be spirits recycled from the Pure Ones. Orphans do not adhere to cultural Traditions, nor do they feel the pull of ancestral spirits within them — they work magick by intuition and inspiration alone.

Though the majority of Orphans' spontaneously Awakened Avatars are quite weak compared to those of normal mages, there are exceptions to this tendency — certain Orphans have been powerful indeed. At first, mages displayed a great deal of hostility toward these "freaks," and though they were of necessity brought into the community of mages, clear distinction was made between "true" mages and the bastards of Earth. In time, this general animosity gave way to a more enlightened attitude wherein each mage was considered on an individual basis. Some Orphans have proved to be valuable soldiers in the Ascension War despite their origins.

Because the Gothic-Punk milieu is almost a Tradition in its own right, a good percentage of all Orphans are steeped in magick methods of Gothic-Punk character. Orphans who adopt the modern Gothic-Punk culture as a basis for a magick Tradition are called Hollow Ones. Hollow Ones are not generally recognized as a Tradition unto themselves, but the mages of the Traditions are beginning to see the importance of bringing these sullen young Orphans into the fold, lest the Technocracy (or worse, the Nephandi) woo them first.

Today

Spells of Einstein, Bohr and Stephen Hawking/ let the mystic and quanta become entwined/ it's space-time's door that now needs unlocking/ by equations of most exquisite kind.

— Len Kaminski, *Dr. Strange* (December 1993)

The Tradition mage today stands at the balance point of the universe, and is thus harried on all sides by the Technocracy, the Marauders and the Nephandi. These foes have all lost the center and fallen to an extreme, whether it be obsessive pattern and stasis, fickle chaos and change, or doom-laden corruption and destruction. Only the Tradition mages can hope to guide humanity toward harmonious Ascension.

Unfortunately, the Tradition's magickal powers have been greatly hampered by the Technocracy. The dangers of Paradox spirits and the Pogrom have caused the mages to retreat underground and practice their art in secret. Overuse of vulgar magick causes Paradox spirits to appear and reverse the effect — and then punish the offender. If any Sleeper discovers their secret, the hunters of the Technocracy would soon be upon them, ready to enforce the Pogrom.

To preserve magick's secrecy, mages have developed both practical habits and mystical disciplines to conceal magick's nature, and to some extent, that of its practitioners. For this reason, coincidental magick is held in high regard among mages.

Mages understand the human tendency to destroy what one does not understand without pausing to verify the truth of the matter. Mages are extremely frustrated by the opposing tendency to believe anything couched within the framework of science. Consider a news story on television that announces an amazing scientific discovery: the ability to rework completely the genetic structure of an unborn child. A man with a complicated machine operating on "scientific" principles would be accepted without question, while another man who simply waved his hand in front of the woman's belly would be scoffed at — even were the results identical, and even though the exact process of either method is incomprehensible to the average person.

Just as the villagers rose up against a Son of Ether named Frankenstein when they discovered his "mad" attempts to reconstitute life, people would not accept much of what mages must do. For the most part, the life of mages consists of purposeful ruses and agreements to avoid performing vulgar magick in front of normal humans. Given time, these predilections become almost automatic and unconscious.

Still, mages will do anything in the name of the Ascension War, as they struggle to reconstruct Prime from the pitiful remnants and clues that are available.

Chapter Three: Storytelling

What is the point of this story,
What information pertains?
The thought that life could be better
Is woven indelibly into our hearts,
and our brains.
— Paul Simon, "Train in the Distance"

Remember the last time you saw a really great movie, one where time seemed to stop while the film played across the theater screen? Between the opening music and the closing credits, the movie consumed your senses and became your world. You suspended your disbelief, and while the movie played, you ignored the sticky theater floor, the uncomfortable seats, or the tall guy sitting in front of you; you forgot about the theater full of people and the world around you.

This same captivating experience was enjoyed by people long before television, film, or even the printed word, through the arts of oral fables and drama. People were fascinated and captivated in the same way that a good flick enthralls people today, but their entertainment came from storytelling. **Mage**, as a storytelling game, strives to promote the same suspension of disbelief, through the Storyteller's ability to weave fables, and through everyone's ability to enact the roles of their characters.

If you are new to storytelling games, don't be surprised if this new form of entertainment is difficult to master at first. As a society, we have become used to being entertained instead of entertaining ourselves — spoiled by television, movies, radio and books. **Mage** requires you to participate actively in the creation of your own stories, to be your own entertainer.

This chapter is meant to guide the organization and telling of stories in **Mage**. While it is primarily intended for the Storyteller, players will also profit by reading it. The quality of any **Mage** story depends as much upon the players' talents as those of the Storyteller.

The Role of the Storyteller

Who tells the stories? It is a significant question. Who imagines the world for us, and how do they do it?
—Michael Warren, *Media and Values* (Winter 1992)

The role of the players is pretty straightforward — they act out the role of **Mage** characters. The role of the Storyteller is

not as simple. Perhaps the simplest way to describe this role is to say that it involves doing everything else. The Storyteller defines the setting of the story, outlines the plot for each story, and creates a host of characters who must be brought to life. This may sound like a lot to do — and it is — but preparing a story can be much more fun than playing it.

Mage has several features to help novice Storytellers as they cut their teeth. First, the sample story provided in the appendix not only gets you started but also provides a number of loose ends for you to extrapolate further plots as you like. You can use this story as a rough guide for how to build your own stories.

Second, because the world of **Mage** is largely based on the real world, you can use real-world situations as models for your stories. It's usually best to alter them a bit, however; the differences between the World of Darkness and the real world are detailed in this book.

Finally, the Storyteller rule system is designed on the principle of simple elegance. You should keep this in mind as a storyteller, and not complicate things unnecessarily. When situations arise during game play where dice need to be rolled, the rules to govern the situation are relatively simple. This keeps the story moving, the drama high, and prevents a game session from becoming a rules-fest. Never forget that the story, not the rules, is the most important thing.

During a story you must wear many hats. You must alternately play the role of various characters, describe settings, narrate events, and adjudicate between character actions and the rules. How adept you are at juggling these roles, and at skillfully performing each one, determines how entertaining and enlightening your stories are.

Entertainment

Though a Storyteller will have many motivations, the overriding goal should always be to entertain the players. Certainly, storytelling requires an investment of your time, but it also requires an investment of time on the part of the players. Instead of playing the game, they could be reading a book, watching a movie, out on a date, or spending time with their families. In order to make the experience worthwhile for them, you, as the Storyteller, need to make it fun. After all the hard work preparing a session of a storytelling game, nothing is better than watching your players have a genuinely good time. That is your compensation for the work of preparing the story.

Occasionally, however, the desire to entertain can lead you astray. You can go too far, and modify the flow of the game to appease, not please, a player. This usually happens when a player has not really taken on the role of his character, and the character's failure affects the player's true feelings. Character identification is certainly encouraged, but the player should still be able to maintain the role of observer and enjoy the flow of the story, even if it becomes a tragedy for his character. If the Storyteller habitually appeases the players so that nothing ever goes wrong for their characters, much of the drama and all of the tragedy of a story disappear.

On a happier note, you will delight when the players guide their characters through a richly woven story to eventual success. Tragedy and temporary setbacks are all part of a chronicle's drama, but eventually, the players should succeed. Balancing a story's problems and perils to the players' abilities and their characters' Traits takes practice, but the more successfully you balance these disparate elements, the more climactic your stories will become.

Using the Rules

It is your duty as Storyteller to know the rules of the game. The rules of **Mage** are designed to be comprehensive, yet simple ways to determine the outcome of any action in a story. However, every application of every rule cannot possibly be included in the rulebook. In a storytelling game, especially a game of magick, anything can happen. The Storyteller must be the final interpreter of the rules, and must decide in a practical way how the rules apply in the game. If a player wants his character's magick to affect everyone in the room, the Storyteller decides the dice roll required, regardless of how any of the players may interpret the rules of the game.

However, as the final arbiter of the rules, you must also be fair and consistent in the way the rules are applied. You must act impartially and reasonably for all involved simply because you wield so much power. A Storyteller must be an umpire of clear and sound judgment.

You will sometimes be obliged to go beyond the rules, or even break them. Breaking rules is often necessary to tell the best story, or to make sense out of the world. In order to maintain the trust of the players, you should probably not break the rules on a regular basis (they may come to rely on it happening whenever they're in a jam). If you make the mistake of doing so, it will destroy the free will of the characters and eliminate the drama of every scene. Of course, you may decide to change the rules permanently in some way, and this we encourage, as long as everyone knows the rules have been changed.

Knowing when to supersede the rules is just as important as knowing when to break them. At times, you must create new rules on the spot, especially when determining what specific magickal effects the players' characters are capable of performing. Your decision can fill a rules hole for the moment, using the guidelines in the rulebook as a benchmark. Then, before you play again, think about the problem in more detail, extrapolate the long-term consequences of your rule interpretation, and see if your solution was the best one. If not, change the rule.

It is important that you determine what your style of storytelling is, and what you need to do to make it work. One way to look at your "style" is as a position somewhere on a continuum between "rules lawyer" and "freeform" storytelling. It is nearly impossible to ascertain your style of storytelling before you actually begin to play; you develop style through practice.

If you are a "rules lawyer," your style of storytelling calls for strict interpretation and application of the rules of the game.

It demands consistency, and its reward is a powerful sense of realism. If the rules say that a player must roll his character's Strength to complete a certain action, then that's what he rolls. Nothing else is added to the roll and nothing else is rolled. This style is what most sports referees aspire to achieve.

The other end of the scale is "freeform." This is the style we tend to emphasize, but it is not necessarily any better than strict application of the rules. When playing freeform, a Storyteller applies the rules sporadically, if she decides to use the rules at all. She may not even use character sheets! The most extreme versions of freeform storytelling essentially become improvisational theater. Live-action roleplaying is an example of what can be done with freeform.

Your style will most likely fall somewhere between these two extremes; this is entirely up to you. Once you settle on a style of play, don't change unless you tell the players. If you typically play radical freeform and then one night you actually begin to use some of the rules, the players will feel caged and may become enraged. Likewise, if you usually strictly apply the rules of the game and suddenly decide to play freeform, many players will be lost without the powers and statistics they assumed they possessed.

Chronicle

Action seems to take the place where sentences collide
I'll tell you why, I'll tell you why, I'll tell you why
The Night is Over, the day has just arrived
I'm only doing what I'm doing
So things will be better in the end.
— Marty Willson-Piper, "Night Is Over"

The fables told in **Mage** are organized into chronicles, which are a series of connected stories combined for the purpose of telling a tale of larger scope and greater content. If a story is a chapter in a book, then a chronicle is the entire novel, trilogy, or ten-book series. Actually, chronicles can be made up of just one story, but more commonly, chronicles encompass many stories. They can take a storytelling group several years of real time to play through, and even longer in terms of time relative to the characters involved.

Individual stories are obviously important in any storytelling game, but the chronicle provides scope and strength to the stories being told. A carefully constructed chronicle can help players suspend disbelief by providing detailed, familiar settings for the imagination. A chronicle with foundation can fill holes caused by individual stories and provide reasons at a later date for seeming discrepancies a Storyteller may create. If the players trust your chronicle, then they will soon trust that most elements of your stories are there for a reason. They will not be as quick to point out flaws, for they will anticipate you addressing their concerns sooner or later.

Creating a Chronicle

You need to begin designing the chronicle long before the players create their characters. Hopefully, you will have already spent several hours of work, at least, in determining the substance and texture of the chronicle you want to run. Everything else depends on what you come up with initially. The sharper your ideas and overall concept, the better everything else will work later on. It can be time-consuming to create a **Mage** chronicle, but the work you do at the beginning will pay off in spades later on.

Before the chronicle can begin, you need an idea of what it will be like — its setting, antagonists and central issues. You must create a setting that will excite the players, antagonists that will provoke them, and issues that will involve them. Creating a chronicle is like creating the most important character of the game.

You have a number of decisions to make as you create the chronicle. First, you need to decide the setting — is it on Earth? In what city? If it is set in the Umbra, in what kind of world do the characters live? Second, you need to decide what connects the characters and binds them together, and what you can do to help describe their motivations. Third, you should develop the primary antagonists of the players — what are their motivations and powers? Finally, you should construct a plan of the progression of the chronicle, to detail where you want to take it and where you must start.

Setting

In **Mage**, it is not necessary to create an entire world from scratch, for the world is so much like our own. However, those areas the characters will frequently visit need to be well developed. You should consider where they live and what kind of area it is. Will most of the stories take place in a city, a wilderness, the Umbra, or other Realms?

Who else lives there? What are the local Sleepers like? If there are vampires or werewolves in the area, do they know of the characters? The Tradition politics of the region need to be determined ahead of time.

Some places will be repeatedly visited by the characters. These settings might be the Chantry, a Node, a curio shop, their teacher's abode, or even a certain city or country. These settings anchor the chronicle at certain points and keep the players involved in a cohesive story. You need to make these come alive for the players; until they do the characters cannot themselves fully exist. Further developing the physical nature of, and Storyteller characters in, each repeated setting will create a more intricate and enjoyable chronicle.

Characters

The characters are the most important elements of a chronicle, and need to be the focus of every story. As such, player involvement in creating the chronicle is tantamount to success. This may seem obvious, but it is all too easy to fall into the trap of designing a seemingly wonderful chronicle that does not involve the characters as its protagonists.

The characters relate to the chronicle largely in terms of the cabal to which they belong. A group of mages may form a cabal for almost any reason: a special mission, protection, revenge, or anything that binds the mages' destinies. It is generally assumed that the members of the cabal are the player characters.

Each cabal is organized and operated differently. Some are very informal and loosely structured, while others are based around a specific building and locale, and operate under a strict set of rules. You should know who the characters are, what they want, and why it makes sense for them to be together. In answering these questions you should involve the players, allowing them to decide the basic structure and organization of their cabal. Some questions of this type are at the end of Chapter Five.

You should not be seduced into leaving the creation of the characters, and thus the cabal, completely up to the players. Never assume that they will fit into the chronicle you have planned. Your chronicle will be more successful if you become directly involved in the creation of the characters. If, for example, you are planning a chronicle that heavily involves the Umbra, you need to ensure that the players realize this and design their characters accordingly.

Depending on your chronicle, you may even have to dictate some aspects of character creation. In so doing, be careful to explain, at least vaguely, why such directives are important to the chronicle.

An excellent way to gain an understanding of each character prior to the game's beginning is through a process called a prelude (see Chapter Five). In a prelude, the Storyteller takes each player aside, one at a time, and tells a rapid-fire one-on-one story about the character's life. Through this process, the Storyteller can introduce some elements that may be important later in the chronicle. The player also gains a chance to try her character out, and to explain the character to the Storyteller.

Antagonists

The opponents the characters face in the course of a chronicle are very important. Antagonists provide a foil for reflecting what the characters strive to attain, and on a more immediate level they add excitement and conflict to the chronicle. A player's imagination can become obsessive when attempting to figure out an arch-rival's next move.

The nature of the paired words protagonist (the characters of the chronicle) and antagonist doesn't necessarily reflect a connotation of good or evil. Some antagonists may simply be individuals or groups whose goals conflict with those of the characters. Canada and the USA may dispute the wording of an international trade agreement, but neither country is evil.

However, nothing holds a chronicle together, story to story, better than a good villain — an individual the characters know is malevolent or evil. During the course of the chronicle,

the characters should confront the same villain(s) time and time again. This provides continuity to the chronicle as well as a familiar face(s) that the players may well love to hate. If the same villain or group of evil ones can be found opposing the characters at every turn, you will heighten the players' involvement.

In shorter chronicles, antagonists tend to be about as powerful as the characters, but for longer chronicles, it is often more riveting if the villain is many times more powerful than the characters, even with their powers combined. That way, the characters never have the option of facing him directly. Instead, they must use secrecy and other tactics that disrupt the flow of information to the antagonist. In any event, the antagonist is bound to have followers and underlings whom the characters can gleefully confront directly, as they work to undo the machinations of the greater foe.

Antagonists in **Mage** can take many forms. Some of the most likely ones include Kindred (vampires), the Garou (werewolves), the Umbrood, the Technocracy, the Marauders, and the Nephandi. Other antagonists can include faeries, Paradox forces, and other supernatural beings such as mummies.

Scheme

Once the basic concept of the chronicle has been decided, the Storyteller can begin to put together the chronicle's plot. In fact, you will probably already have formulated many of the general elements of the chronicle's overall structure and storyline. You should also begin to get a feel for how many stories the chronicle will involve in its telling, and what each story is basically about.

It is best to keep all such plots in a simple and flexible outline form when the chronicle is just beginning. As the chronicle progresses, the players will inevitably make decisions that require the Storyteller to alter the plot of the chronicle. Occasionally, a player decision will radically alter the Storyteller's intended direction and conclusion of the chronicle (sometimes called a "Yes, father, I will join the dark side" decision), but such is the freedom of a storytelling game, and you should be prepared to handle such eventualities. You must then decide whether you want to sacrifice the players' free will by forcing them back into your intended plotline, or sacrifice what could possibly be a better chronicle conclusion to go with the radical new direction the players have chosen. On the positive side, many times the radical new chronicle direction will create an opportunity to break out of what might have been a stereotypical plot into something new and better.

Title

Almost every book, play, movie, poem, painting and sculpture has a title, so your chronicle should be no different. Give your chronicle a title and have the players put it on their character sheets. The title of the chronicle may be as elaborate or as simple as you want, and the title itself may foreshadow

things to come. For example, titling an Umbra-based chronicle "Citadel of the Dream Lord" might give the players visions of battling a lord of nightmare in the Chimerae. You'll find that a good title alone will cause the players' imaginations to begin running wild.

Chronicle Concepts

The inspiration for a chronicle concept can come from any source: discussions with players, movies, comic books, novels, real-life events, and countless other sources that inspire the imagination. The setting of **Mage** lends itself especially well to certain types of chronicle concepts; these are discussed below. As the Storyteller, you can take an inspiration for a chronicle and compare it to the concepts below. Maybe your idea is a unique way to build and flavor one of the chronicle types; possibly, you have a completely new concept.

• Retainers of the Chantry

The characters are working for someone or something else, most likely a long-established Chantry (perhaps even one in the Umbra itself) and the older mages who reside there. For instance, the characters serve the Mentors who apprenticed them and have guided them toward enlightenment. They are perhaps still considered apprentices, still receive training and have access to the tomes of the Chantry. However, they must serve the Chantry and perform tasks assigned to them; these tasks can sometimes be dangerous.

Missions can involve attacks on the Technocracy or other enemies, political summits at other Chantries, obtaining new sources of Quintessence, recovering rare magickal tomes, and discovering new Nodes. Many stories will likely take place in the Umbra, at the Chantry, and in other far-off Realms.

This is an ideal chronicle for beginning characters or players new to storytelling. By playing the part of the master(s) the characters serve, the Storyteller is able to gather characters of different backgrounds into a convenient group, and also to have direct control over what the characters must achieve in each story. However, the Storyteller must be careful not to remove all free will from the characters.

The reasons why the characters serve the Chantry can range from pure loyalty to the threat of punishment or death. The characters might strive to become associate members of the Chantry, and someday even full members.

The characters could serve another master besides a Chantry of mages. Such a master might be a wealthy Sleeper, a vampire Methuselah, a werewolf sept, a powerful spirit, or even a sentient from another realm.

• The Street Gang

The cabal is a gang of street punks. Though the characters have learned some of the mysteries of the universe, they still have not abandoned the pleasures of mundane life. Moreover, they have found that living on the street is the best protection against the Pogrom.

The characters have ready access to stolen technology, the black market, sources of information, and contact with some of the stranger power groups of the Gothic-Punk world. They may even deal with the vampire lords of the underworld.

The characters tend to use blunt means to achieve their goals, even reverting to brute force in times of need. They don't let anyone or anything stand in their way, and treat everyone as an enemy until proven otherwise. Life on the street has hardened them, made them overly suspicious and violent, and sometimes this can make learning from (or even interacting with) other mages difficult. The characters might even be Rogues.

• Fighting the Technocracy

The Technocracy is not very fond of the mages of the Traditions. Its members are possessive of their control over reality, and punish all who stand in the path of total Technomancer dominance. This fanaticism has increased in recent years to the point where a systematic program of repression has begun. The Pogrom has claimed the Avatars and lives of innumerable mages.

Some younger mages, understanding this, have decided to fight back. They have sensed weaknesses in the position of the Technocracy. They have also decided to uncover these weaknesses and exploit them. The increasingly shaky convictions of the Void Engineers have fueled these mages' hope and determination. While some mages try to persuade or cajole the Technocracy into changing its theories and approach, others wage open warfare with its members, and most simply try to hide from the witch-hunts.

Mage chronicles that use this concept will commonly feature the characters pitted squarely against the machinations of the Technomancers. Because the Technocracy is large and formidable, these chronicles have a large scope and involve powerful mages on both sides.

Objectives of this chronicle might include: attempting to "win over" some institutions of static reality; secretly assisting the Marauders; and hunting down and slaying the worst of the Technomancers.

The element of revenge might underlie the characters' own fanaticism. Perhaps the mages who apprenticed them were killed, their Chantry destroyed, or their cultures eliminated by the onslaught of the modern world.

• Espionage

The cabal has infiltrated the Technocracy, and seeks to destroy or change it from within. It will need at least one Virtual Adept member, or perhaps the cabal is led by a renegade Technomancer from one of the Conventions, thus giving at least one player the opportunity to play one of the "bad guys."

Perhaps the cabal is located not upon Earth, but upon Autochthonia, the bizarre machine world of the Technomancers. This world is incredibly advanced — interstellar travel is already underway. The cabal is an underground clandestine organization and is fiercely hunted by Iteration X, who rule the planet. The characters are probably spies and saboteurs planted and supported by the Chantries most opposed to the Technocracy. Surviving more than one or two

stories would be a miracle. The characters should resign themselves to the idea of becoming martyrs to the cause of freedom.

Some even wilder variations are infiltrating vampire, werewolf or faerie society. Remember, with magick anything is possible.

• Quest for Ascension

One of the primary themes of this game is the quest for Ascension. This quest can be made into a focus of the chronicle. Guided by their Avatars, mages must wander on spiritual journeys to discover higher and higher mysteries. In so doing, they increase their understanding of the basic forces that shape the Tellurian.

These quests are perhaps the most metaphysical, the most "out-there," of the chronicle concepts used in the **Mage** game. The exact nature of such quests is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight. If properly run, stories of enlightenment can be uplifting, even illuminating, experiences.

An Ascension chronicle is oriented completely around these quests, and Ascension must be the primary focus of the characters.

• Surmount the Quiet

A very strong element of **Mage** is the touch of the strange. Reality is full of things even mages cannot hope to explain or understand. This strangeness is more than some tentacled horror from a far-off Realm; it is the inexplicable that happens every day. The difference between reality and the mage's maddened perceptions is often difficult to ascertain.

Quiet (see Chapter Eight) is an excellent basis for a chronicle. It gives ample opportunity to take advantage of the Clive Barker/David Lynch aspects of the game—the intrusion of the bizarre and inconceivable into the world of the mundane. Such aspects can be explored in a number of ways.

First, some mages actively seek out the Quiet. They seek to circumvent the mundane in order to explore the bizarre; walking through weirdness like vaccinologists through swampland, hoping the mosquitoes will bite. Eventually the mages may not know how much of their surroundings or memories are (or ever were) real. This becomes even more complicated and interesting when cabals try to explore Quiet 'together.'

A chronicle can also tell the stories of people using "subconscious" magick. These "mages" will not even be able to explain the strange coincidences that act in their favor, let alone the tragedies that threaten to overwhelm them if they dare drop their guard for a moment. The characters can receive nearly unintelligible instructions from people they meet in the strangest places — inside a locked room that was empty the moment before, or seated next to them in a cab. These people order them to complete tasks of unfathomable ramifications.

Whether or not these strange beings are real should never be answered to the satisfaction of the characters. Are they

following the directives of a part of their subconscious better left ignored, or do beings like these really exist?

• **The Ivory Tower**

The characters are lost innocents, clearly out of place in the Gothic-Punk world. They grew up in a Chantry, and know next to nothing about Earth. They must now survive in a strange and hostile world where they understand little. This can be a great way to introduce the Gothic-Punk world to new players.

You need to decide what happened to the characters' Chantry — did they simply lose contact with it while they were on their first mission, or did someone destroy it (providing them with an enemy to despise)?

• **Exploration of the Tellurian**

The World of Darkness is an incredibly diverse environment and contains enough possibility for countless chronicles, but you may occasionally wish to build a chronicle in a setting with a different scope, or in a different time era. You are certainly free to and encouraged to do so. Sometimes a movie or novel will inspire a short chronicle of one or two stories. The advantage of the Storyteller rule system is that it is very flexible, and with minor modifications can easily be adapted to a different type of chronicle.

The Tellurian contains many strange and unknown Realms, and the motivations of the Umbrood are inexplicable. Some have Realms to which they kidnap warriors from throughout the universe to battle for their amusement. Others have Realms that mimic fictional locations from the minds of humans. Basically, this type of chronicle, or any story in the Tellurian, allows you to introduce almost anything to the World of Darkness, even the elements of other roleplaying games.

• **The Guardians**

Whether on their own or by the an older mage's direction, the characters are dedicated to keeping their town or country safe from the influence of darkness and chaos. Marauders' very appearance on Earth is dangerous to reality. Visiting Nephandi are wholly corrupt. The characters patrol the area looking for and stopping these groups' dastardly plans. More advanced cabals might monitor both the physical world and the Umbra, keeping track of movement on both sides of the Gauntlet.

This kind of chronicle provides the opportunity for detective work, crossovers with other Awakened creatures, and exploration. In addition, the characters may regularly find themselves caught between factions. If their Tradition Mentors are harsh or strict the characters might find themselves sympathizing too much with their opponents...

• **Historical Setting**

Historical settings can supply some very interesting locales for **Mage** chronicles — imagine surviving the Salem Witch Trials or the Inquisition. Perhaps you are a mage during the period immediately prior to the beginning of the Technomancers' domination — the European Middle Ages. You could even be part of the grand experiment of the Order

of Hermes (see the White Wolf game **Ars Magica** for more details on the mages of this time).

Such historical chronicles might involve taking a character group from a historical time period all the way up through the modern day (something like the movie *Highlander* where the story is episodic through history), or taking a group of beginning mage characters, perhaps humans who have a strong magickal potential but do not yet exercise it, through a story of the weird and horrific (something like Clive Barker's "*Hellraiser*" mythos).

Story

Whether inspired of nature or dictated by some historical purpose, mythologies are inherently culture-bound, whereas the entertaining features of a well-told tale break easily away from whatever social applications they originally served, to float off and recombine with the features of other traditional inventions in the nightsea of the human imagination.

— Joseph Campbell, *Historical Atlas of World Mythology*

Once you have the concept and basic outline of your chronicle, it's time to begin drafting its first story. The process of designing a story is not so different from designing a chronicle. You still need to know where it will be and what plot you think it will have.

Story Concepts

Listed below are a number of concepts that you can use as starter kits to create your own stories. These premises, issues, situations and themes can germinate one or multiple stories. Read these concepts, pick out the ideas you like the best and weave a story from what you get.

• Quintessence Raiding

A classic **Mage** story is the hunt for Quintessence. Mages need it to fuel magick, as payment to Chantries and Mentors, and to open Portals. Quintessence raiding is a common activity for young mages, especially when times get tough. They hit such places as werewolf caerns, Technomancer Nodes, and magical sites of all sorts. This is a pretty straightforward story concept, but one that can be a lot of fun regardless.

The story starts with the characters learning of a new source of Quintessence. Next they must travel to the site and decide how best to capture it. They may face all sorts of difficulties and danger on their journey, but most conflict is likely to take place at the site itself.

Once they have taken over the site, they must find a way to gather the Quintessence. Sometimes it is already in physical form; other times they need to go to some extra effort to gain it.

• Marauders Take Manhattan

The Marauders can enter a story in a number of different ways, some of which are quite dramatic. For instance, a band of Marauders weaken the Gauntlet enough for mythical

creatures to step into the physical world — in the middle of New York. The characters have to chase down manticora on Broadway and dragons in Central Park, all the while trying to find the Marauders themselves and avoid the furious Technomancers.

Other stories might involve: characters having to deal with a Marauder Talisman that has come into the hands of Sleepers, causing tragedy and mayhem; facing Orphans who have become servants of the Marauders; or dealing with a group of Marauders who are on Earth by means of a corrupted Portal the Technocracy now wants to shut down.

• **Exploration**

There are innumerable places and phenomena to investigate in the Tellurian plane. Mages often venture into the Umbra out of curiosity, and travel to distant Realms in search of knowledge. All you need to do is to create a place worth exploring, put something there that the characters want, find a way to let them get there (an allied Chantry has a Portal?) and think of things to put in their way.

• **On the Home Front**

Sometimes the story comes home to the characters. Sometimes the cabal and its Chantry or Node come under direct attack. The characters are constantly on the defensive, trying to stay one step ahead of their enemies — and the enemies they see may not be the real threat. While the characters are off protecting their Node from a coterie of Tremere vampires, the Progenitors could be cloning or reprogramming their parents. This kind of story will have your *players* looking over their shoulders as they leave.

• **Mystery**

A mystery may start as something small but quickly assumes an importance and relevance to the cabal. Dark secrets among the mages connected with the characters are excellent ways to begin a mystery, but murder is the classic device. Perhaps a mage from an allied Chantry has become an operative of the Technomancers. The characters come across clues revealing treachery...or they might simply stumble across his headless body. Someone else got to him first, and the characters need to discover the murderer.

You need to be sure that magick doesn't give everything away and that the mystery in some way involves the cabal. The characters should often be given a chance to defeat the menace, not just to figure out what is going on.

• **War**

In war, extreme and destructive measures are taken, ostensibly for the protection of rights, privileges, wealth and status. This is even more true for mages. Though overt struggle was once rare, now cabals and Chantries commonly become embroiled in conflicts of such size that they can only be termed war. Antagonism has reached such a point among some groups that many of the Chantries in Horizon Realms are in a permanent state of war. The primary conflict is between Technocratic and Traditional Chantries, as few of them trust one another enough to make permanent peace. The Technomancer Chantries are especially vicious and send raiding expeditions out on their Umbra-ships, using high-tech weapons developed on Autochthonia.

• **Freelance**

Mages are sometimes approached by other groups that seek a temporary or permanent alliance. Often these groups offer a reward of Quintessence for any aid that might be provided, but other times they offer money, connections or information. Mages are powerful beings, and their services are in demand.

Such Freelance stories might involve being hired to free a Sleeper from imprisonment in a Nightmare perpetuated by an evil Nephandus, helping Garou clear from Gaia an area of Wyrm-taint, or even venturing to Hell to retrieve a lost soul.

Beginning a Story

When you are ready to launch your chronicle's first story, there are several things you may want to consider, including preparing an area for the gaming session.

Storytelling games are usually played indoors at a table in the kitchen, den, or living room. There should be chairs for all the players and refreshments if the gaming session is to last a while (etiquette demands that the players bring the munchies, unless they're the hosts). You should also consider any props you might need, any modifications to the room to set the mood for the gaming session, and any special provisions necessary for Live-Action if your story will involve it.

Before you begin each new story, make sure that there are no loose ends from the last story, such as character experience or rule interpretations. Once you are ready to begin, you might tell the players the title of the new story, if you've given it one, and also briefly discuss with them the theme of the coming story.

Finally, many novelists will tell you that the most important line of a novel is the first one, and the really great movies always open with a powerful establishing shot. In that vein, it's usually best to begin the story with the characters right in the thick of things. Get the players on the edge of their seats right away; you can always use a flashback after the opening scene to show the events that led up to the opening scene.

Telling a Story

Telling a good story is a skill that you and your players will enjoy developing as you play **Mage**. You should explore different techniques of telling stories that can improve their entertainment value. Here are a few techniques that can be used in both individual stories and long-running chronicles.

Foreshadowing

Have you ever been reading a book or watching a movie and suddenly gotten a sense of what is going to happen next? This has happened to everyone at some time or another, and there is more to it than seeing through a poorly constructed, clichéd plot. It's called foreshadowing, and authors, at least the good ones, do it on purpose.

When a story element allows a player to guess upcoming events in the chronicle, she becomes caught in a web of suspense carefully laid by the Storyteller. Even though the player knows something is going to happen, she does not know for certain when it will occur, or to whom it will happen, or where it will happen next. This timing is the power the Storyteller has over the player, and by wielding this power carefully, the Storyteller maintains a state of suspense. When the expected is finally sprung, the player will still be surprised.

Though foreshadowing works well when employed sparingly, you don't want to foreshadow everything that's going to happen. If foreshadowing is overdone, the characters may know at the very beginning of the story exactly how things are going to end.

A simple example of foreshadowing would be a descriptive chronicle title, such as "The Destiny Dice". The players can guess that there will be dice somewhere in the chronicle. They do not know what the dice will do, why they are important, or when they will appear, but you can bet that the players will be curious to find out. They will be anxiously awaiting the appearance of dice in the storyline, and when they appear, the characters will clamber over them to discover their secrets. You have now given the players an expectation, and what is suspense if not an expectation of the dreadful?

Repetition

Another chronicle technique is the judicious use of repetition. Just as an often-visited setting provides a sense of continuity, so can other repeated elements build connections between stories and also build suspense.

Any number of story elements can be used to build repetition. For example, a character has a similar dream at the beginning of each story in the chronicle (perhaps a bit more of the dream is revealed each time). Another example is that the characters' antagonists can be identified by a certain sigil, which begins to appear more and more often as the chronicle progresses. Or maybe the characters begin to leave and arrive wherever they travel at precise five-minute increments. In fact, anytime they check a clock, the time is some multiple of five minutes. This may not be noticeable at first, but as these time readings are repeated, the players might make the connection, and then they will realize they have been manipulated by some force of Time since the beginning of the chronicle.

This last example of repetition is perhaps the best because of its subtlety. The most seemingly innocuous elements can be systematically repeated to help provide depth for your chronicle. At first, only you may be aware of these thematic elements. Don't let the lack of praise for your brilliant little nuances discourage you from continuing the practice. It will pay off even more in the end when one of the players suddenly notices

a connection that can be traced through several stories and perhaps many months of real time.

Symbolism

From symbol to symbol leaps the mind of the genius; from symbol to symbol crawls the mind of the moron.

— M. Denning & O. Phillips, *The Foundations of High Magick*

Symbolism is a powerful element in literature that can also be used effectively in a storytelling chronicle. While symbols can work on a smaller scale within a single story, their true usefulness becomes apparent on a larger scale. Within a single story, a Storyteller character named Max Smith may become a symbol for calamities brought forth by excessive greed. To make such symbolism clearer to the players, you might have Max become the central point of a story whose theme and plot follow the intent of the symbol.

Symbols may be similarly used in the larger context of a chronicle. You might even use Max Smith as an antagonist throughout the chronicle, and the characters will come to expect that where they find Max, or hear his name, the destruction and pain caused by his maniacal greed cannot be far away. A symbol used throughout a chronicle in this manner becomes a connecting device for the chronicle that also supports the theme of the chronicle.

Countless other symbols used throughout classic literature can be incorporated into your chronicle. Poetry, such as Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven," is also filled with symbolism. If you find inspiration from the metaphors and symbolism of a poem, you might consider reading the poem aloud to the players before you begin the first story of the chronicle. Then as the symbols in the poem appear in the chronicle, the players will gain insight into the symbols' intended meaning.

Suspense

Suspense is an important element in entertaining stories. The element of suspense is discussed in more detail in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, White Wolf's Storyteller™ game of horror, but certainly deserves some mention here for stories of magick. There are many storytelling techniques that can be used to build suspense; we shall discuss them briefly.

Timing is perhaps the element most crucial to suspense. When the characters are in a dangerous situation, you must judge the moment when feelings of suspense are highest in the players, then unleash the danger upon them. Note that the danger must be great enough that the players fear it, and they must be aware that the danger is near or is coming soon.

The pacing of the story events is also important when building suspense. Allow the characters (and players) some chances to relax, but as the story builds toward conflict, begin to quicken the pace. Your own voice rate should likewise quicken, and your gestures become more lively; build the pace to a fever pitch, so that when the climax comes, the players are completely caught up in the moment, making quick decisions that mean success or failure. Sometimes you can cause the players to create their own pacing by working a deadline into the story.

Finally, the amount of description you use can suddenly slow the pace of the story like the calm before a storm. Suddenly stopping the action of the story to describe something in excruciating detail automatically causes the players to assign the object or setting greater relevance and scope. They will spend hours of real time obsessing about the object described, trying to discover why it is special. Through the description, you have created a suspenseful expectation in the minds of the characters. When the object's special nature is revealed the calm is over and the storm strikes.

The opposite technique is to introduce an object the players know is important (perhaps because of foreshadowing), and tell them almost nothing about its properties or powers. The players will now use their imaginations to assign properties to the object — properties inevitably ten times more ghastly than anything you had planned. If you're a freeform-style Storyteller, you may even take their ideas and use them.

Conflict

I almost felt good inside
'Til the part where the hero died.

— Abecedarians, "Panic in Needle Park"

Conflict provides energy and direction to a story — it provides the characters with someone to fight. Conflict propels the story by involving and motivating the characters on an emotional level. If you give them someone to hate they'll be far more interested in what's going on. Though the characters might not start as the primary participants in the conflict, they will quickly become involved by being enveloped in the struggle. Simply make it impossible for them to remain neutral.

• **Traditions vs. Technocracy** — The primary conflict in **Mage** is the struggle between conflicting utopias. The Technomancers are the primary villains for mages on Earth, as they grip reality ever more tightly and completely reject the quest for individual spiritual Ascension. Conflict with them can arise in so many different ways that only brief mention can be made of the most important. Fundamentally, this conflict is expressed by the Pogrom, the systematic destruction of the cabals, Chantries, and Nodes of the Traditions by the Technomancers. They desire total dominance over earth's reality, and seek to eliminate all disruptions and interruptions in their control – in short, to eliminate the chaos they believe is created by the activities of the Traditions and Marauders. Each and every time the characters do anything to disrupt this control they risk punishment and death. They can never drop their guard, and must conceal their activities carefully. The Technocracy is not an institution to be trifled with.

• **Traditions vs. Nephandi** — The Nephandi utopia is one of complete destruction. They work constantly to destroy or corrupt the mages of the Traditions, both on Earth and in

the Umbra. Toward this end, they employ both direct attacks and subtle temptations: many legends of mortal deals with the devil started when hapless mages signed contracts with the Nephandi.

The allies of the Nephandi are no less formidable. Any cabal that challenges them may soon find themselves faced with ghastly servant-spirits, fomori, the warped and twisted tribe of Garou called the Black Spiral Dancers, and even demons straight from the abyss. For more ideas, see the **Book of the Wyrm** (a **Werewolf** supplement by White Wolf).

• **Traditions vs. Marauders** — The Marauders want a return to the mythic age — right here, right now, with a vengeance. While the transition from the last mythic age to the current technological one has been fast, it has also been gradual. The Marauders are trying to jump-start the return of widespread dynamic magick, and the immediate consequences can be disastrous. Though a few mages of the Traditions approve of the Marauders' milder efforts, most meetings between the two factions are violent.

• **Tradition vs. Tradition** — Though the mages of the Traditions all hate the Technocracy, by no means do they like one another. Most modern cabals are made up of mixed groups, but this was not always the case. Many of the older mages still carry heavy burdens of resentment, hatred and envy for members of other Traditions. Often, general resentment becomes focused upon one Tradition or another. Mages of a single Tradition are then blamed for a calamity, ostracized and, in some cases, even hunted down. The fear and resentment created by these occurrences only serve to increase the level of distrust.

• **Cabal vs. Cabal** — Neither are the various cabals completely at peace with one another. Though generally in alliance with one another against the Technocracy, sometimes conflict and even open warfare can break out between them. All too often, the carefully laid plans of a cabal interfere with those of another cabal. Magickal resources like free Quintessence are found only in limited amounts, and thus become sources of conflict among the cabals. Suspicions of treason, disagreements over shared nodes, or rivalry over access to a Chantry can all foster intercabal conflict.

• **Mage vs. Mage** — Mages tend to possess excessively large egos, and as a result get involved in interpersonal rivalries. Antagonism between mages is very common, and most gossip among those of the Traditions usually revolves around who has done what to whom and why. Sometimes these conflicts break out into open war, and matters of pride and passion are resolved on the streets. The nature of these conflicts can range from a disagreement over metaphysics to disputes over ownership of magickal tomes.

You can either involve the characters in the personality conflicts of other mages, or even better, create some rivals for them to hate.

• **Mage vs. Umbrood** — The spiritual entities that populate the Umbra and the Realms are in no way bound by the same moral codes as humanity. These entities often

become involved in the lives of mortals, especially individuals who have strong Avatars. Preceptors, Lords, Incarna, and even Celestines are not above making elaborate plans to trap mages into service.

Moreover, mages can bring destruction down on themselves. Magickal experiments occasionally "rend" reality, allowing all manner of strange entities to manifest on Earth. In such cases it is the responsibility of the mages to pursue the creatures they have allowed to enter, and remove them from reality.

• **Mage vs. Vampires** — Vampires pride themselves on their dominance over mortal society and influence over the machinery of the modern world. They believe themselves rulers of the warrens of steel and glass that dot the planet, and dislike having their assumptions broken. For the most part, mages are able to influence world culture through highly subtle manipulation, but sometimes more direct interference is required — it is then that conflict with the undead often occurs.

• **Mage vs. Werewolves** — The Garou distrust all mages because of the activities of the Technomancers and Nephandi. The werewolves see the "wizardlings" as despoilers of their magickal caerns (werewolf mystic sites that can be harvested for Quintessence), servants of the Wyrm (their word for the darkness behind the Nephandi) and as the harbingers of the planet's environmental rape. They tend to shoot first and ask questions later when it comes to mages. Though many Dreamspeakers are on good terms with Garou, werewolves see all other Traditions as enemies.

• **Mage vs. Supernatural** — Depending on what other supernatural elements you choose to include in your chronicle, other forces may also oppose the characters. Awakened creatures that have been or will be developed in other White Wolf products include the faerie folk of Arcadia, mummies, ghosts, and the animated dead.

• **Mage vs. Paradox** — Those who continually warp the laws of reality inevitably build up a reservoir of Paradox energy within themselves. Increasingly this makes the mage a lightning rod for the terrible forces of Paradox. While the resulting conflicts are often resolved with horrifying swiftness, such is not always the case. The character (and companions) may instead become prisoners of Paradox. Freeing oneself from these reality traps requires uncommon problem-solving abilities.

• **Mage vs. Sleepers** — Unenlightened mortals, or so-called Sleepers, rarely pose a significant danger to experienced mages. Mages have realized, however, that conflicts with the masses can be devastating interruptions to the mages' own goals. At the very least they can take a mage away from his studies, so one conflict can ruin a whole month of study.

Such conflicts might involve a reporter investigating the true nature of the characters' cabal, or organized crime abducting one of the characters' relatives (and coercing that mage into service if they realize what the mage is). Perhaps an unenlightened cult decides it wants to learn the secrets of magick, and if it can't learn them, no one can. There is also much drama in the efforts of a mage trying to get her spouse, children, parents, friends, etc. to accept her new course in life without asking too many questions.

• **Mage vs. Self** — This type of conflict is best reserved for experienced storytelling groups, as it involves more intense roleplaying and more careful planning. This is an internal conflict, one that is fought within the psyche of the character. It is often a schism between the character's rational and emotional sides. Perhaps the character has been unable to mourn the loss of a loved one, but for Ascension to be achieved the issue must be faced. A classic story of internal conflict is **A Christmas Carol,** wherein the character of Scrooge is transformed from miserly to generous.

• **Sanity vs. Madness** — Mages often delve too deeply and intensely into the secrets of reality, and subsequently enter into a state of Quiet (see Chapter Eight). A journey by the entire cabal into the lunatic world of the character's imagination in order to slay the psychic manifestation of the mental illness may be the only way to free the character. Nearly any horrific entity may be met within the nightmare world of insanity. The horror is only increased when the mages begin to realize just how real this world of imagination can become. Who knows what lurks behind the thin veil of sanity?

• **Mage vs. the Unknown** — The characters do not realize who their enemy is, or who seeks their demise. This makes it all the more terrifying.

Advanced Techniques

Below are a number of techniques you can use to create special effects in your stories. You need experienced storytellers, who are as focused on high-quality storytelling as they are good at it, even to consider using any of these techniques. As the Storyteller, you should have some experience under your belt before you try any of the following. These techniques are extremely difficult to play properly and they must be carefully planned and executed with grace and finesse to work effectively. If you employ them correctly, however, you will create a story your players will never forget.

Dream Sequence

A dream sequence may seem clichéd to you because of its extensive use throughout modern film. Used properly in a storytelling game, however, it becomes a powerful tool. The technique, as its name implies, is simply a dream that is either shared by all the characters or is specific to one of them. In the dream, the characters are either themselves or caricatures of themselves. Even if the dream is that of only one character, the other players may still participate in the dream by assuming the roles of the other people, creatures, or settings in the dream.

The dream need not even be that of a character. A person completely unknown to the characters may simply have a vision that somehow relates to the characters and thus must be included in the story. The players need never know whose dream they entered, but the story of the dream should always be important to their characters.

While playing out the dream sequence, you must determine how much of the dream story the players are free to act out and determine on their own. This spectrum of Storyteller control over the dream sequence ranges from a minute description of the dream, to throwing the characters into a dream and describing what appears while giving players control to do as they will. Storyteller-controlled dreams are good for foreshadowing upcoming events, or for establishing symbolism within the story. Player-active dream sequences are ideally used when spirits or other mages are communicating with the characters through their dreams, or to foreshadow a crucial decision the characters will have to face at some point in the coming story. For example, in a dream sequence, a character must ultimately choose between saving a child or saving himself. Later in the "real" story, the same events that led to the character's dream decision begin to unfold, forcing the character to make the same decision that he made in the dream.

Remember that when storytelling a dream sequence, the action and settings should be dreamlike. Characters disappear and reappear from the dream, events happen with no logical order or flow, settings change instantly, and the dreamer feels extreme emotions that do not necessarily correspond to what is happening in the dream.

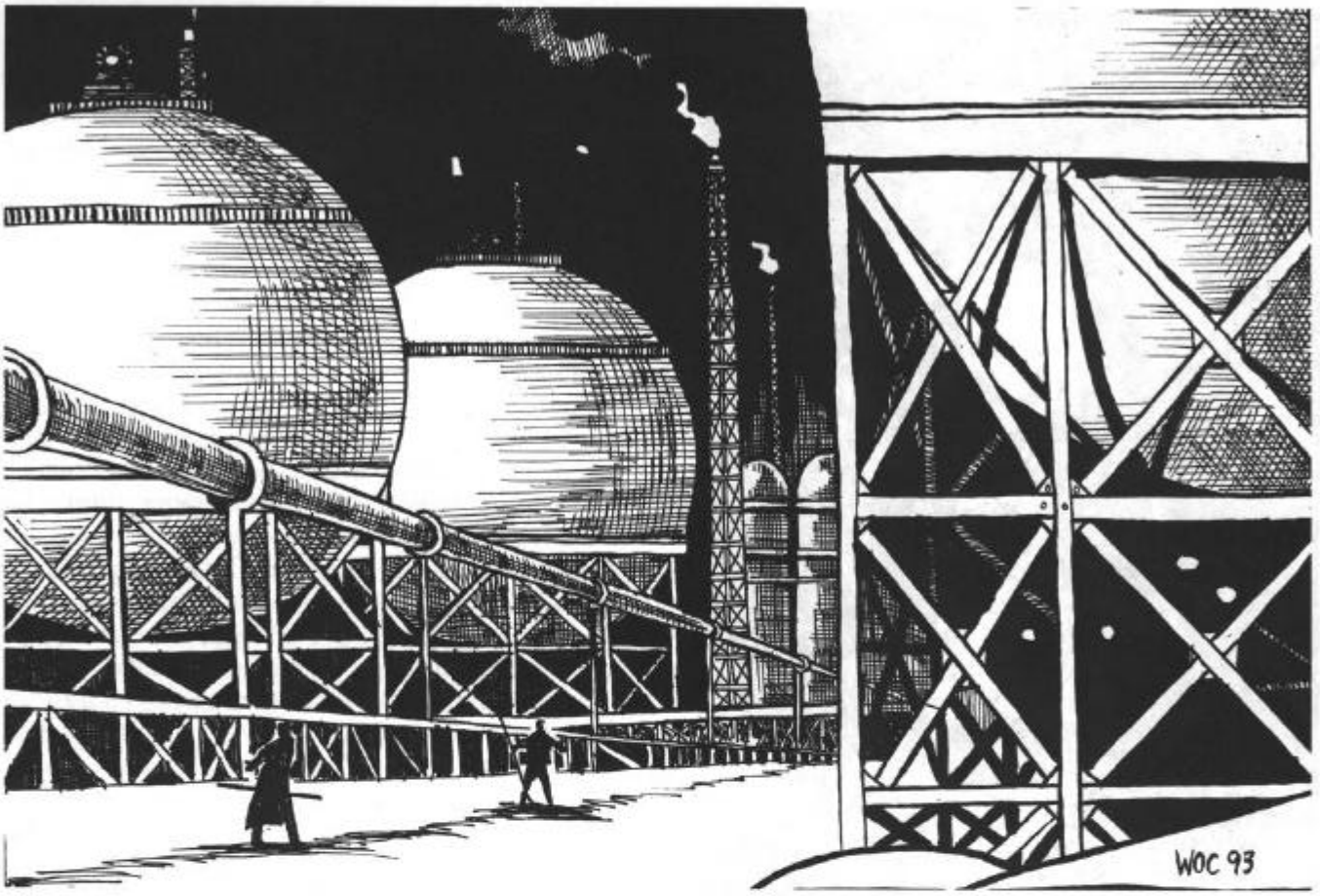
The setting of **Mage** includes many elements of dream that can used to make a dream sequence a direct part of the story, rather than an illuminating aside to it. The Chimerae Dream Realms in the Umbra are all based on dreaming, and the lords of those Realms enjoy capturing mages.

Flashback

While a dream is concerned with how an aspect of the present relates to the current story, a flashback is concerned with how an aspect of the past relates to the present. Again, the characters used to tell the flashback need not be the characters themselves, but should be people with an immediate relation to the "real" story.

The flashback technique can be used to explain the history of some element of the story. Because a flashback is past action, the events of the flashback, or at least its outcome, should be pretty well dictated by the Storyteller, even if the flashback involves the players' characters. Even though they are not in control, players will often enjoy flashbacks that give them a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes incidents that spawned the events they are currently tackling.

There are other, more dramatic uses of flashbacks, but these should be used less often. For example, a flashback to a certain player character's past can be used to introduce a Storyteller character from the player character's childhood. Perhaps the character had an imaginary friend when he was a young child, and now that "imaginary" friend is visiting the adult character. The visiting friend turns out to be a spirit in disguise. The spirit needs the character's help and took the guise of the imaginary friend from the character's subconscious, mistakenly thinking it could more easily befriend the character in such a guise.



A Storyteller can also use flashbacks to involve the characters in a dilemma not of their own making. This is a bit of an abuse of power, because the Storyteller is forcing the players into trouble. If this technique is used judiciously, however, the players will forgive the temporary "power of attorney" taken over their characters.

Parallel Stories

The last and perhaps the most interesting chronicle technique is the parallel story. The parallel story technique, as its name implies, involves running two (or even more) distinct story threads through the same chronicle. The parallel stories most likely involve completely different characters (so that a single player takes the role of a different character depending upon which story is being played), may involve dissimilar settings, and different, yet possibly connected plots. Only the chronicle's theme need remain constant in each story.

No set rules govern the use of parallel stories, but they are commonly used to provide the players with two different perspectives about the events of the chronicle. Usually, one of the parallel storylines may only last one or two stories, and is actually subsidiary to the main story thread involving the players' mage characters. During long chronicles, these subsidiary stories are excellent tools for letting the players "take a break" from playing the roles of their usual characters, by playing a completely different role — a normal human, a spirit, a faerie or virtually anything else. When the players return to the roles of their mage characters, they will have a fresh outlook on the role.

Depending upon what the Storyteller wants to accomplish through use of the parallel story, she may wish to create the characters for the subsidiary story herself and hand them out to the players. For example, the main chronicle involves the players' mage characters accidentally loosing some renegade spirits into physical reality while trying to cajole the spirits' aid. The Storyteller then designs a few normal human characters, such as police detectives and mystic experts used by the city police. These she hands out to the players at the next gaming session. Using these new characters, the players go through a parallel story involving the investigation of a series of crimes perpetrated by the renegade spirits. The next story in the main chronicle may involve the mage characters hearing of the crimes, locating the spirits, and destroying them. However, through the parallel story, the players have seen the atrocities committed by the spirits, and have hopefully gained a new perspective upon the responsibility that goes with the use of power.

Preparation Style

Now that you have a concept and a few ideas about how to tell the story, you need to prepare for play. Many freeform Storytellers simply start with a core concept of a story, and rely on the dynamics of the storytelling game session with the players to generate the details spontaneously. This method

requires very little preparation, relies heavily on the players to initiate elements of the story, and requires a lot of on-the-spot creative work by the Storyteller as the game session progresses.

The majority of Storytellers, experienced or not, do more up-front story preparation by working out a more detailed outline of the plot. This doesn't mean you should create an inflexible agenda that the players must strictly follow to complete the story. Remember that the fun of a storytelling game is in its openness and in the ability of the players to affect the outcome of the story. Locking them into a preplanned ending defeats the purpose of play. Often the players will find some path of getting to the conclusion of the story, but don't be upset if your carefully prepared plot gets blown during the first scene of the story. In fact, if your stories tend to run exactly as planned, you should step back and examine your method of storytelling. Perhaps you are directing the players too much and stripping them of their free will.

The best preparation is usually to prepare the settings and characters that the players' characters will most likely visit and encounter. Inevitably, you will have to make up some characters and settings on the spot, such as police, taxi drivers, diners, alleyways, etc., but these minor settings and characters are relatively easy to create as needed.

Working with the Players

A crowd is easier to control than an individual. A crowd has a common purpose. The purpose of the individual is always in question.

— Orlac, *Kafka*

Always keep the players in mind during a game session. Dealing with the players can sometimes be difficult, but your goal should be to integrate them as smoothly as possible into the flow of the story. This requires involving everyone in every aspect of the story as much as you can. This means thinking ahead and creating a story outline to make sure the characters and cabal interact well in play.

Such up-front work is relatively easy. Think through your story's plot outline, looking for scenes where all the players will not be able to participate. For example, a story during which one player's character is kidnapped, and the others must rescue him, may sound like a good idea, but when the story is actually played out, you will have to alternate between dealing with the one kidnapped character and the rescuers. Each group will tend to become bored while you deal with the other. You can sometimes utilize advanced storytelling techniques to solve such problems (for example, allowing the other players to take the roles of the kidnappers while dealing with that story thread, and letting the kidnapped character take the role of a police detective while dealing with the searching characters), but you will want to identify and solve such problems before game play.

It is also a good idea to discuss chronicle and story ideas with players. Many experienced storytelling groups never stop to discuss why they like storytelling games, and what each player enjoys the most about playing. Players can have very diverse motivations: to gain a feeling of power through playing the role of an extraordinary character, to become someone else during play, to gain a sense of accomplishment, to solve problems, to experience strong emotions, to compete, or just to be with friends. Beyond that, some players enjoy stories that stress dialogue and character interactions; others prefer problem-solving, convoluted plots, suspense, fantastic settings or any number of other story elements. Many players enjoy two, or three, or all of the above elements, or play for some other reason entirely. You should understand what the players really enjoy before you design a chronicle and its stories.

It is often difficult to balance the desires of all the players, for even within a single group a diverse variety of story elements are prized. However, it is usually a simple matter to give each player a little bit of what she enjoys most. If someone is neglected because of the events of the story on that particular evening, try to base your next story's events and situations around the goals of that player.

It is important to have a handle on the group dynamics of your players. Most storytelling groups contain players who try to dominate play and direct all of the attention toward themselves. You should not reward this sort of behavior. Try to involve everyone, especially the new or quiet players. If you don't involve them, then they will not have as much fun as they could, and remember that entertaining everyone is your primary goal. If a player becomes so vocal that his participation is hindering others, simply direct the action away from him to a quieter player by asking what the quieter player's character is currently doing, or by having one of the Storyteller characters interact with that player's character.

After a Story

After the game session in which your group concludes a story and sorts out all of the game details (such as the permanent benefits or scars inflicted by the events of the story) you should consider the impact of the story's conclusion upon the larger chronicle. Because stories often end in an unexpected manner, it is important for you to determine how to reroute the chronicle into the plotline you desire or re-plot the chronicle based upon the new developments. Remember that you are weaving a great novel, and no author knows for certain what every detail of his finished novel will be before he begins writing it. Also, writers don't have to compensate for player decisions.

The other important thing to do before you begin designing the next story in the chronicle is to make notes of any new settings or characters that were introduced into the chronicle. Large chronicles can spawn casts of hundreds of minor and major Storyteller characters and scores of important settings. To keep your sanity, it's best to find a way to keep track of everything as it develops in the chronicle. Notecards (one

3"x5" for each setting or character) work well because more information can be added to them later and they're easy to file, but most of us can only aspire to be so organized.

Ending a Chronicle

As important as anything else about a good chronicle is the conclusion. No matter how long and wondrous a chronicle is, true satisfaction from the chain of interconnected stories comes at its climax. The climactic story for a long chronicle should be treated as an extra-special gaming session, scheduled for a time when all players can attend and set in a room with the proper atmosphere.

After the climax to the chronicle, it often helps to wind down the action with a bit more storytelling in the same setting, as characters say any necessary good-byes or return things to a normal state after vanquishing a villain. Once this is done, your gaming group should begin discussing the prospects of the next chronicle.

Many times, the Storyteller and players will wish to continue using the same characters and setting that have been created during the past chronicle, forging these elements into *a brand new chronicle. Players can become attached* and accustomed to their characters, and it is satisfying to experience the growth and development of a single character through several chronicles.

However, the storytelling group should remain open to other possibilities. Some players may want to try a fresh perspective and create new characters, while others in the group keep their established characters. Also, perhaps one of the players would like to switch roles with the Storyteller, so that she may design and run the next chronicle. The storytelling group may also wish to consider integrating the new **Mage** chronicle with elements from one of White Wolf's other Storytelling games, such as **Vampire: The Masquerade** or **Werewolf: The Apocalypse.**

BOOK TWO

She knows that the old man is wrong. The only reward in the poison is death...but still she accepts it. It burns her throat. Numbs her limbs. She falls.

She stops… far too soon.

Amanda on a wall… hanging, falling… on ropes. A noose for every limb, for neck, for waist — puppet on strings, on threads… High above, naked, gleaming, skeletal hands twitch, play among the ropes… dancing strings, dancing Amanda.

She clears her head and grabs the cords, pulls herself up, climbs to the crosspiece. Now the hands have an attached body, a figure lost in the shadows of this place, large as night.

Good girl. Keep moving.

The hands stop; the giant stoops to peer at its plaything — hollow red eye-chasms in Sanders' face. As she stares, the face wastes to bone, melts to a leaden skull, waxes again to her own in polished chrome, her own chill smile as the hands reach out…

This may be the end… and I cannot help her.

She falls again in a shower of blood, lands broken in her harness. The puppeteer begins again and Amanda dances hopelessly. Time passes, perhaps. In exhaustion she sees things she can't remember. The wall is the floor. Planks too pale for wood line the darkness. The crimson splashes change color, dancing with her. Lights flicker between pupil and lid. She closes her eyes in futile defense, but even blind her vision clouds… then fog becomes flames and flames become words

if you give up now we stay here

and words come from fire and mist that stand before her: a girl.

Her Avatar is awake: she will live.

She burns off the ropes with her wings, wipes the blood away with her dress… but the hands won't come clean. Amanda laughs bitterly from a dry throat.

"No angel would be coming for me."

The girl smiles and takes the bloody hands, stains her own, helps the assassin to her feet.

No. But now you don't need one.

And Amanda knows the old man is right.

THANATOS

Chapter Four: Rules

Rebels learn the rules better than the rule-makers do. Rebels learn where the holes are, where the rules can best be breached. Become an expert at the rules. Then break them with creativity and style.

— Kristine Kathryn Rusch, *The Rules*

The Basics

All games have rules. Some have only a few and are fairly simple, such as Chutes and Ladders, while others have many and are extremely complicated, like bridge. **Mage** has something in common with both types — it has only a few simple rules, but these few rules have a large number of permutations. You need only learn the basic rules, but their permutations evoke the flavor of the game, allowing it to reflect the true complexity of real life. This chapter provides the basic rules of **Mage**; the number of permutations is for you to decide.

Rules are like the myths that shape and describe a culture. They define what is important and delineate the possibilities of existence. Though these rules may seem somewhat strange and exotic, they really aren't all that complicated. Once you understand them, you'll understand how to play this game. Just concentrate on learning these basics and everything else will come naturally.

Time

The mountains are themselves mortal. How much more so mere flesh and blood?

— John Ostrander, "The Spectre" (Feb. 1993)

The first thing you need to learn is how time passes in **Mage**. There are five different ways to describe time, progressing from the smallest unit to the all-encompassing one.

• **Turn** — One unit of time within a scene, anywhere from three seconds to three minutes in length. A turn is enough time to take one action (discussed below).

• **Scene** — One compact period of action and roleplaying that takes place in a single location. A scene is made up of a variable number of turns (as many as it takes to complete it);

it can also be completed strictly through roleplaying, which requires no use of turns.

•**Chapter** — One independent part of a story, almost always played in one game session. It is made up of a number of scenes connected by periods of downtime.

•**Story** — A complete tale, with an introduction, buildup and climax, that often takes several chapters to complete.

• **Chronicle** — A whole series of stories connected by the lives of the characters and perhaps a broadly conceived theme and plot. It is simply the ongoing story told by you and the players.

Actions

Besides acting out their characters' speeches and conversations, players will want their characters to attempt to perform actions they have described to the Storyteller. An action can be anything from jumping over a gorge to glancing back to see if anyone is following. The player tells the Storyteller what her character is doing and details the procedure she uses.

Many actions are automatic, such as when a player tells the Storyteller that her character walks across the street toward the warehouse, for instance. All the Storyteller needs to do is keep track of where the character is and what she is doing. However, certain actions require a dice roll to determine success or failure.

Rolling Dice

There is always chance in life. There's a chance you'll win the lottery, a chance you'll be audited, and a chance you'll die in a plane crash. Chance plays a role in **Mage** as well. However, we use dice to simulate the duplicity of Lady Luck.

Mage requires the use of 10-sided dice, which you can buy in any game store. If you are the Storyteller, you will want a lot of dice, at least 10, all to yourself. As a player, you'll want dice as well, but you may share dice with other players.

Whenever the success of an action is in doubt or the Storyteller thinks that there is a chance you might fail, you will have to roll dice. This gives your character an opportunity to let weaknesses and strengths exhibit themselves, thereby revealing something of the character's true nature to both you and the other players.

Ratings

A character is described by her Traits — the innate and learned abilities and aptitudes she possesses. Traits are defined by numbers; each Trait has a rating from one to five, which describes the character's ability in that particular Trait. One is lousy and five is superb. This scale of one to five is the "star" rating system made famous by movie and restaurant critics.

You should consider the normal human range to be from one to three, with two being average. However, exceptional people can have Traits of four (exceptional) or five (superb), or even have a zero in a Trait (which is extremely rare, but not unheard of).

x	Abysmal
•	Poor
••	Average
•••	Good
••••	Exceptional
•••••	Superb

For each dot your character has in a particular Trait, you get to roll one die. Thus, if you had four dots in Strength, you would get to roll four dice. If you had one dot in Perception, you would only get to roll one die. However, you almost never simply roll the number of dice you have in an Attribute, which defines your intrinsic capabilities. Usually you get to add the number of dice you have in an Attribute with the number of dice you have in an Ability — things that you know and have learned.

So if the Storyteller wants the players to roll to see if they notice the patrol car creeping up behind them, he would have them roll their Perception + Alertness — an Attribute + an Ability. They would take as many dice as they had dots in Perception and put them in their hands. Then they would take as many dice as they had dots in Alertness, and put those in their hands also.

These dice are called the Dice Pool, which is a description of the total number of dice a player may roll in a single turn — usually for a single action, though a player can divide her Dice Pool in order to allow her character to perform more than one action. A player almost always rolls a number of dice equal to a Trait's permanent rating (the circles), not its current score (the squares).

Many actions don't require or even have an appropriate Ability. An example of this is when a player wants to break down a door. In such cases, the player uses only an Attribute, rolling the number of dice listed for that Attribute — in this case, Strength.

There is absolutely no situation where more than two Traits can combine to form a Dice Pool. Only one Trait can be used if it has a potential value of 10 (such as Willpower). This means that a Trait like Willpower can never be combined with another Trait. It is generally impossible for a normal human being to have more than 10 dice in a Dice Pool.

Finally, a character's ratings in her Spheres are never rolled. Magick is used with other rolls; these rolls are described in Chapter Seven.

Difficulties

You used to think it was so easy,
you used to say that it was so easy,
but you're tryin', you're tryin' now.
— Gerry Rafferty, *Baker Street*

Now you've got to figure out what you need to look for when you roll the dice. The Storyteller will give you a difficulty rating, which is the number that you need to obtain in order to succeed in whatever you are attempting. A difficulty is always a number between two and 10. You need to roll that number or higher on at least one of the dice in your Pool in order to succeed. Each time you do so, it's called a success. If the difficulty is a six and you roll a 2, 3, 5, 6 and 9, you have scored two successes. Though you usually need only one success to succeed, the more successes you score, the better you perform. Scoring only one success is considered a marginal success, while scoring three is considered a complete success, and scoring five is a momentous event.

Difficulties

Three	Easy
Four	Routine
Five	Straightforward
Six	Standard
Seven	Challenging
Eight	Difficult
Nine	Extremely Difficult

Degrees of Success

One Success	Marginal
Two Successes	Moderate
Three Successes	Complete
Four Successes	Exceptional
Five Successes	Phenomenal

You can see that if the difficulty is lower, it becomes easier to score a success, and if it is higher, it becomes more difficult. The Storyteller will assign high difficulties whenever the action you have decided to take is difficult, and will either let you do something automatically (because your Attributes and Abilities are so high) or give you a low difficulty if it is particularly easy.

Though they are not on the list above, you, as the Storyteller, can also assign difficulties of two or 10. However, these should almost never be used. Difficulty two is so pathetically easy that you might as well let the player succeed without wasting time on a roll. Difficulty 10 is so difficult that there is an equal chance to botch (described below) as there is to succeed, no matter how many dice the player is rolling. A 10 is pretty near impossible. On the rare occasions when you do announce a difficulty of 10, be sure you realize how impossible you are making the chance of success. If a player ever rolls a 10, the result is automatically a success, no matter what.

Unless the Storyteller says otherwise, the difficulty for a particular task is always a six. This is the standard difficulty, and a six is assumed if a difficulty number is otherwise unstated.

The Rule of One

There is one last thing about rolling dice, and that is the "rule of one." Whenever you roll a "one," it cancels out a success. It completely takes it away. You remove both the "success" die and the "one" die and pay them no more heed. If you roll more "ones" than you do successes, a disaster occurs; something called a "botch" takes place. Don't count the "ones" that canceled out successes, but if even a single "one" is left after all the successes have been canceled, a botch occurs. Getting a single "one" or five "ones" has about the same result in most cases; the circumstances surrounding the botch determine if it is catastrophic or a minor mishap. If there aren't any "ones" or successes left, you've simply failed.

Automatic Successes

You don't want to be rolling dice all the time, for it can get in the way of the roleplaying. **Mage** employs a very simple system for automatic successes so players do not have to make rolls for actions characters could perform in their sleep.

It works like this: if the number of dice you have in your Dice Pool is equal to or greater than the difficulty, you succeed automatically. Such a success is considered marginal (the equivalent of only getting one success), so sometimes a player will want to roll anyway in an attempt to gain even more successes. But for very simple and often-repeated actions, automatic successes can eliminate a lot of wasted time.

The automatic success rules can be used to eliminate dice rolling completely, something you will want to do during Live-Action roleplaying. In such situations, automatic successes aren't a matter of choice. Either you are good enough to succeed or you are not. It is simple, but so was Cops 'n' Robbers and we liked it just fine. The story was what was important and the rules didn't matter.

This simple system even has a twist, making it not quite so black and white. A Willpower point (see the Traits chapter) can be used to earn an automatic success. You won't want to do this often, but for certain actions it can be very advantageous to do so. Of course, the Willpower only counts for one success if multiple successes are required.

When we play, we usually use a combination of dice rolling and automatic successes. During most scenes — especially when we're deeply involved in the story — we don't even roll dice, preferring to roleplay through scenes without interruptions. However, when we get in the mood for *playing-a-game*, rather then *telling-a-story*, we make lots of dice rolls and add many complications to the rules.

Complications

You may have already realized that it is quite easy to score a single success, even when you roll only one or two dice. You have a 75% chance for a marginal success when you roll only two dice and the difficulty is a six. While that may sound too easy, there are various ways to complicate matters, some of which are discussed below. For troupes heavily into roleplaying, simple rolls and automatic successes are enough. Generally, you will use a complication if the players or you want a break from the roleplaying, if you want a realistic result or if you want to make a game out of the scene. Complications add drama to the story, and create a depth of passion and focus.

Extended Actions

In order to succeed fully, you will sometimes need more than one success — you will need to accumulate three, or seven, or even 20 successes (on rare occasions). An action that only requires one success is called a simple action. An action that requires more than one success is called an extended action. Extended actions are not uncommon, but simple actions are the ones most frequently made.

An extended action allows you to roll over and over on subsequent turns in an attempt to collect enough successes to succeed. For instance, your character is climbing a tree and the Storyteller announces that when you roll a total of seven successes, your character has climbed to the top. She'll get there eventually, but of course the more times you roll, the more chances your character has to botch and injure herself. If she is attempting to climb down the tree because it is on fire, the amount of time it takes becomes exceedingly important.

During an extended action, you can keep trying to obtain successes for as long as you want, or at least until you fail to score even one success. If you botch, your character may have to start over from scratch, with no accumulated successes. The Storyteller may decide not to let the character try again at all.

This type of action is more complicated than a simple action and should not often be employed in the middle of intense roleplaying. As the Storyteller, you decide what type of action is called for. A little bit of experience will serve you well when employing these rules.

Resisted Actions

Sometimes you will act in opposition to another character. Both of you will make rolls, with a difficulty often indicated by a Trait of the other character, and the person who scores the most successes succeeds. However, you are considered to score only as many successes as the amount by which you exceed your opponent's successes. The opponent's successes eliminate your own, just as "ones" do. Therefore, it is very difficult, and rare, to achieve an outstanding success on a resisted action. Even if your opponent cannot beat you, she can diminish the effect of your efforts. On actions that are both extended and resisted, one of the opponents must collect a certain number of success in order to succeed completely. Each

success above the opponent's total number of successes in a single turn is added to a success total. The first opponent to collect the designated number of successes wins the contest.

Teamwork

Sometimes characters can work together to collect successes, most often during an extended action. At the discretion of the Storyteller, two or more characters can make rolls separately and combine their successes. They may never combine their separate Traits for one roll, though. Teamwork is effective in some circumstances, such as in combat, shadowing prey, collecting information and repairing devices. During others, it can actually be a hindrance, such as in many social actions (where it can confuse the subject).

The chart below may serve to dispel your confusion regarding some of the different types of rolls that can be made.

Action	Example	Description
Simple	Firearms, Alertness	Task is completed with one roll. The Storyteller announces the difficulty and the players roll their dice. Automatic success is possible.
Extended	Running, Research, Track	Task is completed when a given number of successes are obtained, which may require more than one roll (thus providing more chances to botch).
Resisted	Shadowing	A contest of skill between two individuals. They compare their number of successes and the one with the highest number succeeds.
Extended & Resisted	Arm Wrestling	Two individuals compete as in the resisted action, but before one can claim success he must accumulate a certain number of successes.

Trying It Again

It can often be frustrating to fail in what you attempt. If you are having trouble with your computer and can't figure out the source of the system error, then you're in for an angst-ridden time. This frustration is reflected in **Mage** by increasing the difficulty of any action if it is tried again after it's already been failed.

Whenever a character attempts an action she previously failed, the Storyteller has the option of increasing the difficulty of the action by one. Consider a character who tries to

intimidate someone. If the first attempt failed, then it's going be harder the second time around, so the difficulty is one greater. If tried a third time, then the difficulty is two greater. In cases like this, though, the Storyteller might simply rule that the character cannot even make another try — how do you intimidate someone who has already called your bluff? That's an option the Storyteller always has. Other examples of when to use the rule are: picking a lock (Streetwise), scaling a wall (Athletics), and remembering a word in a foreign language (Linguistics).

Sometimes the Storyteller shouldn't invoke this rule. A notable example is during combat. Just missing someone with a first gunshot doesn't necessarily mean that the gunman is frustrated and has a better chance of missing again. But after the gunman has missed a couple of times, especially if they are easy, close-range shots...

Other examples of when not to use the rule are: seeing something out of the corner of the eye (Alertness) and dodging an attack (Dodge).

Try It Out

Well, that's it. These are the rules. This system for dice is all you really need to know in order to play this game. All the other rules are just clarifications and exceptions. As long as you understand what's been discussed here, you won't have any difficulty understanding anything else. If you don't think you've caught everything, just read the above again and you'll find it will make more sense the second time around.

Now go ahead and make a few rolls, using the example character from the other page. Reynold is scanning the room in an attempt to detect a malevolent Minion that he thinks has entered the world of humanity from the Umbra. The Storyteller decides the action has a difficulty of seven. Take five dice because of Reynold's Perception of five, and three dice because of his Awareness rating of three. You should now have eight dice in your hand — that's a lot. You don't have much chance of failing (you could even decide to accept an automatic success, as the number of dice you have exceeds the difficulty), but go ahead and roll; you never know. Look to see how many successes you have, making sure to take away a success for every "one" you roll. Did you make it or did you botch? The more successes you score, the better and faster Reynold sees the Minion. Only one success might mean that, while Reynold can sense that the Minion is nearby, he can't really get a fix on it. Several successes could indicate that Reynold sees it clearly and can even identify it.

Next, try out an extended and resisted action. An example of this is an arm wrestling match. It requires an indefinite series of rolls, each using a different Trait and requiring different difficulties. You need to accumulate five successes more than your opponent in order to win. A botch eliminates all of your accumulated successes.

• First roll: Each player rolls Strength; the difficulty is the opponent's Dexterity + 3 (speed is important at first).

The Golden Rule

Don't know why you should feel
That's there's something to learn
It's just a game that you play.
— Al Stewart, "Time Passages"

Remember that in the end there is only one real rule in **Mage**: there are no rules. You are playing a mage, so just as the rules of a game are the myths that describe a culture, you must willing to move beyond that culture to describe your own. You should fashion this game into whatever you need it to be — if the rules get in your way, then ignore or change them. In the end, the true complexity and beauty of the real world cannot be captured by rules; it takes storytelling and imagination to do that. Indeed, these rules are not so much rules as they are guidelines, and you are free to use, abuse, ignore and change them as you wish.

• Second and third rolls: Each player rolls Strength; the difficulty is the opponent's Strength + 3.

• Fourth roll (and all subsequent ones): Each player rolls Strength; the difficulty is the opponent's Willpower.

Examples of Rolls

Following are some examples of rolls, to provide you with some ideas on how to incorporate these rules into your roleplaying. Please note that each Attribute can work with each Ability, so there are 270 potential types of simple rolls that can be made. Admittedly, you will not often roll Stamina + Computer, but it might come up.

• You are trying to concentrate on reading a passage in a book but there is a lot of noise and commotion in the hall outside. Roll Perception + Meditation (difficulty 7). You need to collect 10 successes to complete the selection.

• You threaten the young man by trying to lift him up by his collar. Roll Strength + Intimidation (difficulty 8).

• An opponent of yours is winning political support from others in the Tradition because his carefully chosen words are making your ideas look foolish. Roll Manipulation + Etiquette (difficulty 8) to minimize the damage to your reputation.

• You want to break down the metal door that was just slammed in your face. You need to roll Strength (difficulty 8). You must accumulate six successes in order to break it open enough to slip through.

• You find the remains of a very humanlike village in a far-off dimension. Roll Intelligence + Culture (difficulty 9) to ascertain what these people were like.

• You've had a hard time finding the information you need at a public or university library. Roll Intelligence + Research (difficulty 6) to figure out where to turn next.

• You try to slip out of your handcuffs. Roll Dexterity + Streetwise (difficulty 10).

• The person to whom you're talking might be a vampire. You need three dots in Awareness even to have a chance to know; if you do, roll Perception + Awareness (difficulty 7) to find out.

• After being questioned for hours, roll Stamina + Expression to see if you can successfully maintain your story (difficulty 8). Five successes completely convinces your interrogators.

• The rabble of people before you is hostile, but also friendless and in trouble. Roll Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 8) to see if you can find a way to lead them from peril. You need to collect at least five successes before they'll truly trust you.

• How long can you remain motionless in the bushes as the two guards chat for hours on end? Roll Stamina + Stealth (difficulty 7).

• There's something strange about the way the two old men are playing cards. Roll Perception + Enigmas (difficulty 9) to see if your character can fathom the odd pattern formed by the cards.

• Yelling and screaming at the taxi driver, you try to get him to drive even faster. Roll Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 6).

• How flawlessly do you conduct yourself at the formal dinner? Roll Dexterity + Etiquette (difficulty 8).

• By showing off your moves, you try to convince your opponent to back off. Roll Manipulation + Brawl (difficulty 6). Three successes will cause him to pause a turn, but you can try this action only once...

• You attempt to convince the clerk of the court that you really are the EPA inspector, and that you need to see the court records. Roll Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 8).

• You try to analyze what's wrong with the car engine from the strange sounds it is making. Roll Perception + Technology (difficulty 6).

• You need a few dollars quickly. Which horse will win the fourth race at the track? Roll Perception + Intuition (difficulty 6).

• What language is she speaking? Roll Intelligence + Linguistics to ascertain (difficulty 6).

• Why are the ravens crying so loudly? Roll Intelligence + Awareness (difficulty 9).

• Suddenly, a man pushes a crate out of the van you have been chasing—roll Wits + Drive to see if you can avoid hitting it (difficulty 6).

Game Terms

Ability: A Trait that describes what a character knows and has learned, rather than what she is. Abilities are Traits such as Intimidation, Firearms and Cosmology.

Action: An action is the performance of a consciously willed physical, social or mental activity. When a player announces that his character is doing something, he is taking an action.

Advantages: This is a catch-all category that describes the magickal Spheres and Backgrounds of a character.

Arete: This important Trait rates how much universal truth a character understands. It applies several limits on casting magick.

Attribute: A Trait that describes a character's inherent aptitudes. Attributes are such things as Strength, Charisma and Intelligence.

Botch: A disastrous failure, indicated by rolling more "ones" than successes on the 10-sided dice rolled for an action.

Character: Each player creates a character, an individual she roleplays over the course of the chronicle. Though "character" could imply any individual, in **Mage** it is always used to describe the players' characters.

Dice Pool: This describes the dice you have in your hand after adding together your different Traits. It is the maximum number of dice you can roll in one turn, though you can divide these dice between different actions.

Difficulty: This is a number from two to 10 measuring the difficulty of an action a character takes. The player needs to roll that number or higher on at least one of the dice rolled.

Downtime: The time spent between scenes when no roleplaying is done and turns are not used. Actions might be made, and the Storyteller might give some descriptions, but generally time passes quickly.

Extended Action: An action that requires a certain number of successes for the character actually to succeed.

Health: This is a measure of the degree that a character is wounded or injured.

Paradox: One of the Traits of a mage, Paradox increases when a mage uses magick that noticeably contradicts the prevailing reality.

Points: The temporary scores of Traits such as Willpower, Quintessence and Health — the squares, not the circles.

Quintessence: The truest energy of the universe. The amount of it a mage possesses is measured by the Trait of the same name.

Rating: A number describing the permanent value of a Trait; most often a number from one to five, though sometimes a number from one to 10.

Refresh: When points are regained in a Dice Pool, it is said that they are being "refreshed." The number of points regained is the refresh rate.

Resisted Action: An action that two different characters take against each other. Both compare their number of successes and the character with the most wins.

Scene: A single episode of the story; a time when and place where actions and events take place moment by moment. A scene is often a dramatic high point of the story.

Simple Action: An action that requires the player to score only one success to succeed, though more successes indicate a better job or result.

Spheres: The nine divisions of magick that rate how many aspects of reality a mage can influence.

Storyteller: The person who creates and guides the story by assuming the roles of all characters not taken by the players and determining all events beyond the control of the players.

System: A specific set of complications used in a certain situation; rules to help guide the rolling of dice to create dramatic action.

Trait: A Trait is any Attribute, Ability, Advantage or other character index that can be described as a number (in terms of dots).

Troupe: The group of players, including the Storyteller, who play **Mage** — usually on a regular basis.

Willpower: One of the most important Traits is Willpower. It measures the self-confidence and internal control of a character. However, Willpower works differently from most Traits — it is usually used up, rather than rolled.

LLOW ONES

Chapter Five: Character

How many great problems have gone unsolved because men didn't know enough, or have enough faith in the creative process and in themselves, to let go for the whole mind to work at it?
— Daniel Keyes, *Flowers for Algernon*

Before you can begin to play **Mage**, you must create a character. However, unlike make-believe, you don't just make up a character as you go along (though the Storyteller is faced with this challenge regularly). Instead, you've got to create a character *before* you begin to play. A certain amount of work is involved — characters are built, not born. Building a compelling, yet honest, character is a creative struggle even for the most experienced among us.

This chapter describes how to create a unique character, beginning with a general concept and translating this concept into numbers that can be used in the game. It provides guidelines for the players when they create their characters. This process is very simple and players can easily figure it out for themselves. However, the Storyteller should have a good grasp of the process in order to answer the players' questions accurately and succinctly.

These numbers may not seem particularly evocative. It is hard to imagine a novelist describing a character by saying "She has a Charisma of four." However, these ratings make it simple to describe the strengths and weaknesses of a character. More importantly, these numbers allow the random factor created by dice to be employed in relation to the character's Traits. A strong character has more of a chance to break down a door than does a weak character.

Character creation usually follows a pattern from the general to the specific. First, you develop a general concept of who and what your character is — is she more socially or mentally developed? — and then get specific by selecting the ratings of your Traits — how effective are your Charisma, Manipulation and Appearance? Do not use this process to create the "best" possible character; that defeats the whole purpose of making up a really interesting individual. These numbers are intended to enhance roleplaying, not open an avenue to some mythical character Hall of Fame.

Character creation is a lot like cooking: you've got to gather the ingredients, stir and whip them together, and then let the mixture bake for a few hours. You start by deciding what kind of character you want. Are you going to be a street-hardened punk or a rich and somewhat spoiled debutante? Are you a precocious child prodigy or did the secrets of life reveal themselves somewhere in the Appalachian Mountains? The background and personality of your character are the essential ingredients of his persona. From your basic concepts, you can then start to work out the details, such as Attributes and Advantages.

Getting Started

Fall in love with a bright idea
And the way the world is revealed to you.
— Suzanne Vega, "Fatman and Dancing Girl"

You need to be aware of five concepts before you begin to create your character:

• You can create a character of nearly any age from any culture or nation; however, you begin the game as an inexperienced and unsophisticated mage who has only recently graduated from apprenticeship, be that apprenticeship a system of self-instruction via contacting spirits for information, or learning at the feet of a mentor. Your character probably knows relatively little about mage society unless she was instructed by a mentor in an established Chantry or cabal.

• This character creation process was designed as much to help you define your character as it was to provide you with a means to interact with the rules. The process of creating a character is meant to help you more accurately focus the concept of your character. Remember that a character cannot exist only as numbers; your roleplaying must shape and define an alter ego.

• This character creation system is a purchase system with absolutely no dice rolling involved. By choosing Traits from a variety of lists, you decide who your character is. You will get extra points called "freebies" at the end of the process, which you can then use to add dots to any Trait, so do not agonize over all your choices. Nonetheless, you may find that, even with freebie points, you cannot buy everything you want.

• A Trait of one is poor and a Trait of five is superb, so if you only have one dot in a Trait, you are either not very good or only a beginner. Traits are based on an average human range. Mages differ from "mundane" humans because of the extra knowledge and Backgrounds they possess.

• It is your responsibility to create a character who fits into the group. If you fail to get along with the others and disrupt the story because of it, you will have to create a new character. Life as a mage is far too difficult for animosity to exist within a cabal; sometimes survival itself depends on its members' ability to work together.

Role of the Storyteller

As the Storyteller, you must guide the players through the character generation process. After your players arrive for the first game session, you need to introduce them to the basic premise of the game and describe the rules system. Your main goal should be to make things easy for the players. If they are beginners, keep things as simple as you can; let them discover the intricacies of the system on their own.

Start by passing out the character sheets, and give the players a minute to examine them and ask questions about them. Then go through the character creation process step by step, filling in all the details of the character Traits.

It is usually advisable to spend an entire game session creating characters. This ensures that players don't feel rushed, that they take the time to make complete, flesh-and-blood characters, not paper-thin stooges. Once you have finished the practical details of character creation, you can spend the rest of the game session conducting a prelude for each character. A prelude is a form of abbreviated storytelling in which you tell the story of the character's life up to the present. Preludes will

Character Creation

- **Step One: Character Concept**
  Choose Concept, Tradition, Essence, Nature, Demeanor
- **Step Two: Select Attributes**
  Prioritize 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**
  Prioritize the three categories: Talents, Skills, Knowledges
  Choose Talents, Skills, Knowledges (13/9/5)
- **Step Four: Select Advantages**
  Choose Backgrounds (7), Spheres (5 + Tradition specialty)
- **Step Five: Finishing Touches**
  Record Arete (1), Willpower (5), Quintessence (equals Avatar rating)
  Spend "Freebie Points"

be the players' introductions to the chronicle and their characters, so make preludes memorable. The prelude is described at the end of this chapter.

Step One: Character Concept

Before you write a single thing down, you need to develop a concept for your character. This concept need only be a general idea of what your character will be like, something unique and interesting that will be enjoyable to play over the long term. This involves choosing a Tradition (the system of magick your mage practices) as well as the personality of the character, which is described by choosing her Nature and Demeanor.

The better you can interrelate these aspects of your character, the more intricate and complete she will be. Often the Demeanor of a character will be completely different from her actual Nature, and the stereotypical image of a Tradition can be contradicted to great effect by choosing Nature and Demeanor carefully.

Though short lists are given in this chapter, complete descriptions of the Traditions and the archetypes — Nature and Demeanor — can be found in Chapter Six, Traits.

Concept

The first thing you need to do is to come up with an overall concept of who your character was before he discovered that magick was real and could be pursued full-time. Even if your character always believed in magick, he couldn't live as a mage until he could work it himself. The nearby table lists the typical careers and lifestyles of the vast majority of mundane people who attain the status of mage. In most cases, your character possesses a nearly unquenchable desire to learn more about life and its secrets. This desire is characteristic of all great mages.

Concepts

- **Artist:** writer, painter, entertainer
- **Debutante:** intellectual, thrill-seeker, connoisseur
- **Explorer:** archaeologist, environmentalist, guide
- **Good Samaritan:** social worker, politician, policeman
- **Hermit:** recluse, wanderer, woodsman
- **Mystic:** Wiccan, New Ager, weirdo
- **Outsider:** aborigine, orphan, extradimensional being
- **Philosopher:** student of life, theorist, dreamer
- **Professional:** doctor, scientist, entrepreneur
- **Radical:** protester, punk, hippie
- **Scholar:** college professor, theorist, psychologist
- **Worshipper:** clergyman, theologian, missionary

You may develop a character from a concept not on the chart, but this listing should help you get started. You may also combine concepts. Just remember that this list exists simply as a tool for you to get a hold on who your character was prior to being a mage. For instance, you may decide your character was a person who wasn't satisfied with the tidiness of middle-class life. He knew that something more must exist, so roamed the country by hitchhiking and subsisting on money earned from odd jobs, until he found a school of monastic mystics. He felt at home at the school, so stayed, and he ended up learning about magick.

The Traditions also list concept suggestions, so choice of Tradition might help you develop your character concept. Choosing a Tradition is discussed below.

The Traditions

The next step, and arguably the most important element of character conception, is to choose your character's Tradition. Tradition describes the fundamental aspects of your character, like how and why he works magick. The nine Traditions from which you may choose represent the majority of Traditions available to mages in the modern world. There are other Traditions, namely of the corrupted mages who form the Technocracy. Furthermore, some people possess so much Will that they find magick without the aid of a Tradition. However, these nine paths represent the majority of effective mages.

Traditions

- **Akashic Brotherhood:** Monastic mystics who once sought enlightenment through solitude but are now returning to the world.
- **Celestial Chorus:** Spiritual men and women who hold a fervent belief in greater powers.
- **Cult of Ecstasy:** Musicians and hedonists who see magick as both a tool and an escape.
- **Dreamspeakers:** Shamans in the truest sense; they worship Gaia the Earth Mother.
- **Euthanatos:** A mysterious death cult largely misunderstood by others; they have no compunctions against using their power.
- **Hollow Ones:** Not actually a Tradition in their own right, these young mages instead base their magick on the ambience of the Gothic-Punk world itself.
- **Order of Hermes:** Hermetic mages of the Western tradition and the architects of the greatest experiment of mages.
- **Sons of Ether:** Former Technomancers who now stretch the limits of science with their mad experiments.
- **Verbena:** The primal constituents of life, especially blood, hold great power for these mages.
- **Virtual Adepts:** Still nominal members of the Technocracy, they are the masters of computer technology.

Essences

- **Dynamic:** They work throughout their lives to master a specific field or complete a certain endeavor (one that is probably unattainable).
- **Pattern:** The architects of the world; they work doggedly toward some end.
- **Primordial:** Their power comes from deep within — from the original energy of the universe.
- **Questing:** They move continuously through life seeking knowledge and purpose, but seem unable to find it.

Essence

This step is also very important, for your choice of an Essence defines much about who your character is and how she is connected to reality. Nature and Demeanor (see below) define your character in human terms, but Essence defines that aspect of your character that makes her a mage.

You may choose your character's Essence, but in the game reality, the nature of the soul, or Avatar, in the mage determines her Essence.

A mage's Essence defines her relation to the overall nature of magick, and is essential for charting her path to Ascension.

Your mage may have one of four Essences: Dynamic, Pattern, Primordial or Questing.

Personality Archetypes (Nature and Demeanor)

At this point you must choose personality archetypes that fit your conception of both the internal nature and the outward disposition of your character.

Your Nature is the most dominant aspect of your character's true personality, but not necessarily the only archetype that may apply. The archetype you choose for your character's Nature describes the character's most deep-rooted feelings and beliefs about herself and the world; it also provides the primary way through which she replenishes her Willpower Pool. Choosing a Nature helps you describe who your character really is in societal terms.

You should also choose a Demeanor to describe the personality your character pretends to possess. This is the role she plays to the world, the facade she presents to it. It should probably be different from the archetype you have already chosen as the character's Nature, but not necessarily. Whatever you choose is only the character's typical pose; people can change Demeanor as quickly as they change mood. You may change your character's Demeanor at any time, allowing her to adapt to different people and different situations. Demeanor has no practical effect on the rules.

Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Now you start assigning numbers. The first step in this process is to determine your character's basic Attributes. The Attributes are everything a character naturally, intrinsically is. How strong is she? How quick are her reflexes? How persuasive can she be? Questions such as these are answered by the character's Attributes.

First, you must prioritize the three different categories of your character's Attributes — Physical, Mental and Social. You must decide in which your character is best (primary), in which he is average (secondary), and in which category he is poor (tertiary). Is your character more physical than social — is he stronger than he is handsome?

• Physical Attributes are everything that has anything to do with physical effort. They describe how strong, nimble and sturdy your character is, and are the primary Attributes of an

Personality Archetypes

Architect: You are unhappy unless you are creating something of lasting value.

Avant-Garde: You must be the first to do or discover anything.

Bon Vivant: Life is meaningless, so enjoy what there is.

Bravo: You like to be feared.

Caregiver: You need people to need you.

Conformist: You are a follower at heart.

Conniver: There's always an easier way, which usually involves someone doing your work for you.

Critic: Nothing except yourself is ever quite good enough for you.

Curmudgeon: You're a real cynic and sourpuss.

Deviant: You're simply not like anyone else.

Director: You hate chaos and take charge to end it.

Fanatic: You have a cause or goal that gives your life meaning.

Jester: You can't take anything seriously.

Judge: You seek justice for all people.

Loner: You are forever alone, even in a crowd.

Martyr: You have the instinct for self-sacrifice.

Rebel: You struggle against the status quo.

Survivor: You struggle to survive despite all odds.

Traditionalist: You prefer the tried-and-true ways of doing things.

Visionary: Wisdom is your greatest quest, and your greatest gift.

action-oriented character — the Physical Attributes concern only the strengths and weaknesses of the body. Is your character powerful, quick-footed or hardy?

• Social Attributes describe your character's ability to relate to (and sometimes use) others. Social Attributes are vital in determining first impressions, the character's ability to inspire and motivate people, and the nature of her interactions with others. Is your character charming, well-spoken or good-looking?

• Mental Attributes represent your character's mental capacity, and include such things as memory, perception and the ability to learn and think. Is your character insightful, astute or clever?

The concept and Tradition of your character may suggest to you what your priorities should be, but feel free to pick any scheme you please. For now, your character concept should be very general — it is necessary to paint a broad, sweeping outline before filling in the details.

All characters start with one dot in each Attribute. Your priority selection determines how many "dots" you get to spend in each category. You may divide seven dots between your character's primary Attributes, five dots between her secondary Attributes, and three between her tertiary Attributes. Thus you may choose to add seven dots to your character's Physical Attributes, five to her Mental Attributes, and only three dots to her Social Attributes. The dots may be divided among the Attributes of a category as you see fit — you could assign all three of your Social Attribute dots to Charisma, one dot to each of the three Social Attributes, or two dots to one and one dot to another.

Later in the character creation process it is possible to increase these ratings, so don't worry too much. Let your intuition guide you.

Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Abilities delineate what your character knows rather than what he is; they describe the things he has learned rather than the things he can naturally do. All Talents, Skills and Knowledges are Abilities.

Each Ability your character possesses is assigned a rating representing how good the character is in that particular area. This number is used to help determine how many dice you roll when your character attempts to use an Ability. This section of the rules guides you in determining what Abilities you may choose and how high or low each Ability is rated.

Abilities are divided into three different categories: Talents, Skills and Knowledges. Each type of Ability has different characteristics.

• Talents describe all the intuitive Abilities. Talents do not need to be practiced *per se* and cannot be studied or learned from a book; they are most often gained through direct experience. Does your character possess a lot of common sense?

• Skills are the Abilities learned through rigorous training of any sort. This category includes any Ability that must be learned step by step through actual practice, but that can be taught and studied (unlike Talents). Is your character good at learning things through practice?

• Knowledges include all the Abilities requiring the rigorous application of the mind. These Abilities are generally learned through school, classes, books and teachers, but can also be picked up through experience. Is your character educated; does he have a good memory? Many, but not all, mages are Knowledge-oriented.

You must categorize these Abilities in the same way you categorized the Attributes. You must decide how to rank your Talents, Skills and Knowledges, choosing in which category your character will be above average (primary), in which she will be average (secondary), and in which she will be below average (tertiary).

You get 13 dots to spend on your character's primary category, nine for the secondary category, and only five dots for the tertiary category.

Backgrounds

Allies: The friends and assistants of the character, from mundane Acolytes to magical beasts.

Arcane: Mages are inherently unknowable and untraceable, but how well they can hide from mundane society (and the Technomancers that rule it!) is determined by this Trait.

Avatar: Each mage, and in fact each human, has an Avatar within her. This Trait measures the size of the Avatar. This Trait also generates an initial rating in Quintessence.

Destiny: Some mages are destined for greatness or great loss.

Dream: The character's ability to gather answers and information from the Universal Unconscious.

Influence: This rates the character's power in mundane society.

Library: A mage's magickal reference books — good for study and to loan in exchange for favors.

Mentor: The knowledge and availability of the one who taught the character what she knows.

Node: Some mages are lucky enough to begin with access to a Node, a reservoir of Quintessence that determines the cabal's mystical might.

Talisman: Some mages may possess items of power, Talismans, even before they begin to explore unknown worlds and dimensions.

However, there is one additional restriction: you cannot give your character more than three dots in any one Ability (later, however, you can use your "freebie" points to gain four or even five dots in a single Ability).

Step Four: Advantages

You do not prioritize or rank the different categories of Advantages. Instead you have a designated number of dots to assign within each one. Though this number is fixed, you can purchase additional dots later on using your "freebie" points.

Backgrounds

Every character gets seven points to allocate among the 10 Background Traits. You have only seven points to allot, and in some chronicles your choice may be restricted to certain Backgrounds; the Storyteller will let you know the ground rules. Your Background Traits should fit into the general scheme of the concept originally chosen.

Spheres

Correspondence: Knowledge of space and position.

Entropy: Understanding that all systems tend to destabilize and catabolize.

Forces: The ability to command and control the forces of physical reality, like gravity and radiation.

Life: The spark of life animates existence. Some mages can control that spark.

Matter: The knowledge of how physical objects are created and manipulated.

Mind: This Sphere allows the human mind's potential to be unlocked.

Prime: This Sphere governs the fundamental energy of reality, Quintessence.

Spirit: This Sphere provides an understanding of this more basic form of existence, and of the spirit world itself.

Time: Time is not necessarily linear. Mages with this Sphere can manipulate time to their benefit.

Spheres

All mages begin with a free point in their Tradition's specialty Sphere (specialty Spheres are discussed under Traditions in Chapter Six). They may also spend five more points on Spheres of their choice. Spheres are central to the game, for they are the basis of all the magickal effects that a character can create. In actuality, Spheres indicate the ways in which a mage understands reality better than do mortals. By using her will in conjunction with this knowledge, a mage can create effects that mundane people can only call magick.

Darrell Midgette

A mage cannot have an initial rating greater than three in any Sphere, nor can she have a higher rating in any Sphere than she has a score in her Arete Trait (see below). Unlike Abilities, ratings greater than three (or greater than Arete) cannot even be gained by spending "freebie" points. Ratings higher than three must be learned from a Mentor, sources in a Chantry, or through the fondest hope of any mage — sudden enlightenment. However, not even these sources can raise a Sphere score higher than your Arete score.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Often the most important stage of character creation is applying the last touches — the little details and flourishes that complete the character. In this step you gain your 15 "freebie" points, enabling you to add more dots to any of the Traits on the character sheet. Before you spend these points, however, you must record your base scores for your character's Arete, Willpower and Quintessence.

Arete

Arete indicates the degree of "enlightenment" a mage has achieved. Every mage begins with one point in Arete, for this is what makes him a mage in the first place. No Sphere possessed by a mage may be rated higher than her Arete rating, so in order to have a rating higher than one in a Sphere, you have to spend some "freebie" points on Arete.

Willpower

The Willpower Trait rates just how much control a mage has over herself and her reality. If she can control herself, then she can extend that control over reality by exercising her will. A mage begins the game with a base Willpower rating of five. Additional points of Willpower may only be purchased with "freebie points."

Quintessence and Paradox

These Traits are often related, and are recorded in the boxes of a circular diagram on the character sheet. A character begins the game with a base amount of Quintessence equal to her Avatar rating. More dots may be added with freebie points (see below), but these do not represent permanent Quintessence, only temporary, beginning Quintessence. A character begins with no Paradox.

Freebie Points

You now get your 15 freebie points to spend on any Trait you'd like to increase. However, this expenditure is not as straightforward as it might seem. If you want to add a dot to an Attribute, each one costs five freebie points, while a Background dot only costs one point. Costs are listed in the chart below.

Spark of Life

There are other aspects of a character that can be detailed in addition to the above. You do not necessarily need to write these things down, but you should certainly think about them — not only now but throughout the career of your character.

Appearance

Your character's appearance makes her Traits visible to other characters. You should turn the concept and relevant Traits of your character into aspects of her appearance. High Intelligence can become a clear, piercing gaze. An explorer concept could mean the character wears khaki clothes and has a rugged appearance. In this way, you can make your character's Traits more tangible and interesting. It is much more evocative to say, "My eyes are always unfocused so I always seem to be staring into space," than to say, "I look absent-minded."

Specialties

You may wish to give your character specialties in her Abilities. Each Ability in which you have a rating of four or more can be given a specialty. Though most players select specialties for their Traits during play, you can pick them immediately. Specialties are particular aspects of larger Traits at which your character is especially good. Simply fill in the space next to the Trait with an appropriate specialty; suggestions are made with each Trait in Chapter Six. Though primarily used for roleplaying, specialties can give the character a bonus to dice rolls when performing certain feats or can assist in other ways. Chapter Six has more information about the use of specialties.

Equipment

If there are any possessions or pieces of equipment you want your character to have, you should work out the details now. Otherwise, you will have to acquire the equipment during the game, something that can take time and is not guaranteed to succeed. Almost any piece of mundane equipment that fits your concept can be possessed. Certain items, like Talismans, can only be gained by possessing a particular Trait — in this case a Background.

Freebie Point Costs

Spheres: 7 per dot
Attributes: 5 per dot
Arete: 4 per dot
Abilities: 2 per dot
Willpower: 1 per dot
Backgrounds: 1 per dot
Quintessence: 1 point per four dots

Quirks

By giving your character quirks (interesting personal details and anecdotes) you can add a great deal of depth and interest to him. Write a few sentences on the back of your character sheet about the strange and possibly interesting things that define your character. A quirk could be a twisted sense of humor, a gentleness toward animals, or a habit of grunting when answering yes to a question.

Motivations

Many mages are driven by the desire to understand more about the world and existence, but even these mages have other motivating factors. You should decide the things that motivate your character to pursue the dangerous path of magick. The more evocative the motivation, the more it will help define your character. Perhaps your character's father died while your character was away, so your character never had final words with him. An important motive in your character's practice of magick, then, could be to find a way to speak with the deceased spirit of his father.

Mundane Identity

A final important thing you should consider about your character is her identity in mundane society. Not all mages live completely apart from society. Some Traditions, like the Cult of Ecstasy, are still very much a part of the mundane world. Even members of Traditions like the Akashic Brotherhood could have mundane identities. How do you manage to live this double life?

Example of Character Creation

Here I stand with all my lore —
Poor fool, no wiser than before.
— Goethe, *Faust*

Isaac decides it's time to make his first **Mage** character. With a copy of the character creation outline in front of him he sets to work.

Step One: Concept

Isaac must first develop a concept for his character. He decides he wants to a play a real weirdo, someone totally outside the bounds of normal society. He doesn't want a character tied down to any kind of belief or lifestyle, so he chooses the hermit concept. This way Isaac can create a character who wanders around seeking answers and truths in his own way.

MAGE™

The Ascension

Name: Reynold
Player: ISAAC
Chronicle:

Essence: Questing
Nature: Martyr
Demeanor: Fanatic

Tradition: Dreamspeaker
Mentor:
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○
Stamina ●●●●○

Social

Charisma ●●●●○
Manipulation ●○○○○
Appearance ●○○○○

Mental

Perception ●●●●●
Intelligence ●●●●○
Wits ●○○○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ●○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○
Awareness ●●●○○
Brawl ●○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Intuition ●●○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Streetwise ●●○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○

Skills

Drive ●○○○○
Etiquette ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Meditation ●●○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Research ○○○○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival ●●○○○
Technology ○○○○○

Knowledges

Computer ○○○○○
Cosmology ●●○○○
Culture ●●●○○
Enigmas ○○○○○
Investigation ○○○○○
Law ●○○○○
Linguistics ●●●○○
Medicine ●○○○○
Occult ●●○○○
Science ●○○○○

Advantages

Spheres

Correspondence ●●●○○
Entropy ○○○○○
Forces ○○○○○
Life ○○○○○
Mind ○○○○○
Matter ○○○○○
Prime ●○○○○
Spirit ●○○○○
Time ●○○○○

Backgrounds

AVATAR ●●●●●
NODE ●●○○○
DREAM ●●●○○
ALLIES ●●○○○
_____ ○○○○○

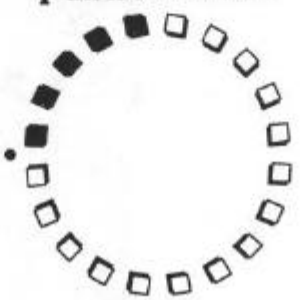
Arete

●●●○○○○○○○

Willpower

●●●●●●●○○○
❑❑❑❑❑❑❑❑❑❑

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised	-0 ❑
Hurt	-1 ❑
Injured	-1 ❑
Wounded	-2 ❑
Mauled	-2 ❑
Crippled	-5 ❑
Incapacitated	❑

Experience

Study Points

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Attributes: 7/5/3 Abilities: 13/9/5 Spheres: 5 Backgrounds: 7 Freebie Points: 15 (7/5/4/2/1)

Next, Isaac looks at his choices for Traditions. He discards many out of hand because they don't fit the concept for his character. For instance, there's little chance of a member of the Virtual Adepts becoming the kind of mage Isaac's character has become. He decides his best choice is a Dreamspeaker, a shamanic mage who hears the whispers of the spirit world. This way the character can have become a mage without ever learning from a Mentor.

The choice of Essence is next. Isaac's choice is a little stereotypical for Dreamspeakers, but no Essence but Questing really fits the aimless wanderer Isaac wants to play. To strengthen the impact of this Essence on the character's life, Isaac decides that the character doesn't remember much of his past other than what the spirits have told him, and even then finds it hard to separate events in the mundane world from those in the spirit world. Isaac therefore reasons that the character won't even have a full name. He goes only by the name of Reynold.

Reynold now needs a Nature and Demeanor. Isaac decides to throw a few wrinkles into the character with his choice of Nature. He chooses Martyr. This means that even though Reynold has chosen to live apart from other people, he still cares deeply about his fellows and will selflessly give of himself to protect and nurture them. He is traveling his road to knowledge alone for two reasons: 1) because he feels it's the only way to true enlightenment, and 2) it's more difficult, and martyrs sometimes make things harder on themselves than they really need to be.

For Reynold's Demeanor, Isaac chooses Fanatic and explains it by saying that while Reynold really does care for the goals of other Dreamspeakers, he is not as fired by those goals as are other members of the Tradition. However, Reynold pretends to be just as enthusiastic as any of his fellow mages. This is one of the ways Reynold tries to fit in with other people. Reynold's Demeanor is likely to change if he ever spends too much time away from a large number of Dreamspeakers.

Step Two: Attributes

The next step is to prioritize Reynold's Attributes. Isaac makes the usual choice for mages, by selecting Mental as the primary Attribute category. He decides that Reynold's travels have made him a fairly fit man, so Isaac selects Physical as the secondary Attribute category. Social, then, is tertiary.

Isaac first divides the seven primary dots among Reynold's Mental Attributes. Because Reynold is so attuned to things beyond the senses of ordinary men, Perception is the best choice for many of the points. In fact, Isaac opts to put four points in Perception, giving Reynold the maximum score of five (remember the one free starting dot in every Attribute Trait). Reynold never really makes plans or ever learned to alter his course, so Wits doesn't seem very important for him. Isaac thus places the remaining three Mental points in Intelligence, making Reynold a pretty sharp-minded guy (score of four).

The secondary Attribute category is tackled next. Going back to the idea that Reynold has survived many rough circumstances on the road, Isaac turns first to Stamina. Here he places three points, making Reynold a tough guy (four points). One point goes into each of the remaining Physical Attributes of Strength and Dexterity to reflect Reynold's average general prowess.

The tertiary Attribute category of Social is easy to settle. Besides, with only three points to spend, the points don't go far. Isaac places all three points in Charisma to reflect Reynold's likable nature and friendly disposition. Isaac reasons that ratings of one in Manipulation and Appearance are okay; Reynold would never dream of trying to trick someone, and he's never been able to take care of himself very well while living on the road.

Step Three: Abilities

Isaac must now prioritize Reynold's Abilities. Instead of doing this right away, Isaac scans the character sheet and starts checking off Abilities he thinks Reynold should have (he does not have a free starting dot in every Ability Trait as he does with Attribute Traits). It soon becomes clear that most of the points are going to be spent in Knowledges, so Isaac chooses it as primary.

Reynold has no real memory of where he gained some of his Knowledges, but he does possess them, all 13 points of them. He's learned a lot about people by traveling around, so three points go into Culture. Though he doesn't interact with people very often, Reynold still knows about their beliefs, so two points go into Cosmology. He has a reasonable knowledge of the Occult, so two points are used there. A very puzzling part of Reynold's past is his ability to speak a number of languages. Three dots in Linguistics means he can speak three languages in addition to his (native?) English. Isaac spends his three remaining points by placing one each in Law, Medicine and Science.

Isaac chooses Talents as his secondary Ability category. He has nine points to spend here. This makes sense since Reynold has lived by the seat of his pants on the road. Reynold got his start as a mage by communicating with spirits and the like, so Isaac figures the character must have a good score in Awareness. Three points go there. Streetwise would also reflect some of Reynold's experience, so two points are spent there. Two points in Intuition and one each in Alertness and Brawl round out Reynold's Talents.

With only five points to spend in Skills, Isaac must choose carefully. Reynold's contemplative nature makes Meditation a good choice, so two points go there. Somewhere in his past Reynold learned a little about driving so another point is spent in Drive. The last two points are spent in Survival, reflecting Reynold's ability to endure adverse conditions.

Step Four: Advantages

Next comes the category that defines what Reynold can actually do as a mage. First, he has seven points to spend on Backgrounds. Isaac knows he'll want more than seven points worth of Backgrounds, but must wait until he spends "freebie"

points to acquire more. For now, Isaac makes sure Reynold has the Backgrounds that most obviously define the character. Three points go into Avatar, because he knows he has a powerful aptitude for magick. Two points go into Node, because he never wants to run out of Quintessence. The other two points are spent in Dream, for a connection to the world of greater thought could give a clue to where Reynold learned much of what he knows.

Isaac then moves on to Spheres. He knows he will have to get more points in Arete if his Sphere ratings go over one, but that can be done with "freebies." Isaac also knows that no more than three of the six points may be placed in one Sphere (six points because he receives five to spend and receives a free one to allocate to the specialty Sphere of his Tradition). With this in mind, Isaac goes to work after marking down the one dot in Spirit Reynold gets by virtue of being a Dreamspeaker.

The very first Sphere choice could help explain a lot about Reynold. With a good knowledge of Correspondence, Reynold could have unknowingly traveled almost anywhere on the globe, so three points go there. Isaac decides Reynold must know a little about the source of Quintessence, so one point goes into Prime. The final point is spent in Time, as an odd perception of time could also help explain why Reynold's past is so mysterious.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Isaac records one point of Arete and five points of Willpower on Reynold's character sheet. Reynold's Avatar Background automatically gives him three points of Quintessence. He can gain more Quintessence during the freebie point stage, either by purchasing additional dots in the Avatar Background or by directly buying Quintessence (see the Freebie Point Cost table). As a starting mage, Reynold has no Paradox.

Now Isaac gets to spend his 15 "freebie" points on Reynold. First, Isaac spends eight "freebie" points for two points of Arete, giving him a total of three and making the purchase of a rating of three in Correspondence legal. That leaves Isaac with seven points. Isaac goes right to Backgrounds because he wants to purchase more of those Advantages. Isaac adds another point to Dream and then spends two points on Avatar. This automatically increases his Quintessence Pool as well. Isaac decides that Reynold occasionally receives advice and aid from the the denizens of the spirit world, so two points are spent on Allies, which Isaac decides are minor spirits. Finally, Isaac decides to spend his last two "freebie" points to increase Reynold's Willpower to seven.

Normally, more detail could be added to a new character, but Isaac thinks he has a pretty good idea of who Reynold is and what he wants. Besides, too much information would actually work against the character in this case, as a large portion of Reynold's strangeness has to do with his mysterious past. Such details are best left to the imagination of the Storyteller and future stories.

Looking Ahead

It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof. What everybody echoes or in silence passes by as true today may turn out to be falsehood tomorrow, mere smoke of opinion, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields. What old people say you cannot do, you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new.

— Henry David Thoreau

In the process of creating a character, you have hopefully become ready to roleplay that character as well. An important part of the character creation process is the attachment that develops between you and your character, enabling you to play the role creatively and with purpose. Nurture your empathy for your character — if she is at all different from you, it might not come naturally.

The process of character creation does not end with the beginning of the first story, for a character never stops growing, changing, developing and maturing. As the chronicle progresses, create new personality traits and historical details. Use your experience wisely to develop your abilities. Seek to build your character's Willpower and increase her Arete, and always, always add more and more flesh to the bare bones listed on the character sheet. The true essence of the character can only be captured in your roleplaying; it can never be listed upon the character sheet.

Most importantly, you should think of ways in which the personality of your character might change because of the things that occur in her life and then guide her in that direction. Let her determine her own fate. Never force her to fall into your earlier conceptions of who and what she should be. An angry Deviant who learns to control his rage, or an aimless Loner who gains a sense of hope can be a beautiful thing — especially if the Storyteller catches on to what you are doing and builds a subplot around it.

If your character ever bores you, it's probably because you have not developed and changed her enough over time. Ideally, the character simply grows more real as you play in the chronicle, developing as a character and as a person. The way in which a character changes reveals as much about that character as the way she is described. A character in a short story is rarely as real and complete as one in a novel — there simply is not enough time for proper development. Make your characters as complete, vital and interesting as you possibly can throughout the course of the chronicle.

Novelists often speak of characters in their books coming to life, refusing to be manipulated or directed by the writer. This type of character stands out from the page and says, "Leave me alone, I'm real"; he then does as he will, regardless of the author's original intent. We can learn much from this experience — it is the epitome of what makes a great character.

The Prelude

Just a minor operation
To force a final ultimatum.

— Joy Division, "Leaders of Men"

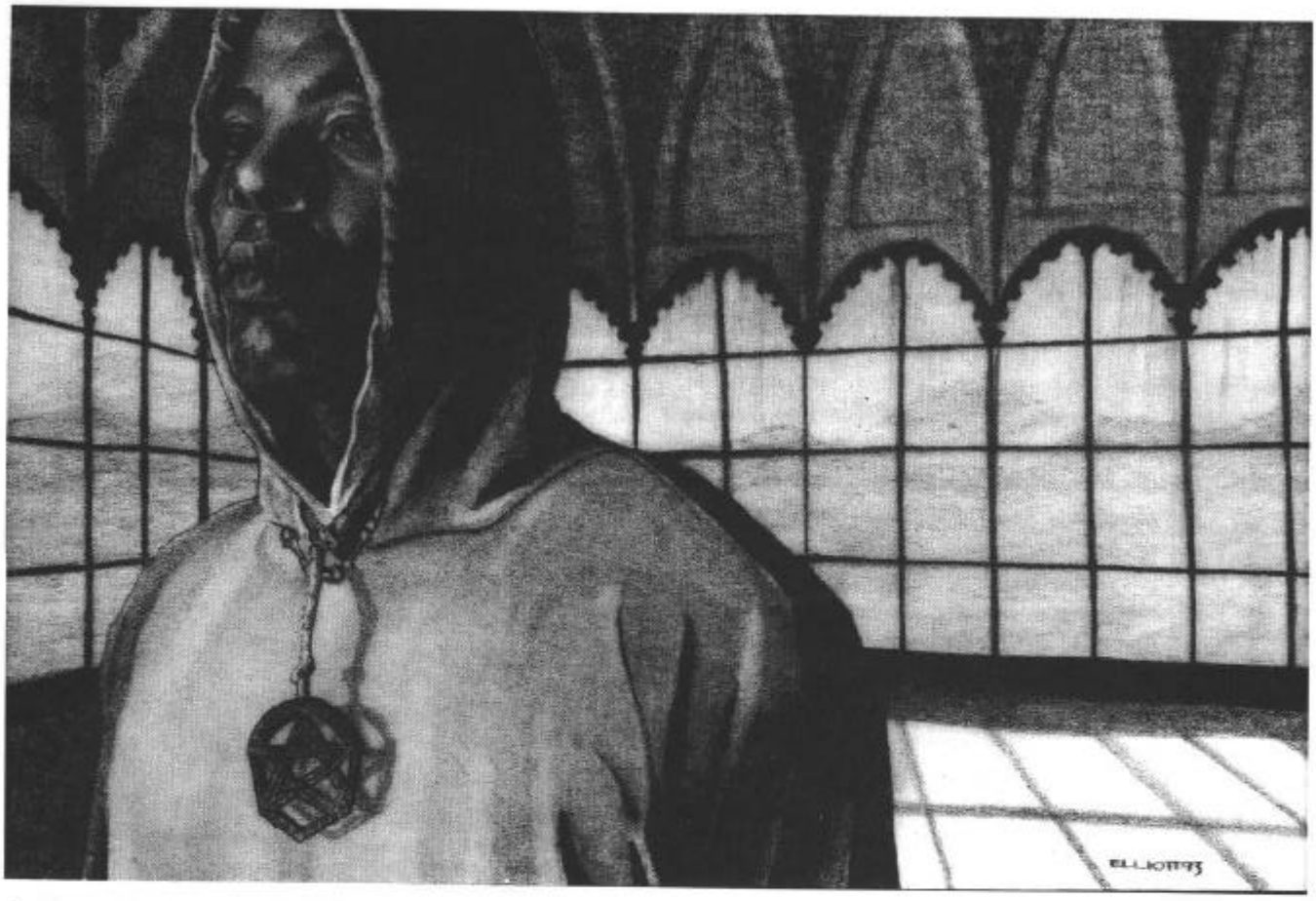
Our past defines us most clearly, for it best indicates what we might become. The purpose of the prelude is to give each character a past so the future might be told. It is, in fact, a form of one-on-one storytelling in which the story of a character's life thus far is told.

The prelude is a way to create character biographies before the chronicle actually begins, allowing characters to live out their lives prior to the moment when the first story starts. It is quite similar to normal play, except that many years are compressed into a series of rapid-fire decisions.

A vital part of a character's background is the creation of a personal history, which is one of the things the prelude does best. It creates a sense of where a character grew up and what her life was like. The personal biography a player creates in the prelude will be relevant throughout the chronicle, and you may well refer to it frequently.

The Right Technique

Each player undergoes the prelude alone. It is one-on-one unless two or more characters were friends and spent a lot of time together before they were mages. While you, as the Storyteller, spend time with each player separately, the rest of



them can socialize and start to get excited about what lies ahead. Anticipation can make a story blossom.

During the prelude you will need to direct the player much more than usual. Give him lots of decisions to make, but rush everything and don't give him much time to think. You need to play through things quickly, unless you are willing and able to spend more time (which can enable the creation of very detailed characters). Characters almost never engage in combat during the prelude. If they do, you simply describe the results of any fights (you can't have the character die before the game even begins!).

During the time you set aside for the prelude, be sure to let the player have a chance to interact with both the setting and the rules. If the player wants to change a few Traits during the prelude, you should let him, as long as it is done for a rational reason and not as an attempt to create a super-character.

There are many ways to progress through a character's life; any way that helps mold a complete character is fine. During the course of the prelude, you will want to explain the full background of the character, including the origin of her Talisman and the identity of her Mentor (both are Backgrounds discussed in Chapter Six). The player should have a firm idea of the details of her Background Traits.

You should play through one or more typical scenes from the character's life to give the player a sense of how the character lived. You can get the player into her life as a mage by showing her the bland tedium of the character's mundane existence. Remember, it is the mundane that gives scope to the magnificent.

It can proceed something like this: "Your flight back to San Francisco has taken a lot out of you and you are anxious to make it back to your apartment. Unfortunately, you landed in the middle of rush hour, so you jockey through traffic all the way home only to find your elevator is down again. You climb the five floors to your apartment but are only greeted by a door with an eviction notice. Didn't the landlord get your rent payment? You pushed it through the slot before you left 10 days ago! You try your key anyway, but the locks have been changed. There's got to be more to life than this!"

As you describe things, let the player interrupt with her own ideas and details concerning what is going on. You are telling a story together, so treat the player more like a partner. You can also include details that provoke the player into feeling the emotions of her character — "Your father is in a coma in the hospital." Once the character joins a Chantry to become a mage, she can't freely visit the hospital anymore. Her father may awaken or may die, but the character may never see him again. The player needs to feel a profound and overwhelming sense of loss in order for the true power of the prelude to come across.

Questions and Answers

Described below are some questions that should be answered by the end of the prelude. If there is no time for a full prelude, you should at least make an effort to answer these questions. It often helps to write out the answers, even if you have undergone the full prelude.

With each question we list what sorts of things the player should ask himself, as well as some advice to the Storyteller on how to run the prelude in relationship to the question.

• How old are you?

How old are you now? How many years has it been since you finished your basic training in magick? Do you look either older or younger than your actual years?

It is often easier to apply dates to events in the prelude after the prelude is over, but it is also worthwhile to establish some important dates for the character during the prelude. The prelude should beginx at one of the important dates for the character, preferably an event in his youth. One main purpose of the prelude is to put the character's life in perspective, so setting early dates and establishing character age are very effective.

• When did you first realize that you were different from most people?

Have you always been able to do things that other people didn't understand? Were you punished for being different? When did you realize that you were more than human? What did you do that helped you decide?

It is important to give a character a sense of herself as a child, and especially a sense of how her childhood may have been different from the one the player knew. It is very important to the development of the character to determine when she first realized that she could do things other people or other kids couldn't. Did she keep this knowledge secret, or was it impossible to do so? How people, especially the character's parents, reacted to any special and strange powers should be important to who the character is.

The character's childhood is always important because it's possible to create many story hooks. Maybe you can create similarities among the childhoods of all the characters of the chronicle. Maybe they were all helped at some time or other by the same mysterious stranger.

• When did you first encounter magick?

When did you first realize that other people were special like you? Did you see someone else do strange things before you realized that you could? Did the magickal person or event become important to you in other ways, or was it dismissed as unexplainable? Were you afraid of magick? Did seeing magick make you even more curious to find out why you were different?

The manner in which a character reacted to magick upon seeing it for the first time could have shaped much about him. If the first experience was with a Paradox spirit, then perhaps the character has a deep-rooted fear of working magick that is too powerful or vulgar. The player knows what she is seeing, but the first time a player encounters magick in the game *should be a memorable experience for her and her character.* Develop the mystery and strangeness of the situation for maximum effect.

• Who was your Mentor?

Did you seek out a Mentor? Did your Mentor approach you to see if you wished to learn more about magick? Was your Mentor kind? Stubborn? Wise? Do you still know your Mentor?

Teachers have an incredible ability to shape the lives of the students they instruct. This is particularly true for young students, but even a grown-up will have his attitudes shaped by an instructor. A character's Mentor should have a huge impact on the character, for good or ill.

You will need to create the Mentor if she is still a part of the character's life or if the character has chosen the Mentor Background. The character's Mentor may have been responsible for much more than simply helping the character gain an understanding of magick. Carefully develop the relationship between the Mentor and character.

• How do you feel about Sleepers?

Are you better than other people because you know more? Do you feel burdened by your knowledge and wish for anonymity among Sleepers? Are Sleepers important at all, or are they just cattle to be used as your magick demands? What do you think of mages who help or hurt Sleepers?

The attitude a character has toward other humans is very important to the focus of the chronicle. If most of the characters are simply power-driven and care little for using their powers to better the plight of common people, then your stories should either avoid using Sleepers as hooks to get characters involved in events, or should try to show characters the error of their ways by involving Sleepers in crucial ways.

A mage could be considered a superior human, for he knows more about the world and has the power to change the world. The truest test of a person, though, is how such power is used. Such a disregard for Sleepers is why the Technomancers are so ridiculed. Would the character join those ranks?

• When did you meet the others in the Cabal?

Do you get along with the other characters? How long have you known them? Did you meet in a Chantry or another way? Do you share the same goals?

It's important, but in the end not necessary, that characters be compatible. Many good stories can be based around mages' rivalries; in fact, such stories could be microcosms of how mages have mishandled the development of mankind for centuries.

However, few players will want to spend eight hours every Friday night arguing with characters played by their friends. More stories, and more entertaining stories, are possible if the characters cooperate. It's thus important to establish meaningful connections between characters. Perhaps they share the same Tradition or Mentor. These links have to be more than just elements of the chronicle. They have to mean something to the characters, and the best time to establish this kind of depth and history is in the prelude.

• Where do you live now?

Do you live in a Chantry? A Node? Have you founded your own Node with the other characters? Do people know where to find you?

Many stories can be told about the characters' abode or about events that take place nearby. It's thus important to establish this residence. If the character lives in a Chantry or Node, where is it located?

• Do you continue to lead a mundane life?

Are you a full-time mage? Do you still interact with people you knew before you completed your magickal training? Do any mundane friends know that you are a mage? Do other mages know about your moonlighting in mundane life?

Details of a character's mundane life can be very important to the chronicle. Countless stories can be based on events in the character's mundane life, like the problems created by juggling more than one kind of life. If the mage is trying to keep his mundane existence a secret from other mages and his magickal life secret from mundane acquaintances, things can be difficult.

• Have you run afoul of the Technocracy?

Are there Technomancers who know too much about you and your family? Did you think about joining the Technocracy? What have you done to rouse the ire of Technomancers?

The Technocracy seems determined to destroy any mages capable of altering the reality they are working so hard to erect. If your character has run into the Technocracy, he may already be marked for elimination. The New World Order may have Men in Black on your heels. Your character's standing with the Technocracy is very important to the pacing of the chronicle.

• What motivates you?

What guides your life as a mage? Do you seek vengeance? Enlightenment? Adventure? Do you wish to leave your life as a mage behind and return to your simple mundane life?

Being a mage is hard work and can mean a lot of responsibility. Not everyone, even those capable of practicing magick, are cut out for the task. Those who do remain must have a good reason, a serious motivation for not letting up or giving in. A real, complete character is one with definite goals. Goals are important to the player, so he has a sense of where his character is going. They are also important to the Storyteller, as they give her an idea of how the character is going to get there. A character's Essence and Nature should play a large part in determining goals.

• How did you achieve enlightenment?

What was your first enlightening experience? How did it change your life? If your Arete is greater than one, how was the additional enlightenment achieved?

Seeking Arete is a major goal of the game, and is certainly the preeminent requisite of achieving Ascension. The means by which a character first overcame her world-view and saw true reality are extremely important. Other occasions of such insight are very noteworthy as well.

The Cabal

There are also some questions that should be answered by all players, after all characters have completed their preludes. Get everyone together and tackle these:

• Where is the cabal based?

In what city or country is the cabal located (San Francisco, London, Delhi, Bali, Mongolia, the Great Barrier Reef)? Do all the members have their own homes and libraries, or do they live together at one location?

• Does the cabal have a Node? Where's it located?

Are all Nodes in the same building, or are they scattered around an entire city? How many of them does the cabal possess (determined during character creation, by choosing Node as a Background Trait)? In what sort of locations are the Nodes located (cellars, museums, bookstores, occult temples, churches, steam tunnels)?

• Who are the Acolytes?

What mundanes does the cabal keep as retainers and assistants (called Acolytes)? Acolytes are acquired through the purchase of the Allies Background Trait. How are these mundane aids treated?

• What are the goals of the cabal?

What are the goals for which the characters strive, and what central motivation unites them (survival, escape, Ascension, create a Chantry, attack the Technocracy, destroy an enemy)?

• Who are your enemies?

Who opposes the characters, and what are their enemies' strengths and weaknesses (Technomancers, another cabal, a resentful mage, human cultists, werewolves, vampires)?

ERMES

Chapter Six: Traits

The world is too complex for subsumption under any general theory of change.

— Stephen Jay Gould, *Bully for Brontosaurus*

In **Mage**, Traits are the basis of a character — they describe, conjure and pin down who and what a character really is. They enable you to detail your character's strengths and weaknesses, allow you to translate the character into game reality by using dice, and most importantly, they help you focus and understand your character.

A character's Traits describe only the general parameters of her abilities. The essence of the character is created through the roleplaying and the imagination of the player. Traits in **Mage** are intentionally left sketchy — at least the number-crunching part — so you will not concentrate on the character sheet too much. What is only crudely established during character creation becomes fleshed out in play. Don't look at your Traits thinking you have a complete character. Your roleplaying will create your character.

Traditions

Man makes his world, or is crushed by the worlds made by others.

— Denning & Phillips, *The Foundations of High Magick*

Most mages of the World of Darkness have organized into groups collectively called "Traditions." Nine of these Traditions are described in the game, though there are a few others, and one group of mages called the Hollow Ones (not a true Tradition) is presented as well.

Traditions are one of the greatest inventions of mages. These groups allow mages of like mind and like aspirations to gather and cooperate. Without Traditions, it would take many times as long to initiate and teach potential mages. Many innovations of mages are tied to the Traditions and would be unable to operate without the Tradition structure. Foci are good examples of such innovations.

Each Tradition is described in the same format. The format, and a description of the information contained with each item, is as follows:

Introduction: A general description of the Tradition and its history begins each section.

Philosophy: This is a statement of how members of the Tradition view magick, or how they feel magick, mages and Sleepers interrelate. It is the best description of the "personality" of the Tradition, though the philosophy presented is taken from the mouth of a perhaps overly stereotypical member of the Tradition.

Organization: This describes the way the mages of the Tradition have organized their ranks. Some Traditions are very iconoclastic while others have rigid and established ways.

Meetings: Most Traditions have regular meetings for all those who can attend. Attendance is sometimes mandatory.

Initiation: In order to become an official member of the Tradition, a candidate must go through an initiation. Potential candidates for membership and some details of the initiation itself are presented in this section.

Chantry: Members of all the Traditions are spread throughout reality, but each Tradition has one central Chantry made entirely of members of the Tradition. This section gives a little information about that Chantry.

Acolytes: Each Tradition's Acolytes typically represent specific segments of humanity. Some ideas for the Acolytes of each Tradition are listed here.

Sphere: While any mage may use any Sphere of magick, each Sphere is typically associated with the Tradition that has utilized it best and with the greatest variety. That

Sphere is listed here, and all mages of that Tradition automatically have one dot in it.

Foci: Each Tradition relies on certain items or practices in order for the magick used by its members to be effective. For example, a Dreamspeaker must have a feather handy in order to use magick related to the Spirit Sphere.

Concept: This section lists examples of typical persons who might join a certain Tradition. For example, an alchemist is a concept for one type of mage of the Order of Hermes.

Quote: This is simply something you might hear a stereotypical member of the Tradition say.

Stereotypes: Most Traditions feel that their ways are best. Here is presented each Tradition's view of the others.

Akashic Brotherhood

While the Akashic Brotherhood has remained essentially unchanged for many centuries, its philosophies have had a tremendous impact on the human race. Zen, and all of its mystical cousins, were founded by the Akashic Brotherhood. The recent spread of the philosophies of the Akashic Brotherhood to the West has caused much concern on the part of the Technomancers. They see the peaceful, contemplative lifestyle the Brotherhood proposes as the antithesis of the mechanistic lifestyle they seek to instill among the world's populace. This is surely no accident on the part of the Akashic Brotherhood.

For over 2,000 years the Akashic Brotherhood has held the same course. The aims of the Brotherhood often seem anti-intellectual. This makes it hard for many people of the modern world to accept the Brotherhood's answers. Still, none who encounter the Grand Masters of the Brotherhood can deny the serenity and self-acceptance they find.

The way of the Brotherhood is more than philosophy; it is experience. The Brotherhood believes that only through experiencing one's innermost self can one become enlightened and gain a sense of one's Essence. To gain enlightenment members of the Tradition practice an art known as Do ("The Way," pronounced "doe"). Do is an amalgamation of martial arts and meditation. The Brotherhood's members believe its continued practice helps a person achieve enlightenment.

Members of the Akashic Brotherhood strive toward the enlightenment of Do as part of an unhurried way of life. While intent on achieving a desired end, they do so with an equal mixture of humor and sobriety. They seek to understand themselves and offer the path of Do to all people, but life can still be joyful.

In recent times, with the spread of such enemies as the Technomancers, the martial abilities of Do have been of necessity used offensively. Such combat magick may well prove necessary. Because of the very meditative attitude Brothers have toward magick, they tend to slip into Quiet more often than other mages. The hobgoblins they bring back are often very devious and malicious. A mage may unknowingly leave trouble behind in an area she thought she had just relieved of a burden.

Philosophy: Be, do not do. Breathe in. Breathe out. Notice your breath, how it is in you, how it flows. Feel the life force that is in you; feel how it changes as you breathe. That is the Do, the way. It is not a thing to be learned. It is a thing to be lived. What is magick but a

extension of our breath? Magick is just as unseen, and just as necessary to us all. It doesn't matter if you were born small, or large, or powerful, or powerless. Achieve this small success, this breath, and you will have taken a step beyond anyone else. Breathe. Be, do not do. The infinitesimal realized is better than the grand unfulfilled.

Organization: The Tradition is organized in monastery-like Chantries. These Chantries are usually in remote areas that are conducive to the quiet and focus required for all aspects of Do.

Meetings: Members of the Tradition typically live and work at a Chantry. Here, daily life is organized as dictated by Do, so every moment of every day is effectively a meeting.

Initiation: New members are chosen from those who have proved themselves worthy in any of the practices that are a part of Do, like Zen, martial arts or yoga. Despite the Tradition's name of "Brotherhood," female initiates are chosen as often as men.

Chantry: Members of the Brotherhood share the knowledge of a hidden mountain monastery in Tibet.

Acolytes: martial artists, Zen practitioners, fraternal orders, monks, spiritualists, Buddhist scholars

Sphere: Mind

Foci: *Do*–Correspondence/Mind/Prime/Time, *Purification*– Spirit, Entropy, *Sash*– Forces, *Weapon*– Life/Matter

Concepts: martial artist, wandering wise man, Zen monk

Quote: "First you must learn the craft of magick. Then forget the craft and embody the art of living through Do."

Stereotypes

- Celestial Chorus — They seek wisdom much as we do, but mankind can be but a part of or key to the divine, not the divine itself.
- Cult of Ecstasy — How can they know if they have achieved some part of the truth or just the satiation of their inner desires?
- Dreamspeakers —They should not look outside of themselves for the answers.
- Euthanatos — A person should control his own destiny, not have it decided for him by those who feel he has more to learn. All people are ready for the first steps of Do.
- Hollow Ones — They are aptly named. They will never reach Ascension or even self-acceptance until they can find a center for their thoughts and feelings.
- Order of Hermes — They separate magick from themselves with their charts and tables.
- Sons of Ether — Their interest in comprehending the reality possible through science is commendable, but they would do best to reconsider before they trap themselves as has the Technocracy.
- Verbena — They see too much in the beauty of the forms around them. They should look within.
- Virtual Adepts — They seek a vision of reality to hold before man, but it must come in its time and cannot be forced.

Celestial Chorus

No Tradition has lost so much over the last thousand years as has the Celestial Chorus. The rise of technology has damaged this Tradition more than any other. Members of the Celestial Chorus view their magick and power in a religious framework and seek the means to return to the embrace of the One.

To the Celestial Chorus, this One is none other than the combined mind and desire of all mankind. For reasons unknown, this One granted herself life, but subsequently fragmented herself many, many years ago. It is the duty of the Chorus to make all people again sing with one voice and gather to share the wisdom that life has taught them.

More than any other Tradition, except perhaps the Akashic Brotherhood, the Celestial Chorus is concerned with the well-being of all men and women. The Chorus seeks to protect humanity from the myriad evils of the universe. Some members feel that meeting these evils head-on is one reason the One granted herself life. Members of the Chorus have therefore taken up arms very militaristically to battle the forces of "evil." They are very effective and determined foes, though sometimes their fervor has gone too far and beings not deserving of such treatment were inexplicably punished. Rumors have surfaced of dungeons full of "heretics" the Chorus has punished as part of a four Inquisition.

Members of the Chorus believe that a great cosmological implosion called the Reconciliation is coming or must be initiated. The Reconciliation will recombine the fragments of the One. The particulars of the Reconciliation are not well understood, but the event seems to involve all of the Realms within the Tellurian recombining with Earth in a great juxtaposition of realities.

All members of the Tradition carry a holy symbol in the stylized image of the Sun. This was the home of the One prior to the fragmentation, and is where all mankind will return when the Reconciliation is complete.

Philosophy: As the One is above, so we are below. Life is a precious gift that the One has given us. It has given us voices so that we might sing. We sing in harmony, not as a sacrifice but as a hymn, a chorus reaching out to the Source, the Light of All Lights, the Unmoved Mover. One day we will turn and see the thousand stars below us, and we will shepherd those stars all the way to Ascension. We will guard and guide Humanity until that day comes, working to spread the Song the One has given us.

Organization: The Celestial Chorus is tightly organized into a hierarchy reminiscent of many organized religions. All members are expected to follow the instructions of their superiors, as those of higher rank are by definition privy to deeper secrets of the One. As all members share the same general fervor concerning their task, there are rarely problems of dissension. However, the very nature of the Chorus' system does create ambition in its members. The ensuing political maneuvering sometimes diverts the Tradition's attention.

Meetings: Nightly meetings punctuate the lives of members of the Tradition, but the major meetings occur every Saturday.

Initiation: Members of the Celestial Chorus require four years of schooling in the history and ways of the Tradition. At the end of this time, the candidate may accept vows making him a member.

Chantry: The Celestial Chorus has placed its Chantry in the holiest of cities (from a Western perspective, anyway) — Rome.

Acolytes: Red Cross workers , TV evangelists and their viewers, the faithful

Sphere: Prime

Foci: *Fire*– Prime/Spirit, *Holy Symbol*– Forces/Mind, *Pure Water*– Entropy, *Song*– Correspondence/Life/Time, and *Touch*–Matter

Concepts: witch-hunter, priest, theologian

Quote: "Friends, all of you are I. You speak of joining minds, but our thoughts speak only of my myriad ability to think all things at once. Together we are I, and I will answer the riddles life allows us to pursue."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood — Each person at base has the same truths, so why do the Brotherhood's members all seek different paths in their Do?
- Cult of Ecstasy — Delinquents! Mankind needs guidance and they do nothing but escape into dreams of pleasure.
- Dreamspeakers — It is easy to think yourself part of something that is so close. It takes courage to accept that you are far removed from what you are.
- Euthanatos — There is a bit of the darkness in every being, even a god. Those who follow this Tradition are the darkness in my soul.
- Hollow Ones — The fire inside has obviously gone out in our youngest brethren. They are not yet beyond redemption, but they must come to us.
- Order of Hermes — They try to quantify that which cannot be counted.
- Sons of Ether — The science they practice is a grim reminder of the outrageous ideas that allowed the Technocracy to begin its ascent to power. We tire of this slap in the face.
- Verbena — There is a power in nature, but it serves mankind, not the reverse.
- Virtual Adepts — They at least show the courage to break from their kind, but they pursue mere shadows of the truth.

Cult of Ecstasy

The Cult of Ecstasy has influenced cultures around th globe for centuries. The Cult encouraged the worship Bacchus in ancient Greece, promoted the theater in the tim of Queen Elizabeth, and sparked the cultural revolutions Paris, New Orleans and Detroit. The Cultist-inspired Summ of Love resulted in a huge coincidental effect — Woodstoc The newest members of the Tradition have returned to th idea of music as revolution by sponsoring the rise of punk and later rap.

Ironically, the radical and undisciplined Cult of Ecsta has produced some of the most talented mages in recen years. However, the Tradition does not encourage participa tion in magick beyond the level addressed by the doctrine of the Tradition. Namely, these doctrines hold free actio and self-expression to be the pinnacles of human achieve ment. While these are in and of themselves nobl goals, they tend to be used by cult members as convenien excuses for blatant self-gratification.

The Tradition's practices of magick are disapproved of b the majority of mages. Its members have a tendency to pursu their comforts and pleasures via the use of wild, unrestraine magick. This often leads to meteoric lives and swift death Many of the vices of society, including drugs of a kinds, are said to be employed by the Cultists a part of their magick. Even members who do not us such substances defend the right of other Cultists t do so on the grounds that such practices are defensibl means of investigating reality. Other members, though claim that such vices only allow a mage to find a realit he wants to find.

Every member of the Cult relies on the practice of som vice in order to work magick. Examples of appropriate vice are excessive drinking, smoking and overeating.

Philosophy: Turn on. Tune in. Drop out. Get off you ass! Life's a party, and most poor bastards are NOT INVITED

Organization: The Cult has a strange, anarchic quasi-organization. Most of its members constantly travel the world, but certain Nodes have been established as havens. However, there is no guarantee that a Cultist will recognize anyone upon returning to a given location — Cultists are notoriously nomadic and unreliable. Cultists make notoriously poor Chantry members.

Meetings: Cultists tend to hold meetings and ceremonies spontaneously, i.e., whenever there are enough members around to warrant such an exercise.

Initiation: There is no set procedure for becoming an initiate of the Tradition. When a likely candidate is found, the highest-ranking Cultist determines an appropriate ceremony. This ceremony could be anything from an elaborate peyote ritual to a three-day, nonstop mountain trek.

Chantry: The base Chantry of the Tradition is located in Berkeley, California, the home of many who yearn to push the fringes of society.

Acolytes: entertainers, playboys, thrill-seekers

Sphere: Time

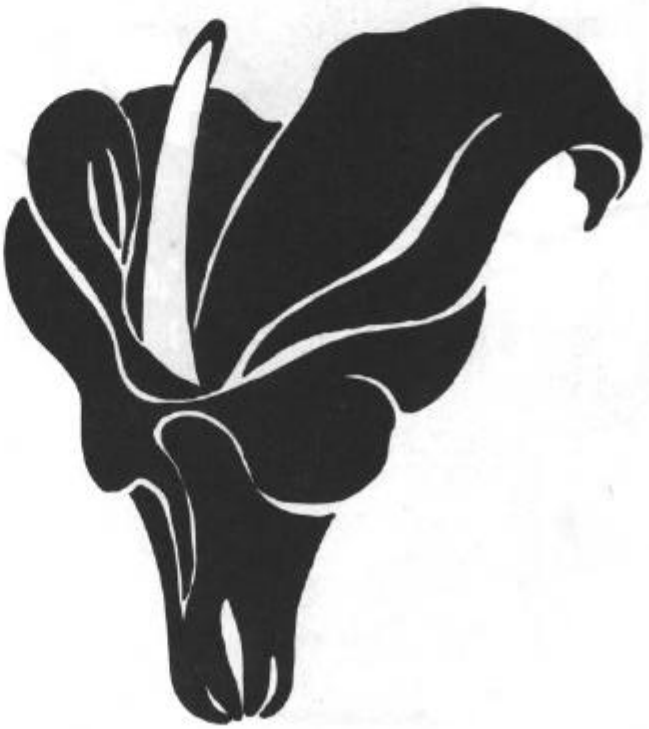
Foci: *Incense*– Correspondence/Spirit, *Music*– Forces/Mind, *Ring*– Entropy/Matter, *Vice*– Life/Prime/Time

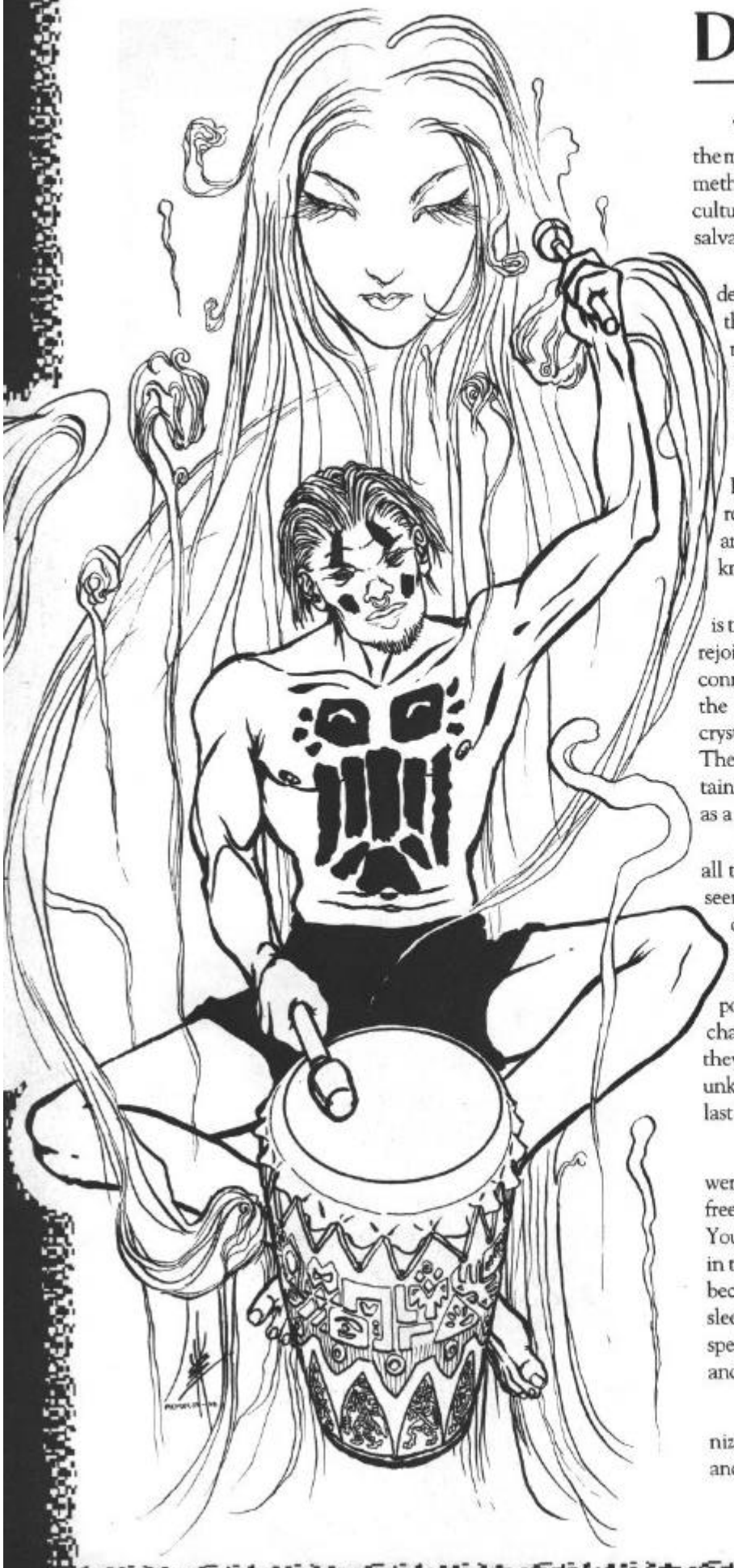
Concepts: musician, Hollywood agent, primitive drummer

Quote: "Why do you subject yourself to such pain? Leave your life behind and embrace our ways. Oh, my existence may seem carefree and pointless to you now, but that is only because of the indoctrination you have accepted for 30-plus years."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood— They waste years in meditation to reach what we achieve out of joy.
- Celestial Chorus — Warped and petty dictators of a lost and forgotten tyranny.
- Dreamspeakers — A lot like us, except they don't like to party.
- Euthanatos — To forsake life for death? Disgusting!
- Hollow Ones — There is so much good in life — so much they have forgotten.
- Order of Hermes — They're too serious and boring for words. Get a life, guys.
- Sons of Ether — This is what science oughta be: funny goggles and Frankenstein.
- Verbena — They throw really great parties. Too bad there's a purpose behind every one.
- Virtual Adepts — These guys are cool. Check 'em out.





Dreamspeakers

The Tradition known as the Dreamspeakers is probably the most ancient of the Traditions. Many of the Dreamspeakers' methods and philosophies were developed by prehistoric cultures. The Dreamspeakers are primarily concerned with the salvation of the earth spirit they call Gaia.

Dreamspeakers can best be described as shamans. Indeed, many members began their studies of magick through the lore of their own people. They feel an obligation not so much to other humans, but to the desires of Gaia. They believe that the world and everything in it, including all humanity, are reflections of the desires of Gaia. Dreamspeakers actively work to advance Gaia's will.

In their efforts to communicate with Gaia, Dreamspeakers pursue every possible course. The most rewarding thus far has been communication with spirits and entities in the spirit world — beings that obviously know a great deal about the true nature of reality.

The obligation of Dreamspeakers in the Sleeper world is to care for the spirits of men and women, enabling them to rejoin Gaia at the time of death. They may be a little too connected to Gaia, though, for their fortunes have mirrored the health of the planet. Just as the planet is slowly being crystallized through science, so too are the Dreamspeakers. The dreams have faded and the roots of their power are now tainted. Many mages of this Tradition have simply gone insane as a result.

Dreamspeakers are perhaps the most loosely organized of all the Traditions. In fact, the only organization they would seem to have is a recognition of new members and an obligation to initiate these members when they seek such a ceremony. This loose structure has all the strengths and weakness one would expect. The Dreamspeakers have the potential to accomplish many goals, for their energies are not channeled in any specific direction. Consequently, however, they retread much of the same ground. Dreamspeakers often unknowingly "discover" something another may have learned last week — or last century.

Philosophy: You must remember a time when you were not dead, when the places within you that are wild and free were just another part of the great Dream, Gaia's Dream. You must know that there are others like you, others who cry in the night because they cannot feel Her light. I tell you this because it is your job to go to the place where our Mother lies sleeping and carry to us the words of her dreams. You must speak for Her, for she cannot. You must go, and quest, and find and return. And then you will speak of Her, and tell us all.

Organization: Dreamspeakers have almost no organization beyond simple mutual acknowledgment of one another.

Meetings: The only ritual meetings are the ceremonies to initiate a new member. Only one Dreamspeaker is required to oversee such a ceremony, though others are welcome to attend.

Initiation: New Dreamspeakers are summoned to their path; rarely can a person choose to become one. The potential member is contacted in his dreams by spirits who show the candidate how to contact another Dreamspeaker. Once in contact with another Dreamspeaker, the candidate must suffer ritual death and rebirth. This process varies from one Dreamspeaker to another; it has been known to involve the actual death of the candidate and the transferal of her Avatar to another body. This practice has only recently begun; many consider the mages' connection to a dying earth the explanation for their Euthanatos-like madness.

Chantry: The Dreamspeakers are unique among the Traditions in their lack of a Chantry. They claim to speak to one another in dreams.

Acolytes: environmentalists, Garou, sleepwalkers

Sphere: Spirit

Foci: *Crystals*– Life/Mind/Prime, *Drums*– Correspondence/Entropy/Forces/Matter/Time, *Feathers*– Spirit

Concepts: shaman, hitchhiker, ecologist

Quote: "Gaia is sleeping. Be certain, mortal, that you trouble her sleep. I ease such nightmares."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood — They know that the answers are within them; now they must learn that the truth also connects them.
- Celestial Chorus — They sense the connection but still seek to attribute it to a greater, unknowable god.
- Cult of Ecstasy — They claim to search for true meaning in life, but they only avoid it by dulling their senses.
- Euthanatos — They overstep their bounds and play with the pieces of Gaia's dreams. Men are meant to live once and then pass on their Avatar.
- Hollow Ones — More than any others, they are the clues to awakening Gaia and finding the path to Ascension.
- Order of Hermes — We number them among the Technomancers, for their magick is nothing save a progression of rules and restrictions that ultimately leads to stagnation.
- Sons of Ether — If science offers any true answers, we must rely on these mages to find them. However, they are likely to find nothing and so walk the same path as the Technocracy, only at a more pleasant pace.
- Verbena — They understand the power of Gaia but are trapped at the level of forms. They must go beyond trees and blood.
- Virtual Adepts — Technomancers on the path to recovery. They again look at the illusions of the world. Unfortunately, they still seek to use them.

Euthanatos

The Euthanatos is the most ruthless and widely feared Tradition. The mages of this bizarre cult have historically had little interest in cooperating with other mages. They are preoccupied by what they feel to be their sacred duty to the Sleepers — killing those who are ready to die.

Mages of the Euthanatos feel that humanity has contemptuously spurned the greatest gift the universe has ever deigned to grant — life. Instead of using life to an even greater end, humanity, in the opinion of this Tradition, has perverted life by sucking it dry of every possibility. Humanity is running out of options, so the Euthanatos mages seek to provide more options by returning certain humans to a more fundamental level of existence, spirit form. These spirits are then eventually reborn into new bodies. With any luck, they retain some memory of their journeys and will hopefully apply this in their next life. Oftentimes, these reborn people become members of the Tradition.

Few other Traditions take so active a hand in the lives of individual people, for most mages are more concerned with sweeping changes affecting entire cultures. The granting of the Good Death, as those of the Euthanatos call it, is the Tradition's way of achieving the same end.

There are rumors, though, that there is an ulterior motive behind the Good Death. Some say the Euthanatos have led several mortals through many lifetimes and in fact are grooming a new messiah. Others tell stories of the abominations the Euthanatos have bred — human and otherwise. Some mages even blame this Tradition for such social aberrations as serial killers, claiming that the Tradition's blind manipulation has created men and women who think like the mages but on a human scale.

Because of the Tradition's interest in redemption and extended life, the mages of the Euthanatos are extremely interested in vampirism and pursue information about the Kindred with a passion.

Philosophy: Things fall apart. Fact. Everywhere the clock of chaos ticks on. Tick, tock. Tick, tock. Is it any wonder that we spend a third of our lives dead? Is it any wonder that life decays, putrefies, and returns to the slime that birthed it? You can see it all around you. Rust. Cancer. Revolution. We think we know the answers, but we don't. We don't have to. One night, the sun won't rise, the wind won't blow, and we'll discover the real truth of it all: there is no Truth and everything we have made will crumble to dust.

Organization: The Euthanatos are guided by consensus opinion and the Tradition thus requires frequent meetings. Individual Chantries are responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Tradition as a whole, but the decisions themselves are the duty of all members.

Meetings: The Euthanatos meet at their Chantry on the first day of every month. At these meetings they discuss the progress of their mortals and consider others for the Good Death.

Initiation: The initiation ceremony of a new member always involves a near-death experience. Poised on the edge between life and death, the spirit of the candidate must make the decision to escape to the Beyond or return to the responsibilities of the physical world. Those who return are welcomed as members. Candidates who have experienced the Good Death are sometimes exempted from this initiation, though the Euthanatos generally hold that failure to participate results in a weaker member.

Chantry: What better place to investigate death than in Calcutta, India? The Euthanatos have several groups spread throughout the city, and one main Chantry amidst the squalor and human misery. The strong influence of the Euthanatos in this part of the world is largely responsible for the belief in reincarnation.

Acolytes: voodoo priests, occult storekeepers, terrorists, doctors, gravediggers

Sphere: Entropy

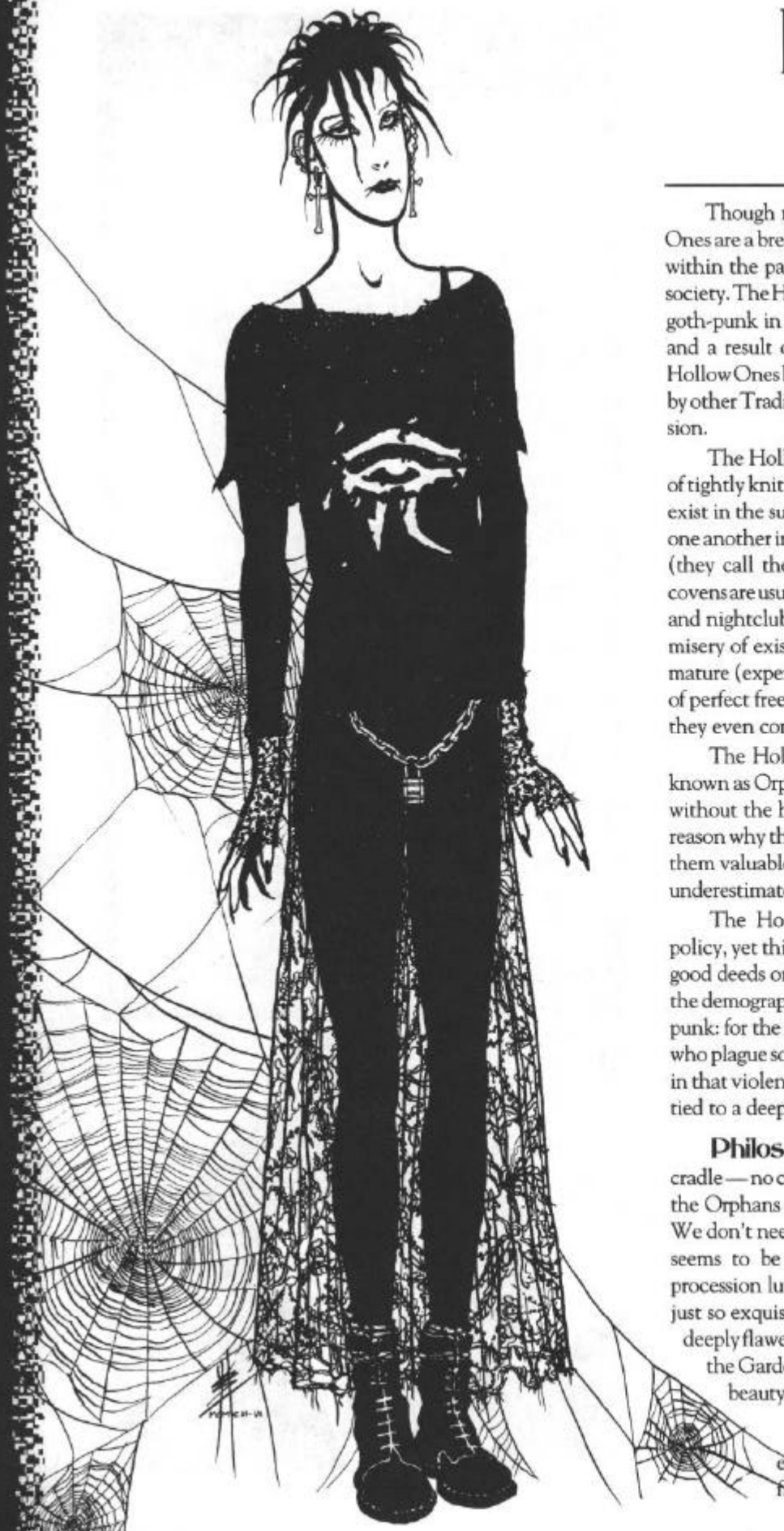
Foci: *Bones*– Entropy/Matter/Prime, *Dancing*– Correspondence/Spirit, *Dolls*–Life, *Rattle*–Mind/Time, and *Weapon*–Forces

Concepts: voodoo witch-doctor, mortician, assassin, doctor, scholar

Quote: "Come, little man. Let me show you the kind of world you have helped create. You think you control it? Let me show how it can be used against you. Pain, death and torture are your legacy. How proud of these are you now?"

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood— Those of the Brotherhood live lives of purpose; never have we encountered one who required the Good Death. We also respect the personal power they wield.
- Celestial Chorus — They attempt to diminish their blame in the course of the world by assigning their faults to the mortals who weigh them down.
- Cult of Ecstasy — How they delight in the clay of their physical forms! If they were mortal, none would be considered for the Good Death. Best to let them die and be gone...forever.
- Dreamspeakers — Their expert communion with the spirits is teaching them what they should know, but they have a problem with implementation.
- Hollow Ones — They claim to be one with death and decay, but that's fallacious. It is indeed amusing to watch the reaction of their sheltered psyches when confronted with the real thing.
- Order of Hermes — They skillfully define the parameters of the physical world, but their magick is ultimately of little use.
- Sons of Ether — Living proof that science could be a valid means of exploring reality. They squeeze every drop of information out of ideas tossed too casually aside by the Technomancers.
- Verbena — They are so close to understanding us. If they could but see the power of life in death, and not the weaker power of life itself.
- Virtual Adepts — Do they think they can live forever if they escape deeper into machines? The computer only eats their souls and leaves them absolutely nothing.



Hollow Ones

Though not an actual Tradition of magick, the Hollow Ones are a breed of young mages that have grown significantly within the past 15 years to become a notable force in mage society. The Hollow Ones are the envy and inspiration of every goth-punk in the World of Darkness. They are a reaction to and a result of the oppressive forces of the modern world. Hollow Ones have little interest in Ascension, and are thought by other Traditions to be signposts, not sign-bearers, of Ascension.

The Hollow Ones are for the most part separate pockets of tightly knit friends. They are usually found in cities, but also exist in the suburbs. Around the mid-'80s, they began to find one another in significant numbers, and the first of their cabals (they call them Cliques) started proliferating. These punk covens are usually found in graveyards, funeral parlors, churches and nightclubs. The point of these gatherings is to share the misery of existence and have fun at the same time. Hollows mature (experientially) at the age of 13 and carve out a niche of perfect freedom from school, job and family matters before they even consciously realize they are using their magick.

The Hollow Ones are just one subset of a larger group known as Orphans, mages who have Awakened on their own without the help of other mages. While this is the principal reason why they are distrusted by the Traditions, it also makes them valuable allies against the Technomancers, for they are underestimated and well hidden.

The Hollow Ones are generally defeatists by overall policy, yet this attitude never seems to get in the way of doing good deeds or entertaining themselves. Unlike the Sleepers, the demographics of the Hollows show more gothic taint than punk: for the most part, they are not the bullies and criminals who plague society. Instead, they are fish who swim peacefully in that violent environment. Their Ascension is a dark thing, tied to a deep narcissism.

Philosophy: Ascension? No such thing. It's a cat's cradle — no cat and no cradle, right? A lie to keep going. Well, the Orphans don't need the lie, especially not us Hollowers. We don't need to keep going either, except that there always seems to be great new music in the nightclubs. So the procession lurches on, and weren't the flowers on the casket just so exquisitely beautiful? Ascension? Okay, maybe. It's a deeply flawed world, but sure, it can Ascend in its way. Maybe the Garden of Eden would have Ascended with grace and beauty and goodwill for all mankind, but this isn't Eden.

Organization: The Hollow Ones recently elected a King and Queen, the two prettiest goths from among all the Cliques. The leaders of the five

or six biggest Cliques are known as Princes or Princesses. Every Halloween the "royal" Cliques throw a huge Ball during which the leadership roles (except for King and Queen, which are "until death") come up for election again. The winners are chosen by the most influential handful of Orphans in a Clique, and a glass slipper (usually a powerful magickal focus) is the trophy.

Meetings: Each Clique holds a Midnight Mass at the Clique headquarters Saturday night, which usually devolves into a party after the biggest decisions are out of the way. The electoral Ball every October 31st is never to be missed, if only because that's the biggest party of all. Other meetings are held at the whim of each individual Clique; it is customary to have an impromptu meeting after each important funeral (for fellow Hollows and Sleeper human friends alike). Inter-Clique meetings occur rarely, if at all, and few nationwide Orphan policies are ever enforced — *so far.*

Initiation: No such thing. Upon entering a new Clique, Hollow Ones are sometimes taken to a cemetery where the greatest number of previous Clique members and hangers-on are buried, and are told to commune with a ghost at random, doing whatever it asks. If they are unable to contact a ghost, then they must commune with a hot local singer while she sleeps.

Chantry: The Way Down, a Gothic church/nightclub in San Francisco.

Acolytes: Blood Dolls, runaways, night-shift workers

Sphere/Foci: Hollow Ones have no special Sphere and require no foci, but they do pay a higher price for all Spheres (see Chapter Eight).

Concepts: Blood Doll, occultist, artist

Quote: "My tongue carries the taste of blood and the dust of bones, an ashen elixir to choke my lover as I scream my kiss deep inside her soul. I guide her gently into the Sepulchre of Ascension."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood — Mysticism is an escape, not a rescue. The real world is frantic and ugly. How can you dig through dirt without getting dirty?
- Celestial Chorus — The Godhead lie isn't a bad one in theory — it's as good a lie as science or magic — but in practice it often weakens the souls of those who approach it incorrectly.
- Cult of Ecstasy — Ah, now these folks have a clue! If only they could appreciate the darker things in life.
- Dreamspeakers — They make perhaps the only strong case for the tendency to eschew the here-and-now, but after every spirit trip high you need to feel that crash back to the low for comparison.
- Euthanatos — The world of dying things is a rose-garden funeral of sores; these mages wish to tour it in a bulldozer rather than on foot. Still, they do bring the party with them, don't they?
- Order of Hermes — The dull monotony of high school taken to the Nth degree. These are probably the same people who memorize and count out their dance steps.
- Sons of Ether — Interesting ideas, great atmosphere. The only problem is their tendency to spend nights in the lab instead of in the clubs.
- Verbena — They seem right on target, but approach existence in a more rural sense than we do. Reality is blood and sweat, and the Verbena do not delude themselves into thinking it's cleaner.
- Virtual Adepts — Their world is a bit too antiseptic, but there seems to be some good mood behind it — style over substance may be just as accurate an assessment of things as our own milieu.

Order of Hermes

The Order of Hermes is the embodiment of what ha come to be regarded as the Western occult tradition. The basi tenets of the Tradition were established in ancient Egypt; the have since continued to evolve, diverging into dozens o splinter groups. Groups like the Hermetic Order of the Golde Dawn and systems of magic like Enochian and the Kabbalal are the results of this experimentation. While these groups an methods have sometimes continued to exist on their own most have been reabsorbed once their usefulness passed.

The Order of Hermes has quantified many levels o magick over the centuries. In fact, this process seems to be it purpose. This knowledge is then to be applied for the benef of mankind as a whole, though such application must b implemented beyond the notice of man lest his fear an ignorance destroy the Order.

The magick of the Order is expressed in arcane language profound metaphors and esoteric numerologies. Magick in th form is easy to record and pass to later generations so they ma build on the work and understanding of those who can before. Such nomenclature also serves the purpose of makin the magick of the Order unintelligible to the other Tradition The Order is the most secretive of all of the Traditions, so th safeguard is important.

The Order of Hermes was responsible for the creation another Order of Hermes, that experimental magickal grou allowed to operate in direct sight of mankind during th Middle Ages. The failure of this experiment has caused th Order of Hermes to withdraw farther, because its membe attribute the failure to internal corruption within the Order- a dark need to summon and control malefic creatures.

Now the Order wavers, fearing retaliation from the oth Traditions should it again attempt to exert influence on th mortal world. Some other Traditions view the complex n merology and astrological formulas of the Order to be litt better than the structured reality model of the Technocrac Still, the Order produces some of the most powerful wizar and so it is wholeheartedly accepted into the Tradition Ascension army.

all levels? Our strength is the strength of our Tradition, and we will never give it up.

Organization: Though there are many Chantries, those in authority control every member. To maintain secrecy, the Order has established the most rigorously organized Tradition.

Meetings: The meetings of the Order adhere to a schedule that reflects the alignment of the stars in the heavens. Ceremonies are held every day, but the size and importance of these ceremonies depend on the rarity of the conjunction at hand. Other numerologically important dates (like the impending close of the millennium) warrant special rituals as well.

Initiation: New members are welcomed into the Order of Hermes only one time per year. The date of the induction ceremony is the day of the most important conjunction of the year. The Order generally believes that the most promising initiates are those inducted on days of more infrequent conjunctions, so the Order tends to view its initiates as classes, with classes from certain years having more potential than others.

Chantry: Most of the Chantries dominated by the Order are found in Europe, and the main Chantry is located in Cordoba.

Acolytes: mathematicians, members of secret organizations (Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, CIA, etc.), scientists

Sphere: Forces

Foci: *Circle*– Spirit, *Language*– all Spheres, including those with another focus (Linguistics Ability required), *Seal of Solomon*– Forces/Prime, *Showstone*– Mind/Time

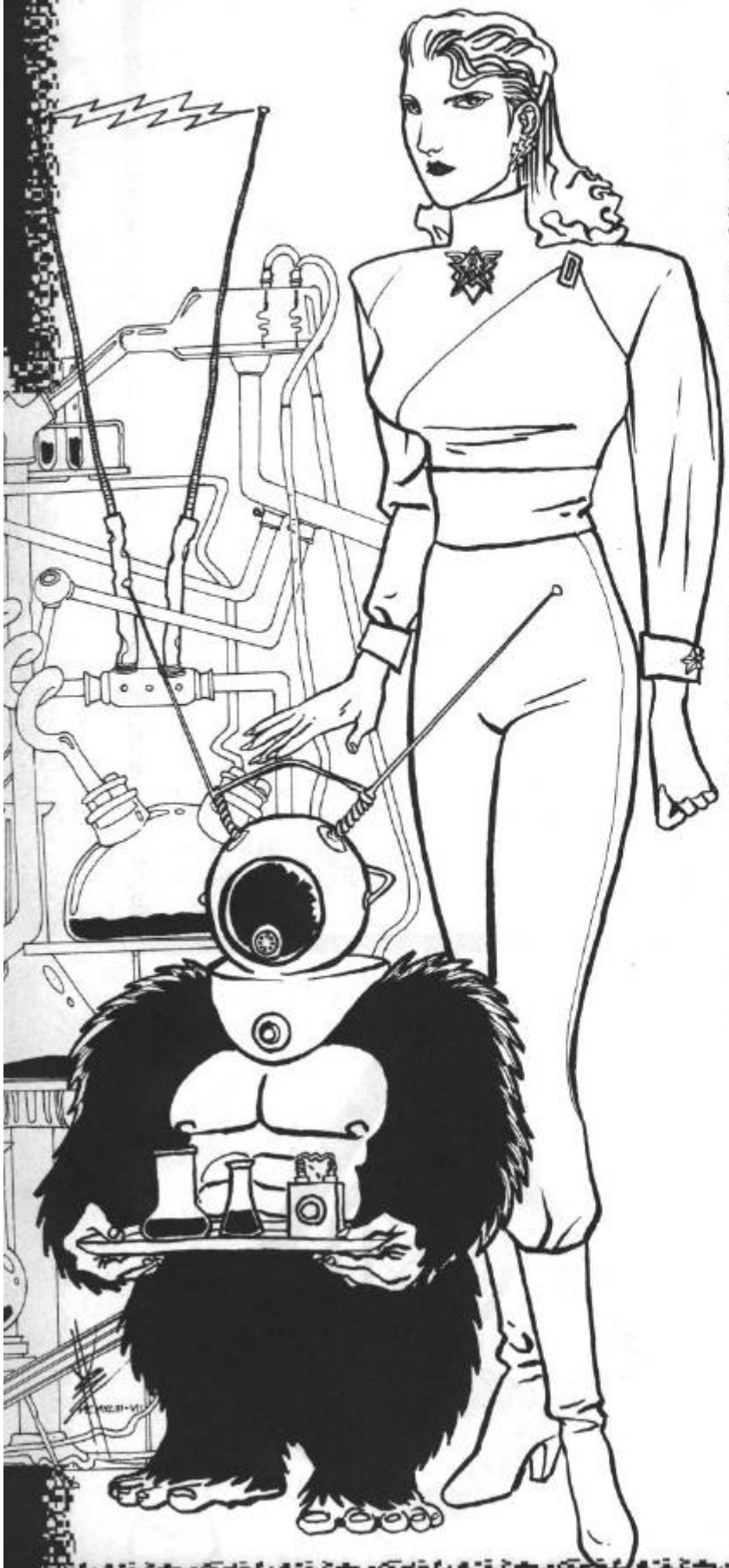
Concepts: Alchemist, Kabbalist, scientist

Quote: "Trust me on this matter as you would in any other, for I can tap a reservoir of knowledge beyond your comprehension."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood — Of all the others, they have the greatest potential to find some degree of enlightenment. They are sufficiently organized to recognize truth when it appears.
- Celestial Chorus — They accept far too much on faith alone. We will believe their claims only when they deliver proof.
- Cult of Ecstasy — Certain experiences are undoubtedly noteworthy, but it is best to study these experiences in others rather than practicing them upon oneself. How can one report in an unbiased fashion about something one has personally undergone?
- Dreamspeakers — The powerlessness of their magick is evident in the thousands of years they have practiced to no noticeable gain. Are they mages at all?
- Euthanatos — While we cannot respect their callousness toward life, we do respect that they have definite goals and work to achieve them.
- Hollow Ones — Contemptible. These bastards of magick have no place among true mages.
- Sons of Ether — They adhere to the limitations of science without reaping any of its benefits. Their procedures don't allow them to make the categorical decisions and divisions that classical thought entails.
- Verbena — They are too fractious to enact any long-term changes, and their beliefs are too religious to allow movement toward higher thought.
- Virtual Adepts — Computers could be put to useful work, but generating false images of reality is not the answer.

Sons of Ether



This Tradition has an unlikely origin. It began with an Islamic scroll that made its way into the Spain of Alfonso X ("the Wise") in the late 1200s. The king's translators in Toledo stumbled across it during their mammoth task of translation. The scroll is said to have contained radical departures from the science of the Europeans. The Muslims of the time studied a more advanced science, but the scroll is said to discuss things unknown or inconceivable even in the Islamic homeland.

The information in this scroll sparked something in the head of the translator who struggled with it (it's quite a coincidence that the scroll was assigned to him!). It detailed a belief very similar to the Metaphysic of Magick. The scroll claims that empirical observations do not depend on the observed, but on the observer. All observations, even those that others might call objective or factual, are in fact based upon the beliefs of the observer.

This fundamental belief led the unknown translator to form a secret society. The society espoused the study of reality as a means to find what each seeker desired. The society's experiments served to create a science based on an invented reality model. Unfortunately, some early mistakes caused membership to plummet, and the society became an underground phenomenon for centuries. The translator apparently stuck to his instinct, though, for a group called the Sons of Ether appeared in the early 19th century. Its members created life from the assembled limbs of dead bodies, swapped thoughts between two bodies, and even traveled to the moon buoyed by the ether they knew was in "space."

The Sons of Ether have long maintained a policy of total separation from society. They work feverishly in their hidden laboratories, occasionally sharing with one another the new scientific phenomena they have created. They seek to build a new science, one based on their own theories and occasionally incorporating theories that mankind has discarded.

Only over the course of the last century have the Sons of Ether grudgingly accepted the term magick to describe what they do, and have begun to interact with the other Traditions. There is a fierce rivalry between the Technocracy and the Sons of Ether. The Technocracy views the Sons of Ether as lunatics who scavenge the lost branches of disproved scientific theory. By imbuing new life to these forgotten concepts, the Sons turn the old theories into thorns in the side of the Technocracy. They squeeze every drop of information out of ideas tossed aside too casually by Technomancers.

For once, the Technocracy may be right, at least with regard to the Sons' mental stability. There are whispers among

generation in a Russian laboratory. The same rumors say that the resulting obscenity is kept under lock and key by the Tradition.

It might be noted that though the Tradition is named the Sons of Ether, it does welcome female reality scientists into its ranks. The women within the Tradition have been campaigning for a revision of the name, with little success.

Philosophy: The Technomancers are cowards. They are afraid to go where their inner vision takes them. Now people can't even see that another science — another mathematics, biology, physics and cosmology — is possible. We will not accept the yoke of conformity and stupidity that the Technomancers would have us wear. We will not allow them to turn our fine and graceful machine into a matte-black, formless engine. Call the process magick if you wish, but we decide how our science should operate and develop it to be so.

Organization: Sons of Ether are loosely organized on each continent through a non-hierarchical structure similar to a colloquium of university science professors. They communicate through a scientific journal called *Paradigma*, trading thoughts on each others' experiments and reporting their own work. Most status within this Tradition comes through successful experiments.

Meetings: All Sons of Ether congregate once a year (or more often during crises) to discuss the current direction of experimentation. Specialized groups conducting similar work meet more often to collaborate.

Initiation: Normally, a Ph.D student whose thesis is deemed too radical by established science, yet who clings to his research despite institutional rejection, is selected to join the Sons of Ether. Often, one of the members of the Tradition will become interested in the thesis work and slip the prospective initiate a copy of the original Islamic scroll. If the prospect responds well to the scroll, the Son will gradually bring the initiate into the fold and tutor him in the ways of the Tradition.

Chantry: France has long been an intellectual capital of the world. These seekers of a new science have gathered in Paris.

Acolytes: inventors, eccentric people, mechanics

Sphere: Matter

Foci: *Abacus*–Correspondence/Entropy, *Electricity*–Life/Prime, *Ether Goggles*– Mind/Spirit, *Scientific Meter*– Forces/Matter/Time

Concepts: mad scientist, absent-minded professor, gadgeteer

Quote: "Real science, the true picture of reality, will not come from the dead-end laboratories of the Technocracy, but from true paradigma experimentation."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood — Interesting people, but their views are only a philosophy of human life, not a theory of reality.
- Celestial Chorus — A bunch of dogmatists, caught up in a theological wheel that keeps winding down but hasn't yet stopped. They don't realize from whence their beliefs are derived.
- Cult of Ecstasy — Be serious. It's a waste of time to discuss these nonsensical faddists.
- Dreamspeakers — A fascinating anthropological study. I wonder how a specimen would respond under beta-wave induction.
- Euthanatos — A group too radical to be safely observed for study. Use caution with them.
- Hollow Ones — A science that can disenfranchise so many is not the science we want. These mages would find more meaning in a world built on our truths.
- Order of Hermes — We could learn some things from this group, and often do. They at least have a systematic approach to their studies, though their interpretations are hopelessly skewed by the arcane gobbledigook they use for technical vocabulary.
- Verbena — A primitive order whose sole purpose in life seems to be relishing in biologically based rituals.
- Virtual Adepts — Very useful. They can often be used in experimental collaboration. Although they seem to stay open to paradigma experimentation, we must beware of their links to the Technocracy.

Verbena

The Verbena are the kinds of mages that give witches a bad name in Sleeper society. Witches have been persecuted for centuries. As long ago as the days of ancient Greece and Rome, Sleepers believed that witches transformed into beasts, destroyed crops, and gave people the "evil eye." This view of witches has gradually softened, especially now that more of the authentic nature of Wicca is understood. Behind the scenes, though, the Verbena continue their magical practices unabated.

Verbena believe in the power of the self to overcome and understand through group interaction. They believe in the power of mankind. Verbena understand, however, that humanity as a whole will never achieve the proper awareness unless it is assisted (even if said assistance is against humanity's will and contrary to prevailing beliefs). Verbena thus work to ingratiate themselves to modern society through new kinds of witchcraft. Exposure of the Tradition's true practices would be extremely damaging to the Verbena's efforts.

Much Verbena magick comes from the natural world. The primal constituents of life are the most useful to Verbena, and create the most potent and lasting effects. Blood, whether from people or animals, is extremely powerful and is prominent in almost all Verbena gatherings and rituals. Tree sap and the juices of plants are likewise important to Verbena, and Verbena as a result usually excel at herbalism.

Outsiders accuse Verbena of tree worship, for in the center of every Chantry is a tree (usually an oak). Trees, however, are simply foci for the power of the Tradition. The Quintessence gathered by Verbena mages is stored in these so-called World Trees, as are the protections and powers gained through their rituals. Because of the bloody aspects of these rituals, Verbena trees gain a particularly crimson hue after a time. The power of a Verbena coven can be gauged by the age and color of its World Tree.

The Verbena understand very well that the body rules the mind. The lusts of the physical shell cannot be denied, and this blunt, unassailable truth forms the foundation of the Tradition. Physiology defeats ideology, and the Verbena are masters of all things carnal.

Philosophy: The power is the blood, plain and simple. We bleed. It is only through our blood that life goes on. Is it any wonder our births are such bloody affairs? So will the blood of humanity be used in our work. We are descended from the Twisters of Fate, and we will bend and twist reality until it is our own. Even those who hold power cannot deny the

simple requirements of life and the passions thereof: rage, lust, envy, hate. We know all of these and we will use them to dominate, control, cajole and influence. We will bring down the lifeless Technocracy and replace it with our own Army of the Living, of Blood.

Organization: Members of this Tradition gather in groups they call covens, though they use the typical word "Chantry" to refer to their places of gathering when interacting with other mages. Covens vary in size, but the most powerful membership number is 13.

Meetings: The eight Sabbats of the calendar year. The four lesser Sabbats are the solstices and equinoxes, and the four greater Sabbats are Candlemas (Feb. 2), Beltane (May 1), Lammas (Aug. 1) and Samhain (Oct. 31).

Initiation: Initiation ceremonies are performed at any gathering or at a special gathering on the birthday of the initiate. The process involves a purifying bath and entry into a magickal circle. Here the new Verbena dedicates himself until candles set at each cardinal direction have burnt out. Like most Verbena rituals, the participants of the initiation ceremony are all "skyclad" (naked).

Chantry: The Black Forest in Germany is the home of these mages. The forest is dwindling despite the best efforts of the mages. Some force, or someone's potent influence, is overpowering the attempts of the mages to halt the deforestation. They may have to get serious about this matter soon.

Acolytes: civil libertarians, Wiccans, butchers, New Agers, rustics, scholars

Sphere: Life

Foci: *Blood*– Life/Prime, *Cauldron*– Entropy/Spirit, *Herbs*–Matter, *Wand*–Correspondence/Forces/Time, *Weapon*–Mind

Concepts: druid, explorer, witch

Quote: "You may call our rituals bloody and primitive, but with your illusions of cars and comforts you are infinitely farther from the truth than I."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood— They have the capacity to understand, but they have created a world for themselves apart from that of others. How can one know that which one cannot see?
- Celestial Chorus — They have been successful through the years because of the pretty pictures they can paint. Their truths are nothing but sugar that melts away in the mouth.
- Cult of Ecstasy — They squeeze every moment out of living, but rejoicing in every moment for its experience leaves little time for understanding.
- Dreamspeakers — Through their incessant contemplation of the world they have lost the ability to interact with it.
- Euthanatos — Vile! They are the ones who should die. Life is too sacred for such treatment.
- Hollow Ones — The life we seek to return to the world has slipped from these people. Hollow Ones are reality's way of showing us what mankind will become if the Technomancers win.
- Order of Hermes — They overanalyze the world and are entangled in the minutiae of it.
- Sons of Ether — Their science is not as sanitized as that of the Technocracy, but that makes it little better.
- Virtual Adepts — Pretty pictures, even ones you can touch, smell and taste, do not reality make.

Virtual Adepts

Computers have become an integral part of modern society. As they have come to dominate the world, so too has a new Tradition of mages, the Virtual Adepts. Ever since Babbage's first machine was invented over 100 years ago, the Virtual Adepts have been working to ensure the acceptance of the computer by society. In this they have been very successful. The work of the Technomancers helped create a world where the computer has become ubiquitous. This has given this young Tradition enormous power.

The Virtual Adepts were at one time a Convention of the Technocracy. However, they were careful to steer clear of the traps into which the other Conventions have fallen. They see the growing acceptance of computers into society as a sign that their star is rising. The Virtual Adepts feel that they are using technology to create new possibilities, whereas other Technomancers are simply devouring the present for maximum gain.

Like all Technomancers, the Virtual Adepts operate beyond the cutting edge of modern technology. They possess laptop computers of sufficient speed and capacity to render Sleepers' largest super-computers obsolete. To promote the view of computers as power for the people, Virtual Adepts have supported the vision of virtual reality. They seek to create new Realms within the spirit world of their cyber-reality Net.

Virtual Adepts are grudgingly accepted by most other mage Traditions despite their Technomancer origins. However, the Technocracy now despises the Adepts above all other Traditions; they are recognized as the greatest threat to the long-term domination of Technomancer science.

This situation suits the Virtual Adepts just fine. They feel that technology can save mankind, but prefer their technological vision to that of the Technomancers. The Adepts have created the first counterculture with enough power to implement true change.

Philosophy: We represent all to which humanity aspires. No longer will we go the way of all flesh, because after the flesh is dead our souls will live on. In our crystalline towers we'll live forever. Before then, however, we'll rip through the barriers that block us, the locks that keep us out, and the security systems that try to stop us. It's our destiny to know, to sense, to alter, to crash, to steal, and to become one with the Ghost in the Machine, the soul of the computer. We *are* the future. We will continue to evolve in this way until *we become* the tools of our Ascension.

Organization: The Virtual Adepts have an unusual manner of organization. Because they usually meet one another online, they often have no idea of the mundane world identity of their fellows. The Tradition's only organization is within the Net, where a loose hierarchy based on ability has been established.

Meetings: Virtual Adepts rarely meet face-to-face. Instead, they rely on communication via computer BBSs.

Initiation: Initiation into this Tradition is possible only by invitation. Virtual Adepts keep an eye out for potential candidates as they travel the Net. When one is detected the candidate is brought to the attention of all the members. Membership is offered if the candidate can pass a series of secret tests.

Chantry: Because it is home to so many government facilities, Omaha, Nebraska is a tangle of phone lines. The main Chantry of the Virtual Adepts exists in a Realm created online in this area. Members attend in their online guises.

Acolytes: science fiction fans, hackers, computer game players, programmers, couch potatoes

Sphere: Correspondence

Foci: *Computer*– all Spheres, *Electricity*– Forces, *Network*– Prime/Spirit

Concepts: hacker, software designer, computer net operator

Quote: "Do you understand now that you have touched, seen, heard, smelled and tasted it? I knew you would."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood — Their way worked in older times, but things change too fast today. People want more and want it sooner.
- Celestial Chorus — Didn't thoughts of gods and salvation die out hundreds of years ago?
- Cult of Ecstasy — They're a lot of fun to talk with, but ultimately they're one-dimensional.
- Dreamspeakers — If they were better organized they could actually recombine the sciences with humanistic thought under the Gaia concept.
- Euthanatos — These mages are really frightening. People can learn without dying.
- Hollow Ones — They're okay, really. If the world isn't good enough for them now, we can create virtual worlds that will set even them on fire.
- Order of Hermes — They have the right idea, but they need to remove the mysticism from all their charts and numbers and find the science that's waiting for them.
- Sons of Ether — They're certainly more fun than true scientists, but their research is an aside more than a true pursuit. We have left some things for them to find, though, because we're curious what they can do with the ideas.
- Verbena — No wonder witches have been burned for centuries. Such rituals have no place in the modern world.

Personality Archetypes

No, my morality was older, more classic yet, the morality that distinguished between sacrifice and slaughter and had not yet dreamed of sport.

— M.J. Engh, *Arslan*

We humans instinctively roleplay. Every moment of our lives is spent playing a role of one type or another. Our being is made up of many layers of personalities, some which we pretend to be, others which we present naturally.

Personality Archetypes are a way of defining our personalities. They describe the roles that are a collective characteristic of our identities and that we all share in common. The psychologist Carl Jung invented the concept of Archetypes to describe the primordial concepts residing in the universal unconscious of humanity. He never tried to name them, as he believed one really couldn't describe such universal symbols with words. However, in order to incorporate the concept into **Mage**, we have done exactly this, so remember to take what we say with a grain of salt.

Archetypes encompass not only personalities, but places and things as well. They are ways for the Storyteller to help players understand their characters and setting, and to relate them to their own lives. Archetypes help us make sense of things, and help the Storyteller bring the story home.

Characters do not, in fact, fit into such neat and tidy categories. Archetypes are the molds for an infinite number of different personalities, and should not be seen as absolute standards. They fundamental patterns, yet each individual varies from the pattern in many ways. These personality Archetypes are examples of the variety of personalities that can found; they are intended to guide, not restrict.

The key to the use of Archetypes is the interaction between the character's Nature and Demeanor. Nature is the true personality of the character, that which she is but may not reveal to others. Most people do not wish others to know them intimately, and therefore create facades behind which they can hide their true selves — false fronts. Such facades are known as Demeanors. A character's Demeanor may be as consistent as her Attributes, or may change from minute to minute. An extraordinarily open, honest or simple-minded individual may have the same Demeanor and Nature.

Archetypes have a practical impact on the game, for each Archetype provides a different way to regain Willpower points. The Nature of the character is thus vital in regaining Willpower. The procedure works like this: the player notices her character may be able to regain Willpower because of her actions or the situation — this varies from Archetype to Archetype. She asks the Storyteller if she can regain Will-

power, and the Storyteller either accepts or rejects the request. If the Storyteller deems the request valid, he awards anything from one to three Willpower points, depending on the nature of the character's actions. The Storyteller shouldn't reward a character if he thinks the player is performing the action in order to regain Willpower and is not really roleplaying.

Each Archetype has an inherent flaw. This is a psychological weakness or fault. This flaw must be struggled against for a mage to survive and must be overcome for a mage to Ascend. Certain Arete Seekings (see Chapter Eight) can only be completed if the character confronts and overcomes her flaw. There are old sayings about how power brings responsibility and how power corrupts. By overcoming these flaws, mages show that they have the proper respect for the knowledge they have. A mage overcome by her flaws will never be considered by the Oracles for further instruction.

The Storyteller should encourage players to develop their own Archetypes, thus giving players the opportunity to create truly unique personalities.

Architect

Your sense of purpose goes beyond your own needs; you try to create something of lasting value for those who will come after you. People need many things, and you gain satisfaction by providing whatever you can. You are the type of person who makes an effort to build something of value: to found a town, create a company or in some way leave a lasting legacy.

Your flaw is that you become **Obsessed** by your ambitions — so focused on your plans that you become blind to everything and everyone else. You must defeat your fixation on one goal, and open yourself to new possibilities and achievements.

— Regain Willpower whenever you create or establish something of importance or lasting value.

Avant-Garde

You must always be in the forefront. You must always be the first to break the news, the new dance or fashion trend, or a new discovery in the arts. Nothing pains you more than hearing second-hand news, like hearing of a hot new band from someone else. New discoveries are your life and you devote a great deal of time and effort to keeping up with things. If you're not in the front, you're nowhere.

Your flaw is your **Pride**, your absolute self-assurance that you are better than everyone else. You hold anything old in contempt, and you quickly grow tired of the new. You must aspire to find something you can truly value.

— Regain one point of Willpower whenever you are the first with a piece of news or other significant discovery.

Bon Vivant

Life is pointless, shallow and meaningless — so have as good a time as possible. Rome may burn, but you shall drink wine and sing songs. You are a sensualist, sybarite and party animal; the words austerity, self-denial and self-discipline have no place in your life. You much prefer the concept of instant gratification. Still, you don't mind a little hard work as long as a good time awaits you upon completion. Most Bon Vivants have little self-control, for they so dearly love excess.

Your flaw is your **Hedonism**. Pleasure is your only real goal. Power exists to serve your base urges. However, Ascension requires higher ambitions, and you must find a less fleeting means of gratification.

— Regain Willpower whenever you have a truly good time and can fully express your exultation (or perhaps even more points if you enjoy an especially fun night).

Bravo

You are a bully, a ruffian, a tough, and delight in tormenting the weak. Things must always go your way, and you do not tolerate those who cross you. Power and might are all you respect; indeed, you heed only those who can prove their power to you.

You see nothing wrong with forcing your will upon others. There is nothing you like better than to persecute, antagonize, heckle and intimidate those whom you hold in contempt. The emotions of kindness and pity are not completely foreign to you, but you hide from your own sense of weakness through cruelty to others. While most Bravos despise the weak, a few become their protectors.

Your flaw is **Anger**. You enjoy exercising your wrath on others. This indulgence must be defeated or it will consume you.

— Regain Willpower whenever you intimidate or physically force another person to do what you wish.

Caregiver

You always try to help those around you, and struggle to make a difference in the needs and sorrows of the unfortunate. People around you depend on your stability and strength to keep them steady and centered. You are the one to whom people turn when they have a problem.

Your flaw is your **Lack of Confidence**. You sacrifice yourself not out of love, but out of twisted duty and desire for appreciation. Action for you is always the result of altruism, through which you vitiate your own power.

— Regain Willpower whenever you successfully protect or nurture someone else. This protection can be as small as a smile of support or a shoulder to lean on at an appropriate moment. You must help the other person in some way, though he need not acknowledge it openly.

Conformist

You are a follower. Taking charge is just not your style. It is easier for you to adapt, attune, adjust, comply and reconcile yourself to the new situations in which you find yourself. You flit to the brightest star, the person you feel to be the best, throwing your lot in with her. It is difficult and distasteful for you to go against the flow or to rebel. You hate inconsistency

and instability, and know that by supporting a strong leader, you help prevent chaos from occurring. All stable groups need some kind of Conformist.

Your flaw is your **Low Self-Esteem**. You haven't the self-confidence to assert your will, and instead allow yourself to be a tool of others. Only when you discover your own agenda and pursue it can you Ascend.

— Regain Willpower whenever your group accomplishes something because of your support and aid.

Conniver

What's the sense of working hard when you can get something for nothing? Why drudge when, just by talking, you can get what you want? You always try to find the easy way out, the fast track to success and wealth. Some people might call what you do swindling or even outright theft, but you know that you only do what everyone else does; you just do it better. Additionally, trickery is a game, and you get great pleasure out of outwitting someone. Connivers play many roles, so you may be a thief, a swindler, a street waif, an entrepreneur, a con man or just a finagler.

Your flaw is **Envy**. You are never happy with what you've got; you always want more. You must eventually overcome your desire, and find happiness in what you've got and who you are.

— Regain Willpower whenever you are able to get your way by tricking another person into doing as you wish.

Critic

Nothing in the world should be accepted without thorough scrutiny and examination. Nothing is ever perfect, and the blemishes must be pointed out in order for the good to be truly recognized. Your standards are high for everything, and you insist on their being met. You encourage the same ideals in others because low standards reduce the quality of life for everyone. They'll thank you later, once they discover the purity of your perspective. You seek out and expose the imperfections in every person or thing you encounter. You are never satisfied with anything that is less than perfect, unless it is yourself — after all, you're not a perfectionist.

Your flaw is **Arrogance**. It is difficult to accept who you are, so you focus your energies upon finding greater faults in others.

— Regain one point of Willpower whenever you discover a significant imperfection that others overlook.

Curmudgeon

You are an irascible, churlish person at heart, taking everything seriously and finding little humor in life (though you may have a wickedly barbed wit). Cynicism is your middle name; it is the tool with which you judge everything in life. You have a very well-defined understanding of how things really work, especially when they involve the circus of human

endeavor. Long ago the foolish actions of others ceased to surprise you.

Your flaw is a **Lack of Imagination**. You've lost the spark that makes you truly magical, and deny that by putting down the achievements of others.

— Regain Willpower whenever someone does something stupid, just like you predicted. You must predict it either out loud to the other characters or in private to the Storyteller.

Deviant

There are always people who don't fit in, and you are such a miscreant. Your beliefs, motivations and sense of propriety are completely antithetical to the status quo. You are not so much an aimless rebel as an independent thinker who does not belong in the society in which you were raised. You don't give a damn about other people's morality, but you do adhere to your own strange code of conduct. Deviants are typically irreverent, and some have truly bizarre tastes and desires.

Your flaw is your **Perversion**. The energy you require to defy what is established will one day spread to what is around you, and remake the world in your image. Hatred for such activity is currently reserved only for the Technomancers.

— Regain Willpower whenever you successfully thumb your nose at society and its precepts without retaliation.

Director

You despise chaos and disorder, and tend to take control and organize things in order to suppress anarchy. You like to be in charge, live to organize, and habitually strive to make things work smoothly. You trust your own judgment implicitly and tend to think of things in black-and-white terms: "This won't work," "You're either for me or against me," "There are two ways to do this — my way and the wrong way."

You have a **Lack of Tolerance**. In order to Ascend, you must strive to integrate the views of others to achieve compromise.

— Regain Willpower when you are allowed to lead a group and accomplish some significant task.

Fanatic

You are consumed by a cause; it is the primary force in your life, for good or ill. Every ounce of blood and passion you possess is directed toward your cause; in fact, you may feel very guilty about spending time on anything else. You will let nothing stand in your way — nothing that you cannot overcome, in any case. You and those around you may suffer, but your cause is everything — the end justifies the means. Before the game begins, make sure you describe your cause, and define how it may affect your behavior.

Your flaw is your **Stubbornness**. The possibilities of life have been closed to you; you must open yourself to other choices or your final victory will be a hollow one.

— You regain Willpower whenever you accomplish an act that furthers your cause.

Jester

You are the fool, idiot, quipster, clown or comic, forever making fun of both yourself and others. You constantly seek the humor in any situation, and strive always to battle the tides of depression inside yourself. You hate sorrow and pain, and constantly try to take others' minds off the dark side of life. Sometimes you'll do nearly anything to forget that pain exists. Your particular brand of humor might not always impress your friends, but it makes you feel better. Some Jesters manage to escape pain and are truly happy, but most never find release.

Your flaw is your **Hypocrisy**. Focusing the attention of others on happiness leaves a deadly potential to ignore the dreadful.

— Regain Willpower when you raise the spirits of those around you through the device of humor, especially when you are able to escape your own pain in the process.

Judge

As a facilitator, moderator, arbitrator, conciliator and peacemaker, you always seek to make things better. You pride yourself on your rationality, your judgment and your ability to deduce a reasonable explanation when given the facts. You struggle to promote truth, but you understand how difficult it is to ascertain. You respect justice, for that is the way through which truth can reign.

In your view, people are resources, albeit ones that are most difficult to manage and employ. You hate dissension and arguments, and shy away from dogmatism. Sometimes Judges make good leaders, though a lack of vision can sometimes cause them to maintain the status quo instead of searching for a better way.

You **Lack Vision**. The static framework you have created must be expanded to one of choice, openness and freedom.

— Regain Willpower when you are able to separate the truth from a web of lies, or when you convince disputing individuals to agree with your judgments.

Loner

You are always alone, even in the midst of a crowd. You are the wanderer, hunter and lone wolf. Though others might think of you as lonely, forsaken, isolated or remote, in truth you prefer your own company to that of others. There are many different reasons why this might be so: you don't understand people, you understand people too well, people dislike you, people like you too much, or you are simply lost in your own thoughts. Your reasons are your own.

Your flaw is your **Lack of Empathy**. By interacting with others, you can find a rewarding place in the world.

— When you manage to accomplish some significant task on your own, without the aid of others, yet which still aids the

group in some way, you regain Willpower based on the significance of the achievement.

Martyr

All possess the martyr instinct, but few act upon it. Even fewer live the life of a Martyr. You, however, are such a one. Your desire for self-sacrifice stems from a low self-esteem, a feeling of a lack of control, or a profoundly developed sense of love. You are able to endure long-lasting and severe suffering because of your beliefs and ideals.

At worst, a Martyr expects sympathy and attention because of his or her suffering, and may even feign or exaggerate pain or deprivation. At best, a Martyr willingly suffers injury or even death rather than renounce his religion, beliefs, principles, cause or friends.

Your flaw is your **Pessimism**. Emotions from without have overcome you, negating your sense of internal peace.

— Regain Willpower when you sacrifice yourself in a real and immediate way for your beliefs or another individual.

Rebel

You are a malcontent, iconoclast and free-thinking recalcitrant. You are so independent-minded and free-willed that you are unwilling to join any particular cause or movement. You are just yourself and only desire the freedom to be yourself. You do not make a good follower and aren't usually a very good leader either (unless your followers are willing to go wherever you lead). You tend to be insubordinate to authority to the point of stupidity.

Your flaw is your **Lack of Direction**. Your power has no focus, and cannot be brought to fruition in the achievement of a goal.

— Regain Willpower whenever your rebellion against the status quo turns out to be for the best.

Survivor

No matter what, you always manage to survive. You can endure, pull through, recover from, outlast and outlive nearly any circumstance. When the going gets tough, you get going. You never say die, and never give up — never. Nothing angers you as much as a person who doesn't struggle to make things better, or who surrenders to the nameless forces of the universe.

Your flaw is your **Lack of Trust**. You must open yourself up to the world to transcend it.

— Regain Willpower whenever you survive a difficult situation through your own cunning and perseverance.

Traditionalist

You are an orthodox and conservative individual. What was good enough for you when you were young is good enough for you now. You resist change of any sort. You oppose change for the sake of change — what point is there in that? You may

be seen by some as a miser, a reactionary or simply an old fogy. You always strive to preserve the status quo.

Your flaw is your **Complacence**. A mage must summon the energy to enact new possibilities, rather than succumb to stasis.

— Regain Willpower whenever you are able to protect the status quo and prevent change.

Visionary

Very few are brave or strong or imaginative enough to look beyond the suffocating embrace of society and mundane thought, in search of something more. Society treats such people with both respect and contempt, for the Visionary perverts as well as guides society.

You may be a spiritualist, shaman, New Ager, mystic, philosopher or inventor, but whatever you are, you are always looking for something more. You see beyond the bounds of conventional imagination and create new possibilities. Though you might have your head in the clouds and are often of an impractical bent, you are filled with new ideas and perceptions.

Your flaw is your **Pride**, pride in your ability to see and understand what others cannot. You must learn humility to Ascend.

— Regain Willpower whenever you are able to convince others to believe in your dreams and follow the course of action outlined by your vision of the future.

Essences

I cry
Now. Death, like a familiar, hears
and look, has made a man of dust
of a man of flesh. This sorcery
I do. Being damned, I am amused...
— Keith Douglas, "How to Kill"

Nature and Demeanor define a person socially — they describe how someone reacts to and interacts with other people. While mages are certainly social creatures, they also exist on a level beyond social definition. This is why mages speak of themselves in terms of Essences. A mage's Essence describes the manner in which he is fundamentally connected to the quintessential core of reality. It describes the Avatar of the mage, and is an embodiment of one of the primary forces of reality. A mage's actions are most likely to succeed when they reflect this fundamental connection. There are five Essences: Dynamic, Infinite, Pattern, Primordial and Questing. Of these, only four are even remotely understood by most mages.

The Infinite Essence has never been known to manifest in mages. In fact, its existence is conjecture, much like the quark in quantum mechanics. No scientist has ever actually seen a quark, but at least 12 varieties of quarks, varying in color, anticolor, flavor and strangeness, have been categorized. Just as modern physics is inconceivable without the existence of quarks, so too does the metaphysics of magick fundamentally rely upon the Essence of Infinite.

The other four Essences are vaguely understood by most mages and have manifested themselves throughout history.

Each player should choose the Essence his mage most embodies. Essence plays a large part in the quest for Ascension, so choose carefully. The four Essences are described below.

Dynamic

This is by far the most common Essence. Dynamic is the very incarnation of the forces of change. All mages are ultimately part of the dynamic force that drives reality, but mages of this Essence are consumed by it. That is, they are driven by a love of and desire for constant change. They will probably never achieve, and may never know, their ultimate destination. Mages of this Essence are often considered pioneers, for they embody the very heart of what it is to be a mage.

The Avatars of those of with Dynamic Essences tend to be energetic spirits of great cunning and curiosity. They are able to assume many different forms, but tend to appear as shadows or nebulous beings out of childhood dreams. Fickle and capricious, they are impossible to please.

Pattern

Relatively few mages outside of the Technocracy embody this Essence, but they are vital in the overall schema of mage society. Pattern Essence mages usually work toward an end. They are innately dynamic, of course, like all mages, but they aren't as concerned with finding new ways to weave the advancements of mages into reality. Without Pattern mages' support, most Dynamic mages would be incapable of pursuing the truths of reality as far as they do.

The Avatars of this Essence are the most stable and constant of all Avatars, and tend to have but one form. Such an Avatar usually appears as an authority figure from the

character's past, and are demanding and unforgiving. Their rules must be followed in everything.

Primordial

Primordial is perhaps the rarest of mage Essences. Many of the earliest mages embodied this Essence, but as time has passed fewer and fewer have manifested it. Today, very few Primordial Avatars exist among the ranks of mages. Many believe this is because the Essence has become obsolete. When reality was forming it was central, but now reality is so defined there is little room for it. Primordial Avatars concern themselves with the base elements of reality, the underlying structures and natures of things.

The Primordial Avatars tend to take the form of animals, spirits or gods of legend. They tend to be very coarse and direct in manner and speech, caring little for the trappings and expectations of society.

Questing

For many millennia mages did not view this Essence as separate from Dynamic. However, mages of Dynamic Essence do not have the focus or motivation of Questing mages. Even if Questing mages do not achieve any stable end, they at least pursue something tangible and therefore forge a path in that direction for others to follow. Dynamic mages lack this focus. They jump from fancy to fancy without regard for an end or even concern over the fact that they are doing little to affect reality in a fundamental way. Many mages tend to overlook the forest for the trees, but those of Questing Essence always seek the big picture. Questing mages tie disparate ideas together and make forgotten thoughts seem fresh again.

Questing Avatars are pushy and demanding, and are never satisfied with what has been achieved. They always want more and better. When they reveal themselves they always want to set out on some mission and are rarely patient enough to wait for long.

Specialties

For each Attribute and Ability Trait rated four or higher, a player can select a specialty. A specialty is a particular facet of a Trait that a character is capable of performing with additional proficiency — a character may be able to drive very well, but may be particularly adept at off-road maneuvers.

A specialty allows the player to reroll 10s scored on actions directly involving the specialty. The player gets to keep the success indicated by each 10, and may subsequently try again for another success, rolling another die for each 10 obtained.

Specialties help mages with their magickal effects. If a mage has a specialty with the magickal effect she is trying to create, she may use it to reroll 10s. This is true even though Abilities themselves are not used in the magickal effect roll. For instance, if a Euthanatos mage has a Medicine specialty of heart diseases and causes a heart attack in her victim, she gets to take advantage of the specialty to reroll 10s even though the actual roll, like all magickal effect rolls, only uses Arete rating.

Attributes

Human beings are the most flexible organisms around. That's why we're still around, and that's why we're smart enough to wonder why.
—Robert Wright, "Science, God and Man" (*Time*, Dec. 28, 1992)

Physical

These Traits describe how strong, dexterous and sturdy a character is, and are the primary Traits of an action-oriented character. Physical Traits concern only the strengths and weaknesses of the body.

Strength

This is a measure of your mean physical strength — your ability to lift, carry and cause physical harm. A person with a high Strength rating is usually larger than someone with a lower rating. Of course, there are always exceptions.

Strength is used when you attempt to lift, carry, push, heave or break something. In melee combat, your Strength Trait is added to your damage Dice Pool. Strength is also used when you attempt to make any sort of jump or leap.

Specialties: Strong grip, Massive, Husky, Able-Bodied, Broad Shoulders, Hearty, Powerful, Bulging Biceps, Wiry, Large

- • Poor: You can bench press 40 lbs.
- •• Average: You can bench press 100 lbs.
- ••• Good: You can bench press 250 lbs.
- •••• Exceptional: You can bench press 400 lbs.
- ••••• Outstanding: You can bench press 650 lbs.

Dexterity

This Trait is a measure of your general physical prowess — speed, quickness and agility. It indicates the capacity for moving with agility and manipulating objects with accuracy and grace. Dexterity includes hand-eye coordination, fine motor manipulation, reaction speed, reflexes and bodily grace.

Specialties: Smooth-Motioned, Lithe, Steady, Deft, Graceful, Nimble, Athletic, Cat-like Reflexes, Swift, Sure-Footed, Fleet-Footed, Light Touch

- • Poor: You are butterfingered, so don't use a chainsaw.
- •• Average: You can chew gum and walk at the same time.
- ••• Good: You have excellent raw athletic potential.
- •••• Exceptional: You can juggle five knives.
- ••••• Outstanding: You can juggle five knives while blindfolded.

Stamina

Stamina is a measure of general health and resistance to pain; it indicates how long you can continue to exert yourself and how much physical punishment you can sustain. Stamina is your staying power, both physically and mentally, and one of its most important elements is the will to live.

Specialties: Tireless, Enduring, Tough, Determined, Aggressive, Tenacious, Stalwart, Durable, Forceful, Dedicated

- • Poor: You are frail in constitution and may be sickly.
- •• Average: You are moderately healthy.
- ••• Good: You are in good shape, the result of regular exercise.
- •••• Exceptional: You could run a marathon.
- ••••• Outstanding: You are tough enough to survive almost anything.

Social

Your Social Traits describe your appearance, charm and familiarity with the human mind. Your Social Traits are vital in determining first impressions, leadership ability and the nature of your interactions with others.

Charisma

Charisma is a measure of your aptitude for enticing and fascinating others. You use Charisma to win others over to you emotionally and to get them to trust you. This Trait reflects a charismatic personality more than it does an overt manipulation of others. It is a sum of your bearing, charm and power of influence. Charisma reflects your power to convince others to put their faith in you.

Specialties: Smooth, Eloquent, Outgoing, Captivating, Charming, Regal, Genial, Well-Mannered, Urbane, Sophisticated, Rustic, Gracious

- • Poor: Others avoid being around you.
- •• Average: You are likable.
- ••• Good: People trust and confide in you.
- •••• Exceptional: Something draws people to you.
- ••••• Outstanding: You could lead a nation.

Manipulation

This Trait measures your aptitude for active self-expression, such as when you want to get someone else to do something. It is important when you attempt to influence or manipulate another person directly. You use Manipulation to trick, fool, bluff, outmaneuver and out-talk another. While you may be effective at manipulating people whom you have just met, those who already know you are rarely fooled.

Manipulation is used in all rolls where you are attempting to influence or convince another person overtly. Whether they like you or not is of no consequence (though it can affect the difficulty of what you are trying).

If you fail a Manipulation action and the other person realizes what you were trying to do (you botch, for instance), she may well be angered. People are manipulated all the time and usually ignore it. However, if it is brought to their attention, it can be very disturbing. Manipulation can net great results, but it is risky to perform openly. Characters with high Manipulation are not overly trusted by those who know them best.

Specialties: Glib, Expressive, Cunning, Persuasive, Smooth, Silver-Tongued, Bravado, Ingratiating, Eloquent, Blarney, Double-Talker, Sophist, Witty

- • Poor: You express yourself in as few words as possible.
- •• Average: Others might believe you.
- ••• Good: You'd make a good lawyer.
- •••• Exceptional: You should run for office.
- ••••• Outstanding: You could sell ice to an Eskimo.

Appearance

This Trait describes your Appearance in terms of your attractiveness and force of presence. You do not necessarily need beauty to have a high Appearance, you only need looks that somehow attract others to you. Appearance is not just your actual physical looks; it's the appeal of the way you move and talk, your animation and expressiveness. It is a measure of how interesting and attractive you seem to others.

Appearance is vital in any social situation where words are not exchanged. It is more important than you might think offhand; the impressions you get of another are heavily affected by that person's looks, no matter how open-minded you are. You may not like to admit it, but it's true.

Appearance is often used by the Storyteller to judge roughly how others react to you upon a first meeting. Thus it can affect all other Social rolls you make with that person (in some cases, your rating determines the maximum number of successes from a Social action that can actually be applied, making it impossible for an ugly person to achieve anything beyond minimal success).

Specialties: Bold Demeanor, Alluring, Captivating, Sexy, Luminous, Honest Face, Imposing, Dignified, Pleasing, Handsome, Beautiful, Gorgeous, Look of the Eagles

- • Poor: You tend to attract the hostility of others.
- •• Average: Easily ignored, for you fit in so well with the crowd.
- ••• Good: You have a pleasing appearance, and people treat you well.
- •••• Exceptional: You are good-looking enough to be a model and are given respect and attention because of it.
- ••••• Outstanding: First reactions are either that of awe, intense jealousy or complete solicitude.

Mental

The Mental Traits represent your character's total mental capacity, including such things as memory, perception and the ability to learn and think.

Perception

This Trait indicates your awareness of the environment around you. While sometimes this is a conscious action, such as when you are searching for something, it more often works intuitively — you simply notice something. At base, Perception is a sensitivity to the world, an open-eyed quality common among children (for whom the world is a boundless and mysterious place) and seldom present among the most jaded.

Perception is used to see if you have the insight to understand or be aware of a certain fact or concept. It can help indicate your degree of alertness to ambushes, the subtext of a politician's speech, and the subtleties of color in a painting.

Specialties: Insightful, Attentive, Patient, Probing, Keen-Eyed, Intuitive, Visionary, Astute, Apprehensive

- • Poor: You are blind to anything but the obvious.
- •• Average: You are unaware of the subtle interactions that occur around you.
- ••• Good: You are aware of moods and textures.
- •••• Exceptional: You are constantly alert to the nuances of life.
- ••••• Outstanding: You can see a needle in a haystack.

Intelligence

Your Intelligence represents both your memory and your ability to learn and think. It is important when using Abilities that require complex thought processes. Some people describe Intelligence as a person's quickness of mind or judgment, but it is more than that — it is the facility for understanding, and the capacity for reasoning and evaluation. Intelligence is a rating of an individual's depth and flexibility of thought.

Common sense, street savvy and wisdom are not components of the Intelligence Attribute; these facets of a character are portrayed by the player. However, low Intelligence can indicate a character who lacks the capacity to understand complicated thoughts, and who is a very slow learner — he

might simply see things in terms of black and white, and can't understand that things are really in shades of gray.

Characters with high Intelligence, on the other hand, are sophisticated thinkers capable of decoding many different levels of an argument or problem. They have a discerning judgment and are well able to tell truth from lies, at least when they have the time to think things over. Intelligence caters to carefully reasoned judgments rather than snap decisions (which employ the Attribute of Wits).

Specialties: Discerning, Creative, Knowledgeable, Pragmatic, Astute, Brilliant, Bookworm, Clear Thinker

- • Poor: IQ 80
- •• Average: IQ 100
- ••• Good: IQ 120
- •••• Exceptional: IQ 140
- ••••• Outstanding: IQ 160+

Wits

The Wits Attribute describes your ability to react quickly and correctly to new situations, as well as your overall sharpness of mind and cleverness. In the simplest of terms, it is a measure of how quickly you think. A more complex view understands Wits as a shrewdness, sagacity and capacity for understanding problems in the most basic terms.

Those with low Wits are occasionally unable to take appropriate actions because of surprise (like a deer caught in headlights). A low Wits can indicate that you are more easily tricked and fooled than most people, for you are a gullible and unsophisticated student of human nature. If you have high Wits, you are able to react quickly to new situations and are seldom caught off guard by sudden changes in events. Whatever else happens, you are able to keep your Wits about you.

Specialties: Clever, Shrewd, Sharp, Practical, Wily, Level-Headed, Creative

- • Poor: You send money to televangelists.
- •• Average: You know when to bet or fold in poker.
- ••• Good: You are capable of handling L.A. rush hours (without shooting anyone).
- •••• Exceptional: You could be a stand-up comic.
- ••••• Outstanding: You have a supercomputer for a brain — it's fast.

Abilities

And now our minds are as naked as the paradise we stripped
And our reward is our entropy, our emptiness is our gift.
— Swans, "God Forgive America"

Specialties

For each Attribute and Ability rated four or higher, a player may select a Specialty for her character. Although

general descriptions of Traits are listed below, sometimes there are particular facets of one that a character is capable of performing with additional proficiency. For example, your character may be able to drive very well, but he may be especially good at off-road maneuvers. Most players select specialties simply to flesh out a character, but specialties can also have a real affect on the story as well.

A specialty allows the player to reroll 10's on actions where the specialty directly comes into play. The player gets to keep the success the 10 originally indicated, but may subsequently try again for another success. She may continue to roll the die until anything other than a 10 is rolled, so mathematically, there is chance to have one hundred successes whenever a specialty comes into play.

Talents

Alertness

Over the years, you have become practiced in noticing all that happens around you, even if you are not actively concentrating upon the surroundings. You are a capable bodyguard, for you have learned how to stay alert over a long period of time. Alertness simply indicates how aware you are of the world around you. It describes how much attention you pay to things other than the rumblings of your belly or the doubts in your mind.

- • Novice: You tend to be alert to changes, moreso than most.
- •• Practiced: You are watchful and very attentive to your surroundings.
- ••• Competent: You are highly vigilant.
- •••• Expert: You are a truly cautious individual, and rarely let down your guard.
- ••••• Master: You notice everything that goes on around you.

Possessed by: Watchmen, Hunters, Bodyguards, Reporters, Burglars

Specialties: Bodyguarding, Traps, Ambushes, Forests, Crowds, Noises, Paranoia

Athletics

This Ability describes your general athletic prowess and assumes a familiarity with most sports. It is used to see if you can jump across a chasm, swim through a storm, throw a football, vault a fence or climb a tree.

Athletics concerns complex motor actions; physical actions requiring only one type of motor action, such as lifting, do not use the Athletics rating, nor do athletic actions already subsumed by another Ability.

- • Novice: Little Leaguer
- •• Practiced: High school jock
- ••• Competent: College Varsity player
- •••• Expert: Professional athlete
- ••••• Master: Olympic gold medalist

Possessed by: Professional Athletes, Enthusiasts, Dancers, Jocks, Kids

Specialties: Swimming, Mountain Climbing, Acrobatics, Dancing, a specific sport

Awareness

This Talent reflects a character's ability to detect things that are not of the physical world, like the presence of magick. However, the range for such detection is still limited by real-world parameters. A mage cannot sense magick cast on the other side of San Francisco (unless the magick was very potent and very successful), though he might be able to sense it through a wall.

A successful Awareness roll allows a mage to ascertain the location and approximate power of a nearby Talisman, a being's Karmic balance, mental state and more. A mage with three or more dots in Awareness can also detect the auras that surround objects and people. This allows him to analyze the general disposition of a person, or to glean other information, such as whether the "person" is in fact a vampire or werewolf.

This Talent may also be used to help a mage relate to spirits and animals, as Awareness enables the mage to sense the disposition of these creatures.

- • Novice: You see strange things out of the corner of your eye.
- •• Practiced: Odd things are revealed to you.
- ••• Competent: All things have an aura that you can see.
- •••• Expert: You can find a four-leaf clover in seconds.
- ••••• Master: You see the bizarre everywhere.

Possessed by: Investigators, Gypsies, Psychics

Specialties: Emotions, Talismans, Spirits, Animals, Supernatural Creatures

Brawl

You know how to fight bare-handed. This Ability includes such maneuvers as punching, kicking, grappling, throttling, throwing, gouging and biting. Brawling can get quite ruthless, but generally is a non-lethal form of combat.

- • Novice: You know what to do, but you haven't had much experience.
- •• Practiced: You know where to hit people and make it hurt.
- ••• Competent: You can choose your bar seat.
- •••• Expert: You are a black belt martial artist.
- ••••• Master: You could be a Golden Gloves boxing champion.

Possessed by: Martial Artists, Soldiers, Thugs, Police Officers, Bouncers

Specialties: Armlocks, Boxing, Wrestling, Karate, Judo, Tai Chi, Grappling, Throws, Showing Off

Dodge

The most effective way to win a fight is not to be struck. Becoming proficient in the Dodge Talent is a very wise choice. Your rating in this area describes your ability to avoid both melee and missile attacks, which includes diving for cover and ducking punches.

- • Novice: You hit the ground if someone screams "Duck!".
- •• Practiced: You have no problem finding cover in a firefight.
- ••• Competent: You're always the last one out in dodgeball.
- •••• Expert: A lucky shot may land once in a blue moon.
- ••••• Master: You can nearly sidestep gunshots.

Possessed By: Criminals, Street Fighters, Military Personnel, Bouncers, Boxers

Specialties: Leap, Sidestep, Duck, Cover, Dive

Expression

Expression covers your ability to get your point across, whether this be by writing a book or debating social issues. Characters with high Expression are unforgettable, but only in their ability to convey their feelings; intelligent or meaningful expression is the purview of other Traits. Expression at its highest form can be art.

- • Novice: Tabloid reporter
- •• Practiced: College debate team captain
- ••• Competent: Successful comedian
- •••• Expert: Best-selling novelist
- ••••• Master: William Shakespeare

Possessed by: Orators, Politicians, Novelists, Actors, Demagogues, Protesters

Specialties: Poetry, Impromptu, Radical, Innuendo, Meetings

Intuition

The Talent of Intuition reflects a mage's ability to guess correctly and follow her "gut feelings." Intuition is kind of a safety net for characters, and it is up to the Storyteller to keep it from being abused.

High Levels of this Talent also indicate some aptitude in certain areas of ESP, like precognition. A rating in Intuition means the character can probably guess the result of a coin toss more often than not. She might also have a sense of when someone is lying to her.

- • Novice: You have good instincts.
- •• Practiced: Always go with your first answer.
- ••• Competent: You're a con man's nightmare.
- •••• Expert: A sixth sense seems to tell you when something's amiss.
- ••••• Master: You would bankrupt Vegas and Atlantic City.

Possessed by: Fortunetellers, Gamblers, Entrepreneurs, Bodyguards

Specialties: Horse Races, Ambushes, Dice, Honesty

Intimidation

The art of intimidation takes many forms, ranging from a subtle suggestion to outright physical damage. Each method of intimidation has its time and place. You understand the science of being overbearing, and know how to use it to get what you want. People with high Intimidation ratings seem to radiate auras of authority.

- • Novice: Six-year-olds give you the right of way.
- •• Practiced: You win an occasional staredown.
- ••• Competent: Your gaze is very unsettling.
- •••• Expert: You would be an above-average drill sergeant.
- ••••• Master: You can make vicious animals turn tail and run.

Possessed by: Businesspeople, Bouncers, Military Personnel, Mobsters

Specialties: Veiled Threats, Political, Military, Social, Overt Violence

Streetwise

The streets are a major source of information and money, as well as big-time trouble. The Streetwise Talent has a variety of uses. First and foremost, Streetwise allows you to blend in with the local scene without drawing attention to yourself. Gossip, felony theft and street slang are also imparted by using this talent.

- • Novice: You know who sells drugs.
- •• Practiced: You are considered cool by the populace.
- ••• Competent: Member of a prominent gang
- •••• Expert: You have spent most of your life on the streets.
- ••••• Master: If you don't know it, it hasn't been said.

Possessed by: Gang Members, Winos, Reporters, Homeless People, Detectives

Specialties: Picking Pockets, Drugs, Fencing, Slang Terms

Subterfuge

You know how to conceal your own motives; moreover, you know how to decipher the motives of others and how to use those motives against them. The secrets and intrigues of

others interest you, and you work at understanding their weaknesses. A command of this skill makes you the ultimate conversationalist, or the ultimate spy.

- • Novice: A few white lies never hurt anyone.
- •• Practiced: You can pick up in a nightclub.
- ••• Competent: You could be a criminal lawyer.
- •••• Expert: Amway salesmen have nothing on you.
- ••••• Master: Perry Mason wishes he had it so good.

Possessed by: Lawyers, Con Men, Casanovas, Politicians

Specialties: Finding Weaknesses, Seduction, Little White Lies

Skills

Drive

You can drive a car, and perhaps other vehicles as well. Simply because you have a Drive rating does not mean that you have a familiarity with all land vehicles. Your target number may be raised or lowered depending on your general experience with a particular automobile.

- • Novice: You can drive an automatic automobile.
- •• Practiced: You can operate a manual/shift transmission.
- ••• Competent: Commercial trucker
- •••• Expert: Formula One car driver
- ••••• Master: Evel Kneivil

Possessed by: Truckers, Race Car Drivers, nearly everyone born in the 20th century

Specialties: Curves, Sudden Stops, Stick Shifts

Etiquette

You understand the small nuances of social life, and are able to conduct yourself in a manner that is both unobtrusive and gracious. You understand how to get along well with mortal society. Your specialty is the culture with which you are most familiar. You use Etiquette during actions such as dancing, seduction, and haggling. Etiquette is also used when engaging in diplomacy.

- • Novice: You know when to shut up.
- •• Practiced: You know not to wear paisley at a black-tie dinner.
- ••• Competent: You know which spoon is used to eat soup.
- •••• Expert: You could get along with just about anybody.
- ••••• Master: You could prevent World War III.

Possessed by: Diplomats, the Idle Rich, Executives

Specialties: Business, High Society, Street Culture

Firearms

Skill in Firearms means that you have a broad knowledge of all guns, from a simple .22 to an Ingram Mac-10 machine gun. Firearms Skill does not include the ability to operate heavy machinery such as tank guns and other artillery weapons. However, skill in Firearms does include the ability to repair them.

- • Novice: You've had one or two lessons at the gun store.
- •• Practiced: You do all right at a firing range.
- ••• Competent: You can pull off a few gun tricks.
- •••• Expert: You're cool and steady, even under pressure.
- ••••• Master: "Do you feel lucky? Well, do ya punk?"

Possessed by: Gang Members, Police, Criminals, Soldiers, Hunters

Specialties: Rifles, Handguns, Pistols, Machine Guns, Sprays

Leadership

You can get people to follow your lead and obey your orders by exerting authority and by example. Leadership isn't so much knowing the techniques of getting people to follow you as it is being the type of person people will follow. Leadership is often used in conjunction with Charisma.

- • Novice: You could coach a Little League team.
- •• Practiced: Your voice is a dominant one and you can demand silence.
- ••• Competent: You are an effective leader in times of strife.
- •••• Expert: You attract followers without really trying.
- ••••• Master: You are a Napoleon, a Churchill—or a Hitler...

Possessed by: Politicians, Military Officers, Gang Leaders, Executives, Police Officers

Specialties: Commands, Orate, Compelling, Friendly, Noble, Military

Meditation

Meditation is the Skill of calming the emotions, controlling the mind, and relaxing the physical body. The attention of the mind is focused on a singular object or phrase so that a character's entire being can also focus on matters of importance and screen out distracting thoughts. Meditation is usually performed while seated in a special position, like the lotus position, but with practice it can be performed in a variety of situations or positions.

Meditation can be used to isolate the mind from distractions, allowing a character to focus on matters of importance. Meditation can also be used to: catch up on lost sleep (Stamina + Meditation roll [difficulty 8] determines how many effective hours of sleep are gained per hour of meditation); survive

inclement weather by effectively hibernating (Stamina + Meditation roll [difficulty 9] determines how many days the character can last before the effects of starvation, etc. set in); or figure our particularly complicated puzzles (Intelligence + Meditation roll [difficulty 9] lowers the difficulty of an Enigmas roll by one per success).

- • Novice: You can sit in one spot for a while without fidgeting.
- •• Practiced: You can sit and attain a peaceful state of mind.
- ••• Competent: You can relax in any position.
- •••• Expert: People have to go out of their way to break your concentration.
- ••••• Master: You could stand on your head in gunfire and find Universal Truth.

Possessed by: Martial Artists, Monks, Athletes, Psychologists

Specialties: Relaxation, Focusing, Memory, Zen

Melee

The ability to fight with a weapon is a valuable skill in the Gothic-Punk environment. Proficiency in this Skill allows you to use hand-held weapons. Knives, sai, saps, tonfa and swords are examples of the types of weapons covered by the Melee Skill. This skill is almost archaic nowadays because of society's dependence on firearms, but keep in mind that a wooden stake or silver spear is a melee weapon...

- • Novice: You have seen a knife being used.
- •• Practiced: You've taken a six-week course in fencing.
- ••• Competent: Average street thug
- •••• Expert: Any weapon is deadly in your grasp.
- ••••• Master: Bruce Lee with a pair of nunchuka

Possessed by: Police, Fencers, Kendo Enthusiasts, Thugs, Gang Members

Specialties: Swords, Axes, Rapiers, Knives, Clubs, Disarms

Research

Every good student or seeker of knowledge knows how to find information he needs or desires. In the civilized world much of this information is available through libraries. A successful roll with this Skill means a character has ascertained where to get the information she requires. It doesn't necessarily mean that the information has been gained, though that is usually the case (especially at libraries, although even then the required book may be checked out or missing).

- • Novice: The Dewey Decimal system has been mastered.
- •• Practiced: You know the workings of most standard reference resources.
- ••• Competent: You have access to many private libraries.
- •••• Expert: Given time, you could find almost any reference material.
- ••••• Master: If it's been written, then you know where it is.

Possessed by: Writers, Scientists, Editors, Lawyers

Specialties: Philosophy, History, German

Stealth

Stealth is the ability to sneak about or hide without being seen or heard, and is often rolled against another character's Perception.

- • Novice: You can hide in the dark.
- •• Practiced: You can hide in the shadows.
- ••• Competent: You are an accomplished hunter.
- •••• Expert: You could walk silently over two inches of dry leaves.
- ••••• Master: Ninja clan leader

Possessed by: Criminals, Spies, Reporters

Specialties: Prowl, Hide, Lurk, Shadows, Crowds, Crawling

Survival

The wilderness is a dangerous place, at least for those who do not understand it. The skill of Survival includes seeking shelter, finding a direct route through and relative safety in the wilderness, and tracking. When you use Stealth in the wilderness, you cannot roll more dice for your Stealth Dice Pool than you have in Survival.

- • Novice: You can survive a five-mile hike.
- •• Practiced: You are familiar with the wilderness.
- ••• Competent: You know how to brew natural medicines.
- •••• Expert: You are at home in the wild.
- ••••• Master: You could find an oasis in Death Valley.

Possessed by: Tribesmen, Hunters, Park Rangers, Hikers, Native Americans

Specialties: Tracking, Arctic, Jungle, Hunting

Technology

This Skill provides practical knowledge concerning the function and repair of technological items of all sorts — cars, security systems, and computers.

- • Novice: The on-off switch is no problem.
- •• Practiced: You know all the basics.
- ••• Competent: You can figure out nearly anything given enough time.
- •••• Expert: You understand many complicated machines and devices.
- ••••• Master: If man made it, then you can use it.

Possessed by: Repairmen, Security Experts, Hardware Designers, Inventors

Specialties: Electronics, Computers, Cars, Security Systems

Knowledges

Computer

You understand how to operate and program computers. You may also be able to design your own system. If you wish to break into a computer system, you need this Knowledge.

- • Student: You can boot up a video game.
- •• College: You made at least a B in Data Processing 101.
- ••• Masters: You are a competent programmer, and can design your own software.
- •••• Doctorate: You make a living scamming Ma Bell.
- ••••• Scholar: You could probably design an AI.

Possessed by: Programmers, Data Processors, Gamers, Students, Hackers

Specialties: Hacking, Virus Programs, Retrieving Data

Cosmology

The unseen world of the Umbra holds many secrets. This Trait reflects how many of these secrets you understand. The Umbra is unknowably vast, so no one can ever know all its secrets (besides, it has the frustrating tendency to change, especially in the Deep Umbra). Possession of this Knowledge indicates that a mage knows something of the forces that shape, and dwell within, the Umbra. The "geography" and myriad realms of this invisible world can also be learned.

The relationship between this Knowledge and the Sphere of Spirit is delicate. The Sphere indicates an ability to manipulate things of the Umbra while this Trait indicates knowledge about the Umbra.

- • Student: At least you know it exists.
- •• College: You know some spots to avoid.
- ••• Masters: You can get around pretty well.
- •••• Doctorate: You know the location of a Dream Warp.
- ••••• Scholar: You have been through the Dream Warp and survived.

Possessed by: Mages, Garou, Demons

Specialties: Celestines, Travel, Near Umbra, Pluto

Culture

Understanding the behavior, beliefs, art, institutions and general thought patterns of a society is part of this Knowledge. Possessing such information allows more than just knowledge of how people act, but why as well. This is extremely important if a person wishes to interact with a culture, or, as many mages wish, to change or influence a culture.

This Knowledge provides an understanding of past and present cultures, an ability to quickly pick up cultural details of a new society, and indicates a talent for blending into the local society.

- • Student: You know a few taboos of the culture.
- •• College: You probably won't get lynched.
- ••• Masters: You understand all levels of many cultures.
- •••• Doctorate: You can recount the past and predict the future of a culture.
- ••••• Scholar: Indiana Jones

Possessed by: Archaeologists, Pollsters, Artists, Politicians

Specialties: Religion, Politics, Ancient Rome, Faerie, Garou, Vampire

Enigmas

Puzzles and problems occupy your imagination — in fact, you may even enjoy being perplexed. Learning and solving riddles of all sorts is a passion, and this interest has given you a knack for piecing together and remembering information vital to understanding problems of many kinds.

Enigmas is an Ability that assists players in solving the mysteries created by the Storyteller. It is irreplaceable for divining secret pathways to lost realms, answering the riddles of mystical guardians, or even when trying to navigate the paper trails of modern bureaucracies.

- • Student: You can put together a 100-piece jigsaw puzzle.
- •• College: You can guess the outcome of a mystery novel.
- ••• Masters: You can do Rubik's Cube in an hour.
- •••• Doctorate: You'd have whipped Gollum without hobbit trickery.
- ••••• Scholar: You could finish an Oracle's sentence.

Possessed by: Crossword Puzzle Devotees, Zen Enthusiasts, Game Players, Mystics

Specialties: Ancient, Riddles, Visual, Oracles

Investigation

You are trained to notice all sorts of details that others might miss, and at high levels may function as a detective. This Knowledge provides an ability to find clues, perform forensic analysis and predict crime patterns.

- • Student: Amateur detective
- •• College: Police officer
- ••• Masters: Private detective
- •••• Doctorate: FBI, CIA, KGB, MI 5, Interpol agents
- ••••• Scholar: Sherlock Holmes

Possessed by: Detectives, Insurance Investigators, Reporters, FBI Agents, Intelligence Agents

Specialties: Search, Prowl, Tail, Detective Work

Law

The law is not a thing to trifle with and those with knowledge of the law are well able to use it to their advantage. If you ever want to get out of jail, this Ability is essential.

- • Student: Practical knowledge, police officer
- •• College: Prelaw, beginning lawyer
- ••• Masters: Lawyer, full partner
- •••• Doctorate: Judge
- ••••• Scholar: Supreme Court Justice

Possessed by: Police, Lawyers, Judges, Detectives, Criminals, TV Viewers, Legislators

Specialties: Courts, Contract, Litigation, Criminal, Police Procedure

Linguistics

It is assumed that you can speak your natural language, but you must purchase any other languages that you wish your character to speak. Each level of Linguistics allows your character to speak another language fluently. Linguistics also gives a character an understanding of the structure of language, which is in turn the basis of thought. With this Ability, you can identify accents or read lips.

- • Student: One additional language
- •• College: Two additional languages
- ••• Masters: Three additional languages
- •••• Doctorate: Four additional languages
- ••••• Scholar: Five additional languages

Possessed by: Travelers, Scholars, Diplomats, Interpreters

Specialties: Curses, Technical, Diplomatic, Political

Medicine

Medicine is the study of the human body and the techniques used to cure its ills. It includes knowledge of the structure and functions of the body, the use of medicine, and the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

- • Student: You know the basics of setting bones and preventing shock.
- •• College: You have paramedic-quality training.
- ••• Masters: You are a doctor and can diagnose and treat diseases.
- •••• Doctorate: You can perform surgery.
- ••••• Scholar: You are a specialist of great renown.

Possessed by: Doctors, Paramedics, Rescue Rangers

Specialties: Pharmaceutical, Paramedics, Emergency Care, Disease, Neurosurgery

Occult

You are knowledgeable in all areas of the occult. This understanding of the more sinister side of the world includes knowledge of curses, voodoo, magic and mysticism. This Knowledge is of the utmost interest to many mages.

- • Student: You suspect it wasn't coincidence.
- •• College: The magickal world is open to you.
- ••• Masters: There are more than mages out there, and you know a lot about these other residents of the World of Darkness.
- •••• Doctorate: You can separate truth from fancy.
- ••••• Scholar: An Oracle could learn a bit of trivia from you.

Possessed by: Weirdoes, New Agers, Scholars, the curious

Specialties: Vampires, Witches, Mystical Powers

Science

You have at least a basic understanding of physics, chemstry, botany, biology, geology, astronomy and other sciences. Your Knowledge deals with the useful applications of science.

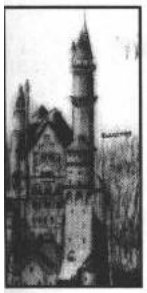
- • Student: You can make smoke bombs with a chemistry set.
- •• College: You understand the major theories and applications.
- ••• Masters: You could teach high-school science.
- •••• Doctorate: You might win a Nobel Prize someday.
- ••••• Scholar: Albert Einstein

Possessed by: Engineers, Researchers, Inventors, Technicians, Pilots

Specialties: Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Relativity, Nuclear Physics

Backgrounds

Apart, outside, who can escape?
Our destiny confirmed in fate.
— Bad Brains, "Re-Ignition"



These Traits describe the special advantages of your character. You must choose why and how you came to possess these particular Traits. How did you gain your Talisman? Who was your Mentor? You need to make sense out of your Backgrounds and integrate them into your character concept.

A Background can sometimes be used in conjunction with an Attribute, such as rolling Charisma + Influence to get the police off your back, or Manipulation + Mentor to convince your teacher to instruct you in the ways of the Forces Sphere.

Backgrounds cannot be increased with experience points. They can only be improved through the actual events of the story.

Allies

In their travels, mages often encounter a variety of interesting people (and other beings). While many of these are regrettably hostile, some befriend and aid the mage. These Allies can be Acolytes, influential Sleepers, or even magical beings.

Each dot in this Background gives the mage one Ally, or increases the power of an already existing Ally (thus, five dots in the Allies Background could indicate five Allies of moderate power, or one extremely powerful entity). Nearly anyone (or anything) can be a mage's Ally, though it is safe to say that such an Ally will be unusual in one way or another. Some mages even have extradimensional creatures, spirit beings, vampires, or magical animals as Allies (these latter are often called "familiars").

- • One Ally, of moderate power
- •• Two Allies, or one more powerful Ally
- ••• Three Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power
- •••• Four Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power
- ••••• Five Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power

Arcane

Mages are inherently mysterious people. While they have existed among humanity since before the Stone Age, they are rarely noticed for what they are. This is in large part because of their reticence and solitary nature, but mages also possess a mystic ability to avoid the limelight. This is a side effect of their coincidental magick powers. This frustrating quality can sometimes interfere with the mage's friends, who often have a difficult time finding her. In large part this Trait reflects the inscrutable nature of mages.

Characters with high Arcane ratings tend, for example, not to show up on television. They are not invisible to the lens, but the camera never seems to focus on them. These mages leave little to no paper trail, so they may not be on computer files even if they were born after the advent of Social Security numbers in the USA.

Each point in Arcane renders it more difficult for enemies of the mage to make sure they are talking about the same

person. Assassination attempts meant for the mage may be misdirected toward the wrong person, sometimes to the chagrin of the mage's companions.

Whenever another being attempts to locate the mage, or information about the mage, subtract the mage's Arcane rating from the opponent's Perception to judge the extent of the opponent's confusion. A result of less than one means the opponent has no hope of finding the mage. A mage may also add her rating in Arcane to her Stealth Dice Pool.

Note that this Background is not synonymous with invisibility; it is more akin to "clouding minds" and does not, for example, protect the mage in combat. Arcane may be consciously dampened by the mage, allowing people to find her more easily.

- • Easy to overlook
- •• Where did he go?
- ••• Very difficult to follow
- •••• A needle in a haystack
- ••••• Which grain of sand?

Avatar

The soul is what differentiates humans from animals. It allows people to interact with the world and not merely react. Mages possess more powerful souls, which are called Avatars. Avatars are purer fragments of the original Prime (from which all souls descended) than are the souls of most Sleepers. The sheer potency of the mage's Avatar is determined by this Trait. Lack of this Trait simply means the mage's Avatar is not exceptionally potent, though it is still far more powerful than that of most Sleepers.

The primary benefit of this Background is very simple. It represents the size of the base pool of Quintessence a character possesses. Whenever a character's Quintessence rating dips below her score in this Trait, she automatically reabsorbs Quintessence after successfully meditating (Perception + Meditation; difficulty 7) in a Node for at least an hour. The number of successes determines how much Quintessence is regained, though the amount cannot be greater than the rating of this Trait or the rating of the Node.

Quintessence that a mage gains from his Avatar may not be stored or channeled to another mage. Quintessence gained from a mage's Avatar is innate to the mage and may only be used by him. In essence, it is part of his Pattern and therefore untouchable.

This mage's rating in this Background is also the limit on the number of Quintessence points that may be spent in a single turn in order to reduce the difficulty of a magick roll.

Some mages claim that there are distinct lineages of Avatars, which they call Families. What these connections might mean if they existed is unknown to all save possibly the Oracles.

- • May rebuild a pool of one Quintessence
- •• May rebuild a pool of two Quintessence
- ••• May rebuild a pool of three Quintessence
- •••• May rebuild a pool of four Quintessence
- ••••• May rebuild a pool of five Quintessence

Destiny

This Trait delineates an important way that mages grant status and recognition to one another. Status in most societies is a reflection of one's position in the society (the President has more status than a police chief). Among mages, however, the Destiny Background — the ultimate potential of the mage to alter reality — grants status. A mage with a huge Avatar fragment and an honored Mentor may have low status if other mages discern that he is of little promise, while a self-taught mage with only a touch more Avatar than a mortal may be revered if other mages detect a great Destiny about her.

In addition, a mage with a high Destiny rating is obviously fated for great things. Though even the Oracles have been wrong on occasion, mages of Destiny rarely die early, ignominious deaths. Destiny has been known to lead a mage through trials and tribulations to her ultimate fate. Once per game session, the mage may roll a number of dice equal to her Destiny rating (difficulty 8). Each success scored on this roll enables the mage to regain one Willpower point — the surety of the character's Destiny has reaffirmed her faith and will to live.

Remember, though, that the Destiny rating means just that — the mage is destined to accomplish some great feat, or save countless souls, or die facing overwhelming odds in valiant battle, or even turn to the forces of evil. One day, the Storyteller should call the Destiny due...

- • Mage of merit; roll one die
- •• A creditable mage; roll two dice
- ••• Mage of promise; roll three dice
- •••• A respected mage; roll four dice
- ••••• A revered mage; roll five dice

Dream

Even mages do not know all the secrets of the universe. However, mages may access many of these secrets, provided they can tap into the correct repositories of knowledge.

Dream indicates the depth to which a mage can delve into Prime, the Universal Unconscious. In game play this means that a character may be able to access information or gain answers she cannot possibly know. A character's Dream rating may be used to enhance any Ability, or even substitute for an Ability in which the character has no ranking. The player may elect to use the character's Dream Background rating in lieu of the character's normal Ability rating. For example, the character is diagnosing an injured friend and must roll Intelligence + Medicine. The character has no rating in Medicine, so instead she connects with the Universal Unconscious, allowing the player to roll Intelligence + Dream.

Dream may substitute for only one Ability per day, so once Medicine is chosen, the character may only use Dream as a substitute for that Ability until the end of the day.

Dream may allow the use of Abilities in completely alien situations where no other Ability would be useful, such as Intelligence + Dream (for Linguistics) to understand the language of a creature from another Realm.

- • Hazy bits of information can be gleaned.
- •• Respectable lessons can be learned.
- ••• Worthwhile lore is available.
- •••• Remarkable knowledge can be accessed.
- ••••• Astounding insights are possible.

Influence

Influence reflects a mage's ability to affect the Sleeper community through channels of communication within the society. There will always be an open table at her favorite restaurant. Sound bites of the mage will appear on television, giving her an opportunity to denounce an enemy's latest tactic. This Background also affects how easily a mage finds new Acolytes (roll Charisma + Influence).

Influence could be the result of a prestigious family, celebrity status, or holding political office. This Background does not reflect standing among other mages (that's indicated by Destiny), and the possession of Influence may actually detract from a mage's standing in the eyes of her peers.

Influence can be paired with many other Traits for the purposes of dice rolls. This is particularly applicable when a mage is trying to exhibit expertise in a certain area — people probably won't contradict her (at least publicly). Influence is generally effective only within the mage's own culture unless the rating is four or five dots, in which case the mage may be internationally recognized.

- • Moderately influential; always called on when you raise your hand.
- •• Well-connected; you have important things to say.
- ••• Position of influence; people seek your opinion.
- •••• Broad personal power; a few comments could affect stock prices.
- ••••• Vastly influential; when you talk people listen (and take notes).

Library

Some mages have the immediate benefit of a library of tomes full of magickal knowledge. Such tomes could have been gifts from the mage's Mentor or they may have belonged to the character before he even Awakened. Such tomes are rated in study points and may be used to learn Spheres; this process is described in Chapter Eight. The total number of study points the mage has in his library depends on his rating in this Trait. It is common for mages to keep their tomes at the

Chantry library, and to share them freely with the others in the cabal.

- • 5 study points
- •• 10 study points
- ••• 15 study points
- •••• 20 study points
- ••••• 25 study points

Mentor

Nearly all apprentices are Awakened and taught by a mage known as the Mentor. This individual is not only a teacher, but an advisor and spiritual guide. The relationship between apprentice and Mentor can be very close and often continues well after the apprentice becomes a full mage. Not all Mentors are the first teachers of a mage; any elder mage who befriends a younger mage can be called a mentor.

Socially speaking, a Mentor is an invaluable advisor. A mage who is guided through wizard society by a Mentor will more easily find teachers, avoid dangerous rivalries, hide from the Technomancers, and understand the power structure.

This Trait describes the power and capabilities of the mage's Mentor. Mentors are important based on how much they know and thus how much they can teach (for it is assumed they are interested in passing their secrets on to others). At the Storyteller's discretion, though, a player may mix and match attitude and knowledge. For example, a mage may have a Mentor who will tell her everything he knows, though that's not much. On the other hand, the Mentor may be a crotchety old hag who knows a lot but is generally unavailable. Both of these could be Mentor 3.

Mentors can teach Spheres and Abilities to mages as per Chapter Eight, but this will be done only rarely; they are primarily information brokers.

Mentors may also protect a mage from danger and inform her of opportunities she might otherwise miss. However, a Mentor may expect some favors in exchange for the information and assistance he provides. This could be as simple as keeping his books in order, or as dangerous as retrieving strange artifacts from the Deep Umbra. In general, though, the mage receives much more from her Mentor than he requires of the mage.

- • Mentor knows a little of import.
- •• Mentor has some noteworthy pieces of information.
- ••• Mentor has significant secrets to share.
- •••• Mentor has extraordinary knowledge to pass along.
- ••••• If your Mentor doesn't know it then maybe no one does.

Node

This Background is arguably the most important, because it determines how much Quintessence is available to the cabal each month. Nodes are extremely valuable, and are magnificent advantages for new mages. They are the backbone of a cabal, and the genesis of a future Chantry. Nodes can be located nearly anywhere — in church cellars, in the backs of bookstores, or in graveyards.

This Background Trait does not apply directly to the character, but rather to the entire cabal. In fact, the total amount that all the mage characters in the cabal spend on this Trait is added together to determine the power of the cabal's Node. The Node's Quintessence appears in the form of Tass, which makes it easily transportable, though easily stolen. The characters should decide what physical form the Tass from their Node takes. This free Quintessence produced by the Node is in addition to any Quintessence gained by the recharging of an Avatar (see the Avatar Background, above).

- • One Quintessence
- •• Two Quintessence
- ••• Three Quintessence
- •••• Four Quintessence
- ••••• Five Quintessence

Talisman

Talismans are items with large amounts of Quintessence bound into them. This Quintessence was channeled at the time of the Talisman's creation to help a mage use magick. This Background Trait allows some mages to begin the game with a Talisman already in their possession. The Talisman could be a gift from a Mentor, an incredibly lucky find at an antique shop, or a family heirloom. The rating of this Trait determines the power of the Talisman.

More importantly, this Trait is rolled whenever a mage attempts to create a Talisman of his own. See Chapter Eight for more details on enchanting Talismans.

To help you determine approximate power levels for Talismans, an example has been provided with each rating. These items may be found in the Appendix.

- • A minor Talisman (Spirit Helmet)
- •• A useful Talisman (Sword of Discharge)
- ••• A Talisman of significant power (X-ray glasses)
- •••• A much-sought Talisman mentioned in many texts (Peacemaker)
- ••••• A Talisman of incredible power (Prodigy)

Arete

What I see before me, around me, is the future of humanity.
— Isaac Asimov, *Forward the Foundation*

The Arete Trait is probably the most important of all a mage's Traits. It embodies what mages are all about — understanding the truth of reality. Varying levels of enlightenment among mages, and disputes about what is right for mankind, have pitted mage against mage in recent times, but Arete is still the main pursuit of workers of magick.

Arete has many practical effects on mage characters in the game, and these are outlined below.

Effects of Arete

• A mage's Arete rating indicates the maximum number of dice she may choose to roll when using magick. If the mage doesn't understand reality very well, she simply isn't able to circumvent it as well.

• Each point of Arete indicates that a mage no longer needs to rely on certain foci to use magick. Beginning at rating two in Arete, a mage may ignore the requirement of a focus for one Sphere (chosen by the player). At rating three, two Spheres may be used without a focus, and so on. See Foci in Chapter Eight for more information.

• Finally, a mage's ratings in her Spheres are limited by Arete. General enlightenment must be gained before specific wisdom may be applied. A mage may never have a rating in a Sphere greater than her rating in Arete, which means no mage with an Arete score of less than six is considered for membership among the Oracles.

- x Superficial
- • Ignorant
- •• Unenlightened
- ••• Dreamy
- •••• Quixotic
- ••••• Discerning
- •••••• Understanding
- ••••••• Perspicacious
- •••••••• Wise
- ••••••••• Visionary
- •••••••••• Enlightened

Willpower

You can choose a ready guide in some celestial voice. If you choose not to decide you still have made a choice. You can choose from phantom fears and vipers that can kill. I will choose a path that's clear. I will choose Free Will.

— Rush, "Freewill"

Willpower measures the capability of a character to overcome the urges and desires that may tempt her. However, unlike other Traits, it is not something you roll (at least not often); Willpower is something that you use up. When you use a point of Willpower, you remove it from your character's Willpower Pool (the squares), not from the Willpower rating (the circles). The rating stays constant, while the Pool gets used up during the story.

Willpower from the Willpower Pool goes up and down a great deal during a story. It decreases by one every time the player uses a Willpower point to have his character do something extraordinary, such as retain self-control or gain an automatic success. Eventually, the character will have no Willpower left and will no longer be able to exert himself the way he once did. The character is mentally exhausted and can't rouse himself enough to give a damn — he's expended all his Willpower.

Willpower is used as a difficulty for many kinds of rolls. The value of the Willpower Pool is always the rating used in such cases, unless the target is a mage. In this case, the mage's Willpower rating is the difficulty.

•	Weak
••	Timid
•••	Unassertive
••••	Diffident
•••••	Certain
••••••	Confident
•••••••	Strong
••••••••	Controlled
•••••••••	Iron-willed
••••••••••	Unshakable

Using Willpower

'Do as thou wilt' shall be the whole of the law.

— Aleister Crowley

• A Willpower point can be spent to gain one automatic success in an action. Only one point of Willpower can be used in this way on a single turn, but it gives a single guaranteed success. In this fashion it is possible to succeed automatically in any simple action, simply by concentrating. For extended rolls, the extra success can mean the critical difference between success and failure. There are some situations in which the Storyteller may not allow such use of Willpower. Sleepers may not use Willpower in this way.

• On some occasions, the Storyteller may tell you that your character does something because of instinct, primal urge or gut reaction ("You nervously blunder your magick as a wave of Paradox energy rises to crush you."). You can use a point of Willpower to avoid this and do as you please. However, the feeling might return and another Willpower point might be required. Sometimes it will return more times than you have Willpower, while at other times you may completely overcome the urge.

Recovering Willpower

Well, by the force of will my lungs are filled and so I breathe.

— 10,000 Maniacs, "Like the Weather"

A character recovers her Willpower Pool whenever she is able to rest or gets a chance to restore her self-confidence. The Storyteller must decide when and how a character recovers Willpower.

Listed below are four different ways through which a character can regain Willpower. This does not have anything to do with the Willpower rating (which can be changed only with experience).

• At the end of the story (not a game session), characters regain their Willpower — **all** of it is recovered, up to the amount of the Willpower rating. The Storyteller may wish to restrict points restored, insisting that characters first attain some modicum of self-pride or achieve moderate success in the story.

• A character achieves some special success during the story that the Storyteller judges would cause her to recover her self-confidence (and thus all or some of her Willpower). (e.g.: You rescue your Mentor from the Technocracy just before he was plugged into a Quintessence Vat. Regain three Willpower points.)

• You fulfill some criterion of the character's chosen Archetypes, thus regaining from one to three Willpower points, subject to Storyteller judgment. This must be achieved through roleplaying and approved by the Storyteller. (e.g.: As a Conniver, you manage to trick the bartender into giving you the key to his car. Regain two Willpower for the scam.)

• A character with the Destiny Background may regain Willpower during the game as a function of being led toward higher goals. (e.g.: A mage with a Destiny rating of 3 is trapped in an alley by two Superiors. The mage is obviously not

destined to die at the hands of such lowly creatures, and the player thus rolls three dice against a difficulty of eight. Two successes are scored, and the mage regains two points of Willpower.)

If none of the above options suits your style of play, consider allowing the characters to regain one point of Willpower after they wake up each morning. This method is simple and guarantees a steady recovery of Willpower.

Quintessence and Paradox

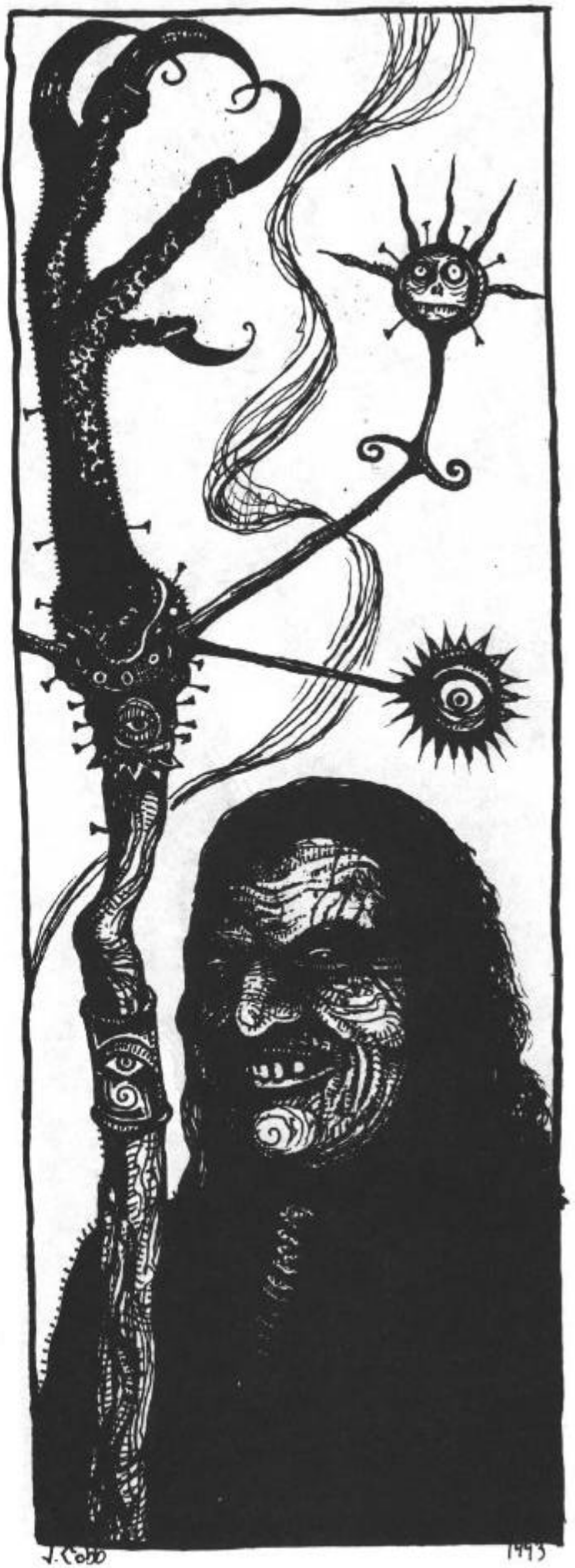
Implicit in the concept of Strange Loops is the concept of infinity, since what else is a loop but a way of representing an endless process in a finite way?

— Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*

The Traits of Quintessence and Paradox work together in a unique manner. Most Traits are added together and then rolled, but these two operate as opposites on a circular continuum of 20 points. Quintessence is measured from the left-hand marker going clockwise, while Paradox is measured from the same point but counterclockwise.

Quintessence rates how much "energy" of the Prime a mage has within him. A mage can literally become a battery, storing a portion of the ambient energy that creates and guides reality. This energy may then be used by the mage to shape reality. Paradox rates something almost, but not quite, the opposite. This Trait reflects how much of an aberration to reality the mage has become. Instead of unifying with reality, as a mage essentially does when he stores Quintessence energy, a mage becomes a blight upon reality as his Paradox rating increases. The benefits and penalties of these Traits are listed below.

No special considerations are necessary until these two Traits threaten to overlap on their circular track. When they do so, Paradox always takes precedence, so Paradox always eliminates points of Quintessence in order to make room for itself on the circle. For example, if a mage with Quintessence 14 and Paradox five suddenly gains three points of Paradox, the first Paradox point fills the remaining empty square, but the latter two erase two squares of Quintessence and replace them with two points of Paradox. On the other hand, if the mage has 10 Quintessence and eight Paradox, and gains three points of Quintessence, he can only hold two of them in the 11th and 12th positions, as the next circle already marks Paradox. Because these ratings will sometimes touch on the circular track, it is recommended that you use two different means of filling the squares, like check marks for Quintessence and "X's" for Paradox.



Quintessence

All around baby, you can see
You're making your own reality, every day because
Enlightenment, don't know what it is.
— Van Morrison, "Enlightenment"

• Quintessence is gained by virtue of possessing a large Avatar (the Background Trait) or by absorbing it from some another source, like a Talisman, mystical site, or the reservoir at the mage's Chantry.

• Quintessence may be spent to decrease the difficulty of a magickal effect roll. Each point of Quintessence spent lowers the difficulty of the roll by one. Quintessence spent in this way may affect either coincidental magick or vulgar magick rolls. Truly stupendous feats of magick may be accomplished by using Quintessence in this way.

Paradox

I think that paradoxes are artifacts of human limitations, our own perceptions of reality.
— Arlan Andrews, *Science Fiction Age*

• Paradox can be gained every time a mage rolls to use magick. The threat from Paradox is increased when a mage uses vulgar magick. Complete rules for this are given in Chapter Eight.

• A character's rating in Paradox indicates the level of Quiet that affects him. Quiet is fully described in Chapter Eight; in brief, it rates the degree of a mage's "insanity." While in a state of Quiet, a mage sees things that don't exist and doesn't see things that do.

Health

I cut clean across just as the net descended
I'm a sandman and I'm a soldier
I'm a Wrecker of Engines.
The Jack Rubies, "Wrecker of Engines"

The Health Trait measures how hale and hearty a character is. There are various levels of injury, and each applies a different penalty to the person so injured. A character who is Hurt, -1, has one fewer die to roll on all her rolls, while a character who is Crippled, -5, has five fewer dice to roll. If this leaves the player with no dice to roll, then the character cannot attempt the action.

Health Levels

Bruised:		Character is only bruised and has no action penalties.
Hurt:	-1	Character is only 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	Character is badly injured and can only hobble about.
Crippled:	-5	Character is severely injured and can only crawl.
Incapacitated:		Character is completely incapable of movement.

A mage who is Incapacitated is very close to death; if she loses one more Health Level, she dies.

BOOK THREE

His time has come.

Sanders sleeps restlessly. Still, he does not hear the window open, nor does he see the dark figure climb through it. When the hot breeze disturbs the conditioned air of the room, he begins to stir, but as she stands above him, he still sleeps.

I'm going to enjoy this.

"Wake up, darling."

His eyes open instantly. "Amanda?" Startled, suspicious. She slings her bag onto the bed and sits beside him, says nothing.

"Where have you been?"

She leans over him… "On the run, lying low." … leans farther, kisses him. "Getting an education." He's puzzled, wary, but beginning to relax.

Fool.

He tries to sit up, to take charge of the situation… control her again, and she hates him for the attempt.

She won't fall for that now…

she's much stronger than he remembers.

"Our backers were not pleased at the results of your last assignment."

She stops what she's doing, draws back. "Didn't you miss me?" she says, one hand on his chest, the other on the clasps of the bag.

"The Senator is still alive, Amanda. His aides say you never showed." And his hands curl loosely around her wrist and throat.

"I guess not. Is there a new mistress or have you stooped to sleeping with your wife?"

Now he smiles, sure of her again: jealousy is easily manipulated. "Very well. Tomorrow we will arrange for you to complete your commission… and tonight you may stay here."

Enough. The sight tells true… there is nothing here worth saving.

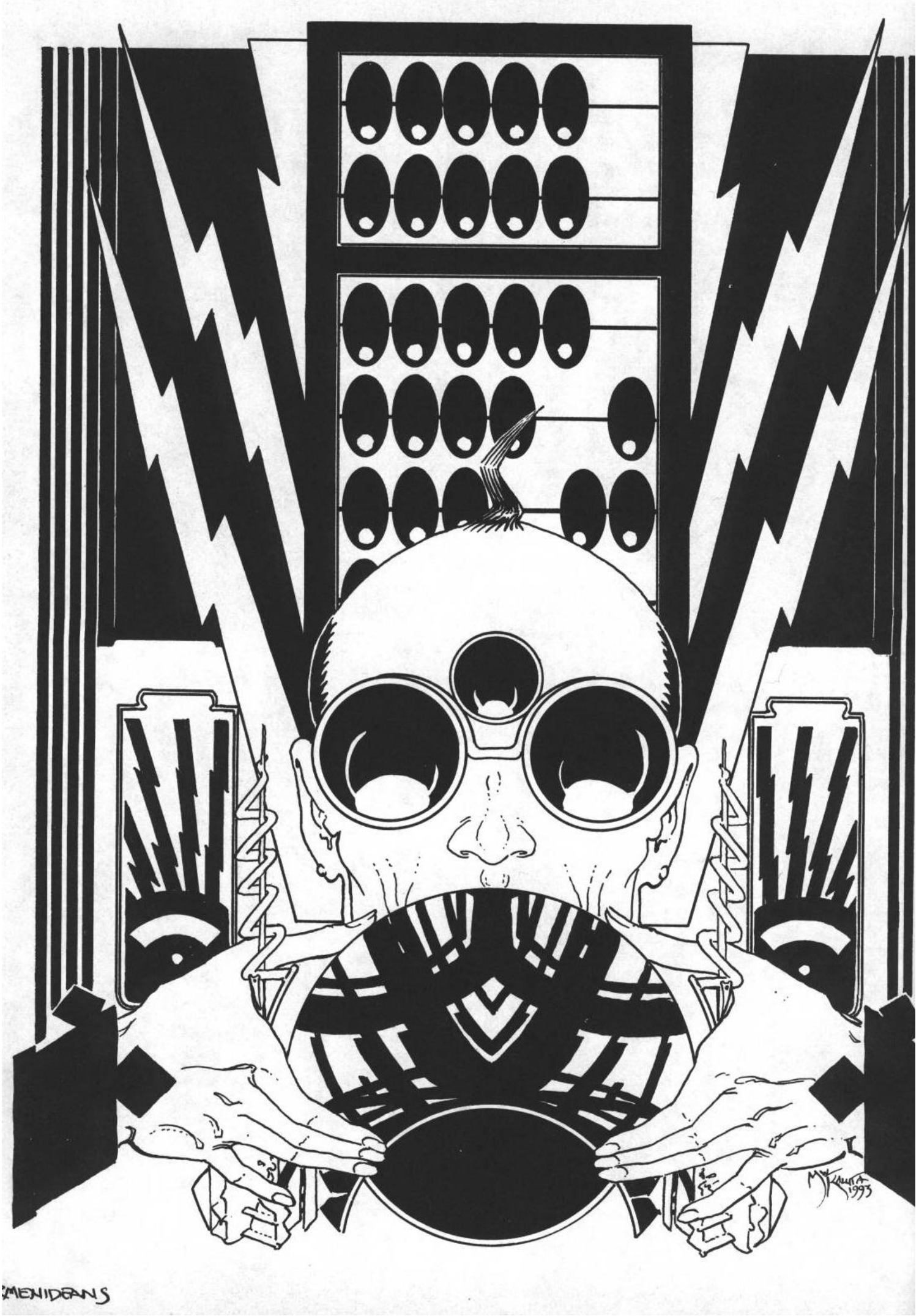
She pulls lightly on the doll, drawing it from the bag. One-handed, she knots a cord around it.

"I'm not going to kill the Senator," she says, and his face clouds with wrath, so fierce he doesn't notice the moving sheets. "He has time left, a good life. But you, Sanders, you don't."

"Amanda!" More anger, swiftly turning to fear as he tries to pull free from the twisting fabric. His hand darts under the pillow — but the gun is already in her hand.

She scares him. Good.

"Not with this. I remember the knife was always your favorite." … and she cuts the doll open, cuts the soul free of his staring corpse. "Better luck next time, Sanders."


MENIDEANS
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Chapter Seven: Magick

You see, people tell us from the time we are born that the world is such and such and so and so, and naturally we have no choice but to see the world the way people have been telling us it is... Yesterday the world became as sorcerers tell you it is...

— Don Juan talking to Carlos Castaneda, *Journey to Ixtlan*

Magick is "the process of causing reality to conform with will." It is the actualization of desire. Through magick, all things are possible, and whatever the mage desires to be, shall be. This is far different from magic (without the "k"), which is nothing more than stage tricks of misdirection and illusion performed by entertainers. True magick involves an enlightened understanding of reality and an iron willpower to bend that reality.

The appearance of magick often seems quite innocuous to those who have been fed youthful stories of fantasy and fable. The bedazzling displays of power described in storybook legends are well within the capabilities of mages, but mages often conceal their magick behind a veil of the everyday. If a mage suddenly desires to transport himself across town and just as suddenly an open taxi rolls up to the nearby curb, then the mage has fulfilled his desire to get across town by causing the taxi to arrive. An unenlightened observer might call the taxi's arrival luck, but mages create their own luck. Certainly, the unenlightened would not say that magick has taken place — after all, where were the pyrotechnics? Yet the mage's desire to transport himself across town has now been satisfied; he has indeed performed magick.

In the very same context, a mage who desires to wipe a city off the globe in a thermonuclear explosion might also actualize her desire and create such an effect. Sometimes true magick makes the fables seem tame.

This chapter studies the use of magick in Mage, including its scope of effects, how it is organized by mages for study, and the consequences of its use.

The Metaphysic of Magick

These Metaphysics of magicians
And necromantic books are heavenly:
Lines, circles, signs, letters, and characters—
Aye, these are those that Faustus most desires.
—Christopher Marlowe, *Life and Death of Dr. Faustus*

In the real world, humanity predominantly takes an object-oriented view of reality. Through science, we seek a better understanding of nature and the laws of our universe. The precept of science is that by observing nature, we can increase our understanding of how it functions. It presupposes that there is a single, definite, objective description of reality that is out there waiting to be discovered and understood.

In the game of **Mage**, this system is completely inverted. Most mages believe in a subject-oriented metaphysics that they call the Metaphysic of Magick. They believe that observation of nature does not build understanding and belief; rather, one's own thoughts and beliefs build nature. In other words, they believe that the universe is not founded on set cause-and-effect relationships waiting to be discovered and identified by science, but rather that the minds of those inside reality define the nature of the universe based on their beliefs. If people believe that the Earth is a sphere, or that DNA encodes life, or in Newton's law of gravity, then those beliefs define cause to operate that way.

This Metaphysic of Magick is instrumental to a mage's ability to shape reality to his desires. A mage's rating in Arete essentially designates how well he has absorbed this metaphysic into his thought processes. Before a mage can perform magick, he must realize that simply by believing in a reality that behaves a certain way, the mage is free to work within the confines of his imagined reality. He can enact any phenomenon that the laws of his own reality allow.

Static Reality

Some things will never change
That's just the way it is
But don't you believe them.
— *Bruce Hornsby*, "The Way It Is"

If reality is governed by the Metaphysic of Magick, one might ask: how do the laws of nature on Earth remain so stable? If each individual's beliefs shape reality around him, nothing would be constant on Earth.

However, Earth's reality is based on the beliefs of its population. It's a sort of average reality based on everyone's

collective beliefs. Because this reality is powered by the sentience of billions of people, it maintains a set structure of reality on Earth. Mages call this average reality "static" reality. Static reality ensures that gravity always pulls down and one plus one always equals two.

Well, almost always; mages are individuals who, by the nature of their Avatars, possess enough willpower to break from the confines of static reality and impose their own beliefs upon the world. Even for mages, however, breaking the rules of reality is neither easy nor inconsequential.

Therefore, many Traditions and Chantries make it their primary goal to implement their ideologies among humanity. The mages hope that their ideas will gain enough acceptance among the normal population to become part of static reality. Mages across the world and throughout history have long engaged in ideological struggles to gain a power base among Earth's population and thereby control humanity's beliefs.

No group of mages has ever succeeded as thoroughly as the Technocracy has in the modern world. Now, the vast majority of humanity does not understand or appreciate the Metaphysic of Magick. The Earth's population has been duped by the Technocracy into believing its brand of metaphysics. Under the guise of "scientific discovery," the Technocracy determines which ideas are released into and accepted by the world.

Magickal Knowledge

Change your paradigm, your scheme for understanding and explaining certain aspects of reality.

— Stephen Covey

The Metaphysic of Magick allows a mage to alter the nature of reality to conform to his own beliefs. However, in order for the mage to perform any meaningful magickal effects, she must have a system of beliefs that allows individuals to perform miraculous feats. The mage must have in mind what she wants reality to be; otherwise she is confined to working within reality as it is.

For instance, if a mage believed in a reality that was exactly like normal, static reality, his own thoughts would only reinforce that reality. If he wanted to control electrical energy, he would have to work within the laws of physics to manipulate the electrical energy. This would mean buying a generator, using conductive cables to route the energy, and getting transformers, motors, etc.

If, however, the mage believed in his own alternate view of reality, his own ideas of how electrical energy can be controlled, then he could control electricity under the laws of the reality in which he believes. If he believed that the human mind alone can generate and control electricity, then perhaps he could use his mind to do just that. To the general populace, an individual who controls electricity with his thoughts is miraculously altering the laws of reality, but to the mage, the feat is well within the scope of his reality.

The pursuit of magickal knowledge therefore is the pursuit of alternate viewpoints of reality. It involves finding and studying beliefs to pursue a reality that allows the mage to do more. This is no easy task. Mages have been pursuing such bodies of knowledge since the dawn of human civilization. Simply saying that the human mind should be able to control electricity is insufficient. The mage must answer the hows and whys that explain his interpretation of reality. By what method can the human mind control the path of electrons?

The Nine Spheres of Knowledge

'Do you really imagine that you know everything about life?' The answer came back through the darkness in the same cool, confident tone. 'Yes.'

— Albert Camus, *The Plague*

Luckily for the inexperienced mage, his predecessors have left him a large body of knowledge. This great body of knowledge is organized into the Nine Spheres of Knowledge, known simply as the Spheres. The Spheres are named as follows:

- **Correspondence** — the study of dimensional space.
- **Entropy** — the study of progressive disorder.
- **Forces** — the study of energy, in all of its forms.
- **Life** — the study of the biological.
- **Matter** — the study of physical, nonliving patterns.
- **Mind** — the study of sentience.
- **Prime** — the study of quintessential reality.
- **Spirit** — the study of the ethereal.
- **Time** — the study of the temporal.

As a mage studies a Sphere, she learns a body of theories that allows her to perform magickal effects. For example, with enough study of Forces, a mage discovers how the human mind can reweave the etheric Patterns that create electricity. Now the mage controls electricity.

However, as with any pursuit, the beginning student cannot perform at a doctorate level. As she progresses in her studies, the mage gradually learns more and more about the Spheres. As her knowledge increases, she becomes able to work more and more miraculous effects.

Most mages accept that the Nine Spheres cover every aspect of reality that can be defined and controlled. Any

magickal effect can be achieved through the understanding and application of one or more Spheres. Many effects also require the mage to understand the relation between Spheres; such relations are often called conjunctions, and the effects thereof conjunctional magick.

The concept of rank, or dots in a Sphere, is purely a game mechanic, and mage characters speak of their progression in the Spheres differently. Many Traditions hold their own titles, but generally a mage who possesses one to three dots in a Sphere is termed a Disciple of that Sphere. At the fourth rank, the mage is called an Adept, and at Rank Five she earns the title of Master. These titles denote each Sphere, so one mage who has studied several Spheres might be a Disciple of Spirit, an Adept of Time, and a Master of Matter.

Note that each Tradition has its own way of approaching the Spheres. The Do of the Akashic Brotherhood embodies a different understanding of reality than the theology of the Celestial Chorus. Nonetheless, Disciples of each Tradition generally progress along similar lines, gaining similar "powers" as they progress through their study of the Spheres. This also lets characters of different Traditions support each other's Ascension; the most open-minded mages advance the fastest.

Unfortunately, many Traditions now cling so strongly to their own tenets that they have lost sight of the fact that these tenets are themselves artificial. The ancestors of each Tradition understood the Metaphysic of Magick and therefore deliberately created a concept of reality that was self-consistent, allowed for paranormal effects, and was understandable by the general unenlightened populace. The goal of each Tradition was to build the best possible description of reality, a description that would advance humanity to Ascension.

Current Disciples of most Traditions do not realize that they are studying a subjective view of reality invented by the founders of their Tradition. Even the Disciples' Mentors may believe that they are teaching the one and only, true, objective view of reality. Often, neither the student nor the tutor fully understands the Metaphysic of Magick. Instead, each views magick as an imposition of "true" reality over the false reality of the general populace.

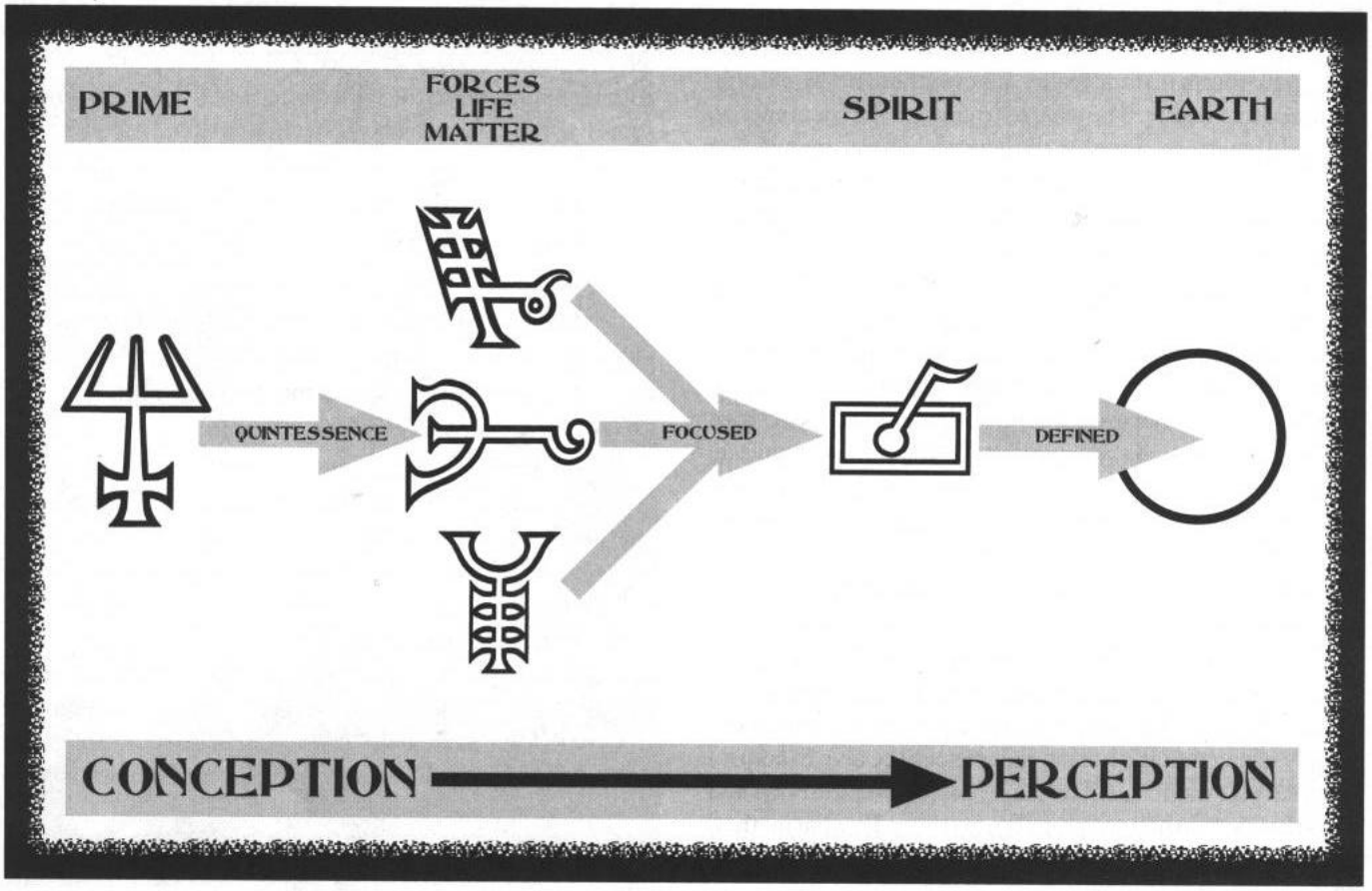
Luckily for such mages, this difference in philosophical approach is a moot point until they achieve Mastery of a Sphere. At this point, they have reached the limits of their current understanding.

The Oracles

Infinite players play best when they become least necessary to the continuation of play. It is for this reason they play as mortals.

— James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games*

At the point of Mastery, many mages cease to pursue knowledge. These mages may (falsely) believe they have reached a full understanding of reality, or perhaps they are simply satisfied with their level of knowledge. These mages often become the rulers of their Traditions, espousing their



beliefs and increasing the power of the Tradition within the Tellurian.

However, a few mages realize that the beliefs of their Tradition, to which they have been subscribing and from which they have been drawing power, are imperfect and can be improved. These mages become the Oracles of their Spheres.

The Oracles are a select group of mages who have superseded Mastery of a Sphere and now seek to transcend the limitations of the Traditions by inventing a concept of reality that allows for even greater feats. The Oracles of each Sphere operate in secrecy.

Occasionally, they request service from lesser mages; even more rarely, they venture forth from their sanctuary Realms to spread word of developments in the Spheres or to undertake their own perilous quests. Lesser mages are rarely allowed to visit the nine sanctuary Realms of the Oracles. Those foolish enough to try are usually driven mad by the alien nature of the Realms long before they find the Oracles.

The Structure of Reality

Part of the purpose in magick is... to arrive, through the faculties of feeling and of intellect, and finally arriving through intuition itself, at a contact with the underlying substance of the phenomena around us.

— Denning & Phillips, *The Foundations of High Magick*

A truly enlightened mage would balk at the question "what is the true structure of reality?" The mage would explain that merely posing the question reveals the questioner still to subscribe to objective reality rather than understanding the Metaphysic of Magick. Under the Metaphysic of Magick, the structure of reality is defined by belief, and as long as there are different beliefs, there will never be one true structure of reality.

However, just as different languages nonetheless possess some similarities, there have emerged some "absolutes" concerning the current structure of reality. Some mages, especially the Dreamspeakers, argue that such structures derive not from the similarities of belief among Traditions, but rather from the sleeping mind of Gaia herself. Regardless, the vast majority of mages hold certain aspects of reality to be constants, and their Sphere theories are based upon these principles.

Each Tradition harbors a belief in four phases of reality: Quintessence, Pattern, Spirit, and Physical. The interaction between these four phases of reality is shown in the accompanying diagram.

Quintessence

Let me be drawn up into the immensity. Into the darkness, where nothing can be known.

— Peter Ackroyd, *First Light*

Quintessence is an indefinable thing. It is neither energy nor matter, and while mages conceive of it as being found in variable quantities called Tass, it is also commonly perceived as an indivisible whole. Mages believe Quintessence to be the basic building block of all reality; everything in reality — matter, energy and the ethereal — is made from Quintessence.

Quintessence is the primary component of reality. Its true nature cannot even be imagined by mages. Most mages believe that there is a great cosmic pool of raw Quintessence that has not been incorporated into anything, but rather floats free. Anytime a new phenomenon is created in reality, Quintessence is drawn from this pool to create it. Also, living things maintain a link to this pool, as all Patterns of life are continually fed a trickle of Quintessence.

The study of Quintessence falls under the Sphere of Prime. Mages who struggle to learn this Sphere attempt to grasp the nature of quintessential reality.

Pattern

Reason cannot be suppressed or circumvented; it must be accommodated.

— Donald Tyson, *The New Magus*

If Quintessence is the raw substance of all reality, then Pattern is the means by which Quintessence is subdivided into the various forms of reality. All types of energy, life and matter have Patterns, which shape them and give them their unique properties. How various Patterns interact and distort one another translates into the known properties of reality. A Pattern of gravity interacting with a Pattern of a raindrop translates into a perception of a falling raindrop.

Patterns cannot be perceived (except possibly by the Oracles), but their forms can be imagined by mages who study them. Mages picture Patterns as webs of etheric material woven into distinct designs. Mages often speak figuratively of "weaving" or even "quilting" Patterns. Thus is derived the so-called "tapestry" of reality and the "threads" that mages "fray."

Patterns are divided into three Spheres for study based on the differences between the Patterns of Life, Forces (energy) and Matter (the inanimate). The working of magic based on these three Spheres is collectively called Pattern magick. Pattern magick allows a mage to control every aspect of the physical world. Mages who seek to master any type of Pattern magick must also study the Sphere of Prime, because the act of creating a new Pattern also requires some knowledge of and control over the flow of Quintessence.

Spirit

When Quintessence is fueled by or stored in Patterns, a true picture of reality called the spirit world is created. This level of reality remains intangible to humanity at large. Mages, however, see the spirit world as a truer picture of reality than the physical world. The spirit world may be called the Umbra, they argue, but in reality the physical world is but the shadow of the spirit. The spirit world is the playground of most mages, and many of their struggles are fought spiritually. Mages who study the Sphere of Spirit learn how to exist and function in the spirit world.

Physical

Finally, the physical completes the spectrum. Physical reality is the normal world perceived by all.

Mages have charted spiritual and physical reality into a cosmological map called the Tellurian. The spirit world of Gaia sits in the middle of the Tellurian; Earth is her physical reality image. Along with the Realm of Gaia, the Tellurian comprises many other regions: the Near Umbrae that surround each different Realm; the Deep Umbra; the Horizon; the Chimarae; and many other Realms, such as Arcadia (whose physical reality is Earth's moon). While the planet Earth is Gaia's physical reality, other Realms have their own physical realities, many of which lie undiscovered throughout the Tellurian.

Through the Metaphysic of Magick, mages believe that the conceived reality (Quintessence) ultimately creates the perceived reality (physical). The Technocracy feeds society the opposite view. The Technocracy has ensured that perceived reality defines conceived reality, and because the perceptions of modern science now take place in highly specialized laboratories, it is relatively simple for Technomancers to control "perceived reality."

Such manipulation is not unlike a fascist government's Orwellian propaganda campaign. The Technomancers largely determine the course of human lives. They have made technology the tool of humanity at large and through it they control the people. People today spend more time soaking up Technomancer propaganda in front of a television than they do sleeping.

Mind

Some mages argue that sentience, or soul, is the single thing that can exist without having Quintessence fed through a Pattern. Ultimately, these mages argue, Quintessence is a conception of the mind, and to say that sentience did not exist before Quintessence is to build a paradoxically circular thought. Others argue that the mind conceiving of its own building block does not violate the Metaphysic of Magick.

Mages who support the independence of the mind still agree that the biological body is made of Quintessence, but they hold that the intellect it houses is not. Along these lines, some mages perceive time and space as likewise distinct from quintessential reality. Many mages argue that time and space are nothing but concepts created by the mind to interpret reality. The debate over the origin of the mind continues in the meeting places of mages, primarily between Masters of Mind and those of Prime.

Creating Magickal Effects

Talk of magic in the Western World as a spent force: self-congratulatory accounts of cults that had been infiltrated and discovered to be groups of pseudo-scientists exchanging arcane theories in a language no two of them agreed upon; or sexual obsessives using the excuse of workings to demand favors they couldn't seduce from their partners; or, most often, crazies in search of some mythology, however ludicrous, to keep them from complete psychosis.

— Clive Barker, *Imajica*

Armed with the understanding that whatever the mage believes is reality becomes reality, and versed in the use of the Spheres, the mage should be able to accomplish any magickal effect. Unfortunately, it is not so easy. When a mage's personal beliefs conflict with the beliefs of billions of sentients, the mage inevitably faces appalling limitations when she attempts magick.

The contrast between the mage's reality and others' reality is the key conflict that must be overcome to create a magickal effect. This conflict has divided magick into two forms: static or "coincidental" magick, and dynamic or "vulgar" magick. Both types of magick are capable of the exact same effects, but one seeks to work within the confines of static reality, while the other ignores reality altogether.

These two forms of magick, along with the game rules for using them, are described below. The rules for each type are very similar and the mechanics are relatively simple to use. To understand some of the game rule terminology used in the descriptions below, you will need to be familiar with the basic use of dice as explained in Chapter Four.

Static or "Coincidental" Magick

Magic is seldom spectacular because it seldom needs to be.
— Donald Tyson, *Ritual Magic*

Reality as we know it is based on the collective beliefs of every sentient creature in the Gaia Realm. The pervasiveness of these beliefs is a formidable barrier to mages. For example, a mage would find it very difficult to become a 10-story-tall giant and stomp through downtown Manhattan. Reality holds that such a magickal feat is impossible, a paradox, even though the mage might believe otherwise.

Mages, being "smarter than the average bear" types of folks, tend to circumvent this restriction rather than face it head-on. Whenever possible, most mages allow the effects of their magick to conform to what is commonly accepted as possible. Thus, magickal effects often take the form of elaborate coincidences — odd, unlikely, maybe even extraordinary, but not impossible, events.

For example, a mage's enemy flees down a subway tunnel. The mage desires the man dead and seeks to accomplish this by smiting the man with a stroke of lightning. The mage is a Master of the Sphere of Forces, so he could simply create lightning, send it crackling from his fingertips, arc it through the air, and ground it to earth through the fleeing man, killing him. However, the laws of reality hold that such a feat is not possible, and therefore the clever mage alters how this magickal effect *appears* in physical reality.

No bolt of lightning sizzles down the tunnel; the fleeing man instead steps upon the high-voltage subway tracks and is electrocuted. The witnesses standing around the mage on the subway platform view the event as a terrible accident. The mage, however, knows that his electrical attack was successful and that only the appearance of the magick was altered. Of course, another mage witnessing the scene will also know what has actually transpired.

Mages often refer to static magick as coincidental magick because its effects so often appear to be happenstance, luck or accidents. Reality will go to amazing lengths to veil the most powerful and dramatic magickal effects in the guise of the believable. Mage characters find this effect to be very beneficial, allowing the mage to preserve the secrecy of his magickal art from humanity at large.

As a general guideline, magick is static if Sleepers would in the end accept what they saw as believable. A man would be baffled by a mage who flipped a coin 100 times and had it come up heads every time, and he might claim that the mage was using a specially weighted coin, but he would not accuse the mage of altering reality to make this happen.

Dynamic or "Vulgar" Magick

For a sorcerer, reality, or the world as we all know, is only a description.

— Carlos Castaneda, *Journey to Ixtlan*

Forget the banal reality of the unenlightened masses. The mage knows the road to true power. Why not flex his mystic might for all to see?

Occasionally out of pride, more often out of necessity, the mage cannot bother with the limitations imposed by reality. He must rip reality apart and reform it to his whim. When a mage performs magickal effects that cannot possibly be explained logically, he is performing dynamic magick. Mages often refer to this as vulgar magick because its appearance is an obscenity to normal reality.

A mage who uses dynamic magick may evoke awesome, breathtaking effects, but risks dire repercussions. Each time the mage performs dynamic magick, he creates a cancer on the skin of reality, and reality will ultimately deploy its defenses — Paradox spirits.

The Process of Magick

Existence — well, what does it matter?
I've existed for the best use I can
The past is now part of my future
The present is well out of hand.

— Joy Division, "Heart and Soul"

Magick follows the steps discussed below. A nearby chart also outlines the steps in a format that will both familiarize you with these steps and make the learning process easier.

1. The player describes the magickal effect (and how it will appear in physical reality if it's static magick).

The player controlling the mage character (or the Storyteller if the character creating the magick effect is a Storyteller character) must explain the magickal effect the character seeks to create. The description must be specific to the situation at hand and specific to the exact effect the mage desires. For example, it is better to describe a magick effect as "I'll reweave the man's Life Pattern to stop his heart attack," than "I'll save his life." The player must explain what Sphere knowledge his character is using and the nature of the magickal effect.

Once the magickal effect is determined, the player must also describe how the effect will appear in physical reality if the effect is a coincidental one. The player must devise a means by which the *same effect* can result through a *different appearance*. The description can only involve "realistic" events, and must be at least remotely believable. The events can be highly unlikely, but as long as they are conceivably possible, the character can attempt the effect as static magick.

Magick Flowchart

1 Describe the Effect

When a mage decides to use magick, the player must describe the magickal effect and decide whether it is coincidental or vulgar. If the effect is coincidental, the player must also explain the nature of the coincidence.

2 Correct Spheres?

The Storyteller then determines whether or not the mage has sufficient power in the appropriate Spheres to create the effect the player described.

3 Determine Difficulty

If the mage can create the effect, the Storyteller must determine the difficulty of the magickal effect roll. The base difficulty is the rating of the highest Sphere involved in the effect, plus three (so a Life 2, Time 3 effect has a difficulty of six). Difficulty modifiers are listed on page 172.

4a Automatic Success Rule

...e player must now determine whether ...e magick is successful. The automatic ...ccess rule is one option, but rarely will ...e success be enough to create the effect ...e mage desires.

4b Vulgar Magickal Effect Roll

The player must now determine whether the magick is successful. If the magickal effect is vulgar, the player may roll a number of dice up to the mage's highest rating in the Sphere(s) being used for the effect. Each result equal to or greater than the difficulty is a success.

4c Coincidental Magickal Effect Roll

The player must now determine whether the magick is successful. If the magickal effect is coincidental, the player may roll a number of dice up to the mage's Arete rating. Each result equal to or greater than the difficulty is a success.

5 Results

Determine the results of the magickal effect by using the number of successes gained on the magickal effect roll. The two charts on page 173 help determine damage, duration or range.

6a ...ulgar Paradox With Witness

...epending on the result of the magickal ...ect roll, the mage may gain Paradox ...ints by using magick. If the magick is ...lgar and there is a Sleeper witness, the ...age automatically gains a minimum of ...e Paradox point if the effect is successful. The mage can also gain Paradox points ...the roll is botched. In this case, the mage ...ins two Paradox points for each die ...lled and the Storyteller rolls the same ...mber of dice the player rolled to check ...r Paradox Backlash. For example, if the ...fficulty of the roll is eight and the player ...lls six dice, scoring 9, 8, 6, 1, 1, 1, the ...age gains 12 Paradox points and the ...toryteller rolls six dice for Paradox Backsh.

6b Vulgar Paradox Without Witness

Depending on the result of the magickal effect roll, the mage may gain Paradox points by using magick. If the magick is vulgar and there is no Sleeper witness, the mage automatically gains a minimum of one Paradox point if the effect is successful. The mage can also gain Paradox points if the roll is botched. In this case, the mage gains one Paradox point for each die rolled. For example, if the difficulty of the roll is eight and the player rolls six dice, scoring 9, 8, 6, 1, 1, 1, the mage gains six Paradox points.

6c Coincidental Paradox

Depending on the result of the magickal effect roll, the mage may gain Paradox points by using magick. If the magick is coincidental, the mage can only gain Paradox points if the roll is botched. In this case, the mage gains one Paradox point for each result on the roll that is a failure or a "one." For example, if the difficulty of the roll is eight and the player rolls 9, 8, 6, 1, 1, 1, the mage gains four Paradox points.

7 Countermagick and Resistance

Another mage may use countermagick to reduce the power of a magickal effect (see *Countermagick* on page 175); a victim may also resist the magick with a Willpower or soak roll. Each success gained in countermagick or resistance reduces the attacking mage's successes by one.

Activity	Difficulty Modifier
Spend Quintessence	-1
Take an extra turn	-1
Near a Node	-1 to -5
Connection to target	-1
Fast-Cast	+1
Distracted	+1 to +3

To describe his character's magickal effect, the player will need to call on his creativity and his own ability at storytelling. The more plausible his explanation, the better the story will flow.

Note that the player does not have to describe the magick's "normal" appearance if the mage employs dynamic magick. Vulgar magick is not bound by the laws of reality. Dynamic magick does not have a duplicity of appearance; it appears in its true form.

If the spell has a target, the player should decide if the spell affects its victim directly (putting her to sleep) or indirectly (creating a gas that puts the victim to sleep). This will affect how the target can resist the effect, as explained in Step Seven.

Finally, the character should decide if the spell's effects are instantaneous (a ball of flame that burns its victim and then disappears) or sustained (causing a target's arm to wither). Note further that with the exception of most Correspondence magick, the character must be able to sense his target, usually visually.

2. The Storyteller decides if the character is capable of producing the desired magickal effect.

The Storyteller must decide whether the player is using the proper Spheres (a character with no rating in Forces cannot control a magnetic field) and whether the character's ratings in those Spheres are sufficient to allow the character to produce the effect (a character with one dot in the Time Sphere does not yet understand how to travel into the future).

If the character is performing static magick, the Storyteller must first decide if the events the player described are possible within the bounds of reality.

For example, if the player describes his character becoming 10 stories tall, the Storyteller must rule that such a feat is simply not possible within static reality. No possible circumstances can explain the appearance of a 30-meter human. The player must rethink his magickal effect while his character similarly ponders for a game turn.

Most often, the player has confused the desired magickal effect with the magick's appearance. The player should stop and think: what specifically did the character want to accomplish by becoming 30 meters tall; and, is it possible for the effect to manifest in some other way? If not, the character should attempt the feat as dynamic magick. If a magick difficulty ever exceeds 10, the the effect is not possible without an expenditure of Quintessence.

Sphere Rank	Damage
One	Successes x 0
Two	Successes x 0
Three	Successes x 1
Four	Successes x 2
Five	Successes x 3

3. The player determines the difficulty of the spell and decides how to modify it.

If the effects the player describes are possible and are within the character's ability, then the Storyteller needs to determine how difficult they are to create. The base difficulty of any effect equals its highest Sphere + 3. Thus, if a mage tried to create an effect that required Forces 4 and Time 2, the difficulty would be seven (4 + 3).

A number of factors can raise or lower this difficulty. For instance, spending a point of Quintessence decreases the difficulty number by one. The mage exhausts his own store of quintessential reality to mold reality to his whim. The maximum amount of Quintessence that can be used in this fashion equals the mage's rank in the Prime Sphere.

Mages who take additional time working an effect may also deduct one from their magickal difficulty ratings. Unless the Storyteller rules otherwise, this requires no more than taking an extra turn. The maximum reduction to the difficulty for taking extra time is one. On the other hand, trying to create an effect quickly when the character would normally have to spend a lot of time with a focus (i.e., a Virtual Adept having to program his laptop before his opponent can shoot at him) adds one to the difficulty.

Casting magick while on a Node lowers the difficulty of magickal effects by a variable amount depending on how powerful the Node is. Also, possessing some item that was once part of a target or meant a lot to him (i.e., toenail clippings, a favorite toy, etc.) can reduce the difficulty.

On the other hand, trying to create a magickal effect while distracted can be especially hard. Some mages have trouble focusing on their view of reality while other events compete for their attention. For instance, trying to create an effect while driving a car would increase the difficulty by one, while creating the same effect while driving a car, dialing the car phone, listening to the car radio and carrying on a heated debate would increase the difficulty by at least three.

4. The player decides how many dice to roll for the magickal effect and makes the roll.

The test for a successful use of magick is called a magickal effect roll. The more successes gained on this roll, the more powerful the magickal effect will be, and the closer to the mage's desires the effect will come.

When a character uses magick, the player can choose how many dice she wants to roll for the magickal effect. The maximum number of dice allowed depends on whether the effect is coincidental or vulgar. For coincidental magick the dice limit is the mage's Arete rating. The limit for vulgar effects is the mage's rating in the Sphere being used for the effect. If the effect is conjunctional, then the limit is the rating of highest Sphere involved.

For example, the maximum number of dice allowed for a Life and Time effect is four if the mage's ratings in those Spheres are Life 2 and Time 4. If the effect was purely part of the Life Sphere then the dice limit would be two for a vulgar effect or the mage's Arete if the effect was coincidental. A mage's Arete rating can, of course, be equal to the rating of the Sphere being used, in which case the dice limit is the same for coincidental or vulgar magick.

This limit is more restrictive for vulgar magick because it is more difficult to overcome the structure of static reality when a mage creates effects counter to its nature. There is a story benefit as well. Players are rewarded when they come up with coincidences to explain their magick as it will allow them to roll more dice.

The "automatic success rule" (see Chapter Four) still applies to magickal effect rolls; however, few effects will do everything the player wants them to with only one success. Ability specialties (see Chapter Five) do play a role in creating effects, even though a character cannot have a specialty in Arete.

5. Determine whether the mage successfully created the effect and what it actually does.

As previously mentioned, one success is rarely enough to create most effects. The accompanying charts show how many successes are needed to achieve certain results.

Manipulating reality is an all-or-nothing affair. If the character does not succeed in creating exactly what the player called for, then nothing happens. Additionally, rolling more successes than were needed does not necessarily evoke more spectacular results.

Damage is based on the mage's rank in the Sphere causing the harm. The number of successes scored on the magickal

Successes	Range	Duration
One Success	Touch	One turn
Two Successes	One close target	One scene
Three Successes	Immediate vicinity (all)	One day
Four Successes	Immediate vicinity (selective), or line of sight (one target)	One story
Five Successes	Any or all within sensory range	Permanent

effect roll is multiplied by the damage multiplier, and the target takes that many Health Levels of damage.

Results may also vary by Sphere. For instance, the Correspondence Sphere has its own Range chart, while the Time Sphere has its own Duration chart. Entropy, Forces and Life all have their own Damage charts. These charts can be found in the Sphere descriptions later in this chapter.

If the player scores no successes, or does not score enough to achieve the results he wants, then nothing happens, though Quintessence spent to reduce the difficulty and/or Willpower spent to achieve automatic successes are lost.

6. Determine whether the mage has caught the attention of Paradox spirits.

If the mage was attempting coincidental magick and the magickal effect roll botches, the mage attracts the attention of the forces of Paradox. She immediately gains a number of Paradox points equal to the number of dice rolled for the effect.

If the mage was attempting vulgar magick without a Sleeper observing her, and the roll botches, the mage gains a number of Paradox points equal to the number of dice rolled for the effect (as above). Additionally, the Storyteller immediately rolls for a Paradox Backlash (see Chapter Eight), using a number of dice equal to the number of dice rolled for the magickal effect.

If the mage was attempting vulgar magick with a Sleeper observing her, and the roll botches, the mage gains a number of Paradox points equal to twice the number of dice rolled for the effect. Additionally, as above, the Storyteller immediately rolls for a Paradox Backlash, using a number of dice equal to the number of dice rolled for the magickal effect. In any case, when a mage successfully creates a vulgar effect that is observed by a Sleeper, she automatically gains one point of Paradox.

7. Other mages may counter the effect and victims may resist it.

Once the character has successfully created her effect, other mages may use countermagick against it (see *Countermagick*, below). Successes achieved with countermagick remove successes from the character's magick effect roll. If there are no longer enough successes to create the effect, the character's effort fails.

If a direct effect like Control Mind is directed against a target who possesses Willpower, the victim can resist. The Trait used to resist is Willpower (difficulty 8); each success removes one from the mage's successes. Again, if there are no longer sufficient successes to create the effect, the effect fails.

If an indirect effect like a lightning bolt is directed against a target, the target may soak the damage; no Willpower roll is used. However, a character cannot soak a direct effect.

Only at this point, after all defenses have had a chance to function, does the Storyteller tell the character the results of the effect: if it hurt the victim, if the character teleported, if the flow of time stopped, or whatever.

Key Elements of Coincidental Magick

While coincidental magick can create complex story situations, the rules of common sense guide what is and is not possible using coincidental magick. Your troupe should soon get the hang of describing such effects, and will find that such description makes each **Mage** story quite thought-provoking. The description need only take into account the perceptions of Sleepers — all Awakened beings, including vampires, werewolves, ghouls and other supernatural beings, realize what really happened. The following key elements are presented to help you understand the specifics of coincidental magick.

To help visualize the key elements, here is a simple example of the use of coincidental magick during a game. An Adept of Matter desires to transmute the bullets inside an enemy's gun into harmless oxygen. The player of the mage character explains that the gun was simply never loaded, or was loaded and later unloaded. So, while the mage has actually transmuted the bullets into oxygen, in physical reality it appears to a Sleeper that the gun is simply unloaded.

No Sleeper witnessing the event would ever think that something extraordinary happened. Witnesses would have no reason to believe that the gunman did not forget to load the gun. However, the bullets no longer exist, and the gunman will have fits trying to remember where he left them.

Unobserved Magick

Static reality does not confine magick when no Sleepers are present. If no mundanes are around to observe the magick, a mage can enforce his view of reality ("I **can** turn bullets into air") with less fear of Paradox. Thus, a mage could go off by himself to the middle of the Sahara Desert and be free of the barriers imposed by reality when he attempts to work magick. This explains why so many mages tend to be recluses.

Paradox spirits generally require the focus of their creators (humanity) in order to function, though they may appear when characters least expect them. Many mages believe they are better safe than sorry, and use coincidental magick on the off-chance that a Sleeper or a Paradox spirit is around.

Repetition of Events

Because imagining static magick's appearance in physical reality can be a difficult creative process, players will inevitably be tempted to reuse the same coincidences for similar magickal effects over and over. For example, the player of an urban-dwelling Master of Forces might explain the explosions his mage creates as gas pipes corroding apart and a chance spark igniting the gas. If the player elects to use this coincidental appearance repeatedly to explain the Forces magick, the quality of the story being told will inevitably suffer.

Experienced players should be creative enough to avoid making their characters' magick become clichéd, but the Storyteller may find it necessary to urge novice players out of a rut. The easiest way to do this is to increase the difficulty of the magick roll when the player overuses a given coincidental effect. In terms of the game setting, it becomes increasingly odd that more and more gas mains are spontaneously exploding all over town, and therefore the "gas main explosion" explanation becomes increasingly less probable.

As long as the player can elaborate the description, weaving more detail into the story, the Storyteller can relax this increasing difficulty. For example, the player might explain that the exploding gas pipes were all recently replaced with a new type of piping material. This explains why the different pipes are all exploding around the same time even though they might be in different parts of the city. The Storyteller, impressed with the player's creativity, forestalls the increase in difficulty number until the next time the player uses the same reasoning.

If at First You Don't Succeed

If a character fails a magickal effect — that is, the player does not roll enough successes — the forces of static reality have prevented the character from altering reality. The character has failed, and it will do no good for her to retry the same effect. She must settle for a different magickal effect attempted next turn, or wait until the circumstances have significantly changed before attempting the same effect again (e.g. many Mind effects can be reattempted on a subject after the subject has slept). During a rare dramatic moment such as the climax of a chronicle, the Storyteller may also allow the character to spend a point of Willpower and reattempt the same magickal effect.

Countermagick

He's intelligent, but not experienced. His pattern indicates two-dimensional thinking.

— Spock, *The Wrath of Khan*

Mages have a direct means of resisting magick. Mages who have at least one rank in each Sphere of the effect being created can see the magick coming, just like someone involved in a fight can see a punch coming. Just as someone in a fight can then dodge, mages can try to counter the effect.

This requires an Arete roll (difficulty of the highest Sphere involved in creating the effect + 3). Successes scored on the countermagick effect roll cancel the successes of the original magickal effect (on a one-for-one basis), thus diminishing the magick's effectiveness.

If the number of successes scored by the countermagick roll exceeds the number scored by the original magick roll, the attacking magick is completely canceled. The attacking magick is also canceled if the countermagick successes reduce the attacking magick to parameters beneath those which the original mage intended.

For example, a vile Nephandus mage with Sphere ratings of Entropy 5 and Life 4 casts an Entropy/Life spell upon her foes, seeking to devolve them into hideous blobs of proto-

plasm. She decides to affect all targets in the immediate area (three successes needed). She rolls six dice from her Arete Pool and scores four successes, indicating that she indeed achieves her effect. However, one of her targets is a mage who also possesses ratings in the Life and Entropy Spheres. He casts countermagick, rolling three dice and scoring two successes. This reduces the Nephandus' number of successes to two. Two successes do not allow the Nephandus to affect everyone in the vicinity (as she had intended); the magick thus fizzles and dies. If the Nephandus had tried to affect only the mage, and the countermagick had reduced the number of successes to two, the mage would still be affected by the magick; the damage of the effect, however, would be reduced to that inflicted by two successes.

Unless the mage splits her Dice Pool, countermagick takes one turn to perform, just like any other action.

Acting in Concert

At the Storyteller's discretion, multiple mages can act in concert to increase the effectiveness of a particular magickal effect. Certain magickal effects, such as expanding a mage's senses or astrally projecting, cannot logically be performed in concert with other mages. However, many effects, such as temporal manipulations or spatial warps, can easily benefit from the work of several mages.

All of the mages involved in the effect must have sufficient knowledge in the appropriate Sphere(s) necessary to perform the magick, and all of the mages must both work simultaneously and remain in communication with one another through some means. Each mage rolls for the effect as normal. The total number of successes obtained on all of the rolls powers the magickal effect.

The down side to acting in concert is that any Paradox gained by one mage is gained by all others in the group. For example, if two mages are working together, and one gains one point of Paradox from the magickal effect roll while the second gains three points, each mage gains a total of four points of Paradox.

Also, if any one mage botches the effect roll (even if the others all score successes), the magick effect automatically botches.

The Burden of Foci

While foci are incredibly beneficial to mages (they wouldn't be able to work magick so easily without foci), they cause problems as well. For example, certain foci are simply too conspicuous to be carried and used in many societies. Imagine a Son of Ether donning his ether goggles in some backwater town in the United States. The locals are likely to become a little too curious.

Portability is also a major concern. Verbena just cannot lug a cauldron around with them everywhere. They may "coincidentally" find one nearby when their need is great, but even then it takes some time to prepare the nauseating fluids

the cauldron must contain. The same is true of the circles employed by the Order of Hermes. Mages of that Order cannot summon a spirit on the spur of the moment like a Dreamspeaker can at the wave of a feather.

Additionally, foci may limit how quickly a mage can create an effect. While the speed with which most magick effects occur is determined by a character's initiative roll, some foci increase the difficulty. If a Virtual Adept wants to make the bullets in a gun disappear before she is shot, she will have to program it into her computer. While this may require only a few lines of code, it will increase the difficulty on the initiative roll by at least two.

Finally, there are "unique items." Unique foci are noted below. A unique focus derives much of its power from the connection between it and its user, and the Spheres relying on that specific focus cannot be used if the unique focus is lost. For example, an Akashic Brother comes to view his weapon as an extension of himself. If he loses that weapon, he cannot use the Spheres of Life or Matter until it is recovered. Alternately, the mage can dedicate a replacement unique focus, but she must relearn the Sphere from the beginning.

This relearning process doesn't require nearly as much time as the original learning process, but it does set the mage back. A Sphere can be relearned up to its previous rank at an experience cost of only 2 x the current rating. Once the mage has achieved his previous rank in the Sphere, the experience cost reverts to the regular 10 x current rank. In addition, this relearning process doesn't require a story-based reason for the increase, as do normal Sphere gains.

The mage may also gain enough points of Arete to dispense with the need for the unique focus, but Arete can be difficult to achieve.

Descriptions of each focus follow. More details about how foci work are discussed in Chapter Eight.

Abacus: This focus is a holdover from the early days of the Sons of Ether, when calculations had to be done by hand. If the mage wishes to use Correspondence or Entropy, he must still perform his calculations by hand. Using an abacus will usually increase the initiative difficulty of an effect by +2 to +3.

Blood: This primal fluid is necessary to work some Verbena magick. The blood can be that of any animal, but human blood seems to work best when Prime is used.

Bones: Any kind of bone will work for the Euthanatos — cow, dog or even human. The bone must be waved like a wand for it to be effective.

Cauldron: Practically immobile foci, the cauldrons of the Verbena are the real things — big and heavy black pots. Various vile liquids must be mixed into the pot in order to work the magick. Such a process takes at least five to 10 minutes. A cauldron will usually increase the initiative difficulty of an effect by +2 to +3.

Circle: To protect themselves from the dangers of the Umbra, Hermetic mages must surround themselves with an ornate magickal circle prior to using the Spirit Sphere. Such a circle takes a minimum of two hours to create, but most Hermetic mages have far more elaborate ones in their Nodes or elsewhere.

Computer: The heart and soul of a Virtual Adept, a computer is required for all magick that the Tradition uses. It is safe to assume that the computer is a portable one with at least as much processing power as the best workstation machines now available. However, the computer must be on and used in order for the magick to work. Most effects take only a few seconds to program, but high-rank effects can take a couple of minutes. Using a computer usually increases the initiative difficulty of an effect by +2 to +3.

Crystals: Quartz crystals store the energy of the earth, so Dreamspeakers require them to use some Spheres.

Dancing: The Euthanatos practice a variety of dances, ranging from the odd to the obscene. Outsiders usually see these dances only when the mage performs magick. Dancing usually increases the initiative difficulty of an effect by +2 to +3.

Do: An Akashic Brother must be performing this martial arts form (the original martial arts form) in order to use some magick. Using Do can draw attention to the mage, and the environment can sometimes be distracting, as meditation is often an essential aspect of Do.

Dolls: When using certain magick against a person, a Euthanatos mage must first prepare a doll that bears some resemblance to the victim. Such a doll requires a short time to make, assuming the materials are handy. Many Euthanatos carry extra dolls, which can be linked to a target in seconds.

Drums: Dreamspeaker magick often requires the pounding of a drum.

Electricity: The Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts require electricity to use some Spheres. This electricity can be siphoned from nearby power cords, overhead lights, or portable storage batteries.

Ether Goggles: The bane of Sons of Ether who wish to work magick without drawing attention to themselves, ether goggles are globular, semi-translucent goggles that obscure most of the face. The mystic substance ether (from whence the Tradition derives its name) permeates the goggles.

Feather: This can be the feather of any bird or mythical being. It is a unique item.

Fire: A small fire must be burning nearby in order for the mage to reach through the spirit to Prime. A match or lighter does not produce enough flame, though two lighters sparked at the same time will do.

Herbs: Verbena must use a variety of herbs to perform their magick. The Storyteller and player are encouraged to vary the way the herbs are employed — from sprinkling on the object to swallowing by the mage.

Holy Symbol: A mage of the Celestial Chorus must wear a necklace or other item of jewelry that has an icon of the mage's belief engraved or attached. This could represent a modern religion or an ancient faith that only members of the Tradition remember. The symbol is a unique item.

Incense: Aromatic incense must be inhaled by members of the Cult of Ecstasy for some Spheres to operate. It takes at least a minute to prepare incense in this way.

Language: The Order of Hermes teaches all apprentices a mystical tongue that only they know. This language can be used for crude communication between members, but its main use is that of communication with the powers beyond this world (i.e. Spheres). Specific intonations must be made to evoke different magickal effects.

Music: Most apprentices of the Cult of Ecstasy subsume their natural musical aptitude into magick. These mages must play an instrument in order to evoke their magic. This usually increases the initiative difficulty of an effect by +2 to +3.

Network: A Virtual Adept must be connected to a reasonably large communications network in order to employ some Spheres. This is becoming easier in the days of internal modems and wireless phones.

Pure Water: Water, either from a natural spring or "holy" water, must be sprinkled when the Sphere is used.

Purification: To use the Spirit Sphere, member of the Akashic Brotherhood must have cleansed their bodies. The Storyteller must determine the cleanliness of the mage.

Rattle: Euthanatos must shake a rattle when using Mind or Time.

Ring: The physical world and its dissolution is represented among mages of the Cult of Ecstasy by a ring they wear. A mage's ring is a unique item.

Sash: The most portable of the Akashic Brotherhood's foci is the sash, a belt that must simply be worn.

Scientific Meter: This hand-held device generates various readings of the surrounding environment. The mage needs this information to use some Spheres.

Seal of Solomon: This seal is also called the Star of David. It consists of two interlocking triangles (one pointed up, the other down) that form a hexagram. This seal must be engraved or drawn on something the mage holds in his outstretched hand.

Showstone: A showstone is a gem or crystal of some kind. It is a unique item.

Song: Mages of the Celestial Chorus must sing aloud when using several Spheres. The song can be anything from an operetta to rap.

Wand: A slender stick made of wood must be manipulated in order for a Verbena to use some Spheres.

Weapon: As part of their Do training, Akashic Brothers learn how to use a weapon of choice. This can be any weapon, but is usually an Oriental one, like a katana. Thereafter, performing moves with the weapon is required for magick. A Brother's weapon is a unique item. Euthanatos also require a weapon; they often choose grisly weapons like spiked whips. These are not unique items. A Verbena's weapon must be a dagger; it is not unique.

Vice: It's easy — too easy — for mages of the Cult of Ecstasy to get trapped in their hard way of life, so they either acquire or never lose bad habits. To work certain types of magick, a mage must be indulging in his vice.

Magick in the Spirit

The rules for magick use change when a mage leaves physical reality and enters the Umbra, as the enlightened are often wont to do. The properties of reality vary a great deal depending on where in the Tellurian the mage travels, and certainly the restrictions on magick change as well.

In the Near Umbra

When a mage is in the Near Umbra, Gaia's spiritual atmosphere, he need no longer concern himself with the appearance of his magick. In the Umbra, all things tend to be revealed in their truest form, and this is true of magickal effects as well. The forces of reality no longer need to veil the appearance of magick in coincidence. Thus freed from physical constraints, mages find magick easier to perform.

In terms of game mechanics, magick performed in the Near Umbra is treated as dynamic magick, with the following major exception: The mage gains Paradox energy based on the rules for static magick, not dynamic magick. These mechanics are used whenever the magick affects the Near Umbra or a target within it, regardless of whether the mage is spiritually present in the Umbra or is simply peering into it from the physical.

In the Deep Umbra

Mages are more likely to travel the Deep Umbra, though. The laws of reality are completely annulled in the Deep Umbra. In such a place, a mage is free to explore the limits of her potential without interference, restriction or fear of Paradox.

The Deep Umbra is accessible to many mages, but this does not mean they understand it. All varieties of strange creatures and forces wander this area. Horrors like the tentacled abominations of H. P. Lovecraft and the black lodge of David Lynch's "Twin Peaks" can be found in this bizarre region between Realms. Most dangerous of all are the Nephandi, who make their homes in the Deep Umbra.

In the Deep Umbra, a mage may do anything her Sphere ratings indicate she has the knowledge to do. The Oracles of Forces have been spied using the Deep Umbra as a sort of testing range for explosions comparable to the mightiest nuclear blasts in human history.

In Realms

Once a mage leaves the spirit world of the Umbra to enter one of the Realms within it, she becomes subject to the laws of reality within that Realm. Each alternate Realm has a rating in each of the nine Spheres. These ratings delineate what is possible within the reality of the Realm; the Realm of Earth has a zero rating in each Sphere.

For example, the Forces Sphere rating of the Elemental Realm of Electricity is 3. This indicates that it is much easier to manipulate Forces within the static reality of this Realm than it is on Earth. A mage with a Forces rating of up to Rank Three would not be hindered at all by the static reality of the electrical Realm when he performed Forces magick, nor would he incur Paradox, because such magick does not contradict the reality of the Elemental Realm.

The ratings of Realms can be positive or negative. For example, a Realm that exists only in two-dimensional space (as in the book *Flatland*) might have a Correspondence rating of -4, reflecting that its reality is much more limited in terms of dimensional space than is Earth's. The same Realm might also have ratings of Entropy -2, Forces 0, Life 3, Matter -2, Mind 1, Prime -2, Spirit 0 and Time 4. All of these ratings reflect the scope of what is possible within that Realm's static reality.

How does this translate into the use of magick? A few guidelines are listed below. The guidelines are nothing more than common-sense applications of the concepts already discussed. Even so, storytelling in a Realm whose Sphere ratings are radically different from those of Earth can be a wild experience. Such settings offer the most complex and evocative storytelling you will find within the game of **Mage**. The following guidelines cover the use of magick in a Realm:

• If the mage is performing a magickal effect or conjunctional magickal effect that requires a Sphere rating *higher* than the Sphere ratings of the Realm, he must perform the magick using the normal rules for static or dynamic magick.

Note that certain Realms have negative Sphere ratings. Actions and perceptions that are standard and normal on Earth are miraculous in such Realms and will require the use of static or dynamic magick. For example, to lift an object in a Realm with a Correspondence rating of -4, where the only "true" directions are forward/backward and right/left, the mage must perform magick.

• If the mage is attempting a magickal effect that requires Sphere ratings lower than the Realm's Sphere ratings, the effect is automatically successful. Just as a human uses depth perception as part of everyday life, so do denizens in some other Realms use clairvoyance. Mages who seek to perform magick that is within the laws of a given Realm's reality automatically succeed. They gain no Paradox because they are not creating a contradiction in the reality of the Realm.

If a degree of success must be determined for such an action, use an appropriate Attribute or Ability roll. For example in the Realm of Valhalla, the Sphere rating of Life is +3. Warriors are able to heal themselves very quickly to ready for the next battle. A mage with a Life rating of three would not need to roll for a magickal effect when attempting to heal himself (an effect learned at Rank Three), but the Storyteller might instead have him make a Stamina roll to determine how many Health Levels the mage instantly regenerates.

• A mage is still limited by her own Sphere ratings, even if the Sphere ratings of the Realm are higher. It doesn't matter if the mage is traveling through the Realm of the Oracles of Time, which has a Sphere rating of Time 8; she is still limited by her personal Sphere ratings. If she does not understand the process of traveling into the future, she cannot do so, even if the Realm's reality allows it, and all of the sentients of that Realm are hopping through time.

In the Chimarae

The dream worlds are completely different monsters for mages. The reality of a dream world is defined solely by the entity controlling that world. A dream world's Sphere ratings shift up or down in accordance with the desires of the dream world's Lord. Indeed, reality in the dream worlds often fluctuates constantly.

Dream magick often involves calling upon the aid of the various Dream Lords, for it is mainly through their will that reality in a Dream Realm can be manipulated at all. The wars between the Lords of Dream are the stuff of legend, and by allying himself with some Dream Lords, a mage inevitably antagonizes many others, thus drawing herself into the demented politics of the Chimarae. Still, some mages feel that the benefits gained are worth the risk of involvement in their affairs.

The Spheres

I have only come here seeking knowledge,
Things they would not teach me of in college.
— The Police, "Wrapped around Your Finger"

The sum of all magickal knowledge known to the Traditions is organized into nine Spheres. All Traditions recognize the distinct nature of each Sphere and the scope of its coverage, although each Tradition has its own body of knowledge about the Spheres. Certain Traditions teach their Disciples sets of Spheres simultaneously to preserve the harmony of their studies. Other Traditions find magickal study more precise and profitable when each Sphere is taught as a separate, distinct body of knowledge.

The following descriptions of the Nine Spheres are intended to provide you with a broad explanation of each Sphere. The explanation illustrates what effects each Sphere covers, and what magickal powers are gained at each rank of a Sphere. Keep in mind that there are often many ways to accomplish the same effect. If a character wants to make a heavy object easier to move, she might use Matter to make it less dense, Forces to alter gravity around it, or Correspondence to shift it through space. Any of the three Spheres could accomplish the desired effect. The method used depends on which Spheres the character has studied, and how the player approaches the problem.

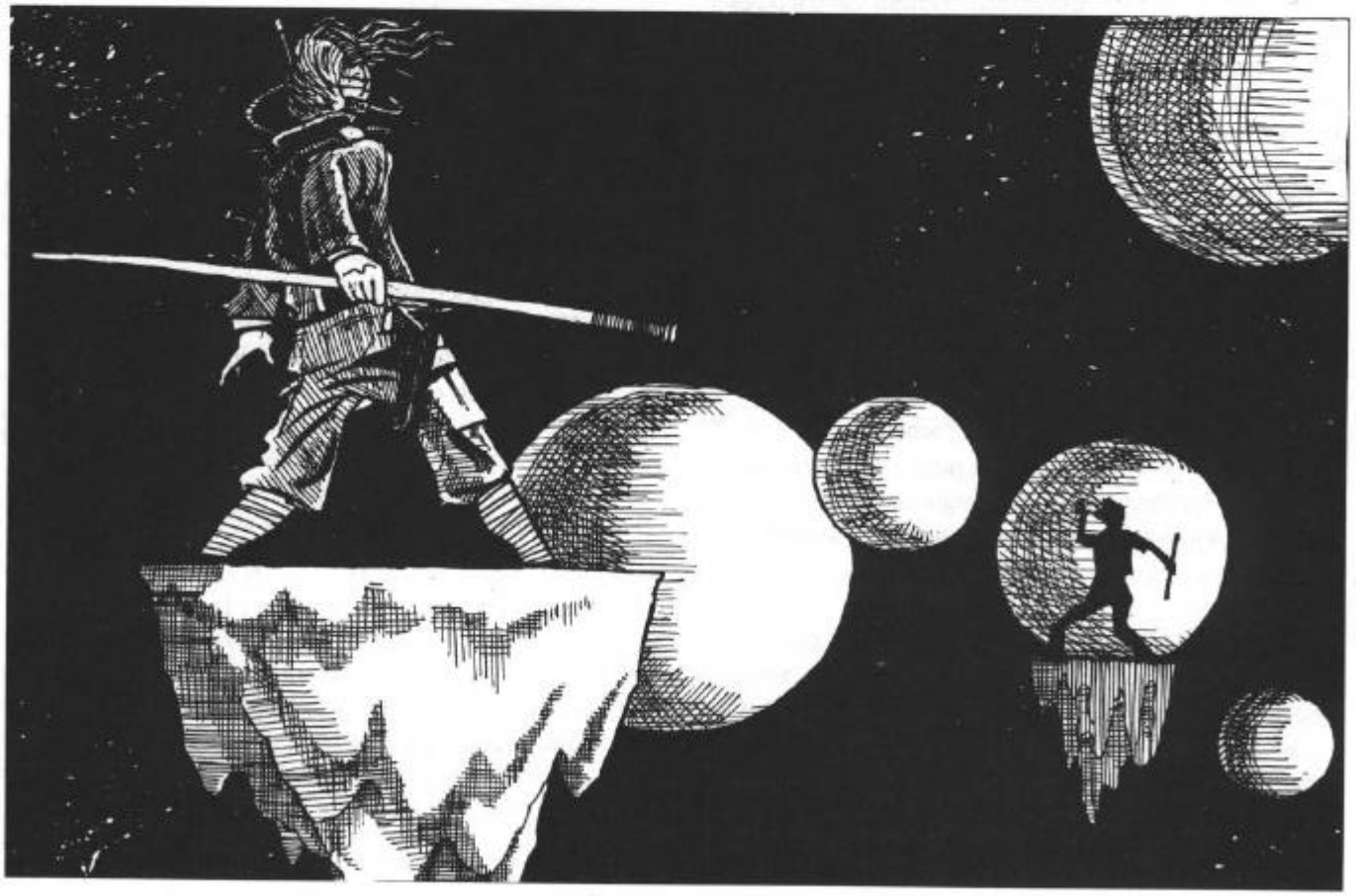
The description of each Sphere is divided into the following sections:

1. Opening Dialogue: A master who has studied the Sphere discusses it with the new student.

2. General Description: The scope of the Sphere is discussed, along with notes on the Sphere's unique properties, and in some cases, a chart describing what additional successes accomplish.

3. Rank Description: A general description of each rank is provided to show the primary magickal effects that become possible at each progressive rank in the Sphere. These descriptions are the true guides you should use for determining the effects a character is capable of creating at each rank. Use these general descriptions as a basis for inventing the magickal effects mages use in various situations within a story.

Always remember however, that *any* effect is possible using some combination of the Spheres. If a mage desires a magickal effect that cannot be found under any Sphere's Rank



Description, the Storyteller should decide at what rank of what Sphere or Spheres the effect becomes possible. The only limitation on characters is that some incredibly dramatic effects can only be performed by the Oracles, whose knowledge transcends the five ranks listed here.

4. Sphere Effects: Examples are provided of specific magickal effects possible at each rank within a Sphere. These effects are meant to be generic guidelines only. They should not be mistaken for absolute definitions of how a certain effect will operate every time in every game situation, and they certainly do not represent the only effects possible at a given rank. These examples merely show that *one* of the things knowledge of Forces allows a mage to do is Discharge Static.

What is a Sphere?

A particular element of reality manipulated by mages. All Traditions recognize the distinct nature of each Sphere and the scope of its coverage, although each Tradition has its own body of knowledge about the Spheres.

Correspondence

First, you must remove this word "where" from your vocabulary. There is no "where" or "here" or "there"; rather, all space is one. Locality is a universal singularity. You will come to understand that space is nothing more than an oversimplified translational tool for interpreting reality — a crutch used by the static mind to comprehend true reality. You must exercise your mind to prepare it for experiencing reality without the facade of space. Once this is accomplished, you will have the knowledge and perceptions that free you from the prison of dimensional space. You will see the Correspondence between all points in space, and you will recognize your existence there — at the Point of Correspondence. To those whose perceptions are still bound by three dimensions, you may appear anywhere and everywhere instantly, as you so will it.

This is the promise of the knowledge of Correspondence, but lest you take the pursuit of this Sphere of knowledge lightly, know that mental aberration and lifelong frustration await most who desire this path of enlightenment. Because you are determined enough to begin this study, let us examine a lesson in two-dimensional space — the first step in breaking your lifelong three-dimensional paradigm.

The Sphere of Correspondence involves an understanding of three-dimensional reality. Mages who have gained understanding of Correspondence have come to the (almost) unanimous conclusion that space, as the human race knows it, is ultimately an illusion. In truth, all patterns are "stacked" upon each other in one "place," referred to by most Traditions as the Correspondence Point or All-Space. In order to interpret and interact with the world around them, the unenlightened need to perceive the Correspondence Point as three-dimensional space instead of seeing that objects are in truth "stacked" on top of each other at a single point.

Mages who seek to master the Sphere of Correspondence have an arduous mental journey ahead. Since birth, the mage has interpreted reality through the lens of three-dimensional space; her sentient mind innately began to perceive reality in three dimensions because the reality into which she was born limited her to such an illusion. Not only has this three-dimensional paradigm been bred into the mage, society has also scripted her with the concepts of space: "the petrol station is *north* of *here*"; "the chair is over *there*, *across* the room"; or "the *volume* of a box is its *length* times its *width* times its *height*."

- • Immediate Spatial Perceptions
- •• Correspondence Perceptions
- ••• Shift through Space / Co-locality Perception
- •••• Blend Localities / Co-locate Self
- ••••• Mutate Localities / Co-location

To overcome such a deeply entrenched thought-pattern, the mage must undergo rigorous mental exercises. These exercises tax the mind's spatial awareness to such a degree that many students give up the pursuit or develop mental abnormalities before they overcome their fallacious perceptions. Many mages who fail in their pursuit of Correspondence become vocal detractors of the Theory of Correspondence. These sour-grapes critiques are fueled by rumors that even the Oracles of Correspondence have suggested that the Theory of Correspondence is not complete. After all, Correspondence is affected by Pattern, which prohibits mages from manipulating only part of a whole. For

Correspondence Range Chart

Successes	Range
One Success	Line of Sight
Two Successes	Very familiar (home, office, etc.)
Three Successes	Familiar (local grocery, mall)
Four Successes	Know of (seen picture, heard described)
Five Successes	Anywhere on Earth

instance, mages cannot teleport a person's nose off his face — though Oracles may be able to do that and more.

Despite its detractors, the Theory of Correspondence holds an exalted state among magickal theories, for all Traditions that study space use the theory in one form or another. Correspondence is the one Sphere on which all Traditions agree to some extent. The terminology differs, but seldom are any theories besides Correspondence pursued when a mage studies space.

Mages who persevere through the study of Correspondence gain knowledge that is combined with other magickal Spheres, the Master of Correspondence is unassailable.

The range of Correspondence is different from that of other Spheres. Mages have an easier time utilizing Correspondence in areas with which they are most familiar. The more unfamiliar an area, the harder it is to create Correspondence effects within/into it.

Mages who advance in Correspondence ahead of other Spheres appear to be "spaced out." Their eyes are unfocused, as they now rely on their spatial sense rather than sight. Their physical movements are very precise; these mages never bump into objects, trip or stub their toes.

• Immediate Spatial Perceptions

At this stage of understanding, the mage has begun to see the fallacies of spatial concepts, but is still caught in the paradigm of three-dimensional space. Nonetheless, the mage possesses a keen understanding of how objects relate to space. She can intuitively sense distances between objects, calculate the exact volume of objects, and sense objects in her immediate vicinity without having to perceive them through the normal five senses. However, finding things that have been consciously hidden must still be handled normally.

•• Correspondence Perceptions

Many mages never attain this level of understanding. The mage has now shattered the spatial illusion of physical reality. While his understanding is far from complete, the mage can now use the Correspondence Point as a gateway of sorts to extend his normal sensory perceptions beyond his immediate environment.

••• Shift through Space / Co-locality Perception

At this rank, the mage understands that all things exist at a single Correspondence Point. She thus realizes that she is already everywhere at once. The application of this knowledge allows her to shift position instantaneously to other locations. Note that to the mage's enlightened perceptions, she is not even moving (she, along with everything else, exists at the Correspondence Point); she is simply changing where she appears to be within the illusion of three-dimensional space.

Furthermore, a mage with a sufficient understanding of the Correspondence Point can potentially perceive all points in space at once, though such a mind-expanding experience would be catastrophic to the human psyche. A mage may, however, desire to view multiple locations at once. She would perceive the various scenes as several ghostly landscapes overlapping one another. This "stacking" of landscapes is called the co-locality phenomenon.

•••• Conjoin Localities / Co-locate Self

A mage of this rank can shift other people and objects through space, and may create pathways through the spatial fabric to join two locations. These pathways usually appear as two-dimensional windows connecting two locations, but can take another appearance depending on the mage's desire.

Additionally, the mage's understanding of the co-locality principle increases. He is now able to manifest physically in multiple locations at the same time.

••••• Mutate Localities / Co-location

The final exercise taught to mages of Correspondence is the knowledge of distorting space. A mage of this rank can affect distances and sizes around her, stretching them and shrinking them to fit her needs. In scientific terms, the mass of objects cannot be changed, but their volumes and dimensions are potter's clay to the mage.

Also, a Master of Correspondence can stack locations on top of one another in a bizarre landscape of multiple forms. She is no longer limited to herself or her senses; she can "stack" different locations on top of one another in a field of co-location.

Correspondence Effects

• **Landscape in the Mind** — When the Virtual Adepts sought to construct their virtual realities within their computer domains, they ran into a stumbling block. It was impossible to reproduce senses such as smell, touch, and even some aspects of sight within the computer worlds. The Virtual Adepts solved this problem by borrowing techniques used by a sect of the Akashic Brotherhood. These martial artists had developed a Zen-like sixth sense whereby they attuned themselves to the space around them. The Brothers "felt" their surroundings via a radar-like sense, and then "built" an imaginary landscape within their minds based on that spatial sense. Thus, the Brothers no longer had to see enemies approaching behind them. They sensed their foes in the landscape constructed in their minds' eye.

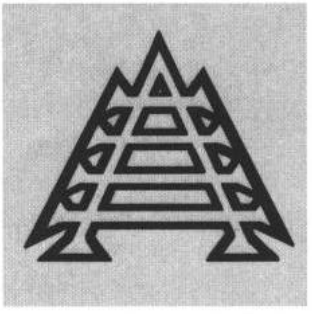
The Virtual Adepts adopted this spatial sense to their needs, incorporating it into mystic software programs and reproducing the effect within their virtual reality. Since that early time, the Adepts have found other techniques for incorporating the full range of human senses into their computer domains, but the spatial sense remains crucial for accurate sensory input in the virtual reality.

This effect is available to all Correspondence Disciples. It allows a mage to sense the shapes of the objects and entities that fill the space around her. A mage can extend the area of perception, but this requires more and more active concentration; after the area reaches a diameter about equal to a city block, the sensory input becomes too much to bear.

•• **Correspondence Sensing** — At this rank, the mage has broken free from three-dimensional space. He now acknowledges the Correspondence Point where all aspects of reality exist.

This knowledge gives the mage the ability to shift his senses through the Correspondence Point, allowing him to sense other locations. A mage in Atlanta now understands that he, and everything, exist at the same Correspondence Point, so he simply chooses to look at downtown Paris rather than at his current surroundings in Atlanta.

The mage need only picture the location in his mind's eye and extend his perceptions there. The mage can then see, hear and smell anything at the remote location and can rotate the perspective as if he were standing there. Tactile sensory input is very limited, but the mage can vaguely feel temperature and concussions. The mage does create a disturbance in space at the remote location he is viewing. Although this disturbance cannot be seen, it can be sensed by anyone with spatial senses such as **Landscape in the Mind**.



••• **The Seven-League Stride** — The name of this effect harkens back to medieval times and the mages of the Order of Hermes who first developed it. Using this effect,

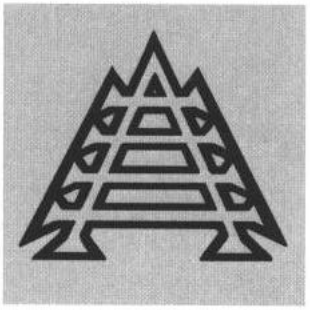
the Hermetic mages were able to transport themselves instantly to any location on Earth. The effect is still practiced by the real Order today, and has become part of every Tradition's Correspondence teachings.

A mage using this effect is able to manipulate his position within three-dimensional space. He can instantaneously blink out and reappear in another location within Gaia's physical reality. This effect does not immunize the mage to his new surroundings. For example, if the mage shifted to the ocean depths, mistakenly thinking a submarine was there, he would be crushed by the intense water pressure. Barring such untidy circumstances (usually avoided by first **Correspondence Sensing** the destination), the mage can safely transport himself throughout physical reality. From the mage's perspective, however, he is not even moving; he is simply "sliding" through the Correspondence Point and changing his interaction with reality so that he translates into dimensional space in a different location.

••• **Divided Sight** — The Cult of Ecstasy has found the co-locality phenomenon to be a wondrous way of multiplying sensory input and thereby expanding the amount of pleasure stimuli possible. Cult members use the **Divided Sight** effect to split their senses between two different locations in physical reality. The mage extends her senses just as with **Correspondence Sensing**, except that she can simultaneously view several locations at once. Each different location superimposes itself on the others, allowing the mage to perceive ghostlike images moving through one another and resting on top of one another. The mage can hear, see and smell each location simultaneously.

There is no limit to the number of locations the mage can sense at once, but too many locations viewed at once produces an indeterminate blur, and the mage will eventually be unable to distinguish what anything is, much less be able to tell which objects are in which locations. To distinguish which objects are in which locations, a Wits roll is needed. The difficulty number is equal to twice the number of scenes being viewed. The maximum number of scenes the mage can safely view equals her Perception Attribute. Going above this Perception limit is dangerous, as the cacophony of the combined perceptions can quickly drive the mage into catatonia or even Quiet.

A peculiar Doppler coloring effect aids the viewing of each scene. Objects in the location farthest from the mage's own location in dimensional space have a red tint or aura around them. Scenes closer to the mage have correspondingly colored auras — orange, yellow, etc. — all the way to violet. For example, a mage in New York City would see objects in Frankfurt, Germany with a red tinge; Dallas, Texas with a green aura; and New Jersey with a blue or violet coloring.



••• **Filter All-Space** — Given certain knowledge about any object or person, the mage can search through All-Space to find where that object exist in three-dimensional space. Different Traditions require dif ferent base information (hair or skin from a person, piece of th object, picture or sketch, etc.) for the search to have an chance of success. Because All-Space contains everything, i can take the mage a very long time to find the object. Searche of a week or more are not uncommon. During the search, th mage lapses into a trance as he mentally plumbs reality.

•••• **Dreamer's Shroud from Day** — Dreamspeaker are well known for using Correspondence Mastery to creat invisibility. The call the effect the **Dreamer's Shroud from Day**, and describe it as willing themselves out of the dreams o the light.

In terms of magickal control of space, this power allow mages to achieve an invisibility effect around any objec simply by warping space around the object into a perfec envelope. Light traveling toward the object will warp aroun the object and continue on its original path. Because ligh never reflects from the shrouded object or person, it cannot b seen. The more successes rolled for the effect, the greater th mage's spatial control and the less noticeable the field o warped space will be. Moving objects are more difficult t cloak and thus require more successes, as do larger objects suc as buildings.

•••• **Ripple through Space** — The Sons of Ether ar renowned for this Correspondence effect. Early in this century one of the Ether scientists developed a teleportation chambe that linked his laboratory with that of his colleague. The tw continued to use the chamber for several years until both were found horribly mutilated in the creator's lab. It is rumore among the Sons of Ether that a creature of Paradox homed in on the reality fluctuation and manifested inside the chambe with one of the scientists when he reappeared.

Nonetheless, this Correspondence effect remains part o Etheric science. The Sons of Ether normally refer to th process as "rippling" through space. The effect is known b other names among other Traditions.

Mages using this effect can shift the position of any one object to another location. Larger objects and structure require more successes to be moved, and the process inevitably imparts a disastrous amount of Paradox to the mages respon sible. It is rumored that a cabal of drunken Cultists of Ecstas once attempted to teleport the Eiffel Tower to Mexico City. The cultists were never seen again in this reality.

•••• **Hermes' Portal** — The Order of Hermes claims t have been the first to advance magickal knowledge of Corre spondence far enough to create rifts through space, portals that connect two locations in dimensional space. They label these warps Hermes' Portals. Other Traditions dispute the Order's claim and use the same effect under different names.

Regardless of its name, the effect creates a "window" in space that connects two or more different locations. These windows have as many faces as the sites connected: two sites are conjoined by a flat window with two sides, three sites are conjoined through three windows arranged in a triangle, four

sites by a square gate, etc.. Each side of the portal shows a blurry view of the location it connects.

Anything that desires to pass through the Portal may do so. However, using the magick involves an act of will, so inanimate objects and nonsentients cannot pass through the gate freely. They may, however, be ushered through by anyone using the gate. This restriction isolates the environments connected by the window; thus, a window connecting a living room to the deep ocean will not allow water to flood the room.

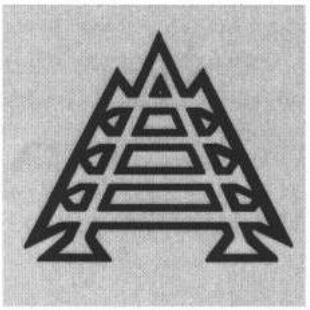
•••• **Polyappearance** — With this effect, a mage can use the co-location principles to make her physical form appear in many locations at once. This effect parallels **Divided Sight**, but in addition to sensing locations, the mage's physical form actually appears in each location as well. Observers in each location will see the mage and can interact with her normally. The mage, however, must simultaneously interact with each location into which she has projected herself. Anything she says or does will be heard and seen by observers at all locations.

The mage will perceive items in each location to be superimposed on one another visually, and all surfaces she touches will be solid to her. This can create an odd spectacle for observers viewing the mage. To the observers, the mage will appear to be a mime extraordinaire, as she opens doors and leans against walls that do not exist in the location of the observer, but do exist in one of the co-locations into which the mage has projected her form.

Note that this interaction is only one-way — from the mage's perspective. Items in one location do not affect observers who are in a different location, but the mage is affected by all objects in any of the locations into which she is co-locating. Her sight will be blocked by the walls closest to her, and she will suffer from assaults directed at any of her co-located body positions.

Mages can use this phenomenon to their advantage. The Do martial arts of the Akashic Brotherhood contains an advanced movement called the Kick of the Four Winds. The attacker executes a flying spin kick at an opponent, and while in midair, co-locates to four positions directly around the opponent, so that the one kick impacts the opponent four times. Masters are able to crush skulls like rotten melons with this devastating technique.

Another Akashic technique is called Sounding the Gong. To evoke this effect, the Do practitioner strikes a nearby object, or even the ground, and through Correspondence magick transfers the power of the strike to any chosen target within sight. For example, an Akashic mage strikes the ground with a balled fist, but the effects of the blow are felt on the back of the neck of her opponent, who stands 10 paces away. The movement derives its name



from the training method used to perfect it, wherein the practitioner tries to sound a gong from across the training field.

•••• **Stalking the Void** — When an Adept of Correspondence detects a disturbance in the fabric of dimensional space near him through his spatial senses (see **Landscape in the Mind**), he can choose to track the disturbance to its origin. The mage actually tracks the disturbance through the Correspondence Point and back into dimensional space. This ability is called Stalking the Void by the Euthanatos, who use it to hunt down anyone foolish enough to spy on the Euthanatos' Chantries.

For example, a Euthanatos senses a spatial disturbance near her and believes that she is being spied upon with **Correspondence Sensing**, so she tracks the disturbance through the Correspondence Point and back to its current position in three-dimensional space. She may then transport herself there to deal with the disturbance directly. Most likely, she will find another mage at her destination who was scrying on her as she predicted. There is, of course, no guarantee what is actually causing the disturbance. Therefore, a word of caution is normally taught with the practice of Correspondence tracking. A few Adepts have tracked disturbances, shifted through the Correspondence Point to follow the trail, and were never seen again. Some disturbances are not what they seem, and their apparent origins may be illusory, bait in a trap set by beings not altogether human.

Stalking the Void also allows mages to detect the point at which any gates or warps that conjoin locations (such as **Hermes' Portals**) reconnect with dimensional reality, i.e., where does the gate lead? Correspondence tracking can usually be done very quickly, unless the disturbance approaches the mage's location through a circuitous route.

••••• **Spatial Mutations** — The mage has gained full understanding of how the Correspondence Point relates to dimensional space. By permutating that relationship, the mage is able to stretch distances, change the sizes of objects, and warp space around him. The number of uses for this magick are infinite. A gunman firing on a mage may suddenly find himself 10 kilometers away from his target as the 10 meters of pavement between the two stretches out like a ribbon through warped space. Meanwhile, from the perspective of the mage or gunman, pedestrians using the nearby sidewalk would appear to zoom down the 10-kilometer stretch, for they are walking on the 10-meter sidewalk outside the warped space.

Note that the mass of objects does not change, just their size. Changing mass requires a conjunctional magick effect using Life or Matter.

••••• **Free Conjunction** — This effect is identical to **Hermes' Portal**, except that the rift through dimensional space is more severe, and the environments connected by the window freely diffuse into one another. This can produce vio-

lent effects, as in the case of connecting a dining room with the bottom of the Marianas Trench.

••••• **Co-location** — The final mastery of co-location allows the mage to co-locate an entire area around herself, including all other entities and objects, on top of another location. Stacking more than two locations is possible, but extremely difficult (raise the difficulty to 10). No damage is done to objects that superimpose themselves upon one another during co-location, yet they are solid to one another and once separated, they will not again superimpose. For example, during co-location, a chair is superimposed on a large rock. Both objects remain intact, and something heavy flung into them may knock the chair aside yet leave the rock standing. If the chair is lifted away from the rock, it cannot again superimpose on it.

Entropy

You can join us, young woman, we welcome anyone who can help us bring necessary disorder to the world for you must understand that there are parts of reality which we shouldn't destroy, and parts that must be destroyed if we are to move on to Ascension, everything must be recycled, providing more quintessential fuel to build the new reality in the new form, all the mages out there, with their own ideas of what reality should be, struggling to build the new reality, in a race to build the new reality in their image, yet their competition has made them turn a blind eye to the finite nature of reality, we must recycle forms, destroy them down to base Quintessence so that it may be used anew, the Reincarnation Manifesto is ours because all others are too blind to see its importance, without us, they would run into the great limiter of reality, then progress would stop, you must learn, you must perform the powers of disorder, destruction is necessary and proper.

Entropy is a peculiar Sphere of magickal knowledge that attracts an equally peculiar following of Disciples. The Sphere of Entropy covers the aspects of reality commonly called decay, chaos, randomness and destruction. The theorems used to explain Entropy are convoluted, seem to lack any fundamental principles, and often seem to have no relation to one another. The study of Entropy can be as chaotic an affair as the material the Sphere explains.

Traditions vary in their presentation of Entropy. Traditions such as the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts use models of complex thermodynamic science, with its vernacular of work, energy and disorder. Other, more naturalistic Traditions personify Entropy as a harbinger of randomness and decay whose touch disintegrates the trees into pulp and the mountains into pebbles. Still others see it as the chaos in the Dream or the yin amid all yang. The particulars are different, yet the effects are similar.

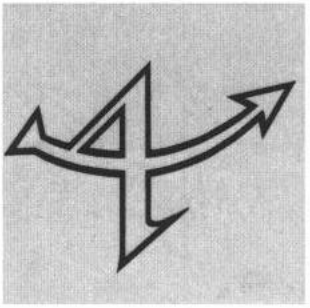
Entropy is based on the overriding principle that all incarnations of reality eventually die or disintegrate. Lifeforms die, rocks erode, electricity scatters into random charges, organizations and empires all eventually collapse. While this tends to cause the Sphere to be viewed in a negative light, many mages see entropic destruction as necessary in order to achieve Ascension. They point to a concept referred to as the Reincarnation Manifesto, which the Oracles of Entropy seem to espouse. The Reincarnation Manifesto holds that Entropy is responsible for breaking all things back down into a basic state of raw Quintessence, which can then be recycled into reality to become some other incarnation of the physical universe. Without this continuous reincarnation, new structures could not be created within reality. Without a continuous infusion of new and better fabricated reality, growth toward Ascension would come to a grinding halt. However, the Oracles of Entropy are rarely intelligible, and in any event are widely believed to the thralls of the Nephandi. Furthermore, this Reincarnation Manifesto has been interpreted and adopted by some mages for their own advantage.

•	Perceive Entropy
••	Control Randomness
•••	Diffuse Energy/Destroy Matter
••••	Wither Life
•••••	Intellectual Entropy

Entropy Damage Chart

Rank	Damage
One	x 0
Two	x 0
Three	x 0
Four	x 4
Five	x 5

Regardless of their motives, mages of Entropy command the power to destroy and disorder all things. From randomizing simple events to eroding the intellectual and moral base of societies, the mages of Entropy are concerned with destruction, a destruction achieved through total disorganization.



The Entropy Sphere has its own chart to determine damage. Direct effects at the first three ranks cause no damage. Rank Four inflicts a number of Health Levels of damage equal to the successes rolled multiplied by four. Level Five has a damage multiplier of five. Indirect effects cause damage normally.

Masters of Entropy often appear disheveled, speak in constant streams-of-consciousness, and behave unpredictably. It is difficult for students of this Sphere to find a Mentor who will stick to one topic long enough for the student to learn anything meaningful from her. Mages with high Awareness ratings will be able to detect a dark, impenetrable core in the Patterns of mages of Entropy. The greater the mage's rating in Entropy, the deeper and more malevolent this "heart of darkness."

• Perceive Entropy

Mentors of Entropy often begin their lessons by teaching their Disciples to identify entropy's existence as a distinct phenomenon in reality. By attuning his senses to entropy, the Disciple is able to sense its manifestations. The mage can thus identify the weakest parts of objects, or the most disordered segments of an organization. By discerning which aspect of a structure is the most susceptible to entropy's effects, the mage can ascertain where entropy would begin to break down the object, energy Pattern, lifeform, institution or sequence of organized events upon which the mage is focusing.

By itself, identifying instabilities does not cause any dramatic effects, but once an enemy's weaknesses are discovered, it doesn't take Sun Tzu to determine how best to combat the opponent.

•• Control Randomness

Disciples begin to learn control over the power of entropy by studying its effects in small events. After first witnessing how randomness propagates in events as diverse as card shuffling, dice rolling, economic market fluctuations, traffic jams, lottery winners, lost mail, roulette wheels, and many others, the mage learns to identify how entropy breeds randomness. The mage then develops the ability to control how randomness propagates in such events.

This gives the mage amazing, yet subtle control over hundreds of small events that are ordinarily random. The mage can control whom a waiter will serve first, what caller number he'll be at a radio station, what number between one and 10 someone has in mind, who picks the shortest straw, the flip of a coin, which chamber houses a bullet during Russian Rou-

lette, etc. The mage can determine the outcome of any minor event that would normally be considered random.

The mage can also control the degree of disorder introduced by an event. A simple use of this power would be to take a new deck of cards, sorted by suit and number. By shuffling them once, some amount of disorder is created, but the cards could quickly be put back into order. However, a mage can control the overall amount of disorder caused by the single shuffle of the cards, so that they appear to have been shuffled dozens of times. Conversely, the mage could decrease the amount of randomness introduced by shuffling the cards a dozen times, so that the cards will appear to have only been shuffled once or twice — perhaps only a few cards will be out of place.

What the mage cannot do at this rank is completely stop or artificially create the effects of randomness. In a shuffled deck, at least one card will be out of place, no matter how successful the mage is in reducing the randomness caused by the shuffle, and a new deck of unshuffled cards cannot be spontaneously put into random order without the randomizing action of shuffling them at least once. Such effects require the creation of entropic energy or absolute immunization against entropy's effects. These abilities are unknown even to Masters of Entropy.

Because control of randomness can only be used on small events, it may seem to be of little use, yet this effect has a large number of possible applications. Injecting randomness into an event is also widely used in conjunctional magick.

••• Diffuse Energy/Destroy Matter

Combining her perception of Entropy with her knowledge of how randomness breeds disorder within reality, the mage begins to learn how entropy diffuses some of the physical incarnations of reality. Specifically, she gains a great degree of power over entropy's effect on inanimate objects.

The mage acquires techniques for channeling the power of entropy, and by funneling this power, she can cause objects to disorganize at accelerated rates. She can cause rocks to erode into sand, or lasers to diffract into scattered light. Similarly, by channeling entropy away from energy or matter, the mage can spontaneously organize substances (e.g., rays of light become somewhat polarized, heat stays in a room rather than dispersing through an open window, gas clouds stay clustered rather than diffusing into the surrounding air, turbulent ocean waves calm to easy swells).

As with the Rank Two power detailed above, the mage cannot perform absolute functions. She cannot instantaneously disintegrate boulders, nor can she remove all random diffraction from light to produce a perfect laser. Such effects require absolute creation or elimination of entropic energy, powers known only to the Oracles. A Disciple of Entropy can only change the rate at which entropy affects something.

•••• Wither Life

Entropy's effects on living organisms are much more complex than the above processes, and more difficult for a mage to isolate and study. Adepts of Entropy study how lifeforms wither and die as their bodily systems gradually deteriorate and break down. They also study the hundreds of ways in which randomness affects living forms, from the effects of heredity to the form a tree takes as it grows. The Adept learns to control entropy's interactions with life, giving her immense power to destroy life and to control its growth.

••••• Intellectual Entropy

Masters of Entropy expand their control over reality by studying the ways in which entropy affects ideas. The effects of entropy on objects are fairly clear and indisputable, but the fact that entropy affects intelligent thought seems far-fetched. Yet entropy affects everything which is organized, be it the organized structure of a molecule or an organized body of knowledge.

Masters of Entropy point to human history for countless examples of theories and sets of knowledge that were useful at times, yet over decades or millennia became filled with so many apparent errors that they were eventually abandoned for newer theories. For example, the history of writing shows techniques evolving from cave paintings to modern alphabetic writing. Previous methods of writing, such as hieroglyphics, gradually disappeared over time as new and better means of writing evolved. Masters of Entropy point to this process, which other mages might call dynamic growth or natural evolution, and claim that Entropy is responsible for the old ideas breaking down, making it possible for new ones to emerge.

Regardless of philosophy, it is evident that Masters of Entropy have the power to destroy ideas on an individual level. They do not have the power to erode entire philosophies on a societal level, but many mages claim the Oracles can perform such feats as making victims forget who they are.

Entropy Effects

• **Dim Mak** — The members of the Akashic Brotherhood who become Disciples of Entropy learn the insidious martial arts technique of Dim Mak, the art of striking vital points. While many mundane martial artists pursue Dim Mak (called "Atemi" in Japanese), only the Akashic Brothers learn the technique in its true form, as it requires the use of magick.

Using their knowledge of Entropy, the Akashic Brothers identify the weakest parts of an inanimate structure or living body — the locations most susceptible to debilitation and destruction. By identifying these pressure points and then physically striking them, the mage may inflict more damage upon the object. One extra Health

Level of damage is inflicted for each success scored when evoking the magickal effect (of course, a normal combat success must be scored as well).

Every structure and every living being has different weaknesses and therefore the mage must apply his magickal senses to each individual object in order to identify its particular pressure points. Also, the pressure points of living things slowly change depending on the time of day, season, and other more esoteric factors, so the mage must re-examine living targets at each meeting.

Other Traditions, especially the Euthanatos, are known to use similar Entropy effects.

• **Locate Disorder** — The mage can identify the area of greatest disorder in an institution or organized sequence of events. This is a perception magick effect, so it does not require a magick effect roll, although the Storyteller may ask for a Perception Attribute roll. The more successes scored, the more precise the information gained.

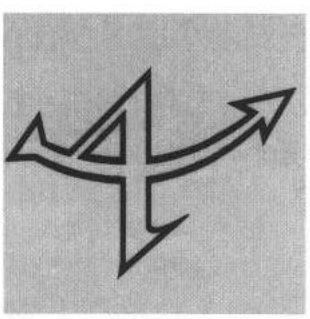
For example, a mage wants to infiltrate the staff of a hotel. She scores one success and thereby detects that the restaurant operation is the most disorganized element. She decides to disguise herself as a chef and infiltrate that segment of the hotel, guessing that other employees will be least likely to care about the sudden appearance of a new recruit. More successes might inform the mage that the greatest disorder in the hotel's business operation is in the pantry manager's personnel files, which are totally disorganized.

The mage must be somewhat familiar with the organization being studied to gain much benefit, though the ability does facilitate extraordinary deductive abilities. In the example above, the mage would need to spend some time walking around the hotel and talking to a few of the employees before she could pinpoint lack of order in the business.

•• **Games of Luck** — Using her power to control localized random events, the mage can virtually determine the outcome of any game of luck. The mage can control the throw of dice, the shuffle of cards, the fall of a roulette ball, and other such events. The more successes scored, the more precise the control the mage can exert.

Sons of Ether use a similar effect called **Causation of Statistical Deviation Through Paradigm Alteration** when inventing formulas for their branch of statistical mathematics.

••• **Slay Machine** — When a Euthanatos shakes his bone focus at a modern machine, he can disrupt its most basic functions, thus turning technological marvels into ruined heaps. The mage uses his knowledge of Entropy to infuse technological systems with raw chaos. Any modern machinery or electronic device can be caused to malfunction or even self-destruct.



Computer systems corrupt all of their stored data, rendering it unintelligible. Electrical

currents within electronic equipment surge so radically that components melt. Phone networks randomly scatter their calls, routing them to wrong numbers. Power distribution equipment, such as a house circuit breaker box, behaves erratically — some breakers trip for no reason, while others fail to trip, thus surging currents through lines, blowing light bulbs and overheating power lines.

The more successes scored, the greater the magnitude of disorder caused. Several successes may be required to cause large machinery to glitch once or twice, while small systems will run amok with the same number of successes.

Naturalistic Traditions such as the Verbena and Dreamspeakers also make frequent use of similar effects.

••• **Erode Matter** — By invoking this effect, the mage floods entropy into any inanimate object. The increase in the amount of entropy accelerates the object's natural tendency toward corrosion, erosion, rot and the like. Gases will quickly diffuse into the air, liquids will evaporate, and solids will disintegrate. The number of successes rolled for the effect determines how quickly the matter dissolves, and how much matter can be affected. Three successes rot away a wooden door within a minute, and four successes corrode the steel body of a truck in under five minutes.

•••• **Blight of Aging** — Verbena are able to brew a variety of hideous concoctions in their cauldrons, but one of the most feared is that which causes a **Blight of Aging**. The mere act of brewing certain ingredients into her cauldron focus allows a Verbena sorceress to initiate the effect.

The mage infuses the primal force of entropy directly into the targeted lifeform, causing its body to deteriorate and decay with frightening rapidity. The appearance of the effect is very similar to advanced aging, and the lifeform will effectively age five years for each success scored on the magick effect roll.

Lifeforms aged past their normal lifespans will quickly die and turn to dust. Victims prematurely advanced to old age should be assigned penalties to their Physical Attributes.

Other Traditions use similar life-destroying Entropy effects, but the Verbena are best known for it. Because they normally relish in the vibrancy of life, Verbena see the removal of that vigor as the worst sort of punishment to inflict upon their enemies.

•••• **Heart Murmurs** — The human body relies on complex feedback processes to regulate heart rate, breathing, body temperature, and countless other bodily functions. Using their magickal science of entropic biology, the Sons of Ether have perfected methods for disrupting the bodily functions of another living being. The mages work out their arcane calculations on their abacus focus and refigure the natural rhythm of the target's bodily functions to include randomness. The result is that the victim's body goes haywire. The victim sweats and shivers; her heart stalls and then spasms like a triphammer; insulin and adrenaline ebb and flow.

This effect does not give the mage selective control over the precise bodily functions affected. Such precision requires knowledge of the Sphere of Life.

••••• **Destroy Thought** — The mage can cause any rational thought or feeling to dissolve away in the chosen subject's mind. For example, a gunman facing the mage announces, "Move and I'll shoot!" The mage can destroy this thought using his control of entropy. The gunman might begin to think, "If I shoot him, I'll go to jail — I don't want to go to jail — besides, maybe he's got friends that'll hunt me down for revenge if I shoot him — he looks like a putz anyway — he probably doesn't have more than five bucks on him — I'm getting out of here."

The victim usually begins to rationalize away the affected thought. As in the example above, the victim finds the weaknesses and illogic inherent in the idea or feeling and so abandons it. The thought is destroyed.

The Storyteller must decide how many successes are necessary for the effect, depending on the complexity of the thought (must the victim abandon his entire moral-religious philosophy to disbelieve the idea, or merely order something different on the menu?) or the passion of the victim (murderous anger or slight annoyance?).

Forces

All things, even the great forces of nature, are controllable by mind and will. Modern man has been lured into the belief that he must build gigantic atom smashers, generators, and transformers to harness the forces of reality, but in truth it takes only an understanding of the true nature of these forces and the will to command them. It is not an easy task; the Patterns of energy ripple through infinite variations at speeds that stagger the mind. How to command the lightning bolt as it blazes across the sky, before it flashes out of existence? But such has been the determination of mages throughout the ages to master these energies that techniques for trimming their Patterns are now known to us.

If you desire to learn this path of magick, then I shall teach you, but be warned that reality does not take kindly to those who master the Forces. The effects are often vulgar, so prepare for your body to be subjected to the debilitations of Paradox. You should prepare your conscience and compassion as well. Commanding the fickle energies of reality can easily lead one to abuses of power and responsibility.

Humans have long sought to control the energies of nature. Toward this end they have employed techniques ranging from the rain dances of tribal cultures to billion-dollar fusion power experiments. Modern man has progressed a long way toward harnessing many of these energies, but mages who master the Sphere of Forces understand that there is much that modern man does not know. Mages are enlightened beyond the bounds of Newtonian physics, quantum theory and special relativity. Masters of Forces understand and apply theories and practices that allow them to manipulate and create any of the powers of nature.

The description of the Forces Sphere given here predominantly uses terms of modern science, such as radiation, kinetic energy, chemical bonds and reactions, etc. While some Traditions (such as the Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts) utilize these terms in their study of Forces, other Traditions use radically different terminology and symbolism to represent the forces of nature. For example, Dreamspeakers see Forces as aspects dreamed into existence by Gaia. For them, the act of using Forces is the process of enticing Gaia to dream a certain way, thereby causing the desired energy to manifest in physical reality.

Mages seek to cause serious damage to their foes often study this Sphere. It causes damaging direct effects at lower ranks than does any other Sphere. At the higher ranks, Forces can kill with but one or two successes.

Mages who master Forces reveal themselves in weird and distinct ways. Their bodies tend to store static electricity, making their hair stand on end and their handshake jolt. Small energy sources tend to fluctuate as the mage passes (e.g., electrical power may surge or candles flare brighter as the Master walks by them). Other mages tend to give Masters of Forces some distance, for they are infamously prone to Paradox effects and their botched magick tends to be very messy.

•	Perceive Forces
••	Control Lesser Forces
•••	Spawn Lesser Forces
••••	Control Major Forces
•••••	Spawn Major Forces

• Perceive Forces

The mage first learns to discern the Patterns of energy. By identifying these Patterns, the mage is able to perceive all types of energy flows. She can sense wavelengths far beyond the limited range of visible light and sonic frequencies upon which the unenlightened rely. Anything from infrared light to x-rays to gravity waves can be perceived by the mage. Of course, such radiation must be present in the environment for the mage to sense it.

•• Control Lesser Forces

Traditions typically divide the study of Forces into the study of various types of energy. The Traditions teach their Disciples to master the Lesser Forces before advancing them to more complex energy forms. These Lesser Forces include electromagnetic radiation of all wavelengths (radio waves to gamma rays), electricity, and magnetism. Naturalistic Traditions represent these forces with symbols (sun, lightning bolt, lodestone) rather than using the nomenclature of Western science.

At this level of understanding, the mage can control the flow of Lesser Forces. However, the mage is limited to using the amount of energy available to him in the affected environment; he cannot create more energy. For example, the mage can focus the light of a candle into a beam of bright light, but he cannot make the candle emit more light.

Though the mage is limited to controlling ambient energies, numerous effects are possible at this rank. Many mages concentrate on the use of light and other ubiquitous forms of radiation. The flow of ambient light can be altered to create areas of darkness or blinding light. In most civilized areas, a supply of electrical energy is also readily available for control.

••• Spawn Lesser Forces

The mage can now create the Lesser Forces from nothing. No longer does she need an existing source of energy to bend to her will; she can produce the forces herself.

Streams of electrical energy can be produced. Fields or concentrated beams (lasers) of radiation can be created, and powerful magnetic fields can be summoned to allow the mage control over metallic objects.

As with all three Pattern magicks (Life, Forces, Matter), the act of creation requires some understanding of the Sphere of Prime (in order for the mage to fuel Quintessence through her newly woven Pattern to create the Lesser Forces). Therefore, all effects using Forces 3 are conjunctional, requiring Prime 2.

•••• Control Major Forces

Once the mage has mastered the Lesser Forces, she begins her study of the three Major Forces: gravity, nuclear and kinetic. The force of gravity is the elemental force that attracts all objects. Nuclear energy covers the forces involved with chemical reactions, such as those that cause fires to burn, as well as the "strong" and "weak" forces known to physicists. However, mages of this rank may not unlock the power stored in the atom (nuclear explosions), although that power is said to be controlled by the Oracles of Forces. Finally, control of kinetic energy, the basic energy of motion, gives the mage a wide range of powers. Kinetic energy primarily controls the motion of objects through space, but it also controls the temperature of objects and the vibration of air molecules to produce sound.

The mage begins by learning to control the Major Forces, just as she did with the Lesser Forces. At this rank, she may control the energy already present around her, but may not create more.

••••• Spawn Major Forces

Finally, the mage can weave Patterns that generate the Major Forces. Though Paradox may limit the magnitude of the energies created, the mage still holds incredible sway over reality. He can create gravity wells, cause fiery explosions, and completely control an object's motion.

Like any Pattern Magick creation effect, spawning Major Forces requires the use of Quintessence. Therefore, all Forces 5 effects require knowledge of Prime 2.

Forces Effects

• **Darksight** — In the absence of visible light, the mage can shift his perceptions up or down the spectrum of electromagnetic radiation. This allows him to view infrared or ultraviolet light, radio waves, x-rays, etc. The mage will no longer be able to discern color, but other interesting perceptions can be gained from the various spectra, such as seeing an object's underlying structure using x-rays or seeing in the dark using infrared.

Forces Damage Chart

Rank	Damage
One	x 0
Two	x 1
Three	x 2
Four	x 3
Five	x 4

• **Quantify Energy** — Sons of Ether commonly use this effect during their research. By invoking this effect, the mage can sense the type and amount of energy at work around her. She can easily translate her perceptions into accurate measurement units such as volts, amps, tesla, g's, etc. Note that this includes kinetic energy, which allows the mage to determine an object's velocity relative to the mage if the mage knows the object's mass.

•• **Discharge Static** — The mage can cause the static electricity in the air to discharge spontaneously in a localized area. If the effect is centered around a victim, the target will suffer one Health Level of damage per success scored. The victim does get a soak roll to minimize the damage. Additionally, if a living target suffers more Health Levels than its Stamina rating, it is stunned (unable to act) a number of turns equal to the difference. This effect is easier to perform when the air is dry (low humidity), or when the mage is around powerful electrical machinery.

Members of the Akashic Brotherhood are known to use a similar control of static charges to make their bodies reservoirs of static electricity. Thus, when they strike an opponent in martial combat, the energy is discharged upon contact.

•• **System Havoc** — Using this effect, a mage can touch any electrical machinery or power distribution system and virtually destroy it by fluctuating the current entering the system into spikes of electrical energy. Many advanced systems are tempest-hardened (protected against surges). Tempest-hardening may minimize the damage the mage inflicts, but virtually any system can be shut down if not damaged.

Virtual Adepts who are Disciples of Forces use a similar effect to control electrical machinery. Their control is rudimentary at best, and the mage must also have a firm understanding of the machinery (gained via Technology, Computer, or Science Abilities).

•• **Call Lightning** — Provided there is plenty of thunderstorm activity directly overhead, the mage can route lightning out of the sky to strike any visible target in the vicinity. The victim can soak damage normally. Living beings may also be stunned as described above in **Discharge Static**.

•••• Telekinetic Control — The mage may telekinetically control the movements of an object, provided the object is already in motion. The object cannot be made to move faster than its original speed, though the mage can slow or stop the object by siphoning kinetic energy into the air around it. This velocity limitation results from the mage's inability to create more kinetic energy to impart to the object. The Adept can, however, redirect the flow of kinetic energy and thereby instantaneously change the direction of an object's motion. For example, bullets may be caused to reverse and strike the gunman, or a moving car may be forced sideways instead of forward.

The more successes rolled for the magickal effect, the more kinetic energy the mage can command: four successes would enable control of a speeding bullet or a sprinting man, five a moving car, etc. It is very difficult to maintain control of a living creature, as the creature can simply stop moving. A Wits roll is necessary for very fine telekinetic movements such as threading a needle.

Members of the Akashic Brotherhood use telekinetic powers to give themselves extraordinary leaping abilities when performing Do. There is also a rumor that the Verbena of old did indeed craft telekinetic Talismans in the shape of brooms, but this may just be stereotyping.

•••• Embracing the Earth Mother — The Dreamspeakers believe that by beating their drums, they can stir the Earth Mother, Gaia, into brief moments of fitful wakefulness. By sounding their drums deep and loud, they can call Gaia to embrace a chosen target. The effect causes gravity to focus around the chosen area or target.

Each success on the effect roll allows the mage to create a gravitational field one "g" strong (a "g" being a force of gravity equal to Earth's normal pull). So, with four successes, the mage could create a field of gravity four g's strong (in which a 100-pound boy would weigh 400 pounds). Five successes enable five g's, six enable six g's, etc.

As a general rule, a character can barely remain standing under a g-force equal to his Strength Attribute, and can still breathe under g-forces up to twice his Stamina. At higher g-forces, objects begin to collapse under the strain of their own weight. A subject caught in a gravity field higher than its Strength Attribute must perform a resisted roll between the field's g-force rating and the subject's Strength. If the gravity field wins, the subject suffers one Health Level of damage for each extra success; if the subject wins, she can crawl a few feet per success to try to escape the field.

Other Traditions use gravity-focusing effects as well. The Cultists of Ecstasy enjoy reversing the flow of gravity to create surreal building interiors reminiscent of M.C. Escher paint-

ings. Euthanatos reverse gravity to slam opponents into the ceiling or fling them into the sky.

•••• **Walking on Water** — The Celestial Chorus performs a miracle wherein its members walk across water as if it were solid ground. The effect is created using the Sphere of Forces to control the molecular cohesion on the surface of a liquid. The surface becomes so tense and resilient that the mage simply walks right across it as if it were ice. Depending on the number of successes the character rolls, other people can follow along.

Other Traditions use similar effects. The Sons of Ether use the effect to build aerial "pipelines" of pure liquid, enabling them to mix chemicals in their laboratories.

Life

No, I do not profess to be a Master of the Patterns of Life. I do know enough to say the Technomancers' version of Life knowledge is shallow and binding. Genetics is another faith science that they have managed to root into static reality. The Patterns of Life are much more than molecular biology; the ethereal meshes which form life are intricately woven tapestries. In your mind's eye you can see these Patterns, and you can imagine them to change.

Even with my limited understanding, it is plain to me what sets life apart from the inanimate. The Patterns of life are infinitely more complex than those of the inorganic. The Patterns of life shift and flow as the form of life grows or dies, and most importantly, Quintessence flows through the Patterns of life like water through a sieve.

Countless things are possible when you change your understanding of Life. You will note that my body is free of scars, or wounds, or corrective eyewear. I do not trim my hair or nails, nor do I eat, sleep, drink, secrete or excrete. Reality has molded the human body into a form fit for survival, but the mind can make the body capable of far more. Come with me and I will teach you what I know of the Sphere of Life.

Life is arguably the most complex of the Pattern Spheres. The Patterns of Life are far more intricately woven than the Patterns of inanimate Matter or elemental Forces, and while the Patterns of Life do not fluctuate as quickly as those of energy, these complex Patterns comprise countless simultaneous permutations. Mastery of the Sphere of Life requires extraordinary mental agility and memory.

As with all Pattern magick, in order for the mage to create new Patterns of Life (i.e., new lifeforms) she must also have some command of Quintessence through knowledge of the Sphere of Prime. The mage can create Patterns of Life, but without Quintessence to feed them, the Patterns will instantly dissolve.

The Sphere of Life can also be used to wreak havoc upon living creatures. It has been used to end lives in innumerable grotesque ways. The amount of damage the Sphere can inflict is fairly standard for the first five ranks, though exactly what can be affected is determined by Sphere rank.

Masters of Life are known by their perfect health. Their skin is free of scars and blemishes, they eat and drink as much or as little as they please, and they rarely tire.

Life Damage Chart

Level	Damage
One	x 0
Two	x 3
Three	x 3
Four	x 3
Five	x 3

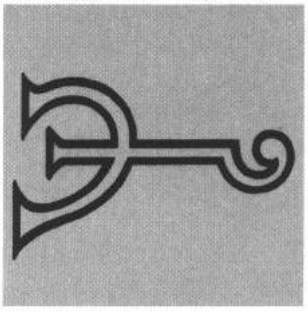
•	Sense Life
••	Alter Simple Patterns
•••	Alter Self/Create Simple Patterns
••••	Alter Life
•••••	Create Life Patterns

• Sense Life

The mage begins his study by learning to identify etheric Patterns of Life. By reading these Patterns, the mage can learn a great deal about a lifeform. A lifeform's Pattern reveals its age, sex, and every aspect of health. Also, by opening his awareness, the mage can sense the nearby presence of different forms of life.

•• Alter Simple Patterns

The mage begins her manipulations of life's Patterns by working with the simplest Patterns of life. She can alter the Patterns of basic lifeforms, such as microscopic viruses and bacteria, all the way to creatures as complex as insects and shellfish (as a good rule of thumb, any invertebrate is considered a simple Life Pattern). Also, all plant life, from algae to sequoia trees, incarnates through Life Patterns simple enough for the mage to manipulate. Of course, she must still be able to sense whatever it is she manipulates.



The power to alter these Patterns gives the mage complete control over these lifeforms' physical existence.

She can turn the creatures inside out, or kill them in countless other ways; conversely, she can heal imperfections in their Patterns, restoring them to health. Finer manipulations to Patterns require relatively long stretches of time during which the mage reweaves the filaments of the etheric Patterns. Destruction of a Pattern is a simple matter of ripping it apart, and can be accomplished very quickly.

••• Alter Self/Create Simple Patterns

At this rank, the mage has mastered simple Life Patterns. He now knows their structures well enough that he may copy them and weave similar Patterns himself. If the mage is also familiar with the Sphere of Prime, he can actually create simple lifeforms. Biogenesis.

Unfortunately, any lifeform created using the Sphere of Life has no mind. It is an organic shell without sentience. However, for simple lifeforms, especially plants, this fault is virtually irrelevant. Even creatures such as crabs and insects can be imbued with some instinctive reflexes that serve for intelligence in the absence of a true mind.

Additionally, at this rank the mage begins to experiment with the most complex Patterns of Life. The mage inevitably begins his studies by manipulating the Pattern with which he is most familiar, his own. He is now able to manipulate the Pattern of his own body to heal it, improve it or change it in anyway he desires.

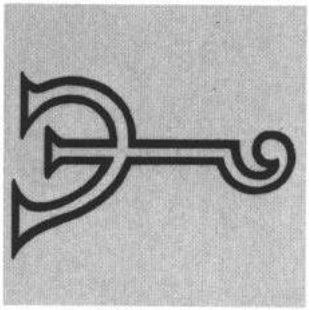
•••• Alter Life

The mage is adept at reweaving the most complicated Patterns of life. Even the highly complex Patterns of another human body are subject to the mage's control.

••••• Create Life Patterns / Transformations

The Master of Life gains a most unique power, which some might hold as divine. She is able to weave a new Pattern to create any lifeform, even a human body. Unfortunately, the lifeform created has no mind or soul. At first, such a huge deficiency might make this creative ability seem useless, but mages have found several functions for the complex lifeforms they create.

Some mages are content to create entirely new forms of life to study how various bone structures or organ placements might be used to improve their own or others' bodies. Often these lifeforms are imbued with sets of instinctive reactions that mimic instinctual intelligence. Some Euthanatos are said to create vile beasts whose instinctive drive is only to kill. These beasts are unleashed on the enemies of the Euthanatos.



Another major use mages have found for the mindless bodies they create is to use them as physical receptacles for spirits or other astral forms. Most spirits are able to manifest in an empty body (some even possess occupied bodies), and can then interact with the physical world. Mages are often able to acquire services from spirits in return for the mage providing a soulless body.

Mages who have also mastered the Sphere of Mind can untether their minds and create new bodies for their own astral forms to fill. Such mages often leave a long trail of different identities behind them. Using this chameleonlike power, many mage Masters attain a degree of immortality by constantly projecting their consciousness into new, young bodies. When a mage switches bodies, he also leaves behind whatever Paradox or Quintessence was stored in the Life Pattern of his old body. While this is a convenient way for the Masters to avoid Paradox Flaws, they have found that Paradox spirits have no trouble tracking their minds to the new bodies, and these spirits often become even more potent to deal with the additional anomaly they are tracing.

Upon attaining Mastery, mages of Life also gain a deeper understanding of how the mind is connected to a Life Pattern. Through this understanding, they are able to transform a Life Pattern completely, without affecting the tenuous connection of the mind. This allows a mage to transform himself or another living creature into any other living form, real or imaginary. These metamorphoses do not affect the subject's intelligence, only its physical form.

Life Effects

• **Genetics Scan** — Using her computer, a Virtual Adept who is a Disciple of Life can execute a program to scan her immediate vicinity for signs of life. The program supplies graphics showing any nearby lifeforms' position relative to the mage herself, and can also display anatomical readouts of the detected forms based on their Patterns. The mage will usually filter the input so her computer doesn't show every gnat and cockroach. She can scan for single species, or even for specific individuals if she has the person's Pattern scanned into her computer's memory (automatic if the mage has previously scanned the target). After about a quarter-mile range, the scan becomes highly inaccurate and may even show ghostly images of lifeforms that aren't really there.

• **Prayer of Healing Revelation** — The Celestial Chorus primarily studies the Patterns of Life to detect illness and injury. Their Disciples of Life learn to identify flaws in a lifeform's Pattern that indicate various diseases, injuries, poisons and parasitic infestations. The mage must usually make a Perception roll when scanning the Pattern. The more successes scored, the more specific the information the mage receives. One success might reveal poison, two might reveal the poison is affecting the respiratory process, and three successes might determine the poison to be cyanide.

•• **Little Good Death** — The Euthanatos primarily study Life to learn how to end it. This effect is the first form of killing the Tradition's Disciples learn. With this effect the mage mentally grasps and shreds the etheric Pattern of any simple

creature. The target suffers three Health Levels of damage for each success the mage scores. The victim cannot soak this damage, though if it has Willpower, it can resist. Other Traditions use similar effects, though less frequently.

•• **Mold Tree** — Verbena invented this effect, which allows a mage to reweave the Pattern of a tree, causing its branches or even its trunk to bend and twist into new shapes.

•• **Heal Simple Creature** — The mage can attempt to repair a lifeform's damaged Pattern. Virtually any affliction can be corrected by this means. Generally, one Health Level of damage may be healed per success scored. The Storyteller must decide the number of successes required for other restorative effects such as regrowing limbs, curing paralysis, etc.

Each attempt at healing a Pattern assumes that the mage does as much restorative work as she is able. Repeating the effect will not heal more damage. At the Storyteller's discretion, the mage may attempt to fix more Pattern damage after the creature's Pattern has had sufficient time to fluctuate around the first restoration the mage performed. Also, any new damage suffered by the subject can be treated by the mage. Some mages have been known to cure a little bit of damage, cause more and create a new Pattern, and then try again. Of course, these are the same mages who tend to botch this effect and cause immense damage.

Certain types of wounds require special treatment when healed through magick. Aggravated wounds (see Chapter Eight) can only be treated using vulgar magick. Aggravated wounds such as damage from Paradox Backlash or Pattern bleeding (see **Improve Body** below) cannot be healed with Pattern magick and can only heal naturally with time.

Finally, two mages cannot successively heal a single subject. After one mage has cured a subject, another cannot try until the subject's Pattern has changed (the target has suffered more damage). Two or more mages may still act in concert to heal a subject.

••• **Ho Tien Chi** — Chinese for "Breath of the Day after Birth," Ho Tien Chi is a breath control exercise mastered by the Akashic Brotherhood. Through this powerful effect, the mage can restore damage done to his body. The results are the same as those of **Heal Simple Creature**, above. Other Traditions practice various methods of healing, from the Celestial Chorus's Laying on Hands to the crazed theories the Sons of Ether espouse concerning electrical stimulation of the human body's healing faculties.

••• **Better Body** — By reweaving the Pattern of her own body, the mage can improve slightly on Mother Nature. Each success rolled enables the mage to increase one of her Physical Attributes, or her Appearance, by one point. The effect has a duration based on the number of successes, but cannot become permanent. After some time, the instability of the mage's new form will cause her Pattern to

"leak" Quintessence. The mage will first suffer one Health Level of damage, and will subsequently suffer more and more physical trauma (i.e. Health Levels) as time progresses until she dies. This damage cannot be corrected or healed until the mage allows her Pattern to revert to its natural weave (losing the points gained in Attributes), and then can only be regained at a natural healing rate, not through Pattern healing. Normally, the damage accumulates at the rate of one Health Level per day, but if the mage frequently exerts the capabilities of her improved body, this interval can decrease to minutes or hours.

The mages of the Akashic Brotherhood use a similar effect to create areas of dense bone in the parts of their body used for striking in martial combat. Euthanatos sometimes cause sharp bony spikes to extrude from their bodies. They use these protrusions as daggers or claws in their death combats. The Storyteller can simulate these natural weapons with the statistics for clubs or knives (see Chapter Nine).

•••• **Mutate Form** — The mage can alter the form of another living creature. He can cause deformities, paralysis or other physical impairments, or he can find beneficial uses for the magickal effect. With sufficient control, the mage could alter a subject's bone structure, allowing the subject to slip through prison bars. He could alter a human's respiratory system to allow her to extract oxygen from water. Mages also use these mutations as the ultimate form of disguise, altering body structure to adjust height, weight, build and facial features.

The number of successes rolled indicates the degree to which the mage can warp the subject's body. Mutations that last more than one scene may cause the traumatic Pattern leaking effect described above in **Better Body**.

•••• **Rip the Man-Body** — The Euthanatos use the Sphere of Life to kill humans. With this effect, a mage can rend the Patterns of more complex lifeforms. As the mage lacks detailed knowledge of such complex Patterns, she is unable to unravel the Patterns quickly. The overall effect is similar to Little Good Death, but **Rip the Man-Body** can affect any lifeform. This damage manifests as lesions and internal hemorrhaging.

•••• **Physiological Emotion Control** — Virtual Adepts still view human beings as innately biological creatures. They have found that the human mind can often be controlled by inducing certain reactions within the physical body. For example, the emotions of anger or fear can be induced by causing the body to release adrenaline. Similarly, tremendous pleasure can be induced by having the body release endorphins. Even depression often has biological causes. This control that the physical body has over the mind is one of the reasons that the Virtual Adepts wish to attain a virtual reality state, where the body is left behind and the mind is no longer a slave to the body's needs.

Any Adept of Life can induce emotions in a subject by *causing the person's body to release the correct hormones. The* more successes on the effect roll, the more severe the emotion.

••••• **Animal Form** — The Verbena Masters of Life can switch form at will, taking the body of whatever animal best suits their current needs or desires. The Verbena also use this effect on those who displease them, turning the offender into a lesser creature such as a frog or a fly.

The Order of Hermes uses a similar effect (***Metamorphosis***) *to take the form of mythical* creatures such as griffins and manticora.

The subject of the transformation receives all the benefits and penalties of the new form. The subject's senses are limited to those of the new form (e.g., a human transformed into a tree would not be able to see, smell or hear, but might gain new senses that allow her to "feel" sunlight, water and wind). The subject's sentience does not change, and mages may still make use of magick in any form.

Matter

Have you heard the tale of the philosopher's stone? It was sought by alchemists for hundreds of years as the means to turn base metals into gold. Had the Technomancers not made gold one of their periodic elements, the alchemists might have succeeded. Indeed, the science of the Sons of Ether may succeed yet.

In truth, there is no need for pestles and mortars or philosopher's stones. Through the paradigm of physical reality Patterns, the enlightened mind can mold even the rigid Patterns of lifeless matter.

Having mastered this knowledge, it is difficult for me even to conceive of a world where one cannot control the forms and shapes of the environment. What a primitive and miserable existence, where one must shape matter with one's hands!

Please, I do not mean to belittle your current state; I merely ruminate over the scope of all that I have learned. You too can accomplish great things with your mind.

I will begin your instruction; be warned, however, that in the coming years, I may leave you to continue my studies among the Oracles. Then you will need to find a new tutor.

The Sphere of Matter concerns itself with the Patterns of all things that are not alive. While its domain is often called the inorganic, this is a misnomer — even compounds of carbon are included in the domain of Matter as long as they are not part of a living form. For example, the flesh of a man is influenced by the Sphere of Life until he dies, but from that moment on (when his Pattern shifts from life to unlife and Quintessence no longer trickles into it) his corpse is controllable through the Sphere of Matter. For Storytellers who include undead beings such as vampires in their chronicle, the bodies of such creatures fall under the sway of Matter, not Life, should a mage attempt to alter the undead form.

The Patterns of Matter differ from those of Life or Forces in that they are much more rigid and enduring. They do not fluctuate nearly as much, and therefore they are not as easy to alter. However, they are much simpler to weave, and a mage with enough knowledge in Prime to be able to channel Quintessence (Rank Two) can easily create new items of matter.

Masters of Matter do not show many outward signs of their ability. They do have a great disdain for possessions (they create them as needed), tempered by an increased appreciation for art, and look upon the entire world as something subject to their control. This viewpoint leads many Masters of Matter to become haughty.

- • Matter Perceptions
- •• Create Unified Patterns
- ••• Alter Matter/Pattern Disassociation
- •••• Transmutation/Quilted Forms
- ••••• New Substances or Structures

• Matter Perceptions

The Disciple of Matter begins by learning to recognize the various Patterns of matter, including the weaves that give objects their shapes and their physical properties. These perceptions of matter allow the Disciple to recognize many things concerning the reality around him, things hidden to normal senses. In addition to sensing the composition and properties of matter, the Disciple can see structures hidden within structures, because the forms of Matter are no longer a barrier to her senses.

•• Create Unified Patterns

The mage can now weave her own Patterns to create objects of unified material. She can create pockets of gas, pools of liquid, and solids of any shape. The mage can only create Patterns that are stable in the environment in which they are created (e.g., she could not create a pool of liquid nitrogen in a room-temperature environ-

ment; such would first require knowledge of Forces to freeze the nitrogen).

Like any other creation effect using Pattern magick, the mage must also have knowledge in the Sphere of Prime (Rank Two) in order to feed the created Pattern Quintessence and thereby cause it to materialize.

••• Alter Matter/Pattern Disassociation

At the third rank of Matter, the mage can finally overpower the rigid Patterns of matter. By selectively altering different threads within a Pattern, he is now able to change the shape of any inanimate object. The mage can also alter specific Pattern threads and thereby change some properties of substances, such as their boiling or melting points, or their density.

The other major effect available to Rank Three Disciples is called Pattern disassociation. Through Pattern disassociation, a mage can alter the Pattern of an inanimate object, preventing it from interacting with some other reality Pattern the mage selects. The object will then become immaterial and nonexistent in regard to the other reality Pattern from which it was disassociated.

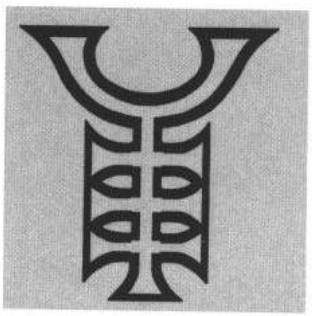
•••• Transmutation/ Quilted Forms

The mage now begins to understand the means of breaking apart the Pattern of a material object without disrupting the object's structure. This ability allows the mage to change the composition of the object without changing its shape. It is the power of true transmutation.

Adepts of Matter can also create much more complex items through a Pattern magick effect called Quilted Forms. These forms are several Patterns of matter interwoven with one another into one structure. For example, the mage could now create a car, complete with all of the forms of plastic, metal, rubber and upholstery that make up a car.

••••• New Substances or Structures

Masters of Matter may create entirely new substances with properties beyond the scope of imagined material science. They have learned how to separate objects into component parts. They may now give any form of matter virtually any property they desire: density, rigidity, melting and boiling points, viscosity, surface tension, electromagnetic response, and transparency or opacity.



Masters build castles with paper-thin walls, and wear clothes of indestructible armor that feel softer than silk and weigh less than a feather. They cause pools of water to become heavier than lead, or cause copper to become an insulator instead of an electrical conductor.

There are still some limitations on the mage, for even a Master does not know all the intricacies of modifying Patterns. A Master could not, for example, change an object's density to that of a black hole, or create materials that are impervious to thermal conduction or electromagnetic effects. Mages who seek this type of knowledge pursue it among the Oracles of Matter.

A Master of Matter can also create complete structures no larger than molecules. These nanotechnology creations are capable of countless duties, and their self-replicating ability makes them awesome, yet dangerous, tools to use. It is rumored that the Oracles of Matter have taken the concept of nanotechnology a step further and created entire entities, new forms of pseudo-life, using only the inanimate.

Matter Effects

• **Fragments of Dream** — Dreamspeakers see all matter as being fragments of Gaia's dream. By tapping the Earth Mother's dream, they can expand their perception of Matter. The mage extends her senses beyond physical reality into Pattern. She no longer sees matter in the same way, e.g., instead of a brick wall, she sees its Pattern in her mind's eye.

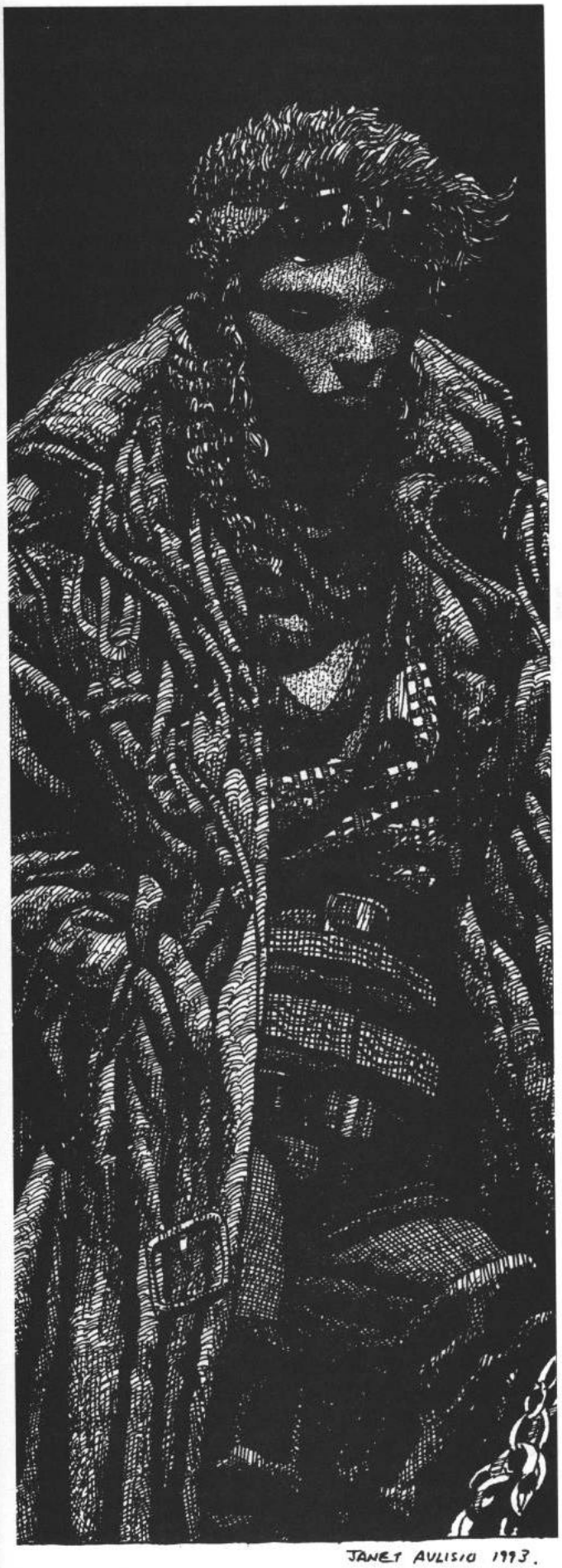
This allows the mage to perceive things that would be unseen in physical reality. For example, the mage could sense the contents of a room beyond a wall. She can also detect objects or structures that might otherwise be hidden, such as the false bottom of a suitcase.

The only limit to this effect is that the mage can only sense the Patterns of Matter (unless she is a Disciple of other Pattern magicks).

• **Analyze Substance** — As a Disciple of Matter, the mage has begun to identify the Patterns of different substances. He can detect the exact composition of any substance, and may detect aspects such as the object's age or weight by examining the Pattern. The mage could distinguish diamonds from cubic zirconiums, detect poison in wine, or tell an antique chair from a modern imitation by studying the chair's Pattern to see signs of aging.

••• **Matter Pattern Disassociation** — The unwieldy name for this effect undoubtedly came from the labs of the Sons of Ether. It involves modifying the Patterns of two pieces of matter so that the two items become insubstantial with respect to one another. The items will not interact in any way. For example, doors slide through their hinges and fall, water cascades through the pipe that was carrying it, a truck wheel drops through the rubber tire and grinds on the pavement, etc. The affected items are in no way changed except with regard to each other.

The more successes the mage scores, the more mass he is able to affect. The mage can simultaneously affect several similar items, such as all four wheels and all four tires on a truck at once, so long as they are formed of the same material.



••• **Sculpture** — Mages of the Cult of Ecstasy who practice the Sphere of Matter are usually fine artists. They use their magick to give themselves new mediums of art. Indeed, those who progress to the third rank of Matter can use any piece of matter as their medium for artistic interpretation.

These mages become sculptors extraordinaire, using solids they find throughout the mundane world as their clay. They reshape houses, fire hydrants, cars, doors, furniture, etc. The mage need only mentally resculpt the image of the matter and then modify its Pattern so that the object assumes the desired shape. A larger object requires more success to manipulate, and the mage can change only the shape of the item, not its properties.

••• **Alter Weight** — This effect is the first of many material property alterations the Sons of Ether perform. This effect allows the mage to alter an object's density, thus changing the weight but not the size of the object. For example, the mage could reduce the density of the iron in a crowbar, making it lighter but not changing its shape or size. For every success on the magickal effect roll, the mage can adjust the density of the object by one factor. With one success the mage can double or halve an object's density; two successes enable the mage to quadruple or quarter an object's weight; and so on with more successes. Objects that are substantially reduced in density tend to become brittle and fragile; some even collapse.

Hollow Ones are fond of using a similar effect to cause fancy cars to collapse under their own weight, or to bring down the roofs on yuppie-infested buildings.

••• **Alter State** — By changing an object's boiling or freezing point, the mage can alter the state of matter between solid, liquid and gaseous. The mage does not change the temperature of the matter, merely its form. He might cause water to freeze into ice at room temperature, but the ice will remain at room temperature. It will not freeze because it becomes colder; rather, it will freeze because the mage alters the temperature at which the water will freeze.

The more successes scored on the magickal effect roll, the more the mage can alter the temperature at which the matter will turn to a solid, liquid or gas. Without checking listings of melting and boiling points in a science book, the Storyteller should just use common knowledge to decide what is possible at various levels of success. One success would cause water to freeze at room temperature, while five successes could turn gases in the air into solids, encapsulating other objects or people.

••• **Destroy Structures** — The mage uses her knowledge of Matter Patterns to unweave the Patterns of structures, shredding them and thereby breaking down their physical incarnations. The effect is in some ways similar to **Sculpture**, except that the mage is unconcerned with the new form of the structure; she is sim

ply breaking it down as quickly as possible. She can shred steel doors, cause wooden tables to fall apart, or cause concrete to crumble. The mage can disperse pools of gas or liquid as long as there is an open area into which the pool can dilute. For example, the mage could extinguish an oil fire burning on top of a river by causing the oil to disperse into the water.

The mage can only affect one type of material with each effect. The more successes rolled for the effect, the larger or more intricate the structure the mage can destroy.

•••• **Transmutation** — Adepts of Matter can remove the strands of an object's Pattern that determine an object's composition and replace them with newly created strands that impart a different composition. The end result is that the mage can transmute matter, changing its base material.

This transmutation effect is incredibly potent and versatile. The mage can entrap people by transmuting nitrogen in the air into iron; he can turn plaster walls into glass, or lead weights into gold. The more successes rolled for the effect, the more mass the mage can transmute. The mage can only affect one type of material at a time.

••••• **Tapping the Signal** — Virtual Adepts use Mastery of Matter to turn any substance into a conductor capable of transmitting computer signals. They can send computer signals through brick walls or along the pavement of an interstate highway. They sometimes use this effect to eavesdrop by tapping into computer communications on "isolated" lines. The computer mage forms a conductive path to the private line through any matter that is in the way, be it walls, insulators, etc.

It rumored that the Virtual Adepts have fine enough control of this effect to turn the ground itself into a network of computer lines. The mage need only plug his computer into the ground itself to create a channel into the ground that taps into the nearest preestablished line. The Tradition is said to have a network of lines that crisscross the entire crust of the Earth. Even mages of the Virtual Adept Tradition who are not themselves Masters of Matter may know of secret locations across the surface of the Earth where the channels have been established.

Mind

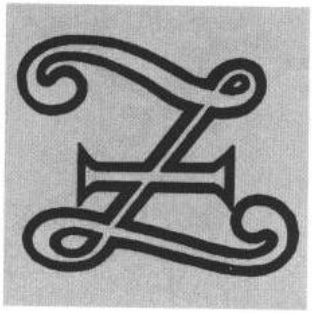
Do not be startled, child. My voice is in your mind, not in your ear. Verbal communication is so limited. You will find that telepathy is purity.

I understand, child. You have held the erroneous belief that perhaps ESP was possible, but this pure telepathy is beyond your belief. Why did you think ESP was the limit of the human mind's capabilities? Because science has almost given it the stamp of approval? In truth, the powers of the human mind know no limit. Our mind shapes the very laws of reality. Our beliefs create reality.

Megalomaniac? Me? You are like Xenophanes of old, questioning man's anthropomorphic vision of the gods' true forms, saying that belief in gods in the shape of man was a conceit. Similarly then, I am guilty of cosmic conceit to believe the human mind responsible for shaping reality in the form of the mind's own beliefs. Yet it is true, as you shall see. Your belief should not come from understanding of reality; rather, reality should come from your understanding of belief.

For now, I will enlighten you to the true potential of the human mind. Choose to take this journey with me, and telepathy will be but one of many things over which you will gain mastery.

Modern man has recognized within himself a need to explore the unknown, to conquer new frontiers. European colonists of America felt a manifest destiny to explore and civilize the American continent (never mind the native population that had already done so). Today man has few remaining frontiers to satisfy the desire for exploration — the deep ocean, outer space, the subatomic world, the workings of the human mind...



Mages have long delved into their own minds in search of power. The scope of knowledge derived from countless years of enlightened investigation has led to the development of the Sphere of Mind. The Sphere covers the manifold powers attributed to the human mind itself. It does not include the physiological processes of the organic brain; such hormonal influences are deemed petty by Masters of Mind. The Sphere transcends biology for the raw essence of intelligent thought.

•	Empower Self
••	Mental Impulse
•••	Mental Link
••••	Control Minds
•••••	Untether

Masters of Mind have opened their mental faculties far beyond the scope imagined by the unenlightened. Perception, communication, even control of thought processes are their domain. Their control extends from the glimmers of sentience exhibited by animals to the higher faculties of the human mind.

Masters of Mind occasionally reveal themselves through odd behavior patterns such as finishing other people's sentences, lightning-fast mathematical calculations, or already knowing trivia about complete strangers when they first meet. They also tend to be introspective and often talk to themselves.

• Empower Self

Before the mage attempts contact with the minds of others, it is wise for her first to master her own. At this rank, mages explore the powers of their minds. Many develop eidetic memory, amazing computational speed, a type of multi-tasking brain function, and mind-over-body control of their autonomic nervous systems (though many mages scorn such biological control as primitive study).

•• Mental Impulse

The mage now begins reaching out to other minds. At first, his practice is limited to the minds of plants, which exhibit only glimmers of a mental presence. The mage then works through the spectrum of animal sentience, eventually broadening into the more complicated task of contacting another human mind.

The mage's ability is limited to subconscious impulses; he cannot yet achieve true conscious communication. He is able to detect another's feelings empathically, or transmit emotional impulses to influence another's behavior. The mage can also communicate indirectly with the consciousness of another by sending images or single words to the person's subconscious mind. Such subconscious suggestions are much more insidious, and can often be more advantageous, than direct conscious communication.

••• Mental Link

The mage is able to establish clear links between his own consciousness and the minds of others. The mage can use this link for telepathic communication or for telepathic invasion of another's thoughts and memories.

Along with the ability to project thoughts and images into another's mind comes the ability to project false perceptions into the mind. At this rank, the mage has full command of perceptual illusions.

At this rank, mages of some Traditions are also taught means of projecting psychic disturbances into a subject's mind. These psychic assaults take many forms, but their end goal is to turn the victim into a mental vegetable.

•••• Control Minds

Beyond simple communication or thought projection, a mage with this level of understanding is able to control the thoughts of another sentient being. The mage's own thoughts now take precedence over the original thoughts of the mage's puppet victim.

Once the mage has invaded the mind of another, he can work magick not only to control the victim, but to alter his mind. He can cure or induce insanity, change memories, or set up perceptual barriers similar to post-hypnotic suggestions. Every facet of the invaded mind is under the mage's control.

••••• Untether

When the mage achieves Mastery of Mind, she understands the mind's unique nature, apart from that of her body. She can untether her mind from her corporeal form and travel freely. This ability, often referred to as astral projection, is said to be the gateway to higher powers known only to the Oracles. The nature of astral existence, of pure mental form, is unknown to the Traditions.

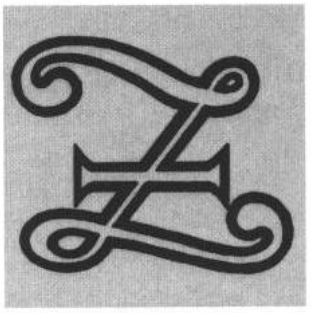
Mind Effects

• **Multi-Tasking** — It's quite possible that the Virtual Adepts have too intimate an involvement with their computer tools (perhaps they will eventually meld too closely with their computers and become cyborgs like the Technomancers of Iteration X). The Virtual Adepts' affinity for computer processing reveals itself in how they approach the Mind magick they call **Multi-Tasking** (other Traditions label it and conceive of it differently).

Each success scored enables the mage to perform one additional task. The Virtual Adepts see this as setting up parallel processing in their minds. The additional task(s) may be equivalent to any that would normally occupy him mentally. Thus a mage who obtained two successes on his magickal effect roll might speak on the telephone to a comrade, program a computer, and memorize a recording in the background. The real limit is the mage's physical ability to perform all of the tasks his mind is capable of processing.

Unfortunately, mages (other than the Oracles of Mind) have been unable to channel their wills through more than one thought avenue at once. Thus, the mage cannot simultaneously evoke multiple magickal effects, nor can he spend Willpower on more than one task at a time.

•• **Pathos** — By mentally reaching out to any individual near her, the mage can gain insight into the subject's current feelings. The more successes scored on the effect roll, the more comprehensive the mage's understanding of the feelings and their origins. For example, one success and the mage senses anger, two successes and the mage senses anger mixed with fear, three successes and the mage senses that the subject in fact feels anger spawned from anguish over loss mixed with fear, and so on with more successes. The mage must succeed with a Willpower roll (difficulty assigned by the Storyteller based upon intensity of feelings) to resist being infected by the subject's emotions and experiencing them herself.

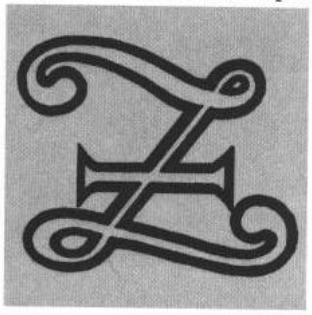


This empathic ability is commonly employed by the Akashic Brotherhood, Celestial Chorus, and Verbena. The Cult of Ecstasy uses empathy

extensively to "ride" others' emotions, and the Sons of Ether clinically study emotions for their own branch of paradigm psychology.

•• **Subliminal Impulse** — The mage can broadcast a single image or word into a subject's subconscious. The more successes rolled, the more powerful the suggestion. The subconscious impulse will work its way into the conscious; more powerful impulses blaze straight into the subject's conscious mind. The subject's response depends upon both her Willpower and the compatibility of the impulse with her normal feelings and behavior.

Powerful impulses can cause dramatic changes in behavior, or trigger spontaneous reactions. For example, a mage may cause a waiter to drop a plate by impelling to the waiter's subconscious mind the word "HOT" as the man picks up the plate. Truly powerful impulses can even cause psychotic or self-destructive acts. Such subliminal suggestions may linger in the subject's subconscious depending on the number of successes rolled.



•• **No-Mind** — All mages who possess Rank Two Mind are capable of scanning their surroundings for sentience. However, the mages of the Akashic Brotherhood have perfected the effect to a fine art. These mages enter a Zen-like trance state wherein their own thoughts are subdued and their minds become open to the impressions of other minds. Such a mage is able to sense the general location of any minds near her, as well as other details such as the gender of the detected creature, i.e. male/female/neuter (some plants and spirits actually register to Mind magick); the type of creature (human, rat, redwood); and sometimes the general behavior of the creature (running, hiding, eating. etc.). Some Do masters have been known to blind themselves purposefully, forcing them to rely on the No-Mind effect. Such mages believe that the No-Mind state is a step toward Ascension and should be cultivated.

••• **Telepathy** — The mage establishes a communication link between his own mind and a number of minds equal to the number of successes he scores on his magickal effect roll. The surface thoughts of everyone linked telepathically are automatically exchanged across the link, creating a collage of images and language. Those unaccustomed to telepathic communication invariably send more information than they had intended to share, for they are untrained in controlling their surface thoughts. Indeed, linking several untrained minds creates a tremendous volume of psychic "noise," as those untrained in telepathy do not know how to blank their minds to avoid constantly "talking" across the link.

••• **Graphic Transmission** — Virtual Adepts approach the power of illusion in their customary fashion, through computer technology. To create an illusion in a subject's mind,

the mage executes a graphics routine on his computer and transmits it directly into the subject's consciousness. Whatever images the mage creates on his computer display are seen, heard and smelled by the subject as if they were real, because they exist in his mind.

The number of successes on the magick effect roll limits the complexity of the desired illusion. For example, an illusion of complete darkness would require two successes, while a fully detailed person who walks and talks would require four successes. The Storyteller may grant victims of this effect a Perception roll to distinguish between reality and illusion (for Virtual Adept illusions, this means noticing that certain visions look digitized or made up of very fine pixels). Subjects of the illusory effect are still free to disregard the phantom sensory input, as long as they know what is illusion and what is real. Most subjects will still react reflexively to illusions, even if they believe them to be false. For example, a target will involuntarily duck a phantom ball thrown at her head.

••• **Probe Thoughts** — The mage attempts to invade the thoughts of another. The mage must choose the types of thoughts she wishes to scan: memories, surface thoughts, emotional ties, subconscious desires, sensory impulses, etc.

If the mage successfully evokes this effect, the subject may suddenly find himself a passive observer to his own thought processes, no longer in control of which thoughts sift through his conscious mind. He will experience the memories or emotions that the mage summons.

If the mage is simply scanning surface thoughts, the subject will feel only a vague intrusion; most Sleepers will immediately dismiss this sensation. The subject will retain control of his thoughts; in this case the mage is the passive observer.

The mage can maintain the scan for a number of minutes equal to the number of successes. The mage will be unable to probe the same subject again until the subject sleeps.

While the subject must be present for the mage to work the effect (unless the mage is also using Correspondence), the subject can travel anywhere once the mage has successfully established the probe. For example, the mage might establish a mental link allowing him to see whatever his subject sees. The subject can then go around a corner, out of sight, or even be transported away with other magick, and the mage's sensory link will remain for the effect's duration.

•••• **Possession** — Euthanatos mages often contact spirits that prefer to manifest in physical reality by possessing one of the mages who summon them. Euthanatos themselves exercise similar possession powers over other humans.

The **Possession** effect operates in a fashion similar to **Probe Thoughts**, in that the mage invades the mind of another. This invasion is much more dramatic than that of **Probe Thoughts**, and the victim instinctively attempts to eject the psyche of the mage. If the mage fails to possess the target, she cannot again attempt control until the victim sleeps.

If the mage takes control, she now commands the subject's body and thoughts. The mage has such total control that the subject's thought-patterns and mind are subsumed by those of the mage. This element of the control effect is critical. The mage does not have to command the subject's arm to lift; the mage can instead cause the subject to think "lift arm" and the subject will lift his own arm. The subject is oblivious to the fact that he is being controlled. From the subject's perspective, each thought is his own.

Alternately, the mage may elect to control only part of the subject's capacities, such as emotions or motor control (if the mage only controls the motor responses, movements will be robotic). If the subject is only partially controlled, he will realize the mage is present and is controlling him.

During the period of control, the mage's own mental faculties are consumed with the efforts of maintaining control and thinking for the subject. The mage will often let the subject behave normally, stepping in to redirect the subject's thought-patterns as desired. Once control is established, the subject can go anywhere and the link will be maintained.

While the mage still has control, she may elect to utilize **Manipulate Memory** (see below) to delete the subject's memory of the moment when the mage fought for and took control. The subject will then believe that his thoughts and deeds for the past several hours were his own making. Many victims may begin to wonder if they are insane and developing split personalities.

•••• **Manipulate Memory** — This effect is another invasive mental power similar to **Possession**. The mage must successfully invade and overpower his subject just as with **Possession**. If the mage succeeds, he may manipulate the subject's memories, blocking existing ones from surfacing (though the actual memories cannot be wiped away) and creating new memories by feeding images into the subject's mind. The more successes rolled, the greater the amounts of memory the mage can control.

The process is reversible. Another mage can undo the manipulations performed on a subject (although she must score more successes than the original mage).

••••• **Untether** — The mage is able to separate his mind from his body. Not to be confused with stepping sideways into the Umbra, in which the mind is still housed in a spirit body, **Untether** completely divorces the mind from all else. The mage becomes an embodiment of mental essence, commonly called an astral form.

The mage's consciousness can travel through physical reality at speeds greater than 500 mph. Without the sensory organs of his physical body, the mage's perceptions are limited to those of magickal nature. However, he is still able to sense other minds near his own, and can utilize their perceptions if

he possesses appropriate magick. The mage may also elect to take control of minds near him, or influence and communicate using any other powers he has mastered.

The mage's sentience is formless and massless, and as such is virtually impervious to harm. The mage can manifest in a ghostly gray form for one turn by spending a point of Willpower. Other astral travelers, or astral beings such as ghosts, can directly interact with the mage. For purposes of astral actions, the mage's Mental and Social Attributes replace his Physical Attributes. In astral form, Wits serves as Dexterity, Manipulation serves as Strength, and Intelligence serves as Stamina.

If two astral beings engage in direct conflict, the purpose of the combat is normally to sever the opponent's silver cord. The silver cord is a thin filament that stretches through the astral Realm, connecting a living being's astral form with his physical body. In astral combat, damage is inflicted upon Willpower instead of the Health Trait, and when a combatant is reduced to zero Willpower, the silver cord is snapped. Beings that have no physical shells (such as ghosts or the Ba spirits of dead mummies) do not have silver cords and are simply disrupted when they reach zero Willpower.

When a mage's silver cord is severed, the astral traveler is believed to be completely drawn into the astral world. Mages are uncertain of how such an astral world fits into the cosmology of the Tellurian, and those who have survived and returned from the loss of their silver cords report a journey mixed with emotional extremes, mental lucidity bordering on enlightenment, and total confusion. It is believed that the mages of the Oracles of Mind venture to the astral Realm frequently, but lesser mages find the experience too disorienting to describe.

Finally, the mage is completely unaware of his physical body once he leaves its physical presence to journey astrally. However, Masters of Mind know enough about the link between the physical body and astral presence to be able to reconnect their silver cords to other bodies. This is especially important if the mage's physical body is destroyed or dies. The mage's astral presence is unaffected by the body's physical death (though some Masters of Mind who wished to achieve immortality by this means reported to their corporeal Disciples that they were being hounded by certain spirits that came from the Realms beyond Final Death). However, without the link to the physical Realm, the mage begins to slip into the astral. He must reconnect his cord to another body. If an empty magickal vessel is not available, the mage may attempt to control the mind of another sentient and thereby house his own intellect in the body. The mage essentially becomes a split personality within the body's original mind.

Prime

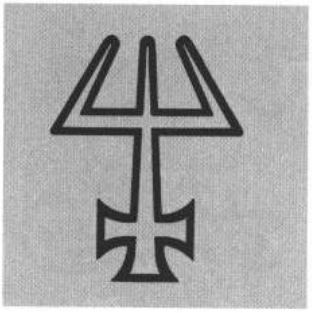
Why have you bothered with these other so-called Spheres of magickal thought? The understanding of the quintessential nature is all you truly need. The rest is flotsam on the ocean of quintessential reality.

No! You contemptible fool! Quintessence is not merely the essence of magick, it is the essence of everything. All energy, all matter, space and time flow from Quintessence. Quintessence is itself neither energy nor matter; it is beyond such nomenclature. It is unity. It is the building block of all things. Have your previous masters taught you nothing?

The origin of the mind? Bah! That's an irrelevant question for the metaphysical theorists, who have nothing better to do than attack ideas. Don't interrupt me with such diversions.

If you wish to understand and thereby control Quintessence, then you may become my pupil. If you prove yourself worthy of such knowledge, you may progress to the control of what is and what is not.

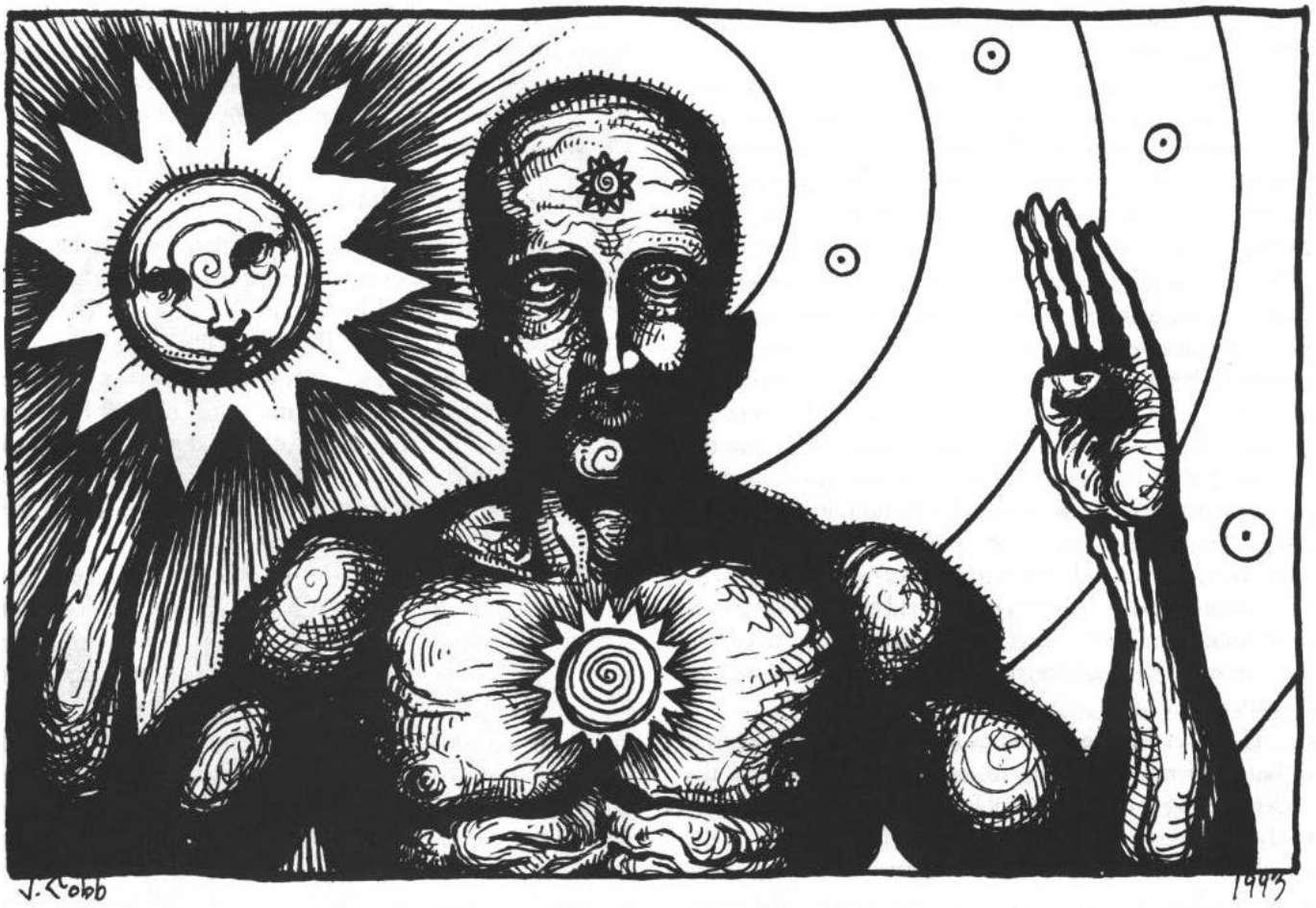
Prime is the study of Quintessence, the fabric of reality. Quintessence is often referred to as the Prime, because it is envisioned as an indivisible unity, of which all reality is but a part. Pursuing the Sphere of Prime is a convoluted study of ill-understood metaphysics. More than for any other Sphere, the Masters of Quintessence struggle to find answers that completely define their field. As much as they hate to admit it, even the knowledge of the Masters is more concerned with techniques for manipulating Quintessence than with true comprehension of its underlying principles.



The Sphere of Prime attracts many Disciples, but very few pursue the Sphere to become Adepts or Masters. The Sphere offers a great deal of important effects to its Disciples, especially to mages who seek to master Pattern magicks, but the complexity of the Sphere's theories dissuades most mages from pursuing it further. They lose sight of the Sphere's benefits and its all-encompassing importance to Ascension.

•	Store Quintessence
••	Fuel Pattern
•••	Channel Quintessence
••••	Expel Base Energy
•••••	Alter Flow

Because Masters of Prime are in short supply, the demand for them is tremendous. Every Chantry has need of a Disciple, if not an Adept or Master of Prime. Such mages are so essential



to a Chantry's long-term viability that Masters of Prime become targets in conflicts between Chantries.

Prime mages are so important because they control free Quintessence, the currency of mages. Free Quintessence gives mages power over their Chantries' Domains. Quintessence is a currency of power, and Masters of Prime are its accountants.

Masters of Prime are detectable by the auras of power that seem to surround them. Their eyes glow with a fiery heat and people who accidentally run into them may be knocked down without budging the mage. Their power does not quantify itself as it does for mages of Forces. Rather, Prime mages are like explosives ready to detonate.

• Store Quintessence

Every mage who seeks to master magick had best study the basics of Prime. Without the first rank of knowledge in Prime, the mage cannot store free Quintessence within his own body beyond the amount he receives from his Avatar. Mage characters who are not Disciples of Prime can never have Quintessence ratings above their Avatar Background ratings.

The first rank of Prime also provides the mage with basic perceptions of Quintessence, such as the ability to sense where it is stored and the magnitude of the reservoir.

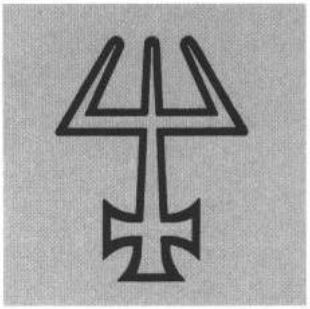
•• Fuel Pattern

The mage realizes the existence of a seemingly infinite pool of Quintessence that exists throughout reality. This Quintessence is free, not bound into Patterns. If the mage is knowledgeable enough in one of the three Spheres of Pattern magick, he may divert a trickle from this great pool of Quintessence into a Pattern of his own creation. In the case of Patterns that create life, the mage sets up a stream of Quintessence to feed the created Pattern.

••• Channel Quintessence

There are rare sites called Nodes where the powers of reality are focused. These places are vital to mages, for Nodes store a surplus of Quintessence. This surplus Quintessence is called free Quintessence by mages, and it is their lifeblood. Free Quintessence may be used to aid magickal effects, create Talismans, strengthen Chantries, or build new Domains.

At this rank, the mage understands how to draw these reservoirs of surplus or "free" Quintessence out of the Patterns in which they are stored. The mage becomes a conduit of Quintessence, storing it in his own being or channeling it into other Patterns, such as her Chantry's pocket Realm.



To the lament of all Disciples of Prime, free Quintessence can only be funneled from one established Pattern into another Pattern. Even Masters of Prime are un-

able to tap into the "pool" of free Quintessence described under Prime Rank Two.

Additionally, mages do not know how to draw extra Quintessence out of this large pool when they create new Patterns and fuel them with Quintessence. That is to say, when a mage creates an object, only enough Quintessence to make the object can be siphoned into it — there is no surplus Quintessence in anything a mage creates from scratch.

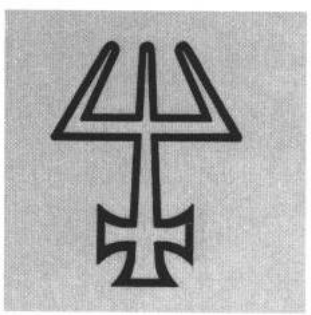
This inability to draw Quintessence from established sources has led mages to describe Quintessence as either raw or free. The terms are for classification only; there is actually no difference between the two. Raw Quintessence makes up Patterns, flows through Patterns of life, and coalesces in the tremendous pool of Quintessence from which mages draw the energies for Pattern magick. Free Quintessence is surplus Quintessence that can be manipulated and transferred. Raw Quintessence is the energy that grants life or form to everything, from a lightning bolt in a stormy sky to a normal person. Free Quintessence is the extra power held by a mage as part of his Quintessence Trait. If that Trait goes to zero, the mage still has the raw Quintessence that allows him to live and be human.

The special properties of free Quintessence that allow it to be transferred from Pattern to Pattern are beyond the understanding of the Masters of Prime. Even they are limited to the techniques of transferring it. If the members of the Oracles of Prime know more, they are saying nothing. There is a definite limit to the amount of free Quintessence that exists in Gaia, and Chantries battle fiercely for control of this precious commodity.

•••• Expel Base Energy

While Disciples of Prime are largely limited to detecting and manipulating free Quintessence, Adepts of Prime begin to learn rudimentary methods for channeling raw Quintessence. They are able to pull Quintessence out of the Patterns of matter and energy, thereby affecting the Pattern's incarnation in reality. Each shard of inanimate matter and each spark of energy has Quintessence stored in its Pattern. Adepts can expel the Quintessence from these Patterns, recycling it into the cosmic pool of raw Quintessence. Without Quintessence in its Pattern, the matter or energy ceases to exist.

Adepts who are also knowledgeable enough in Matter or Forces can use conjunctional effects to alter the amount of Quintessence stored in various parts of these Patterns, thereby "dissolving" different aspects or properties of the energy or matter. The mage could make solids become insubstantial, cause a magnet to have only one pole, remove a chemical's ability to form nuclear bonds with other chemicals (this process would, for example, make an acid unable to corrode), or cause objects to have no mass and yet still be solid. While Pattern magicks themselves allow mages to alter or reduce these properties, the most direct way to erase select properties completely from reality is by extracting the raw Quintessence that fuels the undesired portion of the substance's Pattern.



••••• Alter Flow

Masters of Prime continue to delve into theories that give them greater control over raw Quintessence. They can now begin to alter established flows of raw Quintessence. This gives them great control over the Patterns of life.

Living beings interact with Quintessence in a unique manner. Their Quintessence is not stored in their Patterns; rather, a stream of Quintessence continuously flows through their Patterns. By damming the flow of Quintessence into a life Pattern, the mage extinguishes the spark of life within the creature.

In addition to stopping Quintessence flow, the mage can increase the flow of Quintessence through a Pattern. This is of little benefit to lifeforms without strong Avatars, but those with strong dynamic potential can instantly recharge their Avatars' Quintessence.

Also, some Masters of Prime report that they have found connections between Paradox and Quintessence analogous to those between negative and positive forces. These mages have found little use for this budding knowledge, but some have managed to channel free Quintessence in such a way that it cancels Paradox energies that are not coalesced inside a Pattern.

Prime Effects

• **The Rush** — Disciples of Prime are able to collect free Quintessence that is channeled into their Patterns. Normally Quintessence only flows through the Patterns of life; it does not store itself in them as it does with inanimate matter and energy. However, a mage of Prime is able to coalesce Quintessence around his Pattern and store it. Each success rolled allows another point of Quintessence to be stored. The mage may make only one roll per source of Quintessence. Note that the mage cannot himself channel the Quintessence until he reaches Rank Three in Prime. This effect allows the mage to become a receptacle only.

The Cult of Ecstasy calls the act of receiving Quintessence "The Rush." The Cultist must be hooked on whatever depraved vice he uses as a focus. The influx of Quintessence gives the cultist a mixed feeling of nausea and exhilaration.

• **Sense Quintessence** — The mage is able to sense free Quintessence stored in the Patterns of reality near her. This effect does not require a magickal effect roll, but the Storyteller may call for a Perception roll. More successes allow greater range and accuracy. This ability is generally a good way to discover if any mages are nearby, as mages store some free Quintessence within themselves by virtue of their Avatars or through the use of Prime.

Mages of the Order of Hermes use an engraving of the Seal of Solomon to reveal the presence of Quintessence. Different points of the star-shaped seal illuminate to indicate the direction of Quintessence, and the brightness with which the symbol glows reveals the amount of Quintessence present.

•• **Rubbing of the Bones** — Disciples of Prime do not yet have the ability to cause a serious disruption of the flow of Quintessence into a Pattern of life, but they are able to tamper with that flow to some extent. Euthanatos call this effect the **Rubbing of the Bones**, because they briskly rub their bone foci when evoking the effect. The effect is that the steady flow of Quintessence into the target's lifeform begins to ripple, surging and ebbing in its flow.

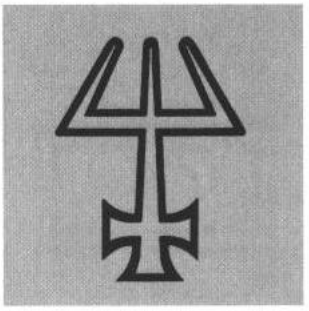
Any lifeform affected will be stunned and unable to function for the duration of the fluctuation (the Storyteller may allow a Willpower expenditure to take limited action for one turn). Its physical form will seem to fade in and out slightly, becoming ghostly and immaterial one second and massively heavy the next. Another mage caught in this effect may choose to spend a point of stored Quintessence to smooth the flow and cancel the effect completely.

••• **Bond of Blood** — The Verbena believe that there is power in blood. Blood symbolizes the power of life striving for Ascension. As such, blood is an important focus for the Sphere of Prime. To transfer free Quintessence between two different receptacles, the Verbena must smear both his palms in blood and touch both objects. The mage can then act as a conduit, pulling Quintessence from one object and channeling it into another (or into himself).

Each success on the magickal effect roll allows the mage to transfer up to five points of Quintessence out of a Pattern and channel it into himself or into another Pattern. Obviously, the mage cannot take more Quintessence than the source object stores. The mage may use this effect to take Quintessence from another mage, but may not reduce the target's Quintessence below its Avatar rating.

••• **Create Talisman** — A mage must have Rank Three in Prime to create items that store free Quintessence and use it to power magickal effects. Rules for creating Talismans are provided in Chapter Eight.

•••• **Flames of Purification** — Mages of the Celestial Chorus are not destructive by nature. Still, they have been known to wield the power of Prime to cleanse reality of things profane to them. By fanning her focus of flame over a chosen object, the mage can invoke this effect and cause the object to burst into mystical flames. The flames will shed no heat, yet they will quickly devour the object until it is dispelled from reality.



The mage is actually extracting all of the raw Quintessence from the object's Pattern. The object thus disappears from reality, eventually becoming nonexistent. The

more successes the mage scores, the greater the amount of mass the mage can affect. She can affect several similar Patterns simultaneously, such as all of the ice cubes in a glass. Only inanimate objects can be affected.

••••• **Recharge Gift** — Through meditation, mages of the Akashic Brotherhood are able to increase the flow of raw Quintessence through their Patterns. The mage is able to filter the additional Quintessence through his own Avatar and recharge his personal store of Quintessence. For each success scored on the effect roll, the mage regains one point of Quintessence, up to his Avatar Background's maximum limit.

••••• **Quintessence Blast** — Dreamspeakers have devised an effect to help them ward off the spirits of Paradox. The Master of Prime charges his crystal focus by spending a point of Quintessence. The Dreamspeaker then uses his magick to draw the Paradox spirit into the crystal focus. The essence of the spirit reacts with the Quintessence stored in the crystal. The reaction injures the spirit, dispels part of its essence, and causes the crystal to explode into dust (for dramatic effect only; no damage is thus caused).

Spirit

You have come to me because you like my paintings, yes? You see in them something beyond what my other admirers perceive. You sense that these wondrous places which I draw must actually exist, and yet you wonder where, and how, it can be so. Take, for instance, this painting of Alph, the sacred river of Xanadu. Where are these caverns "measureless to man" through which it runs?

I create my paintings for my own pleasure, but also to attract curious, vibrant minds such as yours. I will gladly show you these places. I will initiate you into the Invisible World where your spirit soars through universes in the blink of an eye. These are the measureless caverns which Coleridge saw.

In the Spirit, so much is possible. Pleasures and pains beyond the bounds of the fragile human body can be experienced, and this is why we exchange the physical body for one of spirit. You disbelieve me, but you are too curious to fear my apparent lunacy. Come, I will teach you to see these worlds within our own, these worlds where we shall travel.

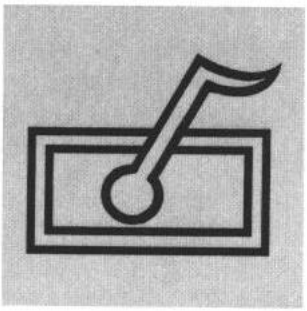
The Sphere of Spirit is one of the most definitive and comprehensive of the Spheres. The theories, models and concepts used by the various Traditions to understand the Spirit Sphere encompass skills for traveling through the spirit plane of reality, dealing with the entities found therein, and surviving such alien environments as the Deep Umbra or the Dream Domains. Some mages choose to dabble in Spirit Discipleship, learning how to step sideways into the Umbra and function there. Some mages, especially those of Traditions such as the Dreamspeakers, pursue study of the Sphere to Mastery — indeed, almost to the exclusion of other Spheres.

Mages of Spirit seek to organize the Umbra into a cosmological map called the Tellurian. These efforts have met with considerable frustration and only sporadic success. It is as if the Tellurian has a mind of its own and refuses to be charted. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, the Tellurian ignites the curiosity and ambitions of many mages, and it is in the Tellurian that many mages make their most daring endeavors.

•	Spirit Sight/ Spirit Sense
••	Call Spirits/ Plumb the Deep Umbra
•••	Travel Spirit
••••	Fabricate Spirit/ Control Gauntlet
•••••	Outward Journeys

• Spirit Sight/ Spirit Sense

The mage is introduced to the spirit world as the intermediary phase of reality between conception (Quintessence and Pattern) and perception (static, physical reality). The mage gains the ability to sense the Near Umbra around her.



The mage also studies the ways that the Umbra and its personified entities influence physical reality. The mage can detect areas where the Gauntlet, the barrier between the physical and the spirit worlds, is weak or strong. She can also sense the proximity and nature of spirits manifested in the physical world, including those embodied in Garou fetishes. Finally, she can detect when someone else is peering through the Gauntlet — in either direction.

•• Call Spirits/ Plumb the Deep Umbra

At Rank Two, the mage begins to learn about the myriad entities within the spirit world. Countless numbers of mythical beings have been created from the beliefs of human cultures throughout history. These spirits inhabit both the Umbra itself and its many Realms. Disciples of Spirit learn methods for contacting these spiritual entities, and begin to interact in the affairs of the spirits.

The mage is able to call upon and communicate with these spirits. Disciples are warned to build relationships with spirits gradually and carefully, for many of them wield powers far beyond those of even experienced mages, and not all of them behave according to human understanding or morality.

Darrell Midgette

At this rank, the mage also begins to explore what lies beyond the scope of Gaia's Realm, beyond the Near Umbra. The mage extends her perceptions into the Deep Umbra, peering into the void like a mystic astronomer. Through these probes into the Deep Umbra, the mage can contact denizens of other Realms and other things that occasionally wander the Deep Umbra itself.

••• Travel Spirit

The mage now learns to enter the Umbra. The act of entering the Umbra is commonly called "stepping sideways" and involves crossing a barrier called the Gauntlet, which separates the spirit world from physical reality. When the mage uses his knowledge to step sideways, he transforms his body into the stuff of spirit rather than the stuff of physical reality. The end result is that the mage's body disappears from physical reality and enters the spirit world.

The Disciple can travel anywhere within Gaia's Realm, including the Domains within the Near Umbra. Some Domains allow the mage to access other Realms. The true barrier to a Disciple of Spirit is the Horizon, which separates Gaia's Near Umbra from the Deep Umbra.

•••• Fabricate Spirit/ Control Gauntlet

The Adept of Spirit can fabricate fields of spirit reality. This allows the mage to create spirit fields within items, making those items capable of housing spirit entities. Such items are called fetishes and they derive special powers from the spirits inside them, much like Talismans draw their powers from the Quintessence stored within them. Only á few Traditions, such as the Dreamspeakers and Verbena, teach their initiates the methods of creating fetishes. It is rumored that these mages actually learned the craft from the Garou.

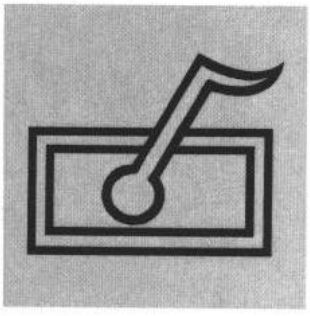
The Adept can also use this spirit field effect to create new Domains within the Near Umbra. This requires arduous effort, but through such effects, Chantries are able to establish their own pockets of reality within the Near Umbra. Creation of Domains requires copious amounts of Quintessence, the exercise of the Matter and Prime Spheres, and many other ingredients, but it is the spirit field around them that allows them to encapsulate a reality distinct from that of the surrounding Umbra.

Another effect learned at the Adept rank is the ability to manipulate the integrity of the Gauntlet. This powerful ability allows mages to trap spirits within the physical world — or to breach the Gauntlet and provide free access between the Umbra and the physical world, allowing anyone, even the unenlightened, to cross the boundary.

Area	Successes Needed
Node	1
Deep Wilderness	2
Rural Countryside	3
Most Urban Areas	4
Downtown	5

••••• Outward Journeys

The mage can now break from the bounds of Gaia's orbit. She no longer must rely on the tenuous connections within Domains to travel to the Outer Realms. The mage is able to traverse the Deep Umbra, surviving its lifeless ether for short periods, while she speeds through it toward her chosen destination. Masters of Spirit are said to spend years at a time on their outward journeys, charting the Tellurian and studying the denizens of other Realms.



Spirit Effects

• **Spirit Sight** — The mage can shift his sight into the spirit world. He will become oblivious to the physical world around him, seeing only its spiritual form. The number of successes needed on the effect roll depends on the strength of the Gauntlet where the magick is being performed.

The strength of the Gauntlet in any one location depends on the subtle variations in the firmness of static reality at that spot. More populated areas, or areas with greater amounts of technology, create areas with stronger Gauntlets. See the information on the Gauntlet in Chapter Eight for more details.

•• **Call Spirit** — While in the Umbra, the mage can call any spirit she knows by name in the hope that it will hear and come to her. Powerful spirits such as Lords and Preceptors rarely respond, but may send lesser spirits to the mage as messengers. The Storyteller must decide the number of successes required to attract the spirit's attention, depending on the power of the spirit and its previous relations with the mage. There are no guarantees of the spirit's behavior once it arrives.

A mage in physical reality can call to spirits if the mage first shifts his perceptions into the Umbra through **Spirit Sight**. Spirits that respond may manifest into the physical world if they are able.

••• **Stepping Sideways** — The mage can force his way through the Gauntlet and enter the spirit world of the Near Umbra. While in the Umbra, the mage can walk, run, talk, use magick, etc. as if she were in physical reality with few differences. When the mage repeats the **Stepping Sideways** effect to re-enter physical reality, he appears in the location corresponding to his final position in the spirit world.

The number of successes needed for this effect depends on the strength of the Gauntlet in the area where the mage is

attempting the shift (see the table under **Spirit Sight**). If the mage botches the magickal effect roll to step sideways, he becomes stuck in the Gauntlet, transfixed between the spirit and the physical worlds. The mage will be unable to move; even Correspondence magick will not help him. It is necessary for someone knowledgeable in Spirit, or an entity of the spirit world, to pull the mage out of the trap. To free the trapped mage, the would-be rescuer must successfully perform a **Stepping Sideways** magickal effect, or **Breach the Gauntlet** where the mage is imprisoned.

•••• **Breach the Gauntlet** — This effect allows the mage to rupture the local Gauntlet completely, creating a window in the fabric of reality between the spirit and the physical worlds. This allows anyone, including Sleepers, free passage into or out of the Umbra. The effect is convenient when mages of various specialties have gathered to pool their strengths, and must all enter the spirit world.

The mage does not have any control over what passes through the breach once it is opened, though she may close it at any time. Some spirit entities are quickly attracted to breaches in the Gauntlet, and are not inclined to beg the mage's permission to use the opened portal.

Each success rolled for this effect lowers the number needed to step sideways into the Gauntlet (see table under **Spirit Sight**) by one. If the mage reduces the Gauntlet difficulty to zero, she has fully breached the barrier.

•••• **Psychic Sterilization** — The Sons of Ether prefer tightly controlled environments for conducting their paradigm experiments. To block out potential spiritual interference, the mages often reinforce the Gauntlet in the areas around their laboratories. By strengthening the Gauntlet, a mage can protect herself from intrusion or spiritual scrying. Each success rolled for this effect raises the number of successes needed to pierce the local Gauntlet by one (again, per the chart under **Spirit Sight**).

The Order of Hermes uses a similar effect to trap spirits in the physical world once they have manifested. If the mage can sufficiently strengthen the Gauntlet, the spirit will be unable to return to its home reality. Of course, the mage will still have to imprison the spirit's manifested form if he desires to hold it captive.

•••• **Gauntlet Prison** — Mages have better methods of trapping spirits than simply hardening the Gauntlet and trapping them in the physical world. By radically fluctuating the strength of the Gauntlet while a being is stepping sideways, the mage is able to trap the being in the Gauntlet, just as if the being had botched its roll to step sideways. Daring mages will attempt to bind powerful spirits in this manner and then extort services from them. Ancient tales recount that certain Chantries used to ensnare Preceptor-level spirits in these Gauntlet prisons.

To trap a spirit traveler successfully, the mage must score more successes on the magickal effect roll than the victim scores on its effect roll to step sideways.

Victims imprisoned in the Gauntlet appear as ephemeral, ghostlike specters when viewed from physical reality or from the spirit world. Once a victim is trapped, the mage often reinforces the Gauntlet in the area (see Psychic Sterilization, above), thus preventing allies of the victim from successfully freeing the captive.

Treacherous mages have also been known to breach a Gauntlet, invite others to walk through, and collapse the Gauntlet into a prison while their victims journey.

•••• **Create Fetish** — The Spirit Adept can fashion items that serve as receptacles for the essences of spirits. Virtually all fetishes are created through the cooperation of spirits, but some mages have been known to use their Spirit magick to imprison spirits into fetishes. Such objects are far more tricky to use, but they are often more powerful because of the potency of the spirit trapped inside. Rules for fetishes will be supplied in future Mage products.

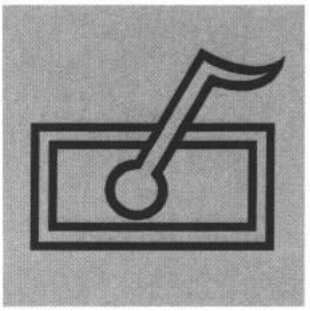
••••• **Break the Dreamshell** — The Dreamshell is the Dreamspeaker term for the Horizon. In order for a mage to enter the Deep Umbra, she must break through the Dreamshell, just as she must break through the Gauntlet when stepping sideways.

At least five successes must be scored to pierce Gaia's Dreamshell. Other Realms might have weaker or stronger Dreamshells. If the mage uses an Anchorhead, a special Domain set amid the Dreamshell, the passage through the Dreamshell becomes easier and requires only three successes.

••••• **Deep Umbra Travel** — To survive the utterly barren spiritual environment of the Deep Umbra, the mage must wrap himself in a field of spirit. This field is identical to those the mage learned to create as an Adept of Spirit. This field of spiritual essence creates a sort of bubble around the mage to protect him from the ravages of the Deep Umbral environment. The mage must reach and enter another Near Umbra before the duration rolled for the field elapses, or he will die a cold death in the Deep Umbra.

The mage is able to fly through the Umbra at amazing speeds using only his will. Still, the distances in the Deep Umbra are almost inconceivable. Close Realms such as Arcadia (the moon) take but a day to reach, while distant Realms such as Mars can only be reached after several days of travel.

Travel into the Deep Umbra is a highly dangerous affair, but many mages feel a manifest destiny to explore it and chart the Tellurian. Their sojourns into the Deep Umbra are much like those of the ancient Pacific Islanders who set sail into the Pacific Ocean to find a new island before they ran out of food. Sometimes the traveler turns back halfway in order to return safely on his depleted rations; sometimes he risks everything and crosses the point of no return.



Time

"When do we start your study?" you are asking me. We are starting now. We are finishing now. You are Disciple, Adept and Master now.

You are understanding that Chronos is not really as he is appearing in the minds of humanity. They are following Chronos down the straight path that he is desiring. They are not experiencing the then, only the now. They are not seeing the will, only the has. We are outside that narrow path; we are enlightened.

We are existing in the Now. There are no beginnings or endings; our Now is spreading all of time before us as a tapestry. In the Now, you are studying with me. In the Now, you are Disciple, Adept and Master — all three.

The Sphere of Time has long mystified and frustrated humanity. Just as humanity had finally begun to accept time as another defined parameter in the organized paradigm of Newtonian physics, Einstein came along and theorized that time was not constant but instead relative to each observer. Since then it has become ever more popular to ponder the possibilities of time travel and theory. Does time pass in quantum segments, like a very high-speed film? Is humanity's perception of time as a one-way linear phenomenon (a train moving from past to future) correct?

Mages who pursue the Sphere of Time gain understanding of time's true secrets. Different Traditions pursue the study by their own unique means, but gradually they develop a keen awareness of time, which allows them to exert their will over it.

When trying to sense through time, the number of successes scored on the magickal effect roll determines how far into the past a Time mage can perceive. Durations for other Time effects are determined normally.

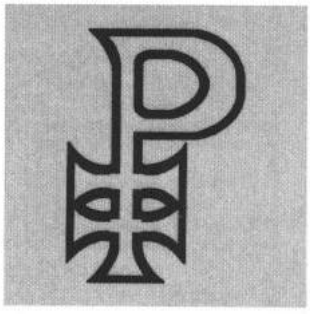
Masters of Time are often surrounded by small effects of time dilation or acceleration. For example, male mages may grow full beards in one day, cups of coffee quickly cool off around them, taxi meters click slower than normal, etc. Masters also tend to speak using only one verb tense: past, present or future.

- Time Sense
- •• Past / Future Sight
- ••• Time Contraction / Dilation
- •••• Time Determinism
- ••••• Future Travel/Time Immunity

• Time Sense

The mage begins to develop a rudimentary awareness of Time's true nature. The mage develops a precise internal clock, which is essential when performing more complex Time magick.

In addition, the mage becomes aware of certain time-based phenomena that periodically shift through reality. The mage can intuitively sense the approach of such disturbances and can "feel" where in dimensional space the phenomena will appear.



•• Past / Future Sight

The mage can now shift her perceptions forward or back in time. Postcognition tends to require more successes to perform, but its results are certain. Precognition is less difficult to enact, but its results tend to be uncertain, especially the farther into the future and/or the more specific the event the mage attempts to foresee. Mages who frequently use this power tend to experience spontaneous flashes of pre- or postcognition. These flashes range from feelings of deja vu to vivid, dreamlike trances foretelling danger.

••• Time Contraction / Dilation

Now the mage begins to gain true control over time. She can exert her will over the passage of time, causing it to accelerate or slow as she desires. Mages often describe these effects as "contracting" or "dilating" time, referring to the length of each moment in time. Thus, contracting time around a waterfall makes it appear to flow more slowly to an outside observer; near the waterfall, each moment does not last as long and less water flows. Conversely, by dilating each moment around the waterfall, more water flows during each segment of time. While the observer perceives these moments to pass normally, he will see more water flow during each moment.

•••• Time Determinism

The mage is now able to cause absolute shifts in time rather than simply adjusting the rate at which time passes. The mage can take a field of space-time and, metaphorically

Successes	Timespan
One	Immediate (generally a year)
Two	Recent (a decade)
Three	Lifetime
Four	10 generations
Five	Past millennia

speaking, freeze it in the flow of time. The net effect in physical reality is that the mage can freeze events for a set period of time.

This is a powerful effect when used in conjunction with other magicks, as the mage can choose the moment in time when a magickal effect becomes operative, effectively storing magick to become effective later. Some long-dead Masters of Time have left the world a legacy of magickal effects that occur even after the mages' death. Such "hanging" spells are a type of time-based phenomenon that mages with Time Sense (Rank One) can intuitively detect.

••••• Future Travel/ Time Immunity

At Master-level knowledge, the mage can do more than determine the timing of events; he can shift objects through time. The mage actually plucks a field of space-time completely out of the flow of time, and repositions the field at some other point along the flow of time. The new position could be seconds or centuries away from the field's original place in time.

Such time travel is limited to future travel only; mages (other than, perhaps, the Oracles of Time) have not discovered a methodology to travel into the past without being torn apart by forces of Paradox. If the Oracles have found a way, they aren't sharing it.

Equally powerful is the ability of Masters to immunize themselves from time. Figuratively speaking, the Master simply steps laterally out of the current flow of time. The Master can maintain his immunity only so long, but during his "time" outside of time, he perceives the world as a statuesque collection of still images that he may manipulate as he pleases.

Time Effects

• **Time Sense** — As described above, mages of Time have identified phenomena that exist in a special "sub-realm" of space-time. These phenomena periodically sweep through physical reality, materializing somewhere on earth for a set period of time and then vanishing again. Some mages theorize that these phenomena are similar to Halley's Comet, sweeping through the Tellurian and passing earth's reality every so often.

These time-phased phenomena cannot be seen by Sleepers; the unenlightened simply ignore them. Only mages who have studied the Sphere of Time can perceive the physical appearances of these phenomena. Mages can intuitively sense time-phased phenomena. Larger phenomena send ripples as they approach the mage's own timeline, and if the mage is close to where a given phenomenon will appear (or has appeared?), she will discern these ripples and thus sense where in space the phenomenon will cross (has crossed?) into her own timeline. She can then seek it out if she desires. Some phenomena are

so powerful that their foreshadowing ripples can be felt by mages across the globe.

Mages have identified hundreds of these time-based phenomena, from powerful Preceptors who appear every 12 years in the Andes Mountains, to the spectral Tower of Babel whose cycle has yet to be determined, to ghosts that wander down certain roads every night looking for the drivers who didn't give them a ride when they lived...

• **Internal Clock** — Virtual Adepts cultivate amazingly accurate internal clocks in order to time events in virtual reality and test the processing speeds of their computers. The mage becomes a human stopwatch; he always knows the current time and can time events to fractions of a second. This internal clock runs according to the mage's perception of time. He can adjust it for temporal effects that he causes; however, visiting some spirit Realms where time operates differently, or being the victim of various time-based effects, can cause the mage to become disoriented.

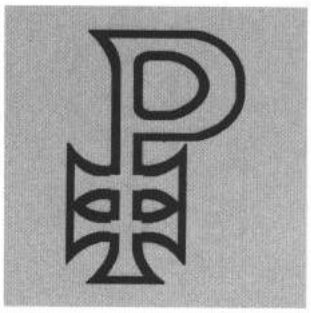
•• **Postcognition** — The mage can extend her perceptions backward in time to witness what has previously transpired in the mage's current location. While the mage "rewinds" time in the location, she sees in her mind's eye what transpired there. The Storyteller must relate to the player what the character sees.

The mage can shift the exact moment she currently watches. For example, she might begin by viewing the events of one day ago, then shift to one hour ago, then 10 years ago, etc. Her total viewing time cannot exceed that rolled for the effect.

•• **Songs of Future Days** — This is a precognitive magickal effect developed by the Celestial Chorus. The mage begins singing as the focus for the magick, and lets his mind wander down the pathways of future time. The words of his song begin to take on a will of their own, describing in epic format the events that may come to pass in future days.

Unlike postcognitive effects, which concentrate on a location, precognitive effects such as this can be centered on almost anything: a location, a person, an organization, etc. The farther the mage delves into the future with precognitive magick, the more disjointed, sketchy and unreliable the information gleaned.

Ultimately, the Storyteller must decide what a character's precognitive vision includes, based at least partially on the number of successes rolled for the effect. The player is free to suggest input, especially in the form of predicting her character's future actions.



••• **Accelerate Time** — By dilating the moments of time, the mage can create fields of space-time where things seem to move faster, like a film played at high speed. Each success scored over two speeds up time by a factor of one — three successes double speed, four

successes triple speed, and so on. Persons under the effects of time acceleration receive an extra action each turn for every factor of speed.

••• **Slow Time** — This effect is the opposite of **Accelerate Time**. Each success scored above two slows time by a factor of one. For example, a person operating under a time-dilation effect evoked by a mage who scored three successes would receive one action every second turn.

•••• **Programmed Event** — The mage stops time in a localized field, and sets a time when it shall resume. For example, the mage lifts a cup from the table and drops it. By freezing time around the cup for one scene, the mage causes the cup to hang in midair until the scene ends. At that time, the cup will fall and break. As with **Accelerate Time**, the field of stopped time cannot exceed the general space of a small room. Furthermore, when events in physical reality are frozen for extended periods, Paradox forces usually erode the magickal effect and prematurely free the events from stopped time. Similarly, in the cup and table example, if someone intervenes and snatches the cup while it hangs in midair, static reality would reassert itself over the cup and the magickal field would dissipate.

••••• **Time Travel** — The mage disappears from present reality and reappears in the same location at a future time of his choosing. The farther the mage wishes to travel, the more successes are required: one success means he jumps ahead to the next turn while four successes take him completely out of the story.

The mage's arrival in the future will be felt through **Time Sense** by the mages of that time. The longer the time jump the mage makes, the greater the time-phased phenomenon he becomes to those sensing his arrival. The mage may reappear to find several of his peers waiting for him, investigating the time phenomenon he caused by his time jump.

No mage has successfully traveled into the past. Paradox inevitably destroys the mage attempting such a trip.

••••• **Sidestep Time** — In some senses, this effect is the opposite of **Programmed Event**. The mage no longer determines time for other events; rather, she shifts herself completely out of time. The world suddenly halts all around the mage. She is still free to move and act among the frozen events around her, pushing or rearranging objects and people. Certain effects, however, are limited. She can turn a television to another channel, but the frozen image on the screen will not change, nor will cars operate, nor will powered machinery work. The mage can extend her temporal immunity to encompass other objects and people, but this limits the length of her stay out-of-time.

Each success scored allows the mage to remain in a timeless state for a longer duration. One success allows the mage to sidestep time for one turn; five successes make it permanent.

Rotes

A horizon of the invisible cuts across the geography of modern culture. Those who have passed through it cannot put their experience into familiar words and images because the languages they have inherited are inadequate to the new worlds they inhabit. They therefore express themselves in metaphors, paradoxes, contradictions, and abstractions rather than languages that 'mean' in the traditional way—in assertions that are incoherent or collages using fragments of the old to create enigmatic symbols of the new.

— O.B. Hardison, Jr., *Disappearing through the Skylight*

Rotes are magickal effects that have been documented by mages for centuries. Rotes are often used to provide apprentices and Sleepers with examples of what is possible with magick. They are descriptions of how magickal knowledge can be applied effectively and efficiently.

Most mages of the Traditions forget the rotes their Mentors teach them once they have graduated to a higher level of enlightenment. Among apprentices, though, rotes serve as a vocabulary of sorts — a way of referring to what has been accomplished in order to describe what can be achieved. Some tomes penned by mages have new rotes described within them, to provide concrete examples of how the knowledge presented can be applied.

The Technomancers are infamous for their systematic rotes, which they call "spells." Technomancer apprentices are required to learn and employ these rotes; as a result the Technocracy works uniformly and has tighter control of its operations. On the other hand, Technomancers become so tied to their rotes that they find it difficult to create unique magickal effects of their own. In fact, it is rare for Technomancers to use any effects other than their "spells."

Each Tradition has rotes of its own culled from its own legends and mythologies. Therefore, a rote has the mark of its parent Tradition. It's quite simple, however, to convert rotes from Tradition to Tradition; the fundamentals always remain the same. Therefore, when a Mentor teaches a Sphere to his apprentice he often uses rotes from the legends of the Tradition most associated with the Sphere (e.g., Euthanatos when Entropy is taught).

The following list of rotes is divided by Sphere. Game mechanics for the effects are presented, allowing new players of **Mage** to learn what is possible through magick. This is especially necessary for conjunctional magick, the combination of two or more Spheres to create an effect. Game mechanic information generally comes at the end of the rote description and is separated by brackets, or "[ ]".

Correspondence Rotes

If it's power you want, get a computer. Information is the ultimate power. Hand me those Fritos and I'll show you. You can never know too much...

— Dante, Virtual Adept

FOR NEXT Loop (•••• Correspondence, •••• Life, •• Forces)

First used only a few years ago, this rote has become instantly famous among the Traditions. The acceptance accorded the Virtual Adepts by the older Traditions was due in no small part to this creative use of Correspondence. The FOR NEXT Loop was used to break a Void Engineer's will until he divulged the information the Adepts sought.

The effect began when the Void Engineer was converted into energy and injected into a computer's CPU. From there, the energy-form Technomancer was sent to a powerful mainframe hundreds of miles away that had the memory capacity to hold so much information. When the mage was finally converted back into his mortal form he was a babbling idiot ready to comply with any demand.

[After being converted into energy, the victim has one chance to escape through a "back door" in the program before he's transmitted to the mainframe. The victim rolls Willpower (difficulty (10 minus Intelligence)). After the victim is safely in the mainframe, the Adept makes a magickal effect roll each round. Each success causes the victim to lose one point of Willpower. A failure means the victim has another chance to escape. A botch means the victim reverts to his original form and position.]

Personal Compression (••••• Correspondence, ••• Life)

The perfect infiltration tool, this rote teaches Virtual Adepts how to reduce their mass and size dramatically. The originator of the rote, an unnamed Adept, is said to have shrunk to the atomic level. If this is true, then a whole new area of reality lies open to investigation.

A Correspondence Master named Elma Hartley claims to have reproduced this effect. She purports to have found entire subatomic worlds (which she dubbed Horton Realms), and claims that they are distinct from the spiritual Realms visited in the Umbra. Mages of other Traditions speculate whether Elma would know the Umbra from a dark alleyway, and dismiss her claims.

[The Master's size and mass decrease by 15 percent for each success scored. There is virtually no limit to the size-reduction capacity of this effect, for these percentages are additive, and as 15 percent times seven exceeds 100 percent, seven successes allow the mage to shrink to any size she desires. The Master may shrink his belongings with him if he also has the appropriate knowledge of Matter.]

Play Back (•• Correspondence, •• Time)

The well-known Virtual Adept named Dante had the task of recovering data from computer data storage devices that had been deleted and then overwritten with garbled data by the Technocracy. As if this wasn't problem enough, Dante was no longer at the site where the data was stored, so he had to work from a distance. Fortunately, he was able to apply his knowledge of Time to the problem, and performed postcognitive data retrieval that allowed him to read the storage media as they had been hours earlier.

[This rote also requires the Computer Knowledge, but as long as the character could normally retrieve information via modem, no additional difficulty is incurred.]

Semi Auto CAD CAM (••••• Correspondence, ••• Matter)

Perfected by one of the first Virtual Adepts, the infamous Farrus, in the days before Babbage, this rote allows the Adept to combine two guns and intermingle the properties of both. It is one of the few rotes that is often used by mages. A computer scans the two images and constructs the new weapon. This effect creates such things as a revolver that fires like a Mac 10 or a submachine gun that fires shells. The new weapon usually resembles both of the old guns in style, unless the Adept designs it differently.

Adepts have utilized this same concept for any number of what they call "fusings." Very powerful computer chips have been created by combining the most useful qualities of different materials, and extremely protective armor has been woven by creating coats that feel and weigh like silk but protect like kevlar.

[Each magickal effect success allows the player to exchange one of the statistics of the two weapons combined (Difficulty, Damage, Range, Rate, Clip, Conceal).]

Entropy Rotes

There are no heroes or villains in this war. If meat gets in my way, I reshape it. Terrible, isn't it, when someone gets hit crossing the street.

— Zharvic, Euthanatos

Curse of the Mayfly (•••• Entropy, •••• Life)

The Euthanatos rote **Curse of the Mayfly** is a hotly debated topic among the Traditions, though little about the Euthanatos is not debated. Aside from the sinister ethical problems the rote raises, concern is often voiced over using the rote as a teaching aid because of the vulgarity of its effects. Chiefly developed by the mage Vareness during the Black Plague (when the effect did not draw undue notice), this rote allows the mage to alter the Pattern of Life in such a way that entropy is diverted toward it. The immediate result is a dramatic increase in the aging process. The target literally withers away, eventually to death.

[Each success on the effect roll ages the subject three years.]

Delion's Haze (•• Entropy, ••• Time)

A now-dead Euthanatos teacher named Delion fell into disrepute when it was discovered that what he passed off as enlightenment to his students was really just a magickal effect. By applying entropy randomly to a student's sense of time, Delion was able to create an effect that his students assumed was their own progress in temporal intuition. The end result was actually an increasing inability to think clearly. The effect has since been reproduced in a quicker variant.

[Concentration is so hard that a victim under the effect of the Haze may not roll more dice for any action (including magick) than he has points of Willpower.]

Magdeline's Dynamic Mind (•• Entropy, •••• Mind)

The sad case of Magdeline is well known among mages, especially the Euthanatos (who are too stubborn to admit that her experiment was a failure). Though she has survived the intervening years through the magick of other mages, Magdeline corrupted her own mind a century ago. She postulated that if dynamism is what all mages seek, then an appropriate step in that direction would be to become forever random in thought and desire. She applied entropic processes to her mind to alter the way it worked. The insights she expected never came. Instead, her attention shifted constantly and her thoughts became incoherent. One moment she wanted to begin a new experiment; the next she wanted a relaxing walk around the lake.

[If the magickal effect roll is successful, the victim will suffer as described above.]

Shango's Grave (••• Entropy, ••••• Forces, •• Matter, •• Prime)

Controlling the patterns of weather, even in a localized area, is an incredibly demanding feat of magick, but the mage Shango has mastered it. Shango determined how to create and destroy massive formations of moisture in the atmosphere,

manipulate thermal energy, and control the thousands of random factors that produce weather. Shango put his mighty magicks to a use belittled by many from other Traditions. He summoned storms to drench the sites of recent battles so that the mud and muck made it impossible to remove the bodies. Shango's apprentices would then retrieve the bodies for experimentation. Soldiers who insisted on trying to remove bodies were hit by lightning that coincidentally struck in the same place twice.

[The magickal effect roll indicates how large the storm is and how quickly it can be summoned.]

Forces Rotes

See these piles of books around me! You might hold them or smell them, even rifle through the pages, but only I, the magus, can bathe in their illumination.

— Caeron, Order of Hermes

Ball of Abysmal Flame (••••• Forces, •• Prime)

The Order of Hermes has no idea who created this rote, but it (along with similar effects) has been a mainstay of the more temperamental among the Order for centuries. The version that is typically taught to Adepts seeking Master status was developed by the mage Claudius, who reportedly produced this effect by weaving a Pattern for kinetic energy and feeding it with Quintessence siphoned through the etheric tapestry. The resulting energy is channeled into a targeted object. The kinetic energy consumes the target, agitating its molecules and causing its temperature to skyrocket. Pockets of surrounding air explode in blasts of superheated gases, and solids disintegrate into a gaseous state.

[Damage to victims caught in such carnage is plain ridiculous. Victims suffer four Health Levels of damage for each success rolled. Successes on a dodge attempt reduce the damage from the pyrokinetic explosion, and the victims can try to soak the damage, but it's probably a moot point. Even victims who survive will suffer horribly from painful, blistering third-degree burns. Note that this effect creates a fire using kinetic energy to produce a huge temperature increase. Flames can also be created via chemical reactions (creating nuclear energy).]

Pulse of the Electro-Stream (••• Forces, •• Prime)

A rote of fairly recent origin, the Pulse was created by the mage Jason Hemingway for use against the Virtual Adepts. Jason once took out an entire BBS by creating raw electrical energy and directing it through the ground at the NetNode. He prepared in advance, as his Solomon's seal required charging while he stood in a ceremonial circle intoning the ritual words. To create the Pulse, Jason threw the seal to the ground.

The Pulse has actually become popular among the younger and more violent members of the Order, who have taken to charging several seals at once and carrying them around like grenades to use against the Technomancers. Virtual Adepts dislike seeing the rote being taught and still do not appreciate its use even though it is no longer directed against them.

[Victims struck by the attack suffer two Health Levels of damage per success on the effect roll. The target gets a soak roll as normal, but living beings will also suffer from the stunning effects of Discharge Static. The Storyteller may choose to adjust the damage according to how well grounded the target is. For example, a victim standing on concrete in rubber-soled boots would take reduced damage, while someone standing barefoot in a mud puddle would really get fried.]

Unseen Arm (••••• Forces, •• Prime)

By touching her seal to an object while speaking the correct formula, the famous albino mage Clarissa Donley found she could propel the object away from herself at high speed. In one of the most harrowing escapes from Technomancers ever documented, Clarissa employed a number of brilliant applications of this rote. She sent pennies flying from her hand with the speed of bullets. She was under the influence of powerful mind-altering Technomancer magick and was thus unable to use any other magickal effects, but Clarissa flung people, cars, and even an airplane away from herself with just a touch. She also used a similar effect to enable herself to fly.

By directly molding kinetic energy, the mage can instantly give any object whatever velocity she wishes.

[The more successes rolled for the magickal effect, the more kinetic energy the mage creates. If the mage chooses to feed the energy into a more massive object, the object will have lower speed than a lighter one. Five successes impart enough energy into a penny to make it fly like a bullet, while a car may only go sliding across the pavement. It is generally assumed that any object thrown by the Unseen Arm will inflict four Health Levels of damage per success rolled. Targets may soak the damage as normal.

The mage can control the object's direction of motion as long as it is within her sight. Fine manipulation and targeting of an object require a Wits roll against a difficulty based upon the speed of the object.]

Veil of Invisibility (•• Forces, ••• Life)

The Veil is a classic rote. Tomes in Ancestral Chantries document the teaching of this rote in the Middle Ages, and an older, less polished version is known to have been used in the time of Hammurabi. The Hermetic mage Alexander found that by altering the interaction between his own Life Pattern and the Patterns of light energy, he was able to make his own Pattern "immune" to the Patterns of light. Thus, light did not interact with his body. The effect is that light passes right through the mage who employs this rote.

This spell shows how different Spheres can be used to produce similar effects. There is also a Correspondence effect that produces invisibility.

[With one successes the mage appears blurry, or may still be visible in parts. Three or more successes allow complete invisibility.]

Life Rotes

It seems that every other philosophy feels a need to overpower the body. They speak of lifting above or even ignoring one's carnal and base desires. Why do that when that's obviously where your power comes from?

— Ashton, Initiate of Verbena

Fluids of Death (•••• Life, •••• Entropy)

An unknown mage, whose actions may well form the basis of some fairy tales, created what is now called an Elixir of Death by brewing a potion with a drop of her own blood in her cauldron. The concoction was then poured on the roots of a tree in a royal orchard. As the fruit of this tree ripened, the flesh of the fruit became tainted by the elixir. The juices of the fruit caused the available energy in the royal bodies to "decompose" into an unusable state. With nothing left to power them, the muscles in the victims' bodies were unable to operate. In some cases the victims' hearts failed or lungs stopped, killing them.

[The effect inflicts four Health Levels of damage to an individual target for each success on the effect roll. In addition to the damage, the victim will suffer double the normal penalty to difficulty numbers because of the fatigue.]

Flesh Toys (••• or ••••• Life, •• Prime)

Heiro, a mage who perpetually lived in a deep state of Quiet, used this effect to create friends for himself. No one can say for certain why he did this or what he actually thought was going on, but Heiro soon had an entire entourage of frogs, insects, cats and dogs that kept him company in his turmoil.

Heiro created a Pattern for each lifeform and channeled Quintessence into it, thus creating the creature. It is rumored that certain Euthanatos copied this rote to create zombie-like lifeforms with limited intelligence and virtually no will, and that some Sons of Ether have created sentient lifeforms in their European castle laboratories.

[More complex creatures require more successes, while creating multiple creatures at once raises the difficulty. The more successes rolled for the effect, the healthier the creatures are, and the longer they will survive. Five successes guarantees a normal lifespan for simple lifeforms. All lifeforms created are assumed to have only base instinctual reactions.

If the mage attempts to create a totally new form of life, one whose Pattern he has therefore never seen or studied, the required number of successes will be higher. Imagined lifeforms must be biologically viable to survive once created; for example, an insect without a nervous system will quickly die.]

Imbue Flesh (•• Life, •• Spirit)

The mage Heiro (see **Flesh Toys**, above) eventually recovered from his extended Quiet and was shocked to find himself surrounded by hordes of loyal animals. No longer entertained with them, but unwilling to dispense with them, he summoned a number of spirits from the Umbra and gave them the physical forms they desired.

Heiro specifically sought out spirits that were both trustworthy and willing to serve in exchange for a physical form. Some spirits required special favors from Heiro in exchange for continued service, but Heiro was not going to let his old friends just decompose.

[This effect has since been recognized as the simplest way for a mage to create a familiar. Different Traditions favor different types of familiars. These combinations are the best known: Verbena — black cats; Euthanatos — cockerels and goats; Sons of Ether — golems; Akashic Brotherhood — cranes, monkeys and praying mantises; and, though Virtual Adepts usually bring spirits into their Net rather than into the physical world, there are reports of young Adepts using mice as familiars.

Uther's Butchered Visage ••• Life, • Mind)

By cutting himself with a sacred knife, a crazed mage named Uther literally carved himself into a new man. It was a messy, bloody business, but no price is too high for safety from the Technomancers. Uther survived a number of months masquerading as a retainer of a Progenitor, and managed to leak valuable information before being discovered.

[A mage must have an opportunity to study the Pattern of another living creature, eidetically memorize it, and then alter his own appearance to resemble the memorized Pattern. Five successes allow the mage to alter his body completely, making it appear identical in every way to the lifeform he is copying. Fewer successes result in some disguise defects, but even these are minor discrepancies. The "butchering" causes no damage to the mage (even in Uther's case).]

Matter Rotes

Newton was wrong! *The apple need not fall. We now control the future of physics. The Ether returns to "empty" space! The planet hungers for our truth!*

— Dr. Reinhald, Sons of Ether

The Incredible Shrunken Machine (••••• Matter, ••• Forces, •• Prime)

Though the Technomancers are pioneering the science of nanotechnology, the Sons of Ether are now using some of their foes' theories to create their own miniature machines. The leader in this field is an eccentric Etheric mage named Dr. Nimbus. The Sons of Ether claim that Nimbus has thrice refused membership among the Oracles in order to stay behind and make sure the Sons win the race for nanotechnology. They'll probably win — unless Nimbus begins to collect too much Paradox.

Nanotechnology already works a little differently for the Sons of Ether. The machine itself is actually constructed on a large scale, and then shrunk through a different effect. Once shrunk the machine will function normally. Such machines can be used to mark items, build programmed structures, produce radiation, or break down certain compounds. They can be designed for a specific mission and equipped to carry it out (e.g. repair a faulty heart valve in a human).

[Each success determines how long the machine will function.]

Spontaneous Material Construction (•• Matter, •• Prime)

A classic Sons of Ether rote, **Spontaneous Material Construction** allows a mage to conjure physical objects from thin air. An artist named Loralai developed this effect to create complex forms not easily duplicated by physical labor. She created "carvings" of exquisite detail, taking hundreds of days just to develop the pattern. The rote is used to demonstrate how such complicated material may be created, in order to prove how easy it is to create simple objects like a crowbar or even oxygen.

After Loralai increased her knowledge of Matter (to Rank Four) she was able to create even more complex items, such as carvings formed from several materials.

[The more successes rolled for this effect, the greater the amount of material the mage can create: two successes = one kilogram, three successes = five kilograms, four successes = 10 kilograms, five successes = 50 kilograms, and so on.]

Talisman Transmogrification (••• Matter, ••• Prime)

Talismans are imbued with free Quintessence, and thus their physical structures are "locked" into reality, rendering them impossible to transform with Pattern magick. However, Loralai, a mage knowledgeable in both the Matter and Prime Spheres, learned to reshape the form of any Talisman, altering its appearance or physical properties as she could any other object.

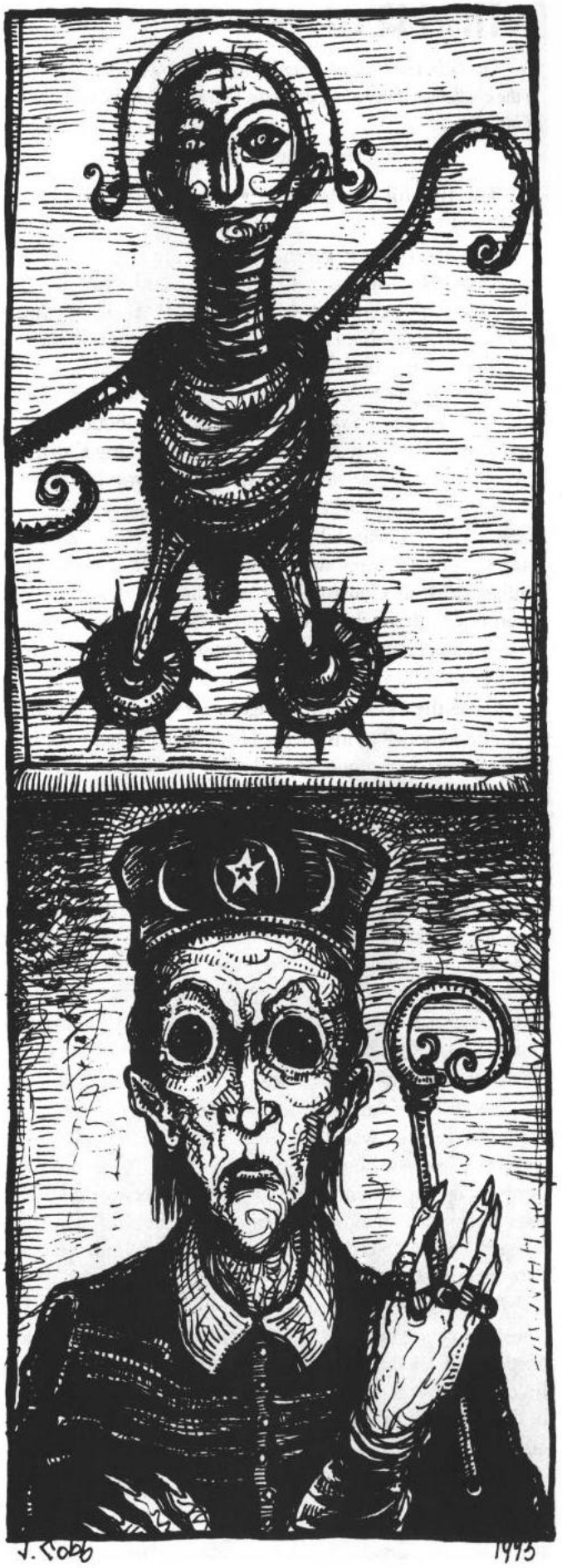
[The mage must achieve a number of successes on the magickal effect roll equal to the Talisman's rating to alter the Talisman successfully.]

Transephemeration Ray Projector (••• Matter, ••• Life)

As with many rotes of the Sons of Ether, the details of the Projector (allegedly developed by the infamous Dr. Frankenstein) are most often written on sheets and sheets of wiring diagrams, as paper is relatively Technomancer-free. The typical Projector shoots two beams of light. One targets a person; the other an object. The machine alters the mage's life Pattern and that of the inanimate object, thereby disassociating the two Patterns. The mage's body and the selected object will no longer interact; they are immaterial to one another. A wooden baseball bat, or any other wooden object if wood is struck by the other beam, will swing right through the mage as if he were a ghost. The mage can step through walls or reach into water without getting wet.

It is rumored that only the magick of this machine allowed Frankenstein to survive the attacks of his first monster and the burning of his castle.

[The more successes scored on the effect roll, the greater the mass of material from which the mage can disassociate. Mages of Rank Four in Matter can use a similar effect to disassociate from objects made of several kinds of matter, like a car made of metals, plastic and glass.]



Mind Rotes

I wouldn't call it defacement. His body simply could not adjust to the challenge of my integrating the Way of this knife with the Do of his being.

— Kwang Lee, Akashic Brotherhood

The Blissful Discipline (•••• Mind, ••• Forces, •• Prime)

A heroic Akashic Brother named Kim Lee did her biological brother Kwang and the entire Brotherhood proud when she captured and held a number of Technomancers prisoner for several hours until her brother arrived to assist her. Kim invaded the minds of the Technomancers and associated a Pattern of electrical energy to the subjects' thoughts. Thereafter, whenever the Technomancers thought about a certain action (in this case, leaving the room or attacking Kim), the energy Pattern was released and the subject was shocked.

[The shocking effect is identical to **Discharge Static** (see Rank Two Forces effects). To succeed in this effect, the mage must successfully overpower the subject's faculties in a manner similar to **Mind Control**. The successes on the effect roll determine both the damage from the shock and the length of time electrical Pattern will activate to shock the victim before it fades out.]

Sense the Echo of the Dragon (••• Mind, •• Time)

The famous Do instructor Ho Kazaoke taught his best students this technique. By relaxing prior to a fight and meditating on the style of the opponent, a student learned to predict the maneuvers the opponent would make only seconds later.

[The number of successes on the magickal effect roll determines both the detail of the prediction and the length of time it covers. The mage should realize that precognitive abilities are never certain, and the subject could choose different maneuvers from those the mage predicted. In personal combat, the mage can add dice equal to the successes gained on the magickal effect roll to any Dodge Dice Pool.]

Serene Temple (• Mind, • Life)

This is a very simple lesson that often marks the beginning of training for the Awakened students of Ho Kazaoke. Through this rote, Ho shows how a mage can change the speed at which her body operates. Some uses of this effect are: accelerate the liver and kidney's removal of toxins, speed the natural healing process, control bleeding when badly injured, and endure extremes of temperature.

[The magick accelerates or decelerates the body's functions by an extra factor for each success gained on the magick effect roll. For example, a player rolls three successes and has his character slow down her cardiovascular system by a factor of four so she can survive four times as long trapped in an airtight safe.]

Prime Rotes

Step into the loving light of the sun—the source of All. Let your concerns melt away and your fears be burnt away. You have always been part of Prime, so never fear that you have wandered too far; just remember that you must come back.

— Sister Evara Immanuel, Celestial Chorus

Hymn of Beatific Harmony (••• Prime, •••• Correspondence)

When they discovered that Ezekiel had been captured by the Technomancers and was awaiting the monstrous pleasure of the New World Order, an entire congregation of Celestials gathered and joined in song. They acted in concert and channeled Ezekiel the Quintessence he needed to stage an escape.

[A maximum of one point of Quintessence may be sent to any location on Earth for each success rolled.]

Mark of the Beast (••• Prime, ••• Correspondence, • Life)

Relatively early in his career as a paladin, the mage Gregory was intent on destroying all vampires. This only ended when he discovered that not all vampires were creatures of complete evil, and some even sought redemption. Before then, though, he would track the creatures to their lairs by marking the Quintessence within the blood of certain humans. After a vampire drank the "tagged" blood, Gregory could stalk the beast as it slept during the day.

[The number of successes on the effect roll determines how long the Quintessence is traceable.]

Radiate Prime's Energy (••• Prime, •• Entropy)

Gregory the Hallowed, one of the greatest paladins of the Celestial Chorus, used this effect skillfully on a number of occasions. The most famous incident involved his conflict with a construction of Iteration X that operated from a storage of Quintessence. The heat of a single candle allowed Gregory to force the life-giving Quintessence from the construct's body.

[For each success on the effect roll, the mage can force one point of Quintessence from a victim.]

Spirit Pilgrimage (••••• Prime, ••• Life)

By stopping the flow of Quintessence into a portion of her Pattern, the mage Sarah Burnstone was able to become incorporeal amid the heart of a Paradox Storm that destroyed a Marauder. While in the storm, Sarah found that without some degree of solidity, she could not move, so teachers of the rote sometimes suggest that students leave select parts of their bodies incorporeal—for example, leaving their legs somewhat solid so that they can walk.

[The more successes of the effect roll, the greater the body mass the mage can turn intangible. Three successes would render an entire human body incorporeal.

Spirit Rotes

Lock the door. Shut the windows. Hide in the cellar. Run all you want, but you can't keep me out of your dreams. You can't stay awake forever.

— Specter, Dreamspeaker

Dream Locus (•• Spirit, ••• Matter)

A problem frequently faced by Dreamspeakers, or other mages interested in moving into the Umbra under their own power, is the inability to take additional matter with them (except for a Dreamspeaker unique feather, which is so attuned to the mage and his understanding of Spirit that it travels with him without additional complications). A Dreamspeaker named Gerry Halfmoon developed this rote to enable just such an effect.

[The mage must defeat the Gauntlet in a separate roll for his belongings.]

Drums of Elemental Fire (•• Spirit, •• Forces, •• Matter)

The Dreamspeaker now remembered only as Red Blossom (largely because of her summonings of gigantic and exotic spirits of elemental fire) used this rote to summon elementals with her pounding drums.

[As long as the magickal effect roll is successful, an elemental will appear. The power of the elemental is determined by the successes rolled. The elemental can take seconds, minutes or hours to arrive. Once present, it will not necessarily be cooperative or friendly with its summoner, but most will show interest in the alien being (the mage) who weaves the elemental's base energy and beckons for its company.]

Leap Beyond (••••• Spirit, ••••• Mind)

The Dreamspeakers believe that the mage Teronymus was the first mage to assume astral form. All previous attempts by mages to explore the Deep Umbra eventually met with grave peril — often a Lord, Preceptor or other malign force intent on harming the mage. Teronymus was able to avoid this by sending just his mind to the Deep Umbra.

[The mage astrally projects himself into the Deep Umbra. The effect is identical to the Mind effect of Untether, except that the mage's mental essence travels the Umbra instead of the physical world.]

Leap Sideways (••• Spirit, ••• Correspondence)

Dreamspeakers have a great need to move between spiritual and physical reality; thus, magickal effects like this rote have been performed for millennia. With this rote, a mage in physical space may instantly move herself to any place in the Near Umbra, and a mage in the Near Umbra may shift herself to any position on Earth.

[A successful magickal effect roll determines where in relation to Earth the character teleported. The character still needs enough successes to overcome the Gauntlet.]

Time Rotes

Mistake Number One: there are no spellbooks. Only book on magick worth a look is ***Cat in the Hat.*** *See that hat? Same as mine. Cat had the right idea. The world is a ball of string; get all the catnip you can.*

— Fritzenjammer, Cult of Ecstasy

Peeping Tom (•• Time, ••• Correspondence)

Cultists have a tendency to annoyances that don't really upset other mages at first, but like an other annoyance that persists, it eventually becomes maddening. The classic example of this (and the reason why the Cult of Ecstasy teaches this rote) is the Cultist that even the Cult now calls Peeping Tom. From the safety and security of his own home, Tom had enjoyed not just watching what other mages did, but then pursuing the matter to see what his favorites did in the past. Word is that massive journals of notes documenting the lives of many famous mages like Ho Kazaoke are in the possession of the Cult.

[The effect is just like Postcognition, except the mage may see the past of any location no matter where he is currently.]

Sugar Magnolias (•••• Time, •• Mind)

This effect, developed by the ill-fated Zak Trainer (see below), allowed Zak to scan another person's mind and re-experience past events connected to the subject's memories. Zak shared the same sensations the subject had while experiencing the past events. In addition, he knew the subject's conscious thoughts at the time of the event. Zak found this rote to be a valuable way to get to know the mages that came to him for instruction; anyone who wished to learn from him had to submit to this technique or look elsewhere for tutelage. At the time there was no better person to whom one could go for information about the Sphere of Time.

The effect was different from simple mind probing, which only reveals what the subject remembers about incidents. Zak actually re-envisioned the actual experience from the perspective of the subject, but without the subject's prejudices. Severe emotions and physical injuries suffered by the subject during the past event did cause Zak to have painful reactions during his vision. One incident was so violent that Zak is said to have broken the connection after numerous wounds appeared on his flesh. This incident occurred when Zak scanned the past of Clarissa Donley, who was a student of his for a brief time. Neither Zak nor Clarissa ever revealed what caused the physical damage.

[The more successes achieved on the effect roll, the more total viewing time the mage receives. If the mage is probing a subject suffering from amnesia, the effect requires many more successes and the relived experience may be very sketchy.]

Tune in, Turn On, Drop Out (•••• Time, ••• Life)

By freezing time with respect to parts of her Life Pattern, the mage Xanadu placed herself in a death-like trance to fool witnesses after a major battle with a number of Superiors. She used her ability in time determinism to stop most of her major

body functions. Xanadu suspected the fake death would have to last for several hours, and thus left some life functions unfrozen to give a more complete illusion of death. For example, her muscles spasmed with the onset of rigor mortis.

[For every hour the mage maintains the fake death state, she suffers one Health Level of damage as her body proteins deteriorate. She may heal this damage using normal Pattern Magick healing once she awakens. Because her brain functions are shut down, the mage is oblivious to her surroundings while in the fake death state. Successes on the magickal effect roll extend the maximum length of time the mage can remain in the fake death state.]

Zen and the Art of Panhandling (••••• Time, •• Forces, ••• Prime)

This effect is the closest thing a non-Oracle has ever achieved to going backward through time. It involves bringing the future back to the present. It was developed by the very knowledgeable Cultist Zak Trainer. After several months of work, Zak was able to contact himself in the future (he didn't know how far in the future) and transfer a quantity of Quintessence to his current self in the present. The problem he did not foresee is that he would someday become that future version of himself and be drained of a like amount of Quintessence. The Technocracy did not miss such a detail, and its minions were poised to strike at Zak at his very moment of weakness. He was slain.

[One point of Quintessence may be "borrowed" for each success. The Storyteller must remember to inform the player that an equivalent amount of Quintessence is lost in the middle of some future story.]

Chapter Eight: Systems

You do not sing only into silence. You also sing into space. You must sing exactly for the space you have been given. You must fill it so that no one can fail to hear you, and keep your tone so clear and free of echo that all they can hear is exactly what your body produces.

— Orson Scott Card, *Songmaster*

This chapter discusses the different ways a character can change, for better or worse, during the course of the chronicle. It includes systems covering everything from the accumulation of experience to the accumulation of wounds.

One of the most exciting things about playing characters is seeing them change over time. Watching a character develop and grow is like watching a child grow up before your eyes. In Mage, however, development does not always mean improvement. The path to Ascension is perilous, and many mages lose their minds and souls in pursuit of it.

Character Development

Now, when you pick a papaw, or a prickly pear,
And you prick a raw paw, well next time beware.
Don't pick the prickly pear by the paw,
when you pick a pear try to use the claw,
But you don't need to use the claw,
when you pick a pear of the big papaw.
Have I given you a clue?

— The Bare Necessities (from Disney's *The Jungle Book*)

We humans are learning machines, and we learn constantly—almost despite ourselves. By acquiring not only facts and figures but new ideas and perspectives, we can make ourselves into what we want to be. Mages are quintessential proponents of change, and they continually evolve in their quest for Ascension.

Trait	Cost
New Ability	3
New Sphere	10
Willpower	current rating
Knowledges	current rating
Talents and Skills	current rating x 2
Attributes	current rating x 4
Tradition Specialty Sphere	current rating x 6
Sphere	current rating x 7
Spheres (for Hollow Ones)	current rating x 8
Arete	current rating x 8

Experience Points

There are times when all the world's asleep
The questions run too deep
For such a simple man
Won't you please, please tell me what we've learned
I know it sounds absurd
But please tell me who I am.
— Supertramp, "The Logical Song"

During a story, characters learn many things. Much of what they learn is not the type of thing that can be recorded on their character sheets, but is rather something the players simply keep in mind. They may have learned never to leave a car door unlocked or never to walk into a dark alley with a light behind them. Sometimes, however, what they learn can and should be quantified and recorded.

At the end of each story, the Storyteller awards experience points to the characters, normally giving the same amount to each one. The players then simply record how many experience points they gained. Experience points can be used to increase Traits.

Awarding Experience Points

Assigning experience points requires a careful balance between rewarding the players and maintaining game balance. If you follow the guidelines below, you probably won't get into too much trouble, but feel free to experiment as you see fit.

End of Each Chapter

Give each character one to five experience points at the end of each chapter (game session). One point is given whether or not the group succeeds or fails, as a function of simply being there (remember, we learn despite ourselves sometimes).

• **One point — Automatic**: A character always gets one point after each game session.

• **One point — Learning Curve**: The character learned something from his experiences during the chapter. Ask the player to describe what his character learned before you award the point.

• **One point — Acting**: The player roleplayed well — not only entertainingly but appropriately. Award for exceptional roleplaying only; your standards should get increasingly higher. In most cases, only award this point to the person who did the best roleplaying in the troupe.

• **One point — Internal Consistency**: The player acted out her character's Nature and Demeanor very well, and had magickal goals that complemented her Essence. While some players may find it tough to fulfill all three goals convincingly, those who properly present both their facade and true self deserve a reward, as do those who represent their Essence appropriately and consistently.

• **One point — Heroism**: When a character puts herself at risk for others, such as when she suffers multiple aggravated wounds fighting a Nephandus long enough for the rest of the mages to escape, give her an experience point. Don't let characters take advantage of this, however. There is a fine line between heroism and stupidity.

End of Each Story

At the end of each story, the Storyteller can assign each player from one to three additional experience points in addition to the points earned for completing the final chapter.

• **One point — Success**: The group succeeded in its mission or goal. Perhaps it was not a complete success, but at least a marginal victory was achieved.

• **One point — Danger**: The character experienced great danger during the story and survived.

• **One point — Wisdom**: The player (and thus the character) exhibited great wits or resourcefulness and came up with an idea that enabled the group to succeed.

If the Storyteller wants to award even more points and let the characters develop more quickly, simply invent new award categories. These can even vary from story to story, and can be based on the specific circumstances of a story.

Spending Experience Points

The cost for raising Traits varies widely; see the chart for specifics. The cost is almost always based on the present rating times a certain number. Thus, if the character has an Alertness rating of two and the player wants to raise it to three, it costs four experience points to do so. If the character does not have the Trait at all, the cost is listed as a "new" Ability or Sphere. A Trait rating can only be raised by one per story — never more.

Roleplay It

Storytellers should not let a player spend experience points to raise any Trait she wishes — advancement is a bit more involved than that. The increased Trait should relate to something the character had a chance to discover during the story: either the character achieved great success through use of the Trait, or made a big mistake from which she can learn. In the case of Willpower, something must have occurred that would have actually increased the character's self-confidence. It is particularly important to limit mages' advancement in

Spheres and Arete. These Traits determine how quickly a mage grows in power and can unbalance the game if not handled well, so a story-based reason for any increases should exist.

Keep in mind, however, that mages are often brilliant with regard to mundane learning. Any mage who sets her mind to it can learn even the most obscure lore more quickly and with less effort than the average human. Those mages who accept mundane society as their purview exceed even prodigies of the day in sheer speed and flexibility of thought.

Backgrounds

The Advantages listed on the character sheet as Backgrounds are handled differently from other Traits. Backgrounds may never change through the use of experience points. Instead, Background changes occur as a normal course of events during the chronicle. For example, a character's Avatar rating may decrease if the Technomancers drain her magick, or it might increase as a result of a vision quest. Eventually, the Storyteller will note the changes, and characters' Traits will increase (or decrease) as appropriate. A player may wish to ask the Storyteller if one of her Background Traits should be changed, but this should not be done too often.

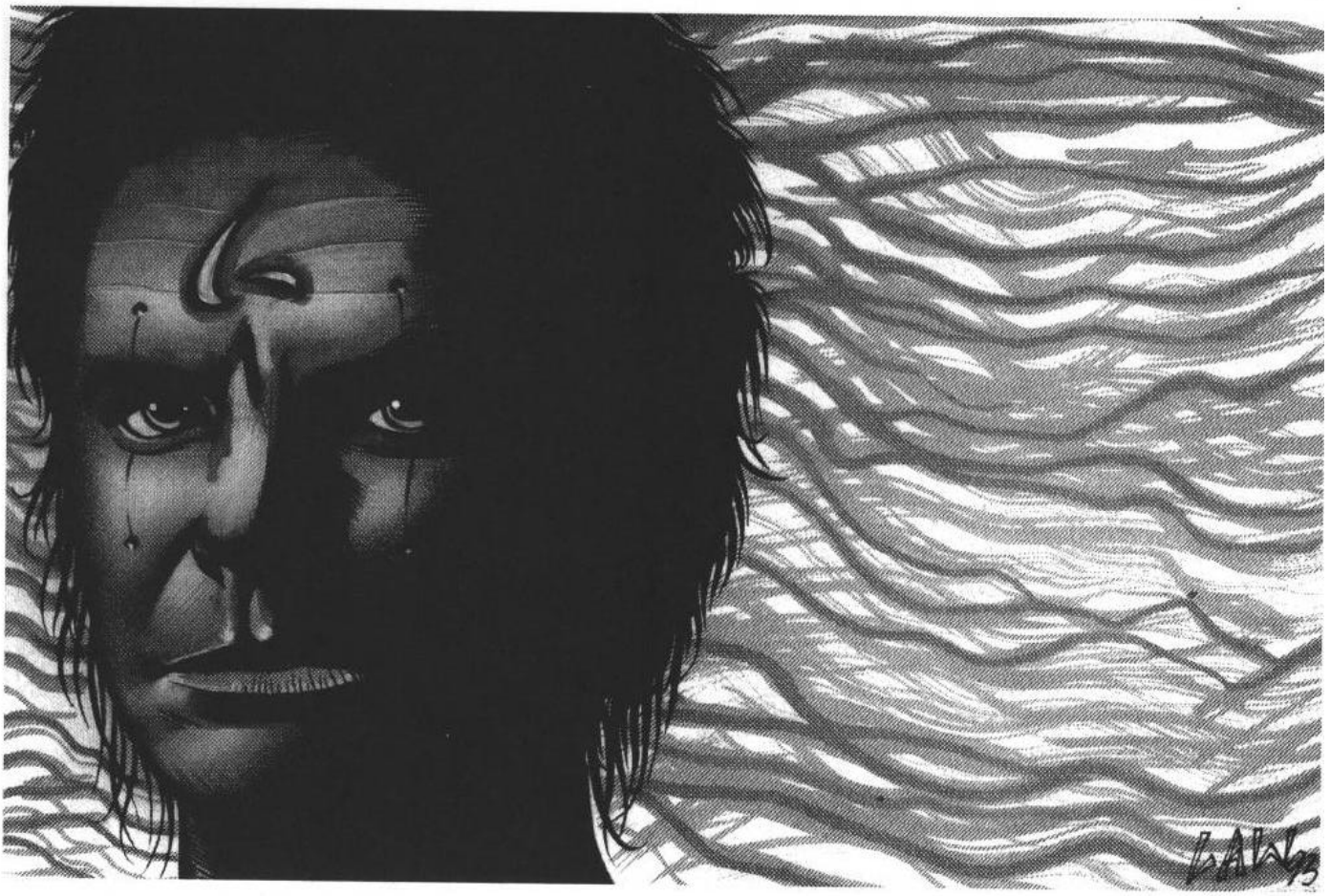
The Storyteller may design a list of things characters must accomplish in order to increase each Background, and the players may or may not be shown this list. To gain a higher Arcane rating, for example, a mage may have to erase certain records of himself. On the other hand, a mage who needs a certain Arcane rating in order to ensure survival may be required to face some moral decisions during a story. Perhaps the only way to increase the rating is to eliminate people close to him.

For the most part, Background-raising decisions take place over the course of a story. Backgrounds generally increase one dot at a time, but major victories and upsets in the story can lead to the gain or loss of more than one Background dot at a time.

Willpower

Characters can buy permanent Willpower with experience points, but sometimes characters may have a specific chance to raise Willpower. The opportunity to gain Willpower makes a great motivation for stories, especially the more bizarre ones.

Characters can lose permanent Willpower as well. This occurs whenever a player botches a Willpower roll. Also, temporary Willpower points (the boxes) are gained, lost and deliberately spent with great frequency over the course of the chronicle.



Personality Development

But I think it is high time you all start looking at yourselves, and judging the lie that you live in.

— Charles Manson, at the Tate-LaBianca trial

A character's personality can change over the course of the chronicle, but for the most part the changes occur through roleplaying and not simply by changing the character sheet. For instance, character motivations change with the passing of time. Deciding when and how a character's motivations change can add great depth to roleplaying. However, when a character's Demeanor or true Nature changes, it should be recorded on the character sheet as well. No aspect of personality can change through the use of experience points.

A mage's Essence cannot change except through the intervention of the most powerful and knowledgeable Oracles.

Demeanor

Though the Demeanor listed on the character sheet is simply the way the character most commonly presents herself, it is not an absolute standard of behavior. Changing the Demeanor of a character may help the player focus on the change in personality. A player may change his character's Demeanor at any point in the game, but should either tell the Storyteller he has done so or make it evident through his roleplaying.

Sometimes the Storyteller might suggest the change after watching the way the character is played, simply as a way of alerting the player that she has noticed the change in personality. Keep in mind that Demeanor is only a tool the player uses to focus and direct roleplaying. If a change in Demeanor is called for or seems appropriate, the player should feel free to go right ahead and change it.

Nature

A player may also change her character's Nature, but rules for this are somewhat more strict than those for changing Demeanor. A character's Nature is central to who and what he is — it is the locus of his being. A change in Nature is akin to a change in personality — everything is different after it occurs. It should not be decided on the spur of the moment, but must be thoroughly considered. The Storyteller should force a player to roleplay the change over a number of game sessions; a story might even be created around the tumultuous transformation. Conversely, sometimes it may make sense for the change in personality to occur suddenly, as a reaction to what has happened to or around the character.

Study Points

I want everything to be explained to me or nothing...The absurd springs from this confrontation between the human call and the unreasonable silence of the world.

— Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

Mages can gain valuable knowledge from teachers and tomes. They can increase the value of certain Traits though applied study, using the guidance of tutors or information in occult libraries. Mages spend at least as much time at home studying as they do traveling and exploring — sometimes months are spent in devout search for new understanding and wisdom.

Time between stories is typically filled with one kind of study or another, recorded in terms of months. One month is considered to be enough time to study a discrete amount of material. Typically, however, many months are spent studying one subject.

Study time can be pretty dull, so it is rarely played out. If the study is done under a tutor, however, it can involve assisting in experiments, as well as such mundane chores as taking out the garbage (or mopping the floor after making a mess). This latter form of menial repayment is ideal for characters who have become overly arrogant in their power.

Spending Study Points

Study points can only be used to raise Spheres, Knowledges and Skills. Moreover, study points cannot be used on their own to raise Traits, but must be used in conjunction with experience points. They can be used, in effect, to double the value of experience points, but have no value on their own. A mage may use study points to pay no more than half the cost of the increase.

For example, if a player wanted to raise her Virtual Adept's Correspondence rating from two to three (an experience point cost of 10), she could spend a maximum of five study points and a minimum of five experience points. All points are lost after being spent.

Tutors

If a character studies with a tutor, the base number of study points gained in a month is determined by the relative Trait ratings of the student and tutor (see the chart below). The tutor must be at least one level above the student, and the more he knows the more the student will learn.

Tutor and Student Relative Scores	Study Points
One higher	2
Two higher	4
Three higher	6
Four higher	8
Five higher	10
Modifiers	
Tutor is of the same Tradition as the student: + 0	
Tutor is of a different Tradition from the student: -3	

If a mage studies from a tome, the study points gained are determined by the study value of the tome. This is based on the erudition of its author, and is rated from one to five.

Study can continue for several months. For each consecutive month spent studying from the same source, however, the study point total decreases by one.

Learning from a Tutor

What is a good man but a bad man's teacher?
What is a bad man but a good man's job?
If you don't understand this, you will get lost,
However intelligent you are.
It is the great secret.

— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

It is not always easy to find a tutor, as the majority of knowledgeable mages are preoccupied with their own affairs. Many months may be wasted for want of a tutor. Moreover, it can be difficult meeting the price that tutors demand for their time and attention, whether it be Quintessence or "a small favor." Such a favor can range from simple delivery of a message to a dangerous expedition to recover a stolen Talisman.

However, if a truly talented tutor is found, many students can profit at the same time. A tutor can simultaneously instruct a number of students equal to his Expression rating. You should make some effort to see that players spend these study points in similar ways, as it is assumed that the tutor is instructing them in the same material (although maybe on different levels). Each student must individually determine the study points gained.

One reason mages agree to serve as tutors is that they also gain study points from the act of teaching — though rarely as many as the student. The tutor makes a Wits roll (difficulty of the number of students + 5). Each success gives the tutor one study point in the subject being studied.

Using Tomes

Once upon a midnight dreary, as I pondered weak and weary
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore...

— Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven"

Tomes are books in which mages record wisdom about the Spheres of magick. They are filled with discussions, experiment notes, arcane secrets, and perhaps more questions than they answer. They also often contain new rotes to help students studying the book. They are essentially scholarly works of various branches of knowledge. Tomes are rated from one to five and are useful as sources for a number of months equal to their rating.

Interruptions

If a student's studies are interrupted, study points may be lost. A Wits + Research roll must be made for each day of study that is interrupted (difficulty equal to the number of days lost). Failure indicates that one study point is lost, and a botch

indicates that all study points are lost. Tutors who are interrupted may have to make similar rolls, but difficulties are generally much lower.

Experimentation

If a mage has access to a properly equipped magickal laboratory in a Chantry where the laws of reality are more forgiving than on earth, study points can be gained without the assistance of a tutor or a tome. Such experimentation is risky, but common among older mages who have difficulty finding anyone who is more knowledgeable than they are in their chosen Sphere.

Quintessence

How can you be two places at once, when you're not anywhere at all?

— Firesign Theatre

A mage's Quintessence fluctuates more than any other Trait. This primal energy can be expended to make magick easier to cast, and Quintessence is required for the creation of most major magickal effects. It cannot be gained through experience, but must be gathered from the Nodes of the Tapestry.

Quintessence is the means by which mages change reality. Quintessence travels along ley lines and tends to gather at the knots that tie reality together — Nodes. Quintessence is the fundamental building block of reality. Mages battle over Quintessence because it is the tool with which reality is forged.

The specifics of gaining or regaining Quintessence are covered in large part in the discussion of the Prime Sphere (see Chapter Seven). However, there are a number of specifics hereafter that show how, and why, Quintessence is a major source of conflict among mages. Quintessence is a precious, and in its raw form, finite, commodity.

Tass

Quintessence sometimes becomes trapped in physical objects, either because a mage stores it there or because of natural mystical processes. It is very common for Quintessence to collect at Nodes and become embodied in the Patterns of physical objects. Mages refer to physical objects that store free Quintessence as "Tass." Tass may take almost any form: water from a sacred spring, crystals dug from a mystic cave, leaves from an ancient tree, mushrooms grown over a mage's grave. It can also accumulate inside the bodies of mystic and supernatural creatures — werewolf tails, demon horns, vampire blood and the like.

At one time collections of Tass were more common, but they have slowly disappeared from the world. In the modern age of reason, Tass can be very difficult to locate and dangerous to seize. Expeditions to the few remaining sites of Tass are common pursuits of young mages.

Mages who have achieved at least Rank One in Prime can use Tass points in the same ways as Quintessence is used. All

of the Tass must be used in a single turn; the object is completely "burned up" when it is used. Tass can power huge magickal effects, enchant Talismans and recharge a character's Quintessence. The advantage of Tass is that it allows a mage to have huge quantities of Quintessence on hand; the drawback is that it can be easily stolen.

Tass is an excellent reward for players, and can be the motivation for innumerable stories. Raids on werewolf caerns are the stuff of legend among some Traditions, and mages who steal Tass from Technomancers gain great prestige in addition to the power of the Tass. Recovery of Tass is perhaps the most common and easiest **Mage** story to tell.

Finally, the word "Tass" has also become a common term among modern mages to describe a general quantity of free Quintessence. One Tass corresponds to one point of Quintessence.

Apprenticeship

Come with me
Like a little child
Like another gun
Like homeless, restless, known to none, like
Way beyond the line.
— The Sisters of Mercy, "1959"

The process of becoming a mage is never easy. Successfully mastering the Spheres requires great determination, stamina and ambition. It is a dangerous undertaking, and survival is far from certain.

A mage is set on the path of enlightenment by a Mentor. After years of observation and contemplation, the Mentor decides how to Awaken the Sleeper's Avatar — whether through direct intervention on the mage's part or through subtle manipulation.

An apprentice rarely remains with his first Mentor forever, even though he may have been associated with the mage for years. Many tutors are required to give the developing mage the perspective and breadth he needs. Without diversity, the apprentice would only become an imitation of the master, and lose his own developing identity.

Any human can potentially become a mage. All Sleepers have at least a small Avatar within them, but few have the will, sense of self, or intelligence to be Awakened. Strong-willed or brilliant Sleepers often work coincidental magick unknowingly, making things happen for their own benefit.

A mage who sees a worthy Sleeper and desires to recruit her typically approaches her obliquely at first, learning more about her character, discipline and disposition. The mage may even begin quietly training the subject through exercises like meditation before revealing his true nature.

Once a recruit has become aware of the existence of magick, she is called an initiate. Each Tradition has a different

set of procedures and policies for training initiates. The Dreamspeakers, for instance, often approach their apprentices through dreams, and may even train them in their sleep. Certain mages of this Tradition have never met their Mentors in person.

Though there are no mandatory requirements for training an apprentice, most Chantries have rules concerning apprenticeships written into their covenants. Most covenants insist that a mage be a Master of one Sphere and an Adept of two others before taking the title of Mentor (one who trains an apprentice and watches over her in the years to come). Mentors may only train apprentices through methods appropriate to their own Traditions. It is rumored that some mages who have left behind the trappings of their Traditions have taken to training Orphans — Sleepers who have a penchant and skill for magick without the need for the props of the Traditions.

Finally, there is the actual initiation, in which the Awakening is ritualized. Again, the initiation is different for each Tradition, and sometimes varies from Chantry to Chantry. For the Euthanatos, initiation is typically a near-death experience, while for the Cult of Ecstasy it is a mind-altering spirit journey of excess and delight. If the apprentice survives, she is considered a full mage, and is now called a Disciple.

Mages seek out apprentices for a variety of reasons. Usually they want to recruit them before the Technomancers or other enemies can. Additionally, a mage can gain study points (as described above) during an apprentice's first year of study. Storytellers can let the Mentor gain study points beyond the first year, but it should become harder.

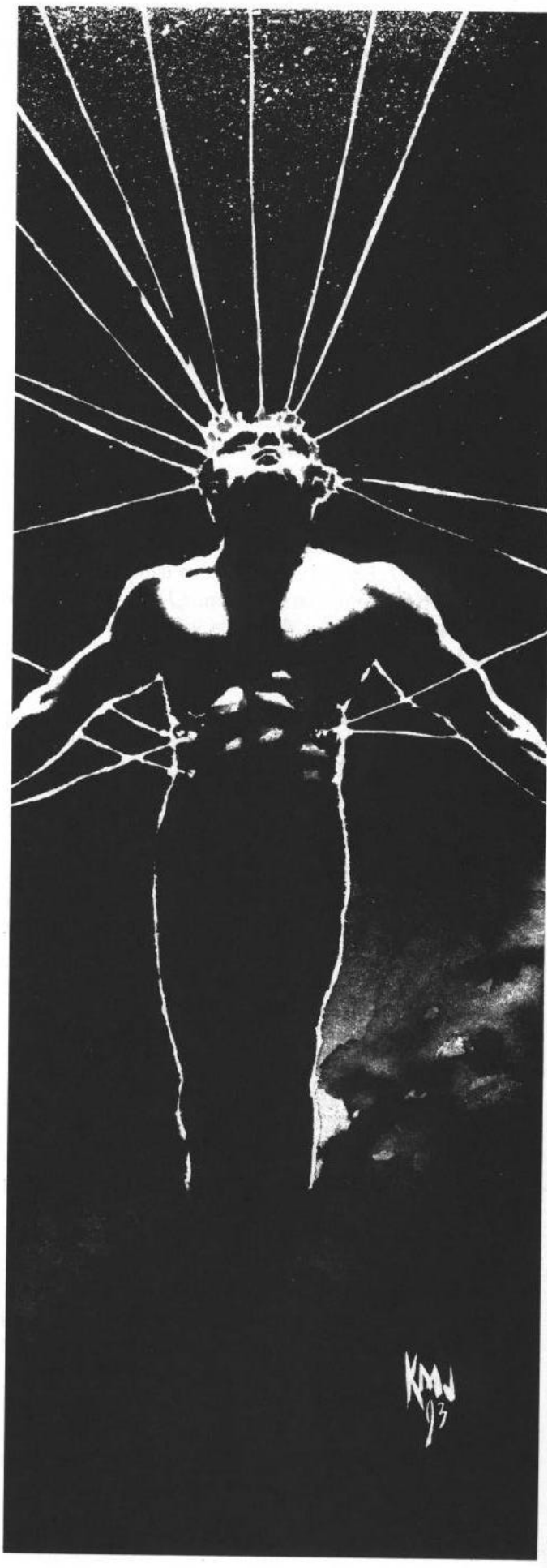
Ascension

Spoken like a true messiah! Simple, direct, quotable, and it doesn't even answer the question unless somebody takes the time to think carefully about it.

— Richard Bach, *Illusions*

Once an apprentice becomes a mage, the quest for Ascension begins in earnest. The path to Ascension is reflected by the Arete Trait. Arete is the measure of a character's enlightenment and harmony with her inner Avatar. The character must continually strive to understand the cosmos and her place in the crusade for evolution. Ascension can only be gained inside the context of a story, though gaining Arete still requires experience points. Advancement toward Ascension is more a matter of Storyteller judgment and player intuition than strict rules and moral platitudes.

. Mystical enlightenment is so personal a venture that intuition alone can guide the mage. For purposes of game mechanics, each rise in Arete must be integrated with storytelling and involve a great deal of character development. Ascension is initiated by the mage's Avatar via direct communication — one of the few times the Avatar emerges as a



separate entity in the character's life. The forms commonly assumed by Avatars of different Essences are detailed in Chapter Six.

A character's Avatar manifests when the character has gathered enough experience to increase his Arete and the player has expressed a desire to do so. During a significant moment (the character escapes a Paradox Realm, discovers a Level Five tome, regains Quintessence, experiences Quiet, etc.), the Avatar contacts the character and begins (via dreams and other mystical means) to guide him toward Ascension.

This sudden revelation is called an Epiphany and is spoken of with reverence by all mages. The actions required to gain Arete (and enlightenment) usually correspond to the character's Essence type. The Storyteller has total control over when and how the Epiphany is reached. Sometimes it will occur to more than one mage at a time, and can even be designed into a story ahead of time.

Epiphanies can be overpowering, emotionally incapacitating a character for hours or even days. Epiphanies should always be formative and pivotal events in a chronicle. Visions often occur, and aspects of the self (such as Demeanor) might change. No one other than the mage and Masters of the Spirit Sphere can see or interact with an Avatar.

The Seeking

Ride Captain Ride upon your mystery ship,
On your way to a world that others might have missed.
— Blues Image, "Ride Captain Ride"

Upon receiving an Epiphany, the mage must embark on what is called Seeking. If the Seeking succeeds, the mage will gain a new dot in Arete. Only at the conclusion of the Seeking need experience points be spent.

True and ultimate personal Ascension is only achieved by fulfilling "karmic destiny." This is a quest for an esoteric goal, and transcends quantified game scores. The object of the quest is expressed by the Avatar during the Epiphany, and the mage is led (or perhaps misled) over the entire Seeking by the Avatar. Such prolonged contact with oneself can be most frustrating and exhausting.

During the Seeking, the mage may come face to face with his own mortal flaws (sometimes expressed in personified form), which then need to be overcome. In any event, he must undergo a grueling sequence of internal and external transformation.

Seeking can take hours, days, months or even years, and the higher the Arete rating to be attained, the more dangerous the journey. Some mages must spend decades in the process. The mage is usually led by his Avatar (often by a circuitous route) to a location or place where an action or series of actions must be taken. It is rare for the Avatar to express exactly what needs to be accomplished; the character must figure it out. Sometimes the Seeking involves a return to some place from the character's past where wrongs must be righted. Sometimes it involves a journey into the Umbra where the mage must battle his own Avatar. Sometimes it is a traditional quest for wisdom, where mountains must be scaled and oracles consulted.

Following are descriptions of the Seeking as interpreted by each Essence:

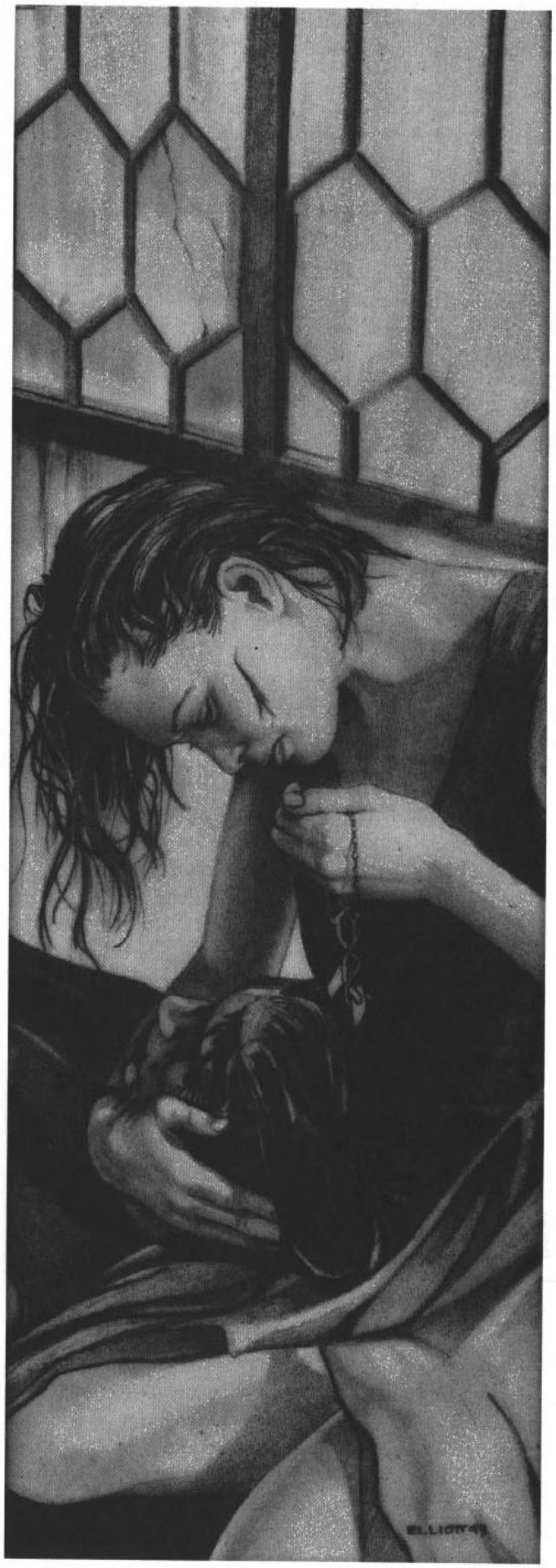
- **Dynamic** — The Seeking of a Dynamic mage typically involves enforcing change upon a person or society.
- **Pattern** — The Seeking typically involves protecting and maintaining the status quo, or reinforcing the Patterns that connect and bind all things, including the self to the world.
- **Primordial** — Most often, this Seeking involves a return to the character's past or inner self. The character must face and defeat his own inner demons.
- **Questing** — Seeking for those of Questing Essence involves the headlong pursuit of a vision, or an exploration of the character's mind. This Seeking often requires extensive travel in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

As an example, a Seeking for a mage with a Pattern Essence could involve him traveling to a Realm in the Near Umbra where Marauders have taken over. The character will have to reestablish the area's religious hierarchy, which was overthrown by the Marauders. He must then deal with the upheaval caused by the Marauders and his own counterrevolution. If he succeeds he will increase his Arete and gain greater understanding of the universe's delicate balance. If he fails, he may well destroy an entire Realm.

Storytelling in the Near Umbra

Mages frequently journey to the Near Umbra. The spirit world resembles the "real world" in many respects, but there are some important differences. The Near Umbra is even more mutable than the physical world, often changing form to match its travelers' expectations. The spirit world is a vibrant place permeated with the essence of life. It bears a close resemblance to the mundane world because spirits often take the form of their material counterparts. However, things look and seem more alive and colorful. Everything, from the color of the sky to the smell of a flower, is more vivid.

The geography of the Near Umbra usually resembles that of the real world. General landmarks remain relatively constant. However, such features as buildings, trees and cars appear as vague blurs in the spirit world unless their spirits have been Awakened. This Awakening generally occurs when the object is the subject of extreme emotions. Objects whose spirits



have not been Awakened are all but invisible and may be replaced by other, stronger spiritual images. For example, a house in the real world might appear as an Indian burial ground in the Near Umbra.

Travel and Interaction

Movement through the Near Umbra is identical to movement in the material world. Characters walk, run, skip, jump or ride just as they normally would. Except for the rules concerning magick use in the Near Umbra (see Chapter Seven), game play is handled the same way in the Near Umbra as in physical reality. If an object has a form in the spirit world, it can be lifted, thrown or broken.

Storytellers should make the Near Umbra whatever they want and need it to be. Treat it as a dreamscape in which anything and everything is possible; an environment in which Storytellers can create any style and shape of story.

Talismans

A Talisman is a physical item instilled with magickal powers. Instilling magick into an item is a lengthy process informally referred to as enchantment. The act of enchantment places Quintessence into an item's Pattern, and also creates a flow of Quintessence through the item, similar to what occurs in the Patterns of living creatures. When the stored Quintessence is depleted, the item runs out of fuel for its magickal effects. However, only when the flow of Quintessence through the Talisman is disrupted does it become a mundane item.

A Talisman must be tied to specific effects, whether vulgar or coincidental. Unlike the mage herself, who can enact any effect given a broad base of knowledge, Talismans are programmed with particular powers — rather than having a general Forces 2 power, for instance, a Talisman would have a specific Forces 2 effect instilled, such as the ability to reverse flows of electricity.

The advantage of Talismans is that they allow mages to utilize knowledge and powers that they may not possess internally but can employ with the help of the Talisman. Also, they are advantageous because mages can roll more dice than they have Arete, up to a maximum of 10. This means that a mage who is backed into a corner can become very dangerous if he has a potent Talisman.

Talismans are rated in power on a scale from one to five. Some legendary devices with higher ratings, called Artifacts, are known to exist, but such Talismans are extremely rare. Specific examples of Talismans are provided in the Appendix.

The rating of a Talisman indicates three limitations on its powers. No Talisman may contain more powers than its rating; those powers must each have Sphere ranks lower than or equal to that rating; and the maximum amount of Quintessence that the Talisman may contain equals its rating times ten. For Talismans gained with the Talisman Background during character creation, assume that such Talismans contain one power of each rating up to the rating of the item. For instance, a Level

Three Talisman would have one power each from the first, second and third levels of its Sphere.

Using Talismans

Talisman powers may be used by the Awakened. The user must make physical contact with the Talisman and spend one turn willing the power to activate. An accompanying command phrase or triggering gesture might also be required, depending on what the creator of the Talisman desired.

The rules for Talisman-created magickal effects are similar to those used for mages. Any Paradox gained through the use of a Talisman is channeled to the user of the item (although rumors abound of Marauder Talismans that store their own Paradox, unleashing it on those unfortunate enough to use the item without special knowledge).

Each use of a Talisman requires the expenditure of one point of the Quintessence stored in the item. A mage always has the option to use a point of her own Quintessence in place of the one that must otherwise come from the Talisman. When all the Quintessence inside an item is expended, the Talisman can no longer produce powers, though it is still considered enchanted. Mages who have achieved Rank Three or higher in Prime can channel more free Quintessence into the item, "recharging" its mystic batteries. Only physical destruction or a supernatural assault equivalent to a Prime 4 magickal effect can actually disenchant a Talisman by permanently disrupting its flow of Quintessence.

Creating Talismans

Talismans can only be created within the confines of a Chantry's Horizon Realm. A high degree of magickal aptitude and knowledge is also required, and the assistance of a Master is recommended.

Foci

Foci are the items used by Tradition mages to facilitate the use of magick. All Traditions require the use of certain foci and do not even teach their magick without incorporating the items. The benefit is tremendous — what used to take a mage a decade to learn can now be learned in much less time because the magick inherent in a focus allows a mage to tap magick otherwise beyond her.

As a mage becomes increasingly skilled, he is able to dispense with the use of certain foci. Until that time, however, a focus is necessary if the mage is to use the Sphere to which the focus is connected. For example, an Akashic Brother must be purified (i.e. have just cleansed his body) in order to use Spirit magick.

Foci may be dispensed with at the rate of one Sphere per point of Arete over 1. At Arete 1 a mage is Awakened and

gains the ability to tap foci. At Arete 2, the mage may choose one Sphere that she may use without the benefit of a focus. The aforementioned Akashic Brother might suddenly realize how he can use the Spirit Sphere without first having to purify his body.

A physical focus may still be necessary for the mage, though, if more than one Sphere is tied to it. For example, a member of the Sons of Ether needs an abacus in order to perform Correspondence or Entropy magick. At Arete 2, the Son may discard the abacus for the purposes of working with the Entropy Sphere, but he still needs it for Correspondence. Later, when the Son gains another point of Arete, he may dispense with the abacus for Correspondence magick as well. At that point, the mage need no longer carry around an abacus when he thinks he'll need to tap one of those Spheres.

Of Sound Mind and Body

Though mages are vastly more powerful than their Sleeper brethren, they are far from invulnerable. They can fall victim to unhealthy states, whether of mystical or physical origin. This section discusses those internal pitfalls, from psychoses to bullet wounds.

Paradox

I fought the law, and the law won.

— The Bobby Fuller Four, "I Fought the Law"

Whenever a mage produces a magickal effect, he creates a situation that cannot exist within reality (note that this is even true of static magick, though its appearance is innocuous). When a mage ruptures reality, he becomes infused with the energies of Paradox. If a mage's magick attempt fails, the failure indicates that the force of reality, or perhaps Paradox spirits themselves, emerge to diffuse the attempt. This is important: the effect doesn't just fail — rather, it is stopped by reality.

A mage's accumulated Paradox energy tends to coalesce within the etheric Pattern of the mage's body in the same manner that the mage stores Quintessence. Accumulated Paradox is indicated on the **Mage** character sheet, specifically on the Quintessence/Paradox circular track. In order for a character to rid himself of Paradox energy, the player may either "spend" the points on Paradox Flaws, or (in the case of highly charged characters) must suffer a Paradox Backlash.

As a character accumulates Paradox energy, the player can choose to reduce the Paradox Pool by exchanging points for Paradox Flaws. Sample effects are detailed below. Each Flaw has a Paradox point "cost" associated with it, denoting

how many Paradox points the character loses when that Flaw is chosen.

In game terms, the forces of Paradox are beyond the control of the mage character, but for story purposes, the player is allowed to determine how the forces of Paradox affect her character. Naturally, the Storyteller is free to assign Flaws to a character, especially if a certain Flaw will later become crucial to a story's plot, or if a player seems to be abusing her power of selection.

Paradox Backlashes are strictly in the purview of the Storyteller. Backlashes are violent, devastating effects caused by Paradox energy exploding out of the character's Pattern. The effects of Backlashes range from physical and mental trauma to attracting the more insidious forms of Paradox.

Mages of the Traditions have found no way to control Paradox, and only a few means of working around it. Despite this, most mages believe that even Paradox can be understood and controlled. In particular, the Marauders seem to be immune to its effects.

Paradox Flaws

It is your flesh we want to experience.
— Pinhead in *Hellbound*

Player can choose to select new Flaws at any time. While players may at first have no motivation to select Flaws, players will quickly realize that it is far better to select Paradox Flaws than to wait for the Storyteller to roll for a Backlash. Besides, when properly played, Flaws can be exciting and humorous story elements.

Players can select Flaws from the numerous examples below, or better yet, create completely new Flaws. The examples below are organized according to how many points of Paradox the character loses when he adopts the Flaw. The Storyteller can use the examples below as guidelines when assigning a Paradox point "cost" to new Flaws.

The exact die roll or Trait penalties a chosen Flaw causes are determined by the Storyteller (experienced groups may allow players to decide their own penalties). The duration of an effect is also subjective and is decided by the Storyteller. The natural flow of Quintessence into a character's Pattern will slowly correct most damage to the Pattern caused by Paradox; however, some Flaws scar the character's Pattern and are permanent.

The effects of Paradox cause mages to tread with some degree of fear through the Realms of magick, and the Flaws of Paradox energy must stay fresh and new to continue to be exciting elements of the story. For this reason, storytelling groups are strongly encouraged to create their own Paradox Flaws to supplement those provided below. Storytellers may even reward players with extra experience at the end of a game session for creating especially imaginative or entertaining Flaws.

Often, elements in a story spontaneously create new ideas for Flaws, depending on what the characters have done to gain the Paradox energy. For example, in the process of using Life magick to grow hair and disguise himself as a heavily bearded man, a mage character acquires a couple of Paradox points. The player elects to spend the accumulated points on a Paradox Flaw associated with the magick that was used. The player decides that from now on, all hair on the character's body will grow shorter each day until eventually the character is completely bald, at which point the Flaw will disappear and the character will again begin to grow hair normally.

Most Paradox Flaws at least temporarily discomfort or handicap the character, but occasionally the player can select Flaws that occur in the environment around the mage and do not necessarily affect the mage personally.

Once a mage has accumulated large amounts of Paradox, he finds it very difficult to bleed it off in discrete amounts. Once the lid is off, Paradox tends to stream out of the mage. Therefore, whenever Paradox Flaws are purchased, a player must spend at least half of her character's current Paradox (round up). For example, if the mage has five points of Paradox, the minimum Flaw that may be purchased is a three-point Flaw (five divided by two and rounded up is three). Of course, a four- or five-point Flaw may be selected as well. If the mage has a Paradox rating greater than eight, five-point Flaws are the only option.

One-Point Flaws

A minor Paradox effect occurs near the character. Most one-point Flaws are extremely short-lived. The majority of Paradox Flaws are one-point effects that happen as the mage performs the magick that caused her to acquire the Paradox point. Minor Paradox Flaws include: watches running in reverse; milk curdling; a fire burning without its fuel being consumed; plastic rusting; flowers closing back into buds; glass disintegrating into sand; shadows falling toward a light source; the character sneezing so forcefully he suffers a Health Level of damage and makes a sound like thunder; a reversal of the sense of taste; making sweets sour and normally tasty foods vile; etc.

Two-Point Flaws

Two-point Flaws are more dramatic and can last for hours. Examples include: energy briefly flowing backward (cars suddenly thrown in reverse, electrical currents reverse, fire burns cold, etc.); scars reopening into wounds; mirror images acting differently from the objects they reflect; right-handed people becoming left-handed; casual acquaintances forgetting each other completely; nearby sounds echoing indefinitely; 10 minutes passing in an eyeblink; the next point of Quintessence the character gains becoming a point of Paradox instead; finger- and toenails growing extremely fast and twisting into unnatural shapes; streams running uphill; etc.

Three-Point Flaws

Three-point Flaws are much more prominent and inhibit the character significantly. They also tend to have longer durations; some last days or weeks. The player may also choose one-point Flaws and make them permanent. Three-point Flaws include: things falling upward; specific memories radically changing; the character's face wrinkling as from old age; one finger becoming flexible like a rubber hose; inversion of the character's sense of hearing — whispers are screams and shouts are barely audible; the character becoming unable to enter the Umbra; the force of friction completely disappearing in regard to anything the character contacts; nerve impulses to control one arm being delayed for a full second; nerve impulses to another arm happening one full second in time before the character would will it (trying to catch a thrown ball, the character's arm raises before the character even knows the ball is being thrown, and then drops a full second too early, so that the ball beans the character); etc.

Four-Point Flaws

Four-point Flaws become quite hazardous. They can last hours, days, or weeks depending on their severity. Examples include: the body's intestinal tract reversing direction of consumption and excretion; the character needing darkness instead of light to see; the character's body becoming a powerful magnet so that nearby metal objects nearby hurtle toward him; the character being forced to speak in inverted word order (which means for the character to say "I am Jason", the player must say "Jason am I"); the character's bones becoming as heavy as iron or as brittle as rotten wood; etc.

Five-Point Flaws

These are major Paradox Flaws. These Flaws are often more damaging than lesser Flaws but do not necessarily last longer than three- or four-point Flaws. The Storyteller must decide the exact consequences of each Flaw in terms of game statistics. The Flaws often involve a drastic and temporary or minor and permanent decrease in one or more Attributes. Players may also choose two-point Flaws and adopt them permanently. Examples of five-point Paradox Flaws include: sights coming into the right eye being seen with the left eye and vice versa; one of the character's knees or elbows only bending in the opposite direction; every piece of inanimate matter the character touches turning transparent; etc.

Paradox Backlash

In my dream I was drowning my sorrows
But my sorrows they learned to swim.
— U2, "Until the End of the World"

Whenever a vulgar magick effect results in a botch, or whenever a Storyteller feels it is appropriate, a Paradox roll is made to determine if the mage suffers from a Paradox Backlash.

To make a Paradox roll, the Storyteller should take the number of dice indicated (the number of dice rolled for the effect, or the mage's entire Paradox rating) and roll against a difficulty of six. This Dice Pool can be from one to 20 dice.

For each success the Storyteller gains on the Paradox roll, the character loses one point of Paradox energy. That's the good news.

The bad news is that the character suffers from some form of Paradox Backlash as the released Paradox energy explodes out of the character's Pattern. The Storyteller can select any of the Backlash effects below, or create new effects of her own. Generally, the more successes rolled, the more Paradox energy is expelled, and the worse the effect will be. Spirits will be more powerful and traps will be more difficult and threatening.

Damage: The forces of Paradox directly assault the character, inflicting physical or mental damage. The character suffers one Health Level of damage for each success on the Paradox roll. The character cannot soak this damage, nor can it be healed through any means other than natural processes (see *Aggravated Wounds* in Chapter Eight). This damage usually appears as wide, striated burns randomly scattered on the character's skin. These burn marks gradually fade as they heal. Paradox wounds are extremely painful and their visible marks are symbols of pride, shame or embarrassment, depending upon the character's Tradition.

Many famous mages have died in this way.

Paradox Realm: The character, and anyone else nearby, is sucked into a Paradox Realm. Paradox Realms are phenomena that imprison those caught within them into a form of infinite loop. These traps often involve the Spheres of Correspondence, Time, Spirit or Mind, but can be related to other Spheres as well. Examples of Paradox Realms include:

• **Correspondence**: The prisoners are caught in a field of warped space. The space may be the size of a room, a city block, a town or a nation. Whenever the prisoners attempt to leave the space, coincidental effects hinder them from leaving (to the point of injuring or killing them), or they simply appear on the opposite side of the space when they attempt to exit from the other side.

• **Entropy**: The prisoners seem to have entered another dimension. Everything around them is normal except for its appalling lack of disorganization. People move like robots; traffic moves in orderly streams; events occur right on time; the landscape looks like something out of *Metropolis*; there is an absolute void of creative process anywhere.

• **Mind**: The prisoner is trapped inside the virtual reality of his own imagination. He might be plagued by his own personified neuroses, which appear as other sentients inside this virtual world. This effect can be similar to Quiet (see below). Other Paradox Realms of the mind cause insanity: for example, the prisoner assumes a new split personality each day, occasionally cycling back into his true personality for a while before switching again.

• **Spirit**: The prisoners become trapped inside another Realm, usually a Paradox dimension where the laws of reality differ radically from those of physical reality. They might become trapped in a dream that endlessly repeats itself, or in a dream world based upon mindless clichés such as soap opera romance or gangster pulp. The physical bodies of the prisoners lapse into states of catatonia.

• **Time**: The prisoners are doomed to repeat the same period of time endlessly. This period might be a week, a day, an hour, or even a mere minute. The movie *Groundhog Day* is one reference source for this kind of Paradox Realm.

Storytellers are encouraged to play characters' entrapment in and escape from these Realms as complete stories. The methods of escape from Paradox Realms are many and varied, and most often involve creating a Paradox within the Realm itself. Other traps must simply run their courses before the characters are set free.

Paradox Spirits: On rare occasions, potent releases of Paradox energy will summon a Paradox spirit, or transform another being into such a spirit. Examples of Paradox spirits are given in the Appendix. The spirit created will do everything in its power to destroy the mage. Some spirits manifest and immediately attack the mage who "created" them. Others escape into the Umbra, where they weave elaborate, cunning plots to ruin the mage.

It is rumored that Marauders sometimes purposefully create paradoxes in order to summon Paradox spirits. The Marauders are said to possess methods that allow them to trap the spirits once they arrive. The spirits are then perverted into servants of the chaos mages.

Quiet

So I cry sometimes when I'm lying in bed,
to get it all out what's in my head,
then I start feeling a little peculiar.
— 4 Non-Blondes, "What's Up"

Mages are susceptible to a state of psychic regression known as Quiet. Mages are so adept at eschewing "true" reality to pursue their own unique visions that they tend to get a little carried away. Sometimes the mage's perceptions cannot realign with reality for a period of time. Such an estrangement is known as an episode of Quiet. Quiet is usually viewed by mundane humans as insanity.

Any mage with Paradox points can slip into Quiet at any time. When and how an episode of Quiet begins and ends is entirely up to the Storyteller, though Quiet usually occurs if a character builds up Paradox without buying Paradox Flaws or suffering Paradox Backlash. Sometimes entire subplots of a Chronicle will be aspects of a character's Quiet.

The symptoms of a Quiet, from an outsider's perspective, include bursts of thought, action and communication that

make no sense to sane people — interspersed with bouts of severe withdrawal verging on catatonia. From the victim's perspective, Quiet is an assault of extraneous sensory data and changes to the world around him. During the mage's fight to realign his perceptions with reality, he is perceived as catatonic by outsiders.

Naturally, beliefs being what they are in the world of **Mage** (especially a mage's beliefs), such insanity can have tangible effects. Sometimes mages may take people into their Quiets, to keep them company in the strange landscape or to help them find their way back. Sometimes an episode of Quiet is so strong that all the characters in a cabal are affected by it. Storytellers are free to create or evoke nearly anything during a episode of Quiet — it's all "illusion" anyway.

The worst part of Quiet is that the mage cannot be certain which elements are real and which are false. During the episode, the mage usually tries her best to ignore her delusions and act normally. Those who fail tend to end up in sanitariums, or at least with tarnished reputations in human society. Particularly strong elements cannot be ignored, for they are so solidly accepted by the mage that they affect her as if they are real.

Tracking Quiet

The extent and variety of a mage's Quiet is determined by her current Paradox rating. A nearby table indicates what changes might occur.

These guidelines are quite loose and open to Storyteller interpretation. Some Storytellers may choose to invest the Quiet episodes with symbols reflecting the nature of the character; others may use Quiet as a sort of "Tell-Tale Heart" motif, trying to prey on hidden guilt. Others may decide to make the elements of the Quiet completely arbitrary, to best reflect the situation at hand or promote strange roleplaying on the player's part.

Coping with Elements

We do not have the ideal world, such as we would like, where morality is easy because cognition is easy. Where one can do right with no effort because he can detect the obvious.

— Philip K. Dick, *The Man in High Castle*

All false elements introduced into a character's setting should be described convincingly, unless they are too fantastical to fool anyone. During the Quiet episode, the Storyteller, acting as the player's senses, must give false information as if it were true. Only by observing the reactions of other people, or by making a specific effort to determine the origin of something, can a mage realize the unreal nature of a Quiet element.

The mage can also "force" himself to disbelieve by spending a point of Willpower and making a Perception + Intuition roll (difficulty 7). Three successes are needed for definite answers. Any lesser amount leaves the matter ambiguous. A botched roll leaves the mage convinced that the illusory element is real (or a real element is illusory). Botches, failed rolls and ambiguous successes against false elements during a "scrutiny roll" all lend that element a degree of power (see *Hobgoblins*, below). Elements may only be scrutinized once, and the results are believed thereafter unless the mage spends one (or more) Willpower points.

Active confrontational elements arising in Quiet may also be "scrutinized" as above. These rolls, however, are more along the lines of banishment. If they fail, the target must be faced. If a mage knows she faces an illusory danger, she can attempt to work magick internally. In effect, she withdraws into a catatonic state and deals with the problem within her mind — vulgar magick may be used, and the effects will not affect the mundane world in any way.

Once a mage draws her foes into her mind in this way, she has committed to the struggle of the mindscape, which is described below.

Hobgoblins

Should the mage fail to disperse an illusory element of her Quiet, that element may actually become real. Such illusions-made-real are called hobgoblins. Hobgoblins can take virtually any form, from inanimate objects to "living" creatures. Living hobgoblins become something akin to spirits manifested in the physical world, acting with an intelligence of their own. Some hobgoblins are extremely dangerous. The Traditions generally hold their mages responsible for the actions of any hobgoblins birthed from a mage's Quiet.

Whenever a mage fails to disbelieve a Quiet's illusory element, the Storyteller can opt to have that element become a hobgoblin. The element then enters the real world and can be seen and felt by everyone, not just the mage. Hobgoblins are rare, however, and Storytellers may choose to employ them only in instances when a mage botches her disbelief roll.

Mindscape

The only way for a mage to deal with active confrontational elements (or any persisting elements the mage desires to remove) of Quiet is to enter the stage of the Quiet known as the mindscape.

To achieve a mindscape, the mage must enter a trance state. The mage must make a Wits + Enigmas roll (difficulty 4) to determine the length of his catatonia. The number of successes rolled is compared to the table below.

In the mindscape stage, the mage's physical body remains in a catatonic state — from whence the Quiet derives its name — while her mind battles its internal demons. In play, this dream is handled as a bit of wildly creative storytelling that ends only when the episode of Quiet ends.

A mage trapped in a mindscape for longer than a day may try to communicate with people in the real world every so often. A successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7), or the expenditure of a Willpower point, allows the mage to communicate. Three successes allow clear communication; fewer indicate correspondingly greater degrees of unintelligibility. The maximum length of each communication, in

Paradox Rating	Delusions
0	None
1	A few false inanimate elements (such as letters or paintings) appear intermittently but repeatedly.
2	A false environmental feature appears that is unique, but not harmful (a light drizzle, things seem much louder, etc.).
3	Illusory objects appear; these delusions don't confront the mage, but would react or respond if approached (petting a sleeping dog, talking to a peanut salesman, working a calculator).
4	The delusions become increasingly regular, and even more interactive. It becomes very difficult to tell reality from falsehood.
5	Things that demand the mage's reaction in some way, but are not dangerous (such as flies buzzing around the head, someone knocking on the door, etc.), begin to appear.
6	Some actual items disappear from the mage's reality (such as a favorite bookstore or a family member). If encountered directly, these things will not be remembered or will appear as something else.
7	Potentially harmful changes to the mage's surroundings appear (music loud enough to deafen, no sunlight in the daytime, broken glass on the ground, etc.).
8	The mage is confronted with potential dangers (such as a growling pit bull, a mugger, or a speeding bus).
9	The mage constantly encounters fantastical events (houses caught in tornadoes) and supernatural creatures (such as minotaurs and dragons).
10+	Reality is completely altered.

minutes, equals the mage's Intelligence. A mage may only attempt such communication once per period of time equal to the units of her incarceration. For example, a mage stuck in her mindscape for "weeks" may try to communicate once per week.

Successes	Period of Catatonia
0	years
1	months
2	weeks
3-5	days
6	hours
7	minutes
8+	seconds

Injury

There are as many different ways for a character to sustain injuries as there are injuries, but in Mage injuries are described in one way: the Health Trait. A player records injuries in terms of Health Levels; each wound causes the loss of one Health Level. Simply check off Health Levels as the character loses them, so the last check made indicates the character's current Health Level. As the character regains Health Levels, erase the check marks.

Think of Health as a spectrum with Bruised at one end and Incapacitated at the other. As a character takes more wounds, she travels down the spectrum until she finally reaches Incapacitated. When she heals, she simply removes the checks one by one, until she is again in perfect health.

Each success on an opponent's damage roll indicates a loss of one Health Level. If a foe scores two successes, the player checks off two Health Levels, starting with Bruised and going down to Hurt. If a mage takes damage beyond the Incapacitated Level, she dies. Once a mage dies, her Avatar flees into the spirit world, there to be reconstituted and reintroduced into the human race as new people are born.

It is more difficult for an injured character to perform regular actions. Listed next to each Health Level on the character sheet is a penalty number. This number is subtracted from all the character's Dice Pools. For example, a mage who is Wounded would have two fewer dice to roll on all Dice Pools as long as her condition remains Wounded. This subtraction reflects the crippling effects of the wounds the character has received.

Healing

The human body has an amazing ability to repair itself. Given time and proper health care, humans can recover Health Levels based on the chart below. Note that the time given is how long it takes to recover that particular Health Level — other Levels must also be healed. Thus, if the character takes three months to recover from being Mauled, she must still take the time to heal Wounded, Injured and so on.

Of course mages have other means of healing normal injuries. The Sphere of Life has a variety of magickal effects that accelerate the body's healing ability (see Chapter Seven). Healing magick can even be performed as coincidental magick: the bullet only grazed a rib, or hit a lucky whiskey flask that the mage just happens to be carrying in her chest pocket (even though she never drinks, and that shirt didn't have a chest pocket before...).

Aggravated Wounds

Mages occasionally suffer wounds so terrible that even magick will not heal them. These wounds are called aggravated wounds, and a mage can only heal them through the painfully slow natural process (as shown on the Normal Healing Time chart above), or by using vulgar magick and spending a point of Quintessence per Health Level healed. Common sources of aggravated wounds include certain Nephandi attacks, the claws of vampires and werewolves, weapon Talismans, and the nastier Paradox spirits.

Aggravated wounds should be indicated on the character sheet with an X rather than a check.

Death

When a person reaches Incapacitated, she is one Health Level away from death. If she is injured one more time, or if it is impossible to stem the flow of blood from her body, she will die.

Sources of Injury

There are many ways to inflict harm upon a character. These sources of injury are described below. Note that damage to mages is applied exactly like damage to Sleepers. Only after damage has been calculated does the player get to reduce the effects with magick, provided the damage is not aggravated.

Combat

Combat wounds are covered at length in Chapter Nine. Each success on a damage roll causes the character to lose one Health Level.

Disease

Mages can catch and even transmit human diseases, but generally do not die from them, for they have miraculous recuperative powers. Health Levels lost to disease are assumed to be normal wounds. Once they are healed, the person is cured. Some very severe diseases must be treated as aggravated

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

wounds — the mage's coincidental miraculous recovery must take a certain amount of time. The only other option is vulgar magick (and wasted Quintessence).

Falling

Occasionally, characters will fall. Use the chart below to calculate damage. Characters can make Stamina rolls to try to "soak" damage. The difficulty is an eight; each success means one fewer Health Level is lost (the mage happens to fall into the passing garbage truck, etc.). Each botch means an additional Health Level is lost.

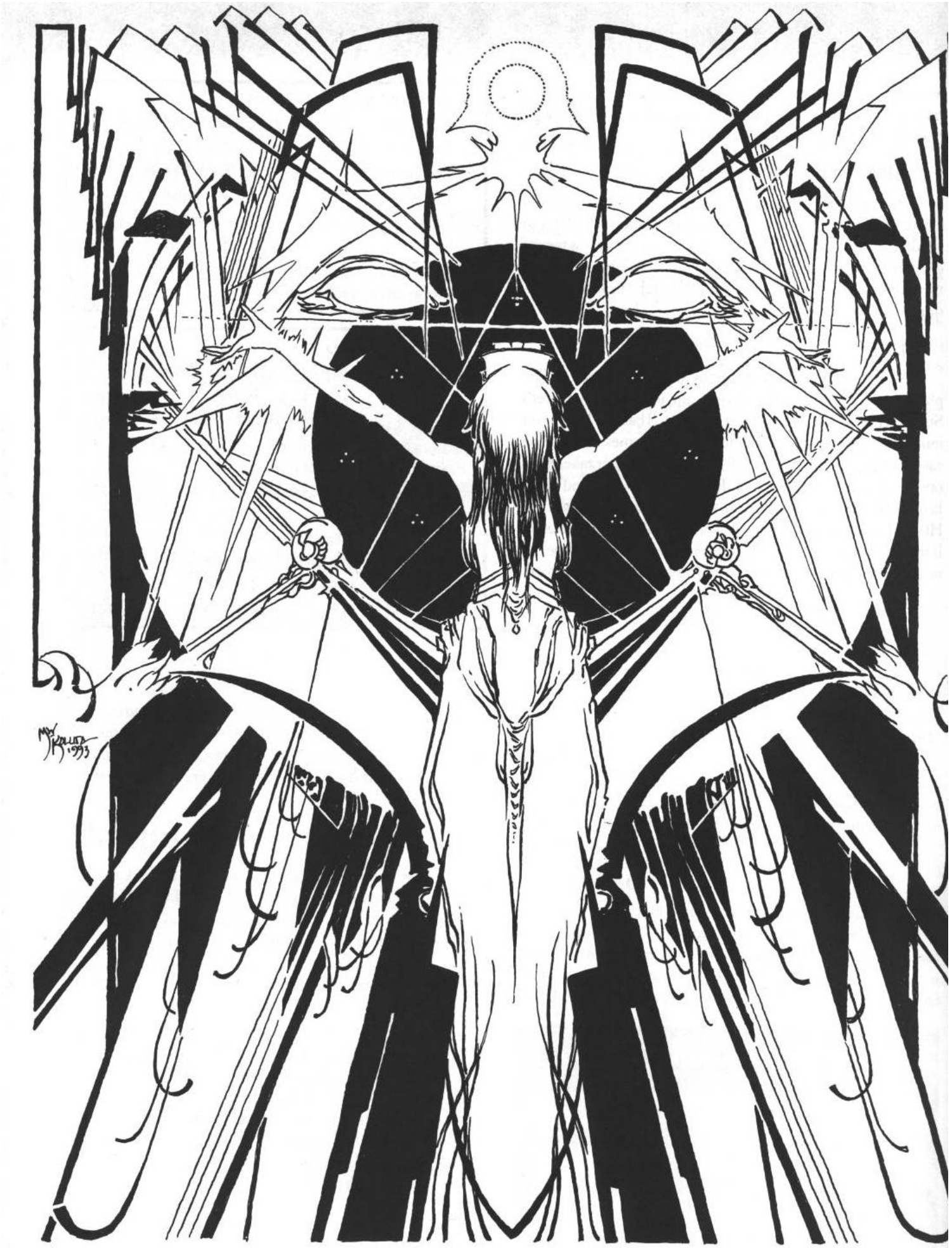
Fire

Any size flame can potentially harm a character. The player may roll a number of dice equal to the character's Stamina rating against the difficulties listed below. The player must roll each turn the character is in the flames to see if she can resist the damage. If the roll fails, the character takes from one to three Health Levels of damage (see the second chart below), while if the roll succeeds, the character takes one fewer Health Level of damage per success than she normally would. If the roll is botched, the character is harmed in some special way — perhaps she loses her eyesight or her limbs are maimed.

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.	

Difficulty	Heat of Fire
Three	Heat of a candle (first-degree burns)
Five	Heat of a torch (second-degree burns)
Seven	Heat of a Bunsen burner (third-degree burns)
Nine	Heat of a chemical fire
Ten	Molten metal

Wounds	Size of Fire
One	Torch; part of body burned
Two	Bonfire; half of body burned
Three	Raging inferno; entire body burned



TUAL ADEPTS

Chapter Nine: Drama

There's always been intuition. We want something more, don't we? We want a mathematical treatment that will give us probabilities of specific future developments under this condition or that. If intuition suffices to guide us, we don't need psychohistory at all.

— Isaac Asimov, *Forward the Foundation*

There are many actions a player might want to take during a turn — jump a fence, seduce a mortal or research werewolves in the library. As the Storyteller, you already know the rules (from reading Chapter Four), and can probably figure out how to adjudicate the player's roll, but there are a few techniques and variations on the rules that you might find interesting. That's what this chapter is all about — it provides advice on rules systems for resolving dramatic actions.

This chapter is not meant to be all-inclusive. These systems are only examples of how to resolve the actions taken by characters. Use these as examples and invent your own systems for running things as you'd like. Don't stop the action in the middle of a dramatic scene to look up something in this chapter — just make something up, perhaps based on a rules system you first encountered here.

Only if a roll is truly needed should you use one of the systems described in this chapter. If the roll in question is a simple roll, none of these systems are needed. If you're not interested in the drama created by putting the game into the story, use the automatic success rules. Go to the Traits Chapter and, by reading about the Trait in question, determine if the character is successful or not, without rolling any dice. You may not want to roll dice if you don't have to — they can really get in the way. However, there are occasions when rolling dice adds tension and suspense, as Lady Luck makes her appearance.

As a general rule, have the player make a roll only when there is substantial doubt in your mind as to whether the character will succeed in her action or not. If you can reasonably assume she will succeed, then just let her do it.

When you do start making rolls and have the players do the same, make the rolls special and make them different. Don't waste a lot of time on a die roll that doesn't do anything special for the story, or is uninteresting for you or the players. Each roll of the dice should be a game in miniature, with strategy and tactics to master and luck to inject the unexpected.

Scenes

A scene is a moment in a story when the troupe focuses on the events at hand and roleplays through them as if they were actually occur. A scene may only require roleplaying and a lot of conversation between players and Storyteller, or it may involve a number of different actions, some requiring die rolls.

A scene is like a series of shots taken in a movie, in the same location and at the same moment in the story. It is the essense of roleplaying, when players are in their roles and describe their characters' reactions to events rather than explain what they intend to do.

You should do everything you can to make the scenes in your story as dramatic, complete and fulfilling as possible. The more you give each scene an exciting start, an action-packed middle and a fulfilling end (or a strategically frustrating one), the better your story is.

Describe the scene not as a static picture, but as a place or time full of life and action. It should have its own existence apart from the characters. The gang leader does not simply sit at a table — while the characters are watching he calls over one of his henchmen and begins to berate him. Create an open-ended story in your descriptions and invite the players' characters to enter it. Don't force the players to animate your creation — breathe life into it from the very first.

Time in the story not spent in a scene is called downtime. This can be when characters conduct extensive research, travel, or can simply be periods that players don't want to roleplay every moment of. Downtime is a break from the intensity of the scene. Though you normally want to spend as little time as possible in downtime (generally it's relatively boring), you shouldn't avoid it altogether. Use downtime to organize players, direct the story more precisely, and progress the plot more quickly.

The story can turn into a scene at almost any time. Often it does so quite naturally, without anyone realizing it has happened. For instance, while you discuss with players how their characters intend to make a journey to Chicago, you may begin to describe what they see along the way. You have gone from downtime to a scene. When you begin roleplaying an old man who walks up to them and asks for change, you have completely immersed them in the scene. By simply roleplaying without warning, you jump-start the players into their roles, instantly beginning a scene.

Turns

A scene is divided into turns in order to organize and structure the arrangement of events. A turn is a variable period of time during which characters can do things. It helps the Storyteller keep track of what is going on and ensures that each player gets the same chance to do something. In one turn, each character should be able to do one thing. Additionally, each player should be given about the same amount of time to

describe what she wants her character to do. Each turn, go around the table in order of initiative (see below), give each player an opportunity to state an action, and then go to the next person. When you get to yourself, describe the actions of the non-player characters.

Even if doing so might not make complete sense, you should use the turn structure pretty loosely. You might, for example, let someone climb a tree while someone else fires a gun, even though in normal circumstances climbing a tree usually takes a minute, and shooting a gun takes only three seconds. Adrenaline makes people do amazing things, after all.

Multiple Actions

A character can perform multiple actions in a turn (such as running and shooting a gun), but he has to divide his dice. To split a Dice Pool between two different actions, the character takes the dice from the action at which the character is least skilled (the one with the smallest Dice Pool) and divides that Pool among all the actions he wishes to perform.

If the character moves while taking other actions in a turn (such as firing a gun), he may do so simply by taking away one die from the Pool for every three yards he moves. Movement is already considered in the rules for dodging, so characters who dive for cover accrue no extra penalty.

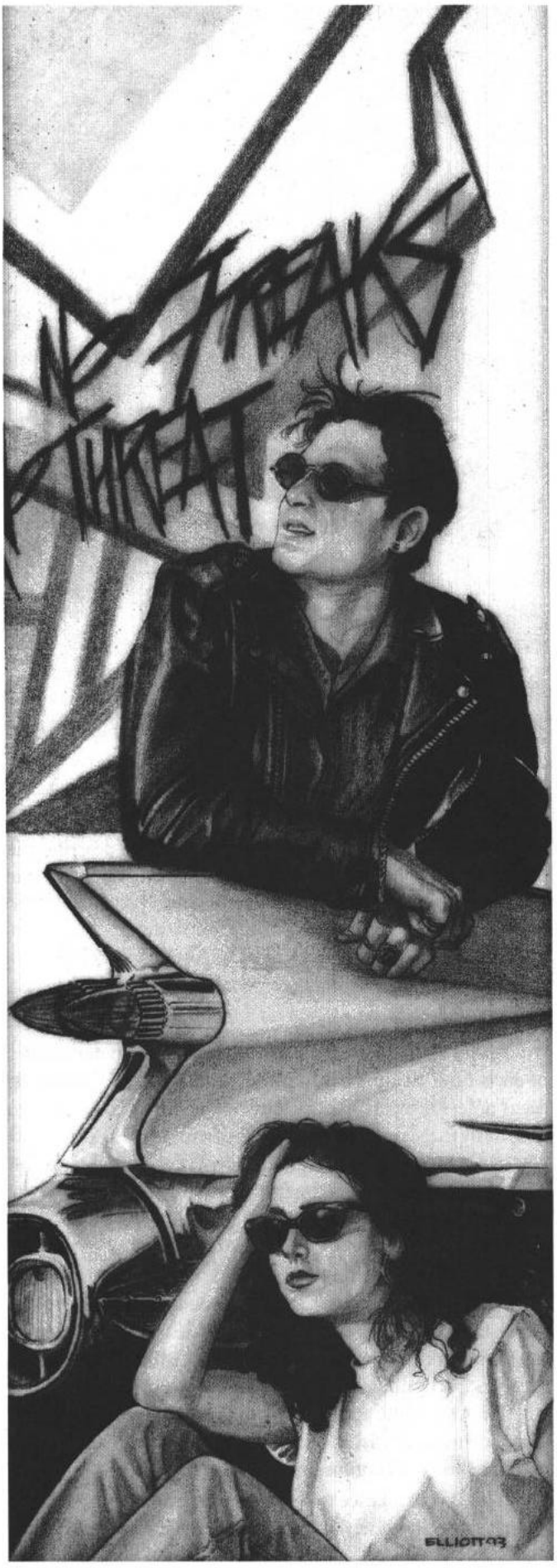
Characters with multiple actions take their first action in their normal order of initiative (unless they delay). They may take no more than one action at this time. After all characters have completed their first (or only) action, characters with more actions may take their second action, again in order of initiative. After everyone has taken a second action, play proceeds with the third and subsequent actions in order of initiative, as above. While characters may delay their action, they must take it before the rest of the characters move on to their next action, or it is lost. However, characters can always use dice to dodge as long as there are any dice left in their Pools.

Action Scenes

Many scenes are so full of actions and dice rolls that they require special rules to make sure everything runs smoothly. These are times when adrenaline is racing and pacing is fast. Action scenes are the fights, races and feats of danger common to adventure stories. During an action scene, the turns are usually very short, lasting only three seconds or so. Most of the systems described in this chapter occur during action scenes and use action turns.

Many different types of actions can occur in an action scene, and correlating everything can seem a little tricky. Let a character do nearly anything she cares to try, even if you assign a difficulty of 10.

Make sure you carefully describe where everyone is in the scene, as well as what cover is available and how far it is from



characters. Otherwise, you will have to describe the scene over again and hear complaints like, "Wait a minute, you didn't say anyone was over there!" You may also want to describe the environmental conditions and how they might affect the scene. Rain, wind and smoke can affect many rolls.

Organizing an Action Turn

Just as turns organize a scene, so there are different stages of each turn. Still, you will probably not need to subdivide turns unless they are action turns. Though you need not go exactly by these stages, look over this list to get ideas about how you can organize things when the action gets hot. The better you've organized a scene, the more smoothly it will go and the more fun everyone will have.

• Describing the Scene

At the beginning of each turn, you should describe the scene from the characters' perspective. You may want to suggest what the characters' opponents might be about to do, but do not actually describe what will happen. Sometimes this will be a wrap-up of the last turn, making it clear to all players what occurred. This sort of constant description is essential if you want to avoid confusion.

This is your chance to organize and arrange things so that all goes smoothly when the players begin to interact with what you have set up. You will want to make your description as interesting as possible, leaving open all sorts of possibilities for characters' actions.

The players need to roll for initiative (see Initiative, below) to determine the order in which their characters will act. In especially complicated situations, you can have the players describe to you what their characters intend to do that turn, starting with the player who rolled the lowest initiative. This statement of intent can help you clarify in your own mind what is going on, but it slows things down, so avoid it if you can. If you wish to be particularly free-spirited, eliminate the initiative roll altogether and have the characters act in whatever order you wish; e.g., "In the distance you hear sirens, and see that the street punk at the end of the alley seems to have noticed them as well. He wins the initiative and sprints toward the fence. What are you going to do?"

• Decision Stage

Going in reverse order of initiative (if the players made initiative rolls), have each player explain what her character intends to do and how she intends to go about it. If you did not call for initiative rolls, simply go around the table from left to right, or in order of character Wits, or using whatever consistent method you like. You then decide how you want to resolve the action — what kind of roll each player will make, the difficulty of the roll, and the number of successes needed. You can make the process as simple or as complicated as you like;

e.g. "If you want to catch him before he gets over the fence, you need to make a Dexterity + Athletics roll. You need to score six successes to catch up with him, but he only needs three more to get over the fence."

• Resolution Stage

This is when the players roll to see whether their characters succeed or fail. The players roll dice to attempt the actions they described in the preceding stage.

At the end of the turn, you need to summarize everything by describing what happened, translating all dice rolls into description, plot and story. Don't simply say, "You manage to hit the bad guy for three Health Levels of damage." Get more graphic and say, "After ducking away to the left, you sweep across with your fist and strike him alongside the head. Your hand stings, but you've broken his nose and wounded him for three Health Levels."; e.g. " With a great burst of speed and a daring leap over a garbage can, you race down the alley after him. Next turn you will be able to make a grab at him before he gets away completely. However, you see a police cruiser pull in around the corner of the alley."

Initiative

At the beginning of most scenes, you need to figure out who goes first. Rolling for initiative is the best way to decide the order in which players will take their turns for the remainder of the fight. Sometimes it will be obvious who goes first, such as when an ambush was set or one person is clearly caught by surprise. In combat, however, if you intend to let the opponents have a free shot at the characters, you should not simply spring it on the players. Let them make Perception rolls (difficult ones) to see if characters notice something just before the bad guys open up. Otherwise, you'll have a pack of whining jackals on your hands. The difficulty depends on how well the ambush was set (usually 8 or so). The number of successes the players score indicates the number of dice they can roll on their first actions (usually dodges).

In a normal situation, each player makes an initiative roll, and you do so for each of the opponents. Everyone involved makes a Wits + Alertness roll (or you can have them roll Wits + Brawl, Melee, Firearms or any appropriate Ability). The difficulty is usually four — characters with the most successes go first and ties go simultaneously. Characters who fail act after those who succeeded last. A botch on an initiative roll means the character does not get to act that turn — his gun jams, he stumbles and cannot punch or dodge.

Taking Actions

The two basic actions characters can take without making rolls include:

• **Yielding:** The character allows the person with the next highest initiative to take his action, thereby yielding her turn. She can still take her action at the end of the turn. If everyone, including her opponents, yields as well, no one does anything that turn.

• **Moving:** The character may move by walking, jogging or running. If she walks, she may move seven yards. If she jogs, she may move 12 yards + Dexterity. If she runs, she may move 20 yards + (3 x Dexterity). No roll is required, but this movement is the only action the character can perform in that turn. In some situations, it can be hazardous to jog or run, and a roll might be required to maintain balance when there is glass on the ground or bullets are raining down. If the character wants to run away from the conflict or encounter, she must dodge unless she is not in the field of fire or hindered in any way.

All sorts of other actions might require rolls. Some are listed here:

• **Attack:** A character may decide to fire his weapon or strike someone. The roll made depends on the attack; for instance, a Firearms attack requires a Dexterity + Firearms roll.

• **Climb:** This action requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll.

• **Dodge:** A dodge not only allows a character to avoid an attack, but altogether removes him from the line of attack. A character can make a Dodge roll right after someone tries to hit him, thereby (hopefully) avoiding the blow.

• **Get to feet:** It takes a turn to get up from the ground without having to make a roll. If a character wants to do this in addition to her other actions, she has to take dice from her announced action and attempt to score at least one success on a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty at least 4).

• **Leadership:** A character may give commands to followers and have them obeyed with appropriate Charisma (or Manipulation) + Leadership rolls.

• **Reload gun:** This can be done in a single turn with a preloaded clip.

• **Research:** A character may try to look up a vital piece of information in a book using the Investigation Ability. Though this would likely take longer than three seconds, in the interest of drama, you may wish to suspend reality a bit.

• **Start a car:** This action doesn't require a roll at all, unless a character is hot-wiring it.

• **Sneak up on enemy:** This action usually requires a Dexterity + Stealth roll.

• **Unjam gun:** This action can normally be performed in a single turn with a Wits + Firearms roll.

Dramatic Systems

I wish we could play in a gym without any people and try to play the perfect game where you don't make any mistakes and maybe if there's a mistake it's of omission, not commission, and everything is done at the right moment, at the right time, and each decision is the right one and everyone can ride the decision-making wave.

— Sam Smith quoting Coach Phil Jackson, *The Jordan Rules*

Described below are a variety of different systems to resolve actions, or, to put it simply, a bunch of ways to make rolls. If you prefer to roleplay through dramatic scenes, just use these systems as suggestions of what sorts of things can happen during the scene. There are a few more examples of Physical dramatic systems than any other kind because these actions are impossible to resolve purely through roleplaying. Social and Mental systems can be simulated by the players.

Physical

These systems describe physical actions and confrontations — dramatic situations in which Physical Attributes predominate.

Climbing

When a character attempts to climb any sort of surface (a tree, cliff or building), ask the player to roll the character's Dexterity + Athletics. The difficulty depends on the sheerness of the climbing surface, the type of surface being climbed and, to a lesser extent, the weather conditions. Each success indicates that the character has climbed five feet. Once he accumulates enough successes to get to where he wants to go, he can stop rolling. For example, Reynold is trying to climb a 25-foot wall, so he needs five successes to get to the top. A failure indicates the character is unable to make any progress during the turn. A botch indicates the character falls and cannot again attempt to climb without expending a Willpower point.

Climbing Difficulties

2 Easy climb: a tree with many stout branches
4 Simple climb: a cliff with many handholds
6 Straightforward: a tree with thin branches
8 Treacherous: very few handholds
10 Extremely difficult: a nearly sheer surface

Coincidences: a rope or ladder is nearby; the tree has a low limb; the wall has available hand- and footholds; there's a fire escape on the side of the building.

Feats of Strength

A character's Strength is often used alone, without an Ability, in actions where brute force is all that matters. This system works on the same basis as automatic successes. If the character's Strength equals or exceeds the difficulty of the task he is attempting, he succeeds automatically. Only if the difficulty is higher than his Dice Pool must he make a roll.

When the character makes the roll, however, it is based on Willpower, not Strength. It is a simple roll, so the character gets only one chance to make it. The difficulty is almost always a nine, though it can vary according to the surface conditions, the wieldiness of the object being lifted, and Storyteller whim. Each success pushes the character's effective Strength up one step on the chart below (to a maximum of five). Thus, if the character has a Strength of four, but wants to flip over a car, she needs three successes on the Willpower roll to do it.

Dice Pool	Feats	Lift
1	Crush a beer can	40 lbs
2	Break a chair	100 lbs
3	Break down a wooden door	250 lbs
4	Break a 2" x 4"	400 lbs
5	Break open a metal fire door	650 lbs
6	Throw a motorcycle	800 lbs
7	Flip over a small car	900 lbs
8	Break a three-inch lead pipe	1000 lbs
9	Punch through a cement wall	1200 lbs
10	Rip open a steel drum	1500 lbs
11	Punch through 1" sheet metal	2000 lbs
12	Break a metal lamp post	3000 lbs
13	Throw a car	4000 lbs
14	Throw a van	5000 lbs
15	Throw a truck	6000 lbs

Coincidences: the chest is lighter than it looks; the door is unlocked or made of rotten wood; the pipe has stress fractures; the car is packed with boxes, but only on one side so it's much heavier and leans that way anyway.

Jumping

Jumping requires a Strength roll, or a Strength + Athletics roll if it is a horizontal jump and the character gets a decent running start. The difficulty for a jump is almost always three (unless there are difficult weather conditions or there is a narrow landing space). The Storyteller calculates how many successes are required to make the jump. There are no partial successes in jumping; the character either succeeds in one roll, or she falls.

If necessary, you can use the chart below. The number of successes required is based on the number of feet that must be jumped and whether the character is jumping horizontally or vertically (see the chart below).

Type of Jump	Feet per Success
Vertical (up)	2
Horizontal (across)	4

Coincidences: there's a springboard present; you catch a good updraft.

Repair

Getting something fixed is not always as easy as taking it to the garage; sometimes the task has to be performed oneself. When a character wishes to fix any sort of mechanical implement, he must roll Dexterity + Repair. The difficulty is determined by the complexity of the task (see the chart below). Before the job can be considered complete, a certain number of successes must be collected, usually between two and 20. Each roll means that a certain amount of time is spent — whatever the demands of the story require. A botch indicates that the device is somehow damaged in the attempt.

This system can be fun to use during combat, as one character desperately tries to start the car while the others hold off the Technomancer HIT Marks.

Job	Difficulty	# of Successes
Simple mechanical repair	4	3
Soldering job	5	2
Electronic malfunction	5	5
Fitting in new part	6	10
Repair stalled car	6	5
Tough auto repair	7	10
System overhaul	8	20
Technical glitch	9	2

Coincidences: the engine was just overheated — it starts fine now; floater needle becomes unstuck; the battery wires were just loose; a good kick starts 'er right up; it was only unplugged.

Shadowing

Sometimes a character will want to follow someone. In order to be led somewhere interesting, this needs to be done as discreetly as possible. That is what shadowing is all about — following someone without him knowing the character is there.

There are two components to shadowing—keeping track of where the subject is and making sure he doesn't see his tail. Shadowing can be conducted on foot or in vehicles. Rolls can even be made if someone else is driving, such as a taxi driver — "I'm sorry, but I can't remember the address — you'll just have to follow my directions. Take a right at the corner. No, wait, a left!"

The character attempting to shadow must make a Perception + Investigation (or possibly Streetwise) roll. The difficulty is normally a six (though it can vary from five to nine depending on the thickness of crowds, relative speeds of vehicles and weather conditions). Each success indicates that

the target has been followed for a turn. A certain number of successes is required to follow the subject all the way to his destination. A failure indicates that the character has temporarily lost the subject, but can try again next turn. If she gets a second failure, she has lost the subject completely and the chase is off (unless she can come up with a new approach). A botch indicates that not only does the character completely lose the subject, but she is so involved in shadowing that she gets into trouble of her own — a gang tries to beat her up, she falls into an open manhole, or she has a car accident.

Though the Perception roll is the most important aspect of shadowing, a Stealth roll must also be made to see if the subject notices he is being followed. Each turn the Perception roll is made, the Stealth roll must be made as well. The player must roll Dexterity + Stealth (or Dexterity + Drive if the character is in a vehicle).

The difficulty is the subject's Perception + Alertness, but it can be modified by +/- 3, depending on the circumstances (empty streets or thick crowds, for instance). A single success indicates the shadower is not detected, and each success also makes it more difficult for the subject to spot the shadower, even if he is actively looking. A failure indicates the subject becomes suspicious and starts to surreptitiously glance over his shoulder (and may make Perception rolls of his own; see below). A botch indicates the character completely reveals herself and the subject now knows he is being followed.

If the subject is alerted somehow (by the shadower's failure on the Dexterity + Stealth roll above), or simply looks to see if he is being followed (out of habit perhaps), roll Perception + Investigation (or Streetwise). The difficulty is the Stealth + 5 of the character who is shadowing. Each success on this roll indicates a higher degree of suspicion. Successes can be accumulated from turn to turn; see the chart below to see how alert the subject is to the fact that he is being followed. A failure means nothing out of the ordinary is seen and the suspicion value of the subject decreases to zero. A botch means the subject is convinced he isn't being followed and no longer looks behind him.

Successes	Suspicion
1	Hunch
2	Suspicion
3	Near-certainty
4	Positive knowledge
5	The shadower has been spotted

Buddy System: Two or more characters can share shadowing responsibilities by trading off. However, they must have previously worked/trained together in this technique, or the difficulty on all rolls for the pair is one higher. One player shadows for a turn or more, and then trades off whenever her partner gives the signal. If the pair switches off, the subject can't accumulate successes for very long, which makes it much harder for the subject to spot shadowers.

Coincidences: you see your shadower reflected in store window; the guy you thought you'd given the slip made the same wrong turn you did; he gets caught in a traffic circle; a truck breaks down between you and him.

Stunt Driving

This system is used to determine the outcome of nearly any type of automobile chase or maneuver. Dice rolls in chases are not only made to see how fast a driver goes, but also to see if she stays on the road or not. Each vehicle is rated for its maximum safe driving speed, as well as its maneuverability. One vehicle is not always as fast as another nor as maneuverable, so the details of the chase often depend on the make of the vehicle (see the chart below).

A character can make special maneuvers in order to catch or lose another vehicle, such as spinning around a tight corner, doing a 180° turn, or wheeling about to block a road. Essentially, one character makes a special maneuver and the other character must copy that maneuver by making the same or an approximate roll.

The player must roll Dexterity (or perhaps Perception) + Drive. However, the maximum number of dice that can be rolled is the Maneuverability rating of the vehicle. The difficulty of the maneuver and the speed of the car determine the difficulty. You should give each maneuver a basic difficulty from 2-7, and then designate a speed at which it can be completed at that difficulty. This is most often the Safe Speed, but can be much less depending on how complicated or tight the maneuver is. The difficulty goes up by one for every 10 mph the vehicle exceeds that speed while performing the maneuver. The driver decides how fast her vehicle performs the maneuver, although she will not always be able to slow down enough to avoid a crash or collision.

Vehicle	Safe Speed	Max Speed	Maneuver
6-wheel truck	60	90	3
Bus	60	100	3
18-wheeler	70	110	4
Sedan	70	120	5
Mini-van	70	120	6
Compact	70	130	6
Sporty compact	100	140	7
Sport coupe	110	150	8
Sports car	130	170	9
Formula One race car	140	240	10

Coincidences: that truck ramp was in the right place at the right time; driving on two wheels is easy when the road slopes up with you; you slingshot off another car — too bad for the other guy; thank God for anti-lock brakes.

Pursuit

This simple system is used when one character attempts to catch another. One opponent starts with a certain number of successes. This number is either determined by the Storyteller (this is the preferred method) or by having the pursued character roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) for each turn of headstart on the pursuer and add up the number of successes

achieved. This number of successes must be collected by the other character before he can catch up. Once he does, he can try to grapple the fleeing person (see the combat rules). The pursuer might only want to catch up halfway, just to get a better shot at the fleeing character.

Coincidences: the other person is tripped or blocked; an alley leads to a dead end if the mage is the pursuer; there are too many possible directions that the pursued mage may take for the chase to continue.

Sneaking

When a character attempts to hide in shadows or sneak up on a guard, she must roll Dexterity + Stealth. The difficulty is the guard's Perception + Alertness. Anyone who is on watch or who is actively looking for intruders can be considered a guard.

The sneaking character needs to collect a certain number of successes in order to make it to where she wants to go. A Perception + Stealth roll can be made if the player wants to estimate how many successes will be needed; the difficulty for this is usually seven.

Failure of any sort on a Stealth roll indicates detection.

Coincidences: the guard falls asleep; the lights are dim; the shadows fall on the right places; an animal rustles elsewhere to lead the guard off your track; no one set the alarm.

Social

These systems involve social interaction between people. They nearly always require a Charisma, Manipulation or Appearance roll. Often these systems are best left unused, instead determining the success or failure of a particular social interaction through roleplaying.

Seduction

Seduction is an unnatural means of gaining intimacy with another person, because every step is carefully staged and real feelings are not shared (they are faked). A seduction goes in stages, and unless a person is successful in each stage in succession, he will not be successful at all. This system is designed to replicate the activities of a dominant person over a more submissive one. If the emotions and motives are true, then you should ignore this system and roleplay it out.

In many cases, depending on the Nature of the character, Willpower can be regained if she succeeds in the seduction. Bon Vivants, Connivers and Gallants often regain Willpower by successfully completing a seduction.

Opening Line: The player rolls Appearance + Subterfuge. The difficulty is the Wits + 3 of the subject (the player gains a bonus of 1-3 dice if it's a good line, minus 1-3 if it's a stupid one). Each additional success, after the first, adds an extra die to the roll on the next stage.

Witty exchange: The player rolls Wits + Subterfuge. The difficulty is the Intelligence + 3 of the subject. Again, give bonuses and penalties for roleplaying. Each additional success adds an extra die to the roll on the next stage.

Conversation: The player rolls Charisma + Empathy. The difficulty is the Perception +3 of the subject. Again, roleplaying bonuses come into play here.

Intimacies: At this point, the couple may move to a private area and become physically intimate. No roll is required.

Coincidences: you remind him of that long-lost love; what a nice cologne; always had a thing for the thin, pale type; "you're a gamer, too?"

Fast Talk

This system describes a means to browbeat and confuse someone into submission. The player must roll Manipulation + Subterfuge, though Charisma or Appearance can sometimes be used, as can Acting. The difficulty is the target's Wits + Streetwise. Success indicates that the target becomes confused.

The target may make whatever rolls he wishes; however, fast talk is likely to confuse him too much at some point to take the appropriate action. Willpower points can be expended to resist fast talk. Failure indicates that the attempt has faltered, and the target can try to get something in edgewise — an attempt to explain himself, or perhaps attempt to fast talk back. This attempt to say something back continues until the subject fails or botches. A botch indicates that the target doesn't get confused, only angry. Fast talk attempts by the character will never again be effective on him.

Repeated rolls might be necessary to truly confuse the target. As Storyteller, you need to run attempts at fast talk in a way that is consistent with the mood of your game. It can be as slaphappy or as deadly serious as you like.

Coincidences: his shoe really is untied; your victim read an article on the topic just last week; a passing stranger agrees with you; he already owns the Brooklyn Bridge.

Oration

If a player wants her character to give a speech, but doesn't want to actually give it, you can use this system. You want her to describe what she says, and maybe tell you a memorable phrase she uses — that might even get her started into roleplaying it out. Oration is often very difficult to roleplay, so never force your players to do so. Just use this system.

The player makes a Charisma + Leadership roll. The difficulty depends on the mood of the crowd, its willingness to hear what the orator says, and its penchant for throwing rotten vegetables. The difficulty is usually a seven. If the orator has any sort of reputation, you may wish to adjust the difficulty accordingly. If the character has Fame or Status among the group being spoken to, she can add that rating to her Dice Pool. The number of successes indicates how impressed the crowd is

(see the following chart). It is a simple roll, so the player has only one crack at it. A failure indicates the crowd ignores the character. A botch indicates the character is going to be lynched, or if that sort of thing isn't common, then booing begins.

Successes	Crowd Reaction
1	They listened, but aren't excited
2	The character has convinced them somewhat
3	The crowd is won over
4	The crowd is completely enthralled
5	The crowd is in the palm of the character's hand

If the speech is vital to the story, the player may make several rolls. If you want to spend some time on it, you can make it an extended action, with each roll interspersed with roleplaying. The character can spend as many turns as she would like on the speech, but after the third turn, the difficulty goes up each turn by one. More successes than five might be required to completely win over the crowd.

Coincidences: most of the crowd is drunk; the microphone has just the right amount of echo; the sun comes out of the clouds just as you make your point.

Credibility

This system is used when a character attempts to convince someone she is telling the truth, such as when she attempts to persuade the jury she is not lying, or tries to convince a police officer she is who she says she is. The player must make a Manipulation + Leadership roll. The difficulty is the other subject's Intelligence + Subterfuge. Lower the difficulty by one to three if the character is telling the truth (it does make a difference). Each success indicates a higher degree of believability. Five successes indicate the subject is completely convinced. A failure indicates disbelief, and a botch indicates the character is caught in a lie (or the subject thinks he has caught her in a lie).

Coincidences: your name is listed in the appointment book; the officer or witness testifying against you never shows up; your rights were never read to you; a scholarly book on the nearby shelf has information that supports your argument (even if wrong — don't believe everything you read).

Facedown

This system is used during facedowns, when two characters are engaged in a duel of Willpower and neither wants to be the first to back down. No words are exchanged — the opponents just glare at one another. Mages resort to this kind of behavior somewhat often. They tend to have big egos and this is one way to prove their point.

Both opponents roll Charisma + Intimidation; the difficulty is the opponent's Willpower. The one who first accumulates as many successes as his opponent's Wits + 5 wins, forcing the other to look away. A character can spend a Willpower point each turn to avoid this and keep on glaring, but he will eventually run out of Willpower.

Coincidences: the other sees something out of the corner of his eye; he has to sneeze or has a sudden itch; she can't help but laugh at the funny look on your face.

Interrogation

Interrogation can occur in a number of different situations. It is a form of questioning, not torture, though intimidation is certainly employed. Torture can be used, but you will have to develop your own rules for that if you wish to include it in your chronicle.

The player makes a Manipulation + Intimidation roll; the difficulty is the victim's Willpower. The number of successes indicates the amount of information obtained (see the chart below). A failure indicates the character learns nothing of value. A botch indicates the subject tells the character nothing, and will never tell him anything — or worse, the subject lies. For this reason, the Storyteller should often make the roll for the player.

Successes	Interrogation
1	Only a few mumbled facts
2	Some relevant facts
3	Much interesting information
4	The subject talks on and on
5	Everything of import is discovered

Coincidences: you say a name (guessing) and know you got it right when the guy blanches; he has all the plans written down on a paper in his pocket; she accidentally says the name.

Performances

This system is used whenever a character gives any type of performance, whether it be comedy, music, acting or storytelling. It can be on a stage or in a nightclub, and can be formal or informal.

The player must roll the appropriate Attribute + Expression (or Acting). The difficulty is based on how receptive the audience is. A failure indicates a lackluster, eminently forgettable performance. A botch indicates a miserable performance that cannot even be finished — the instrument breaks or the character is booed off the stage.

The number of successes indicates how moved the audience is (see the chart below). These successes determine the artistic merit or technical verisimilitude of the piece.

Successes	Your Performance	Reaction
1	Mediocre	Polite applause
2	Average	Approval
3	Good	Genuine appreciation
4	Superior	Vigorous applause
5	Exceptional	Ecstatic reaction
6	Superb	Immediate sensation
7	Brilliant	Miracle, *Magnum opus*

Coincidences: you play their favorite song; you play a song they don't know so they have no idea how it *should* sound; you look like their son or a favorite actor.

Mental

These dramatic systems deal with the use of the mind and Mental Attributes. They are employed in situations where drama is not so much a factor of the action as it is of psychological tension.

Research

Research is often the only way for a character to proceed to the next stage of a story. A mage may have to investigate matters in a library, newspaper office or through computer files in order to obtain needed information. Research is a great way to let a character with high Intelligence show off, and takes the focus off fast-paced action.

The player rolls Intelligence + Research (or sometimes an appropriate Knowledge Ability after a place to research has been found). The difficulty is based upon the obscurity of the information.

Difficulty	Accessibility of Information
2	Generally available
4	Widely documented
6	Accessible
8	Difficult to find
10	Incredibly well-concealed

The number of successes determines how much the character discovers. One success might mean that only the most obvious facts are found, while five successes might mean that the full (and maybe truthful) story is uncovered. Depending on the precise information the character seeks, 10 or 20 successes might be required to find all the available data.

The player might want to continue research after gaining a partial success. However, continued research takes longer than the initial search. Basic research usually takes only an hour — that's the first roll. More in-depth research (and a second roll) takes one complete day. If the player wants a third roll, further research takes a week; a fourth roll takes a month, a fifth roll takes a year. After that use your imagination. Therefore, it is easy to see how some research projects can take years or even decades to complete. Of course, some mages have all the time they need.

Coincidences: the library you use is a world-recognized repository for such information; someone was researching the same thing and left a stack of reference books piled on a desk; it's a favorite topic of the bookstore owner so she happens to stock material about it.

Search

This system enables a character to search for something in a confined area, like a room. Have the player roll Perception + Investigation; the difficulty depends on how well concealed the object is (usually between seven and 10). Each success indicates more is found. Sometimes a certain number of successes are required to find something that is well hidden. If you want, a lower number of successes could warrant a hint or clue from you indicating where to look, thus encouraging roleplaying and a degree of puzzle solving. As much as possible, lead the player through the search step by step. Have her describe to you where she looks. Don't let her succeed if she doesn't specifically search in the right area, and let her succeed automatically if her description is detailed enough.

Coincidences: just happens to look in the right spot the first time; someone forgot to put it away; it falls off a shelf.

Track

This system is used to track people and things by following the physical trails they leave. The player rolls Perception + Survival (or Investigation in the city — but tracks are rarely left on sidewalks and pavement). The difficulty is based on weather conditions, terrain and the age of the tracks, but averages around eight. Each success lowers the difficulty of the next roll by one.

The character needs to succeed for a certain number of turns; the exact number depends on the length of the trail. Each turn is usually about five minutes long. If the character misses a roll, she can try again; this time, however, the difficulty is one higher. Once it goes above 10, the character loses the trail.

Coincidences: the ground is muddy so footprints are easy to see; all the doors are locked from the outside so she couldn't have gone in any of them; several people saw where he went; the quarry stopped to rest.

Cryptology

This system is used to decipher codes. The player must roll Intelligence + Linguistics, or Intelligence + Computer if the character is using a computer to help him crack the code. The difficulty will normally be quite high (between 8-10, or less if the character uses a computer). Each success cracks more of the code. Multiple rolls can be made to accumulate successes. It can take anywhere from two to 20 successes to fully crack a code, depending on how complicated it is. Each "turn" can be from one minute to one month, depending on the needs of the story, the intricacy of the code and the use of computers. Any failure indicates all collected successes are lost and the decoding process must restart from the beginning. A botch indicates total failure; the job can never be attempted again, or the character has misdeciphered the code.

To create a code, a character must roll Intelligence + Linguistics three times (difficulty 5). The total number of successes indicates the number of successes it takes to crack the code.

Coincidences: a baby's gurgling gives you a clue; you guessed that password during *Trivial Pursuit*™ yesterday; the number is the same as your birthday.

Combat

You are in the Lear jet, me I'm in the Jumbo
Coming through the skies
Coming through the skies
Yeah, coming at each other
I'll rip you to shreds
I'll rip you to shreds
I'm making soup from your bones.
— Julian Cope, "Slow Rider"

Combat in **Mage** attempts to capture the drama of violent conflict without downplaying the grim reality of what is going on. We have made every effort to create a system true to the dynamics, limitations and viciousness of real combat, while still leaving room for the unique elements mages bring to it.

There are three types of combat, all of which use the same basic system, yet have some minor differences. They are the firefight, melee and brawl. However, a mage can also cast magick; see Chapter Seven for the rules on magick use in combat.

• A firefight is any type of armed combat using projectile weapons — things like Uzis and sawed-off shotguns. Opponents normally need to be within sight of each other in order to engage in a firefight.

• Melee refers to fighting with hand weapons — anything from broken bottles to silver axes. Opponents need to be within one or two yards of each other in order to engage in melee.

• A brawl describes a hand-to-hand battle fought with bare hands — unarmed combat. Opponents need to be within touching distance to engage in a brawl.

The rolls made in combat determine whether or not an attack succeeds, whether the target dodges and how much damage the target suffers. Almost all combat turns are around three seconds long, though they take somewhat longer than that to resolve.

As with all action scenes, combat turns begin with an initiative roll. However, because combat can sometimes get a little sticky, divide the turn into three stages — Initiative, Attack and Resolution — to make it easier to keep track of things .

Stage One: Initiative

This stage organizes the turn, and here characters must declare their actions. Characters can take a number of different actions — anything from leaping behind a wall to shouting a warning. Each player must declare what his character is doing in as much detail as the Storyteller requires. At this point, everyone needs to decide what weapon to use, if any.

Characters make initiative rolls using Wits + Alertness (difficulty 4, though Storytellers can vary this roll if they so desire). The character with the most successes acts first, while those characters who rolled fewer successes take their actions in descending order of successes. Some characters will act simultaneously because they rolled the same number of successes. Those who gain no successes at all on this roll go last, and those who botch do not get to take actions at all.

Remember to have players declare what actions they want their characters to take during the combat turn before going to the Attack Stage. A character splitting his Dice Pool must also declare how many dice to allocate to each action.

All a character's actions happen when it is her turn to act. The only exception to this is the dodge, which a character can perform at any time as long as she has dice left in her Pool.

Stage Two: Attack

The attack is the meat of the combat turn. It is where the success or failure of an action is determined, as is something of its potential impact on the target.

The Roll: There are three different types of attack rolls; the type of combat determines which one to use.

• For firearms combat, roll Dexterity + Firearms.

• For melee (with weapons) combat, roll Dexterity + Melee.

• For hand-to-hand (without weapons) combat, roll Dexterity + Brawl.

The weapon or attack used by the attacker determines the base difficulty of the roll. The number of dice rolled might be modified by the gun's rate of fire or the use of a scope, but the difficulty is usually only modified by the circumstances around the attack. If no successes are obtained, the character has failed his attack and no damage is inflicted. If a botch is obtained, then not only does the attack fail, but something nasty happens; the Storyteller needs to invent something truly awful.

Dodging

Any time someone attacks the character, he has the option of dodging. In fact, a player may announce at any time that her character is using an action (or part of it, by dividing

her Dice Pool) to dodge, simply by declaring "Dodge!" before the opponent makes an attack roll. In some cases a dodge may not be allowed, such as in confined quarters or in situations where the character has been surprised. The required roll is Dexterity + Dodge; each success subtracts one success from the attacker's roll.

The difficulty to dodge melee or brawling attacks is a base six, plus one for every opponent after the first.

In firefights, the difficulty depends on the availability of nearby cover behind which a character can dive to avoid getting hit. Each success removes one of the opponent's successes. A character can even take away successes from different opponents, though this means splitting successes between them. After such a dodge attempt, the character usually ends up behind some sort of cover or, at the very least, lying on the ground (if there was no cover to be found).

The difficulty to dodge during firefights is determined by the proximity of cover.

Difficulty	Terrain
2	By moving back half a step, the character is back under full cover.
4	Full cover within diving distance (one yard)
6	Full cover within running distance (three yards)
7	Partial cover within running distance (three yards)
8	Flat and featureless, no cover (the character dives to the ground)

Stage Three: Resolution

In this stage, characters determine the damage inflicted by their attacks and the Storyteller describes what occurs in the turn. It is a mixture of game and story, for though the dice never lie, the Storyteller must interpret what luck has decreed.

Damage: Each weapon or attack allows the wielder to roll a certain number of dice in order to cause damage (difficulty 6). Each success causes the target to lose one Health Level. Additionally, each success scored with a firearm (after any dodge) adds one die to this damage roll. Melee and brawling successes do not add to the damage.

Soak: A target may make a roll to see how much damage she "soaks up" because of her natural hardiness. The target rolls Stamina (difficulty 6); each success reduces the damage by one.

Exception: Damage and soak rolls are two rolls in **Mage** that cannot be botched.

Complications

A number of factors determine whether an attack hits or not. Smart combatants head for cover as soon as bullets start

flying. Others find that ganging up on one foe in a brawl never hurts. The following modifiers delineate many of the variables that affect combat.

General Complications

• **Changing Actions:** If a character changes her declared action after the turn has started, the difficulty for the new action increases by one. Generally, the Storyteller should only allow the character to change her declared action if events have made it impossible. "Yes, I know I said my character would jump into the car, but that Technomancer just blew it up!"

• **Immobilization:** If a target is immobilized (e.g., held down by someone), but still struggles, the difficulty for the attack roll is lowered by two. However, if the target is completely immobilized (e.g., is tied up or magically paralyzed), then no roll is required and the attack succeeds automatically.

Firefight Complications

• **Range:** Getting close to one's foe is a good idea if a character doesn't mind taking a few shots in return. The range given on the Firearms Table is the weapon's medium range; the character receives no modifier for shooting at this range. Twice that range is the farthest the weapon can shoot. Shots within this range have their difficulties increased by one. On the other hand, shots made at targets within a yard of the attacker are considered "point-blank"; the difficulty of a point-blank shot is four.

• **Cover:** Intelligent characters use cover to protect themselves from enemy fire. Cover increases the difficulty of

Firefight Complications

Complication	Difficulty	Dice
Changing action	+1	—
Immobilization	-2	—
Long range	+1	—
Point-blank	4	—
Lying flat	+1	—
Behind pole	+2	—
Behind wall	+3	—
Only head exposed	+4	—
Movement	+1	—
Aiming	—	+ Perception
Scope	—	+2
Specific area of target	+2	—
Mutiple shots	+1/extra shot	—
Full-auto	+3	+10
Three-round burst	+1	+3
Spray	5 +1/yard	+10

Firearms Table

Type Example	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Conceal
Revolver, Lt. SW M640 (.38 Special)	6	4	12	3	6	P
Revolver, Hvy. Colt Anaconda (.44 magnum)	7	6	35	2	6	J
Pistol, Lt. Glock-17 (9mm)	7	4	20	4	17+1	P
Pistol, Hvy. Sig P220 (.45 ACP)	8	5	30	3	7+1	J
Rifle Remington M-700 (.30-06)	8	8	200	1	5+1	N
SMG, Small* Ingram Mac-10 (9mm)	7	4	25	3	30+1	J
SMG, Large* Uzi (9mm)	6	4	50	3	32+1	T
Assault Rifle* Steyr-Aug (5.56mm)	7	7	150	3	42+1	N
Shotgun Ithaca M-37 (12-gauge)	6	8	20	1	5+1	T
Shotgun, Semi-auto Fianchi Law-12 (12 gauge)	7	8	20	3	8+1	T

Range: This is the practical range of the gun in yards. A character may fire up to double the listed range; however, that is considered a long-range shot.

Rate: The maximum number of bullets or three-round bursts the gun can fire in a single turn. The rate does not apply to full-auto or spray fire.

Clip: The number of bullets that can be held in one clip or in the barrel. The +1 indicates a bullet can be held in the chamber, making the gun ready to fire.

Concealment: P = can be hidden in a pocket; J = can be hidden inside a jacket; T = can be hidden inside a trenchcoat; N = cannot be hidden on one's person at all.

* indicates the gun is capable of three-round bursts, full-auto fire and sprays.

an attack depending on how much of the character's body is still out in the open. However, though cover protects, it can also hamper return fire, and in some rare instances it can completely prevent any return fire. For instance, ducking out from around a corner to shoot may increase the difficulty by one, while watching a shootout through the cracks in a battered wall prevents a character from firing back at all.

Cover	Difficulty
Lying flat	+1
Behind pole	+2
Behind wall	+3
Only head exposed	+4

• **Movement:** Shooting at a moving target increases the difficulty by one (or even more), as does shooting while moving at any speed faster than a walk (such as firing out the window of a speeding car).

• **Aiming:** A character may add her Perception rating to her Dexterity + Firearms Dice Pool if she spends time aiming. However, it takes one turn for each die added, and during this time the character can do nothing but aim — it takes time and patience to aim. Additionally, the target may not be moving at a speed faster than a walk. Shotguns and SMGs cannot be aimed.

If the gun has a scope, the character may add two dice to her Pool in addition to the dice added for Perception. The scope bonus can only be used once per shot — after the initial three dice added in the first round (two for the scope and one for Perception), the character continues aiming as outlined above.

• **Targeting:** Aiming for a specific location (gun hand, the heart) increases the difficulty by two.

• **Multiple Shots:** If a character wants to take more than one shot in a turn, he must divide his Dice Pool into two or

Melee Weapons Table

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Conceal
Sap	4	Strength	P
Club	4	Strength +1	T
Knife	4	Strength +1	J
Foil	5	Strength +3	T
Saber	6	Strength +4	T
Axe	7	Strength +5	N
Quarterstaff	4	Strength +3	N

more actions. Also, for every additional shot after the first, the difficulty increases by one. Ten is, of course, the maximum number to which the difficulty can be raised. A character can only take as many shots as allowed by the rate of the firearm.

This penalty is cumulative. Thus a character adds two on the third shot, and three on the fourth. It is not usually wise to snap shots off blindly; the recoil always catches up with the gunman. Using these rules, it is permissible to fire two or more three-round bursts in a single turn, though a character can only fire on full-auto once per turn (and must reload to do it again).

• **Full-Auto:** The full-auto option is the most damaging attack a firearm can make, as the attacker unloads the full contents of a gun's ammunition clip within a very short time span. However, the gun becomes a bucking bronco, difficult to control and even harder to aim.

A character gets 10 additional dice to roll on the attack, thus increasing the chance to hit and cause damage. However, the difficulty is raised by two from the recoil.

Full-auto fire can only be done when a weapon has more than half its clip remaining. Whenever a character uses the full-auto option, he uses up the entire clip of the weapon. Reloading takes one full action and requires the character's full concentration (and Dice Pool).

• **Three-Round Burst:** The semi-auto option is the middle ground between the full-auto and the single-shot options, and has some of the strengths and weaknesses of both. A burst gives the attacker three additional dice on the attack roll. However, the recoil increases the difficulty by one.

• **Spray:** When on full-auto, a character can decide to spray across an area instead of focusing on one foe. A spray uses the extra 10 dice given by full-auto fire, but the attack has a base difficulty of five, increased by one for every yard covered by the spray, in addition to other modifiers.

The player divides any successes gained on the attack roll evenly between all targets in the covered area. However, if only one target is in the sprayed area, only half the successes affect him. The player then assigns any leftover successes as she desires. If the attacker rolls fewer successes than there are targets, the player may only assign one to a target until they are used up. This attack also empties the clip.

The difficulty of a dodge roll against a spray is increased by two.

Brawling Table

Maneuver	Accuracy	Damage
Punch	6	Strength
Grapple	6	Strength
Kick	7	Strength +1
Body slam	7	Special; see Options

Melee and Brawling Complications

• **Multiple Opponents:** If a character is battling multiple opponents in close combat, that character's attack and dodge difficulties are increased by one per opponent (to a maximum of 10).

• **Flank and Rear Attacks:** The difficulty of a flank attack is lowered by one, while that of a rear attack is lowered by two.

• **Grapple:** An attacker can try to grab a foe, hoping to immobilize him and subsequently crush him. If the attacker scores more successes than the opponent's Strength, the attacker can immobilize him. In the next round, she can begin to inflict harm. Any character struck by this attack loses his attacks for the current turn.

If the attacker misses altogether (by failing the Dexterity + Brawl roll), she is knocked down and must spend an action getting to her feet.

Continuing to grapple during each turn after the first requires the combatants to make opposed Strength + Brawl rolls. Whoever accumulates more successes may immobilize the other. If both score the same number of successes, neither gains the upper hand this turn.

• **Body Slam:** A character may also try to charge forward, hurling his weight into his opponent in an attempt to damage her. It is possible to damage oneself with this attack, as bodies were not meant to be used as battering rams. A character needs three successes to unbalance an opponent and does one Health Level of damage to himself for every success fewer than three.

If the attack succeeds, the opponent is thrown off balance, and the difficulties for the rest of her actions for this round are increased by two. Also, if the opponent does not succeed in a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty of the successes + 3), she falls to the ground. The base damage done by the attacker equals his Strength; each success scored on the attack roll above the minimum adds one to this base. If the attacker does not roll at least three successes, this maneuver fails; he falls to the ground and is treated as though he had no dice left in his Pool.

Magick in Combat

Using magick doesn't complicate combat very much at all. If the mage's effect requires use of a Sphere for which he still relies on a focus, the mage must make his initiative roll at a higher difficulty than normal. This difficulty is determined by the focus; see Chapter Seven for a complete listing.

If the mage does not need a focus to create the desired magickal effect, then the usual Initiative roll is made (Wits + Alertness, difficulty 4), and the mage may cast a spell as a normal action. Magick willed into existence without the use of props happens instantaneously, though some coincidences used to explain the magick may still take time to unfold. Work these incidents into the flow of the story as required.

Chapter Seven contains all the details of how to use magick. Keep in mind that too many things occurring at once can be distracting, so if you are at a tense point in the story and a Paradox backlash is indicated, you may decide to overlook it for now and simply declare a botch on a spell the mage casts later (even though the mage may make that roll!).

Coincidences in Combat

While mages are not adverse to carrying guns (especially when their weapons are enchanted Talismans), they primarily rely on magick to subdue their foes during combat. Innumerable coincidental effects can occur in combat, but to get your fiendishly clever juices flowing, a few of them are listed below.

• **Firefight:** the bullet hit the whiskey flask in your pocket; the opponent's gun jams; the opponent's gun is not loaded; his shot happens to miss the lung by an inch; your shot is that inch closer; a bullet ricochets off several surfaces and hits the gunman; the rifle's sight is crooked just enough to compensate for your bad shooting; the gun you picked up has a full clip or is specially modified to hold a larger clip; you trip to the ground just as an assassin fires a bullet at you.

• **Melee and Brawling:** he misses you and his weapon lodges in a door; you have a secret ankle sheath; her weapon gets snagged in her sheath as she draws it; your shot pinches a nerve; he falls on his funny bone; his old back pain (or war wound) flares up; she slips on something or loses her weapon; he has a glass jaw; blood runs into her eyes so she can't see clearly.

• **Damaging your opponent:** he twists a leg (maybe it breaks); a car swerves off the road and hits her; his brakes fail; the fall knocks the breath out of her; a piece of Skylab hits her on the head; the blow doesn't seem to do much, but induces internal hemorrhaging; your punch is just right and drives fragments of the nose into the brain; she misses you and breaks her hand against the wall; the fence is electrocuted; a gas main blows; there are sharks in the water; it's not a tub of water — it's sulfuric acid; the TV blows up and sprays glass across the room.

Armor

A character with body armor can add dice to her soak rolls. Different types of body armor have different armor ratings, which are the number of extra dice rolled on a soak roll. Certain types of armor restrict body motion, and thus penalize the character's Dexterity rolls (any rolls involving this Attribute have their difficulties raised by an amount equal to the penalty).

Armor Chart

Class	Armor Rating	Penalty
Class One (reinforced clothing)	1	0
Class Two (armor T-shirt)	2	1
Class Three (vest)	3	2
Class Four (flak jacket)	4	3
Class Five (full suit)	6	4

Example of Play

Story Section

Welcome, thou kind deceiver!
Thou best of thieves; who, with an easy key,
Dost open life, and, unperceived by us,
Even steal us from ourselves.
— John Dryden, "All For Love"

Rembrandt studied the large corporate building as he crouched in the bushes. The structure was darkened glass and glimmering steel, clawing its way into the nighttime sky. An involuntary shiver ran down Rembrandt's spine when he thought of the treachery which had brought him to this Technomancer monolith.

"Are you almost ready?" he impatiently hissed at his companion. Maximillian Gadfrey gave no response as he flipped through several pages of parchment, chanting in Latin and grasping his medallion of two interlocking triangles.

Rembrandt nervously reached in his pocket and pulled out his computer, just to make sure it was safe. It was small, black and very sleek. He rubbed his hand over the smooth plastic surface and smiled. Next to him, Max stopped chanting. Rem had just enough time to see his colleague grin and then they both faded from view.

"Now, my dear Virtual Adept," Max's voice issued from thin air, "see what study and practice can achieve." Rembrandt rolled his invisible eyes and sighed.

"How long will this last?" Rembrandt asked. "I'll need some time at that door."

"Long enough," Max's voice insisted. "You just take care of the cameras and electronic locks."

"Fine," Rembrandt replied quietly. "Let's do this."

Both men, cloaked in the Hermetic mage's rote of invisibility, sprinted across the landscaped lawn and under the lights and cameras of the office building. Reaching the front doors, Rembrandt immediately made his way to the electronic keypad that controlled access to the building.

Rem took a moment to collect his thoughts, then placed his hand on the keypad. He could sense the electrical network connecting the building's cameras, locks and other security devices. Focusing, he proceeded to interrupt the flow of power to the door's locking mechanism. He was rewarded with an audible click as the electronic locks slid from their housings.

"Excellent," Max whispered. "Let us go. My invisibility will shield us from the cameras ..."

"No," Rem whispered in a strained voice, his brow furrowed. "I can do more from here." Rem concentrated on the electricity flowing through the entire building. He

Rules Section

But my true mission is just revenge
You ain't my set, you ain't my friend
Wear the wrong colors your life can end
Homicide's my favorite binge.
— Ice-T, "Colors"

Keith ended last week's story with a surprise for his players, Travis and Josh. Nera, a local mage, cheated their characters out of Quintessence and revealed herself as part of the Technocracy. Now the two want to even the score. Travis' character is a Virtual Adept named Rembrandt. Josh's character is the Order of Hermes mage, Maximillian Gadfrey. They have decided to pay Nera a little visit.

Keith makes sure it will take hard work, cooperation and not a little luck to make this go down the way the players want. No matter what they do, Keith wants them both to know they have been in a fight. Nera had promised them quite a bit of Quintessence for the heist they pulled off against the New World Order. Now both mages decide to enter the Prudential Building in search of their mutual "pal."

Josh decides that in order for their plan to work correctly, invisibility is in order. He checks his Spheres and decides that he does have enough to render both Rem and Max invisible. As a matter of fact, the rote called Veil of Invisibility is exactly the one he wants. Making sure that no Sleepers are watching them become "unseen," Josh tells Keith that he will render them both invisible.

Max has a Forces rating of three and a Life rating of four, so this rote is well within his power. Josh tells Keith that Max will chant steadily (Order of Hermes requirement for Life) and clutch the Seal of Solomon on his necklace. Keith looks at the rote Veil of Invisibility and determines that it will be enough to make them invisible. However, the rote was designed to affect one person. Josh reminds Keith that three successes must be acheived to affect his general area. So Josh tells Travis that Rembrandt had better stay close when he completes this rote.

As Veil of Invisibility is Forces two and Life three the difficulty is six (highest Sphere in the rote +3). Josh will have to roll three sixes in order to produce this effect. Knowing that this rote is vulgar in the extreme, Max does not want to risk acquiring Paradox. He spends two points of Quintessence (his Prime Sphere is two) to lower his target number to four and rolls his entire magick pool (his rating in Arete) .

Taking the dice in his hands and rolling them, Josh wishes for good luck and throws them across the table. 4,5,1,6,7 — three successes exactly. Barely having made the roll (no thanks to his one botch), Josh breathes easier as Max and Rembrandt fade from view.

could sense the various connections — their delicate, sensitive, web-like structures. With a smirk, he sent a surge of staggering magnitude traveling through the matrix, disrupting everything in its path. The building went dark as all systems crashed. The emergency lighting came on as the backup systems activated.

"Whoa," Rembrandt sighed, wiping the sweat from his brow.

"Rembrandt, what the hell are you doing?"

"Drop your rote," Rembrandt said, shooting a contemptuous but invisible glance at his scholarly companion. "I've taken care of the building's security."

They entered the building and, once safely in the foyer, Maximillian let his rote disperse. Not wasting any time, the pair of mages entered a stairwell, making it less likely for them to encounter any roaming security guards.

"Nera will be expecting us," Max whispered, his eyes dancing with mischief.

"She should be," Rem grunted. "After crossing us, she ran to her Syndicate allies, thinking they would protect her. Fool."

"I know she's here," Max said, glancing at a camera mounted in the stairwell. "You sure that thing is not operational? I would hate to meet Nera if she were able to pinpoint us precisely. She is not unskilled in the art of magick."

After approaching the door they find it secured by an electronic lock. Travis tells Keith his character will trip the lock with a power surge using Forces. Forces at Rank Two allows control over the Lesser Forces, one of which is electricity. Ordinarily the difficulty would be five (Forces two plus three), but Keith rules that using Forces this way is more difficult. He raises the difficulty by two for the fine-tuning that Rem must accomplish, and rules that the difficulty will be seven.

Travis decides that Rem will pause and spend extra time on this effect. This lowers his difficulty to six. Confident that he can pull this off, Travis rolls only three dice — 7,7,1. Rem places his hand on the keypad, the power surge runs through the locking mechanism, and the door locks swing open.

Now that he has opened the door, Rem needs to take out the security system. Rem uses the lock as a focus to shut the system down. Looking at his Correspondence Sphere, Travis finds that Rembrandt's Sphere rating is high enough for him to use Correspondence Sensing. Travis wants Rem to use his magick to find out where the fuse box is so that he can short it out.

This effect is a Correspondence two effect and thus the difficulty will be five (Correspondence two plus three). Spending two points of Quintessence lowers his target number to three. Travis uses all of Rem's magick pool to locate the power box. He rolls five dice (his Arete score), which come up 4,5,7,3,6. All right! With five successes in Correspondence

"Neither are we," Rembrandt sneered. "Now let's do this."

"So you keep saying," Max sighed. "How do you want to go about it?"

Rembrandt reached to his waist and pulled out his pistol. He checked the clip, slid it into place and pulled back the slide. The sound of the .45 caliber shell being chambered brought a smile to his face. "Let's take the fight to that double-crossing Techno-bitch," Rem snarled.

Maximillian nodded and smiled, his mind already conjuring up several offensive spells involving fire. He so loved fire.

"It will take both of us to achieve this. Are you ready?" Max asked, arching one eyebrow inquisitively.

Rembrandt slid his pistol into his belt and pulled out his computer. He flipped the screen up and smiled as a blue-white glow issued from the small device. He could feel the power — his power — flowing through this tiny machine. Rembrandt began to write a program. It took several minutes to compile and debug, but when it was complete, he had a file called: LOCATE.MAG. While he was typing, Max chanted in Latin, then fell silent, waiting. Rembrandt met Max's gaze and the Hermetic mage nodded once, slowly. Rem ran his program.

The screen filled with characters, scrolling past at incredible speed. Then came the final input line: **C\> command?**

"Give me the command words," Rem hissed, "and prepare yourself." Max simply nodded gravely.

"Magi Translocus Magus Domus!" the Hermetic mage exclaimed. Rembrandt punched in the words as they issued from Maximillian's lips and stabbed the **<ENTER>** key.

There was a moment of disorientation as reality warped around them, and then they stood on firm ground. They were in an austere room decorated in blacks, whites and grays. An imposing desk of dark wood was framed by a large window through which the city could be glimpsed. Behind this desk sat a radiantly beautiful woman, her dark eyes reflecting the light of a computer screen. She looked startled when Maximillian and Rembrandt appeared, but only for a moment.

"Maximillian. Rembrandt. You should not have come here." She rose to her feet.

"How could you expect us not to?" Rembrandt demanded. "You cheated us out of a very valuable commodity. Quintessence does not come easy."

"You will die for your deception, Nera," Max intoned in a grim voice. "By my hands." Maximillian's eyes darkened to a deep, burning crimson and a nimbus of fire sprang up around each of his hands.

Rem could have seen anywhere on Earth. Too bad all he needed to know was where the fusebox was. Rem touches the keypad, extending his sight through the power lines in the building, and finds the fusebox.

Now that he can see the fusebox, it is within line of sight. He might need this later to help him with the target number. Travis decides that Rembrandt will overload the box with a bolt of electricity. Casting a bolt of energy is simply a Forces effect; this is also a coincidental effect, as electrical devices are prone to power surges and short circuits all the time.

Using his Correspondence of two and his Forces of two, Travis explains that Rembrandt will direct a bolt of electricity through the electrical matrix and overload the fuse box, which is now considered to be in his line of sight. The normal difficulty would be five (highest Sphere rating + 3), but Keith decides that this effect is fairly specific; however, he only imposes a +1 difficulty penalty, as Rembrandt took the extra time to locate the fusebox. Travis' difficulty is now six.

Travis knows that this needs to be a spectacular effect, so he spends a point of Quintessence to lower his difficulty to five and decides to use a point of Willpower to gain at least one automatic success. He now rolls his full Arete pool of five dice and gets 8,4,6,5,3. Three successes, plus the one from his Willpower, are just enough to render the range for the intended effect as line-of-sight (according to the General Effect Chart). Keith rules that the fusebox is shorted out and the building goes dark, but the emergency lighting and other backup systems are still operational. If Travis had acquired five successes, even these electrical systems would have been fried.

Entering the building and making their way to the stairway, the two mages discuss how they want to approach Nera. Both are aware that she is a member of the Technocracy and are thankful that they have robbed her of her cameras, locks and eye beams. Josh looks to Travis for the lead, knowing that as a Virtual Adept, Rembrandt is more in touch with the Technocracy. Travis decides that he wants to take the fight to Nera. Josh and Travis both know that this will be a cooperative conjunctional effect — very tricky.

Travis has Rem use his computer (the Correspondence focus for Virtual Adepts) to write a program that can both locate Nera and transport them to her immediate vicinity. The act of locating Nera is a conjunctional Correspondence and Life effect, requiring a rating of at least two in Correspondence but only one in Life. However, the act of transporting them requires a rating of three in Correspondence. If the two mages simply wanted to locate Nera, the difficulty would be five, but because they also want to appear at her location the difficulty goes to six (highest Sphere +3).

Both mages possess sufficient skill in the two Spheres to evoke the effect. Rem writes his program while Max chants in a mystical tongue (language is the Order of Hermes' focus). Both Travis and Josh decide to spend a point of Quintessence and use their full Arete Dice Pools. The effect they are attempting is vulgar magick, and any botches on this roll will have disastrous consequences shared by both mages (because

it is a cooperative effect). With their difficulties now lowered to five, both players roll their dice. Travis rolls a 5,6,4,6,9 for Rembrandt while Josh rolls 3,3,7,8,5 for Maximillian. Their total combined successes are seven — enough to locate Nera and shift everything in their immediate vicinity to her location.

Nera is understandably surprised when both mages arrive. Keith has her threaten the two mages, wanting to make Josh and Travis sweat a bit. After a brief bit of dialogue, Josh decides to get things going by having Maximillian power up for an offensive attack involving fire; it will undoubtedly be vulgar magick.

The game will continue from here. Who knows if Travis and Josh will triumph over the treasonous Technomancer, or if Nera will grind them under the world-encompassing might of the Technocracy?

APPENDIX

When there is too much information to sustain any *theory, information becomes essentially meaningless.*
— Neil Postman, *Technopoly*

Other Storyteller Games

Mage is one of several White Wolf roleplaying games using the Storyteller system. Two other complete games — **Vampire: The Masquerade** and **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** — are already available. Because you are holding a Storyteller game, any volume in our **World of Darkness** series can complement your chronicle. All of these games have the Storyteller game system in common, and all are compatible.

The most obvious application for another game, such as **Vampire**, in **Mage** is as a wellspring of fresh antagonists. Such supernatural opponents are especially mysterious because they are unknowns. No matter how little you give away during character creation, **Mage** players begin with some knowledge of the enemies characters face. This is only fair, but imagine the first time characters discover that there is more on heaven and earth than dreamed of in their metaphysics. Chapter Three provides some ideas for cross-cultural stories.

Better yet, one or more players could create characters from different supernatural cultures. Imagine the richness and diversity of stories in which mages, vampires and werewolves interact... simultaneously! Of course, the dilemma lies in explaining the formation of such a mixed group — suspension of disbelief only goes so far. To galvanize your imagination, the section below provides 10 reasons for player characters of different cultures to interact. After the first story, assume that the characters become friends... or at least grudging allies.

Ten Reasons for Interaction

It's a hybrid of me — I'm a hybrid of he
You're a misfit for me — I'm a misfit for you
In limbo
Do you speak the lingo?
— Siouxsie and the Banshees, "Hybrid"

• A mage of the Euthanatos Tradition may have one or more Kindred as followers or allies. As blood-suckers, they make great agents of death; as undead, they need not worry about being rewarded with a Good Death. Perhaps mage and Kindred team up after discovering they're stalking the same powerful prey. An undying mummy makes a great antagonist for such a group.

• Garou of the Theurge auspice or Uktena tribe might realize the limits of their magickal perception and wish to learn more from a mage. First contact would probably be with a Dreamspeaker in the spirit world.

• After the rise of the Technocracy at the end of the Middle Ages, magi of the Order of Hermes found their power weakening. This distressing reality prompted the members of House Tremere to formulate a plan for preserving their magic. By powerful means, they transformed themselves into vampires, thus preserving and passing on the magic through their bloodline. Some of these Kindred warlocks now wish to rejoin mage society. Certain Tremere may "apprentice" themselves to player mages.

• Dreamspeakers feel their plans would proceed much more smoothly if Gaia would awaken a bit. Currently, she sleeps feverishly, consumed by a virus werewolves call the Wyrm. As Garou are the immune system of Gaia, Dreamspeakers might assist them in their struggles.

• Kindred and Garou can and sometimes perform feats impossible for mages. Yet they remain untroubled by the forces of Paradox. To learn why this is so, any mage (but particularly a Son of Ether) might do some "field work" among these cultures.

• The lowest common denominator between mages and Kindred is a common heritage: humanity. Therefore, the mundane ties of friendship, love, family or the workplace are perfectly acceptable rationales for stories. By the same token, Garou appear human half the time and have Kinfolk in the mortal world.

• Question: What do you get by combining ambitious Glass Walker or Bone Gnawer Garou, traitorous Virtual Adepts or Sons of Ether, and any anarchistic Kindred character? Answer: a kick-butt urban chronicle. This triple alliance decides to overthrow the power behind a small city — a vampire prince, an exceptional pattern spider, a Technomancer Chantry, or all three!

• Practically the only mortal group not under supernatural control is the Arcanum. This makes it weak, but a threat nonetheless, for mages, vampires and werewolves all value secrecy. What if a member compiles notes on a number of different "magickal" beings — the players' characters, naturally! Because vampires have been ordered not to interfere with the Arcanum, a Kindred might contact a mage for help. Perhaps all the characters arrive at the Arcanum data vault simultaneously. What an extraordinary coincidence...

• Many vampires pursue the exalted state of Golconda. Mages pursue the similar transcendence of Arete. A vampire on the path to Golconda might seek the aid of a mage.

• A complete stranger (a mummy character) shows up at a mage's front door, acting like the two have known each other forever. They have, almost. For over 2,000 years, the mummy has pursued a friendship with the mage's Avatar through each of its mortal incarnations. The Avatar (and thus the mage) may even owe the mummy a big favor.

Antagonists

Mages face threats from many fronts. Provided here are statistics for a variety of different foes.

Governments

At some time in the life cycle of virtually every organization, its ability to succeed in spite of itself runs out.
— Brien's First Law

How much do the world governments suspect? How much do they know? How firmly are they under the control of mages or other supernatural entities? It's hard to say. Many governments have agencies or departments devoted to the investigation of paranormal occurrences; many of these, especially on the military end, seem to be devoted to extrasensory phenomena such as ESP, clairvoyance and telekinesis.

Rumors circulate that the United States government funds some special research, designated "Project PSI," and has achieved a measure of success! Has the government managed to Awaken test subjects? And what about the number of mages who have disappeared in the last few years...? In general, though, these departments seem to be concentrating on their own "ground-breaking" research.

Britain also has an organization devoted to the investigation of the paranormal, but it is very difficult to trace. Some people suspect that it is actually of a quasi-mystical nature, possibly with ties to similar organizations dating back hundreds of years (in any event, British mages report instances wherein Scotland Yard has investigated mage-related inci-

dents with unnerving accuracy). Some say that a vampire actually controls this group, using it to combat her enemies.

In the United States, interest in mage activity can be traced to two agencies: the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Security Agency.

The FBI might contain several individuals who suspect the truth. There is even a special department devoted to the investigation of the paranormal. Originally formed to neutralize the impact of suspected "Communist Thought Control" research, this department, known generally as Special Affairs (though its members rarely identify themselves as such) is involved in continuing investigations. It is believed that some of Special Affairs' investigations into paranormal activities in the '50s and '60s may have uncovered some mage-related information. Despite this, Special Affairs has dwindled significantly in power and members over the years. Proof of suspected activities is demanded by the FBI before action can be taken, and proof is what has thus far eluded the department. Circumstantial evidence of magickal activity no doubt abounds, but that last, necessary piece of tangible evidence has escaped Special Affairs — so far.

It is believed that the NSA keeps an active file on supernatural events, especially significant paradoxes, but treats it as a subclassification of terrorism. The agency has not yet made the connections that would reveal the whole picture. The NSA is a giant fact-sifting agency concerned with national security from an internal perspective. The NSA flags police and news reports that contain interesting or anomalous (read: paradoxical) facts. Investigation only occurs after the computer, or a reviewer, notices undue occurrences that may be related. Should the NSA actually deduce any significant mage-related connections, the resources that could be brought to bear are truly frightening.

Police Officer: At one time or another, mages will find themselves on the wrong side of the law, whether through their own folly or some devious plan of the Storyteller. Most local cops patrol in police cruisers. Help is only a radio call away; usually one to five other cars arrive within minutes of an emergency call. In extreme emergencies, up to 50 other police officers can be called in to help within 10 minutes (at least in a city).

Character Creation: Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 15/9/3, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 6.

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 2, except for Physical Traits where you can assume ratings of 3.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 1, Computer 1, Dodge 2, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Investigation 2, Law 2, Leadership 1, Melee 1, Police Procedure 3, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1, Technology 1.

Equipment: Lt. Revolver, Lt. Auto. Pistol, Pump Shotgun, Billy Club, Handcuffs, Radio, Badge, Flashlight.

Police Detective: Police detectives are called to the scenes of murders and other major crimes. They are the

Roses" brand) that many of both groups' best practitioners and scholars left their respective orders. After drafting a great Charter, these dissidents united to form the Arcanum. This order persists to this day.

Though the Arcanum has only formally been in existence for less than 100 years, its history dates back even farther. The core of the Arcanum consists of a group that has branded itself the "White Monks." It is believed that these so-called White Monks were somehow involved in the Inquisition, and learned of mages there. However, they are not currently connected with the Inquisition, and never actually engage in witch hunts. The Arcanum studies, but does not destroy.

The Arcanum has three known Foundation houses — one in Boston, one in Paris, and a third in Vienna. Its members, recruited from the cream of intellectual society, are today concerned more with theory than practice. They seem solely devoted to the gathering and study of occult-related information, but are focused primarily on the past rather than the modern world. There are some members who have shown a degree of interest in the here and now, but these members, and the Arcanum itself, likely believe mages and magick long gone, if they even ever existed beyond folklore. The Arcanum as a whole seems to be more interested in phenomena of a less tangible nature: magic, miracles and hauntings.

The existence of the Arcanum does cause mages some concern, for they wish to keep the Sleepers unaware of the magickal forces of the world. A miscalculation on the mages' part could lead the Arcanum to their doors.

Scholar: These intellectuals are involved in the gathering and classification of paranormal matters of all sorts, including alleged magick use. They are not interested in violent confrontation with the supernatural and will avoid such at all costs. When in the field, investigators operate in groups of two to four to provide witnesses and greater safety.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/6/3, Abilities 15/9/3, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 10.

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 2, except for Charisma, Intelligence, and Manipulation, which should be 3or even 4.

Suggested Abilities: Bureaucracy 2, Culture 2, Drive 1, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 4, Linguistics 4, Occult 4, Research 5, Science 3, Subterfuge 2. Those who routinely perform field work — photographing ghosts, collecting ectoplasm, measuring the "magical" energy of ley lines — often possess Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Intuition 3, Medicine 1, Survival 1.

Equipment: Automobile, various "gadgets," investigative paraphernalia.

Vampires

Tragically hip murderers who can kill mortals simply because they're cooler than mortals...

—Christopher Kubasik, *White Wolf Magazine (#33)*

Vampires are creatures of cities. They feed off the human population of urban areas. Along with the Technomancers, vampires are largely responsible for the unchecked growth of urban sprawls.

Vampires subsist on human blood, and derive many special powers from it. A vampire who has recently feasted on blood is usually much stronger and faster than a mortal. The Blood Pool listing below takes this into consideration. A vampire may use one Blood Point to: increase a Physical Attribute up to 5 (and sometimes higher); or heal one Health Level (except for damage caused by fire, sunlight, magick, or the teeth and claws of supernatural entities). Vampires also have superhuman abilities equivalent to Sphere magick. While their powers are not subject to Paradox, Vampires usually maintain a mask when among mortals.

Elder Vampire: While there are many types of vampires, of varying degrees of power, elder vampires are the ones whom mages most commonly encounter. They are the princes of their urban realms and often dominate a city's politics. Elder vampires have potent blood and have survived between 300 and 1000 years, and thus have considerable inherent powers. The vampire stats below represent a traditional Western variety.

Character Creation: Attributes 10/7/5, Abilities 21/9/3, Backgrounds 12, Willpower 8, Spheres 9, Blood Pool 20.

Suggested Attributes: Assume a rating of 4 in each Social, 3 in each Mental, and 2 in each Physical Attribute.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Culture 1, Dodge 3, Etiquette 3, Expression 1, Intimidation 4, Intuition 1, Melee 2, Occult 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4.

Suggested Spheres: Forces 2, Life 3, Mind 3, Spirit 1 (choose one power for each rating of a Sphere as you would do for a Minion).

Equipment: Outdated but Expensive Clothing, Tinted Glasses, Pocket Watch, Sword Cane.

Ghoul: Many vampires create ghouls. This is accomplished by giving a mortal or animal some vampire blood without first draining the creature of its own life force. Because ghouls are essentially mortals, no statistics are given; use human or animal stats, maybe with slight additions to Physical Attributes (particularly Strength).

Special Rules: So long as ghouls imbibe vampire blood regularly, they can live forever. However, once the point of their natural lifespan has passed, ghouls must always have vampire blood in their systems, or they will age and die very quickly — within a few days, or perhaps even a few hours. Ghouls can use the blood within them in precisely the same manner as vampires do (i.e., to increase stats and heal). Assume ghouls have one to 10 Blood Points, depending on the generosity of their master.

Werewolves

The acrid air is heavy
with hate and a question
hangs in the haze —
when will you rage?

— Mark Rein•Hagen, *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*

Werewolves tend to live in tightly knit tribes and operate in "packs" of between two and 10 members. They are quite ritualistic and rustic in outlook. Werewolves are very secretive, insular and xenophobic. Many mages who have stumbled upon their territory in the real world or the Near Umbra have been hunted down and executed. Dreamspeakers, who have the most frequent contact with werewolves, say they are ferocious fighters and skilled shamans. It is most dangerous to gain their enmity. On most nights of the full moon, whole tribes of werewolves go on mad rampages; all those caught in their path — mortal or otherwise — are slain.

Though not enemies of the mages, werewolves will eliminate any who seek to despoil their Domains (called caerns) for vulgar Quintessence trapped therein. They are as secretive as vampires and mages.

Typical Werewolf: Like vampire clans and mage Traditions, each werewolf tribe has a different philosophical bent. The werewolves themselves have variable skills and aptitudes depending on the lifestyles of their human halves. The stats below reflect a country hick, hot and hairy under the collar, whom you would not want to anger...

Character Creation: Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 15/9/3, Backgrounds 5, Willpower 8, Spheres 3.

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 2, except in Physical where you can assume 3.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Enigmas 1, Intimidation 2, Intuition 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Stealth 3, Survival 4.

Suggested Spheres: Forces 1, Prime 1, Spirit 1 (choose one power for each rating of a Sphere as you would do for a Minion).

Special Rules: Werewolves have three forms — man, wolf and wolfman. The first two are quite mundane. When in wolfman form, however, a werewolf adds three dots to all Physical Attributes, can regenerate one Health Level per turn (except for damage caused by silver, fire, magick, or the teeth and claws of a supernatural entity), and is immune to dice penalties for being wounded. Werewolves also automatically possess one very potent power of the Spirit Sphere—they can step sideways into the Near Umbra.

In addition, werewolves seem to provoke reactions of uncontrollable fear in un-Awakened beings who view them. Though mages are obviously immune to this crippling phobia, their companions may well be affected.

Equipment: Rugged Outdoor Clothing, Swiss Army Knife (or Hunting Knife), Bead Necklace or Other Token, Rifle or Shotgun.

Mages

It is one thing to believe in levitation when you see it, it is another thing entirely to believe in miracles.

— Richard Bach, *Illusions*

The following guidelines allow you to create mages of varying ability.

Disciple: These mages are seeking enlightenment, and have achieved only moderate prowess in the Spheres (Ranks Three and lower).

Character Creation: Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 13/9/5, Backgrounds 5, Willpower 5, Spheres 6, Arete 1-3.

Adept: These mages have reached a level where their perception becomes very different from that of other mages. They have gathered personal power (Rank Four in at least one Sphere) and usually have the sense and responsibility to wield it properly.

Character Creation: Attributes 8/6/3, Abilities 19/10/5, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 8, Spheres 20, Arete 4-6.

Master: These mages have Mastered (attained Rank Five in) at least one of the nine Spheres (and perhaps more). Their vision may have so expanded that humans are blurred from their world-picture, as they look upward to the Oracles.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/6/4, Abilities 22/10/6, Backgrounds 10, Willpower 10, Spheres 30, Arete 8+.

Despite their alleged common denominator of Ascension, mages bicker and compete with depressing frequency. Rival mages are often terrible annoyances, as illustrated by the following fellow:

Gregor Sorenson

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Gallant

Essence: Dynamic

Tradition: Sons of Ether

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Attributes: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Intimidation 2, Intuition 3, Subterfuge 4, Etiquette 3, Firearms 4, Meditation 1, Melee 2, Survival 2, Cosmology 2, Culture 5, Linguistics 5, Occult 4

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Forces 4, Life 2, Matter 3, Prime 3, Spirit 3

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Avatar 2, Talisman 5

Willpower: 6

Arete: 4

Quintessence: 10

Paradox: 4

Notes: Sorenson is a magickal pirate, combing the earth and the dimensions in search of rarities magickal and mundane. He is clever and cunning, but possesses neither the creative brilliance nor the gifts inherent to mages of true

cosmic importance. Thus, Sorenson resorts to theft: theft of ideas, theft of knowledge and theft of actual physical items such as tass and Talismans. He has an extensive collection of Talismans stolen from rival mages and plundered from the hoards of beings best left undisturbed (many of these latter would give much to learn the identity of the thief).

Sorenson uses his Correspondence and Spirit Spheres to spy on the gatherings of other mages and to travel the Umbra in search of loot. If mage characters are planning an expedition to gather Quintessence, rare tomes or Talismans, Sorenson (or another like him) is a possible complication.

Sorenson is a tall, dark-haired man. He dresses impeccably and sports a thin mustache. A variety of bizarre weapons and Talismans hang from bandoliers, belts and sashes on his body (more for purposes of intimidation than combat). He swaggers and speaks to his opponent in exaggerated, sarcastically polite tones.

He has two allies, brought back with him from parts unknown: the first is a bad-tempered brute that seems to be a hybrid of mantis, goat and platypus; the other appears as a swirling, nebulous vortex of crackling energy approximately three feet in diameter. Sorenson carries a pistol that appears to be an antique flintlock, but mimics the properties of the Peacemaker Talisman.

Technomancers

...scientists simplify, they abstract, they eliminate all that, for their purposes, is irrelevant and ignore whatever they choose to regard as inessential; they impose a style, they compel the facts to verify a favorite hypothesis, they consign to the waste-paper basket all that, to their mind, falls short of perfection.

— Aldous Huxley

Technomancers are themselves mages, and they have a variety of servants. Examples of a Technomancer and of these servants are provided here.

Dr. Heinrich Wernerschnuder

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Visionary

Convention: Progenitors

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 1, Firearms 2, Technology 4, Computer 1, Linguistics 3, Medicine 4, Science 5

Spheres: Life 4, Matter 2, Mind 2, Prime 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 1, Talisman 4

Willpower: 6

Arete: 4

Quintessence: 12

Paradox: 5

Notes: Dr. Heinrich Wernerschnuder was a scientist in the service of the Third Reich, and was instrumental in the

development of weapons for Germany. Though not particularly enamored of the Nazi cause (in fact, he held Einstein in high esteem), he was unfairly accused of war crimes at the war's end and forced to flee to Argentina. There he met a *brujeria* (sorcerer) who Awakened his latent Avatar. The magic of the Traditions held little appeal for Wernerschnuder, and he joined the Progenitors in 1953, shortly after Watson and Crick discovered DNA.

Wernerschnuder now spends most of his time ensconced amid the labs of the Technomancers. Latent ideals of the "master race" have inspired the doctor to spend most of his time in a fanatical quest to create the "perfect human." Alas, to date Wernerschnuder has failed. Many of his failures shamble and crawl about the lower levels of his lab; Wernerschnuder occasionally uses these failures as guards, fodder for experiments, and assassins.

Wernerschnuder appears as a trim middle-aged man in good health (steady use of Life magick has extended his lifespan). His Talisman is a particle beam weapon given to him by his brethren in Iteration X (identical to the Peacemaker from the list of example Talismans).

Hyper Intelligence Technologies Mark V

These mechanical men are the grunt soldiers of Iteration X. They are very dangerous foes because most mages cannot always use powerful magick against the mechanical monsters (HIT Marks possess countermagickal alloys).

HIT Marks vary in appearance, so that each appears as a unique man or woman — except for the eyes. A flicker of laser-red flashes in a HIT Mark's eyes every few seconds. HIT Marks have extensive programming in most Abilities.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2.

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, all Skills 3 (except Meditation and Stealth), all Knowledges 3 (except Cosmology and Occult)

Spheres: none

Arete: 0

Willpower: 5

Quintessence: 0

Paradox: 0

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, Destroyed

Armor Rating: 4

Attacks: Chain gun (200 rounds; damage as a shotgun, all other stats as an assault rifle); claws (Str + 3 damage)

Innate Countermagick: All HIT Marks are covered with a layer of a magickal alloy rendering them somewhat impervious to magick. HIT Marks gain two free dice of countermagick against all magickal attacks.

Men in Black

The mysterious Men in Black are the servants of the New World Order. These mysterious black-clad warriors are the personification of their intimidating parent Convention. The mere presence of the Men in Black seems to sap the spirits of everyone in their vicinity. This effect is actually evoked by their Mind Sphere, used coincidentally through their ominous garb and intimidating presence.

The true nature of the Men in Black is unknown. Mind probes turn up no thoughts or memories; Life magick shows their bodies to be healthy yet somehow hollow, as if lacking souls; Spirit magick detects an ominous spiritual aura about them. Beneath their all-black costumes, Men in Black are pale and hairless, with few if any distinguishing features. They have the annoying habit of melting to nothingness within a few moments after they are killed, an effect that somehow never calls a Paradox spirit. In fact, Men in Black are often unaffected by Paradox. In short, they are the perfect unholy implements of the New World Order.

The Men travel in organized groups of individuals that complement each other. Each specializes in two Spheres and works with others in the group to create conjunctional effects that are deemed necessary; otherwise, they use magick independently.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 5, Athletics 2, Dodge 2, Intuition 3, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Meditation 2, Melee 3, Stealth 5, Enigmas 1, Investigation 3, Occult 1

Spheres: Two at 3

Backgrounds: Arcane 3

Willpower: 8

Arete: 3

Quintessence: varies

Paradox: varies

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -2, -2, -5, Vaporized

Superiors

The Progenitors have been successful in some simple (to them) genetic engineering experiments. Among their achievements is the creation of a "perfect" human specimen. Perfectly physically, that is — Superiors have psychotic tendencies and their intelligence regresses over time.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Firearms 4, Melee 4

Willpower: 3

Arete: 0

Quintessence: 0

Paradox: 3

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Terminated

Innate Countermagick: All Superiors automatically receive two dice of countermagick defense versus any magickal attack.

Marauders and Beasts of the Mythic Age

The dreaded Marauders are the scourge of Technomancers and Tradition mages alike. They seek to turn the world into a seething maelstrom of wild magic, where the laws of physical reality are mutable and uncertain. Examples of a Marauder, and of the beasts that serve as allies, are provided below.

Xylloth, Marauder mage

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Deviant

Essence: Unknown

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 4, Enigmas 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Forces 3, Mind 3, Spirit 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Avatar 4

Willpower: 9

Arete: 5

Quintessence: 9

Paradox: 11

Notes: Xylloth is a typical Marauder mage. Though he primarily wanders the Umbra, he occasionally breaches the Gauntlet and enters physical reality, spreading destruction and chaos in his wake. He is a reactionary servant of the Marauders, and wishes to replace technology entirely with magic. He is often surrounded by beasts of Earth's Mythic Age, to whom he speaks in an alternately loving and harsh manner.

Xylloth appears as a wild-eyed humanoid covered with blue tattoos and wrapped in the skins of unknown beasts. He speaks in a shrill, high-pitched voice, as if he has just inhaled the contents of a helium balloon.

Mythic Remnants – Marauder Allies

Though the Mythic Age has long been over, a scattered few survivors from its heyday stalk the Umbra. Occasionally, such a creature crosses the Gauntlet into a wild and lonely place on Earth. Mythical survivors are also employed by Marauders as allies and servitors.

Manticora

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Athletics 1, Brawl 3

Willpower: 5

Arete: 0

Quintessence: 5 innate (may be harvested as Tass)

Paradox: 5

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Claws (Str +2 damage); Bite (Str +2 damage); Scorpion Tail (Str damage — in addition, a victim who takes at least one Health Level of damage after soak must roll Stamina (difficulty 9); if this roll is failed, the victim takes three non-soakable Health Levels from the poisoned stinger).

Innate Countermagick: The manticora has two free dice of countermagick defense against any magickal attack.

Notes: The manticora is a fabled beast of the Mythic Age, now banished to wander the realms of the Umbra. Occasionally a Marauder brings such a beast to Earth to wreak havoc (though only for a short time, as the static reality of Earth that doesn't allow for their existance causes them to rapidly sicken and die).

The manticora has the body of a lion, the head of a deformed man, distended shark-like jaws, bat-like wings, and a scorpion's tail. It is a savage, unreasoning brute, existing only to destroy.

Ik-Thazai (a lesser dragon)

Nature: Curmudgeon

Demeanor: Conniver

Attributes: Strength 10, Dexterity 3, Stamina 7, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 1, Intimidation 5, Intuition 3, Subterfuge 3, Etiquette 2, Melee 3, Culture 3, Enigmas 4, Linguistics 5, Occult 3

Spheres: Forces 5, Life 3, Matter 3, Mind 3, Prime 3

Willpower: 8

Arete: 6

Quintessence: 20 (half of this may be retrieved as Tass from the dragon's corpse)

Paradox: 3

Health Levels: OK (x3), -1 (x3), -2 (x5), -5 (x2), Incapacitated

Attacks: Bite (Str +5); Claws (Str +3); Tail (Str +1; victim is knocked back three feet times the result of a die roll)

Notes: Ik-Thazai, the One Who Coils in the Deep, ravaged the lands of Eastern Europe during the fabled Mythic Age. As magick left the world, she was forced into longer and longer periods of sleep, and finally left Gaia altogether. Now she dwells in a Shard Realm in the Near Umbra. Ik-Thazai detests her exile, and occasionally aids the Marauders' insane schemes in return for temporary passage to the realm of her

youth (she can only remain on Earth for a few days at a time, or her Quintessence drains from her and she sickens).

Ik-Thazai can remain in the physical world for longer periods of time if she has access to a powerful Node to "recharge" her Quintessence. If she could usurp one of sufficient strength (such as one belonging to a powerful Chantry), she could theoretically remain in the world indefinitely. She desires nothing so much as this.

Ik-Thazai can utilize her Spheres for a variety of draconian effects. She can transform herself into human form, breathe gouts of devastating flame, fly and command all nearby reptiles.

Nephandi and Their Ilk

The third side of the unholy triangle that opposes the Traditions is the vile Nephandi. These mages have been corrupted by Demons and now seek to drag the universe down to oblivion. Nephandi have gained the assistance of an array of malevolent entities. Examples of a Nephandus and Nephandi servitors are provided.

Meggan O'Rourke (Nephandus mage)

Nature: Curmudgeon

Demeanor: Bravo

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 2, Intimidation 2, Intuition 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Meditation 2, Stealth 3, Cosmology 1, Culture 1, Occult 5

Spheres: Entropy 4, Forces 2, Life 2, Prime 1, Spirit 2, Time 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Talisman 5

Willpower: 7

Arete: 5

Quintessence: 10

Paradox: 9

Notes: Meggan O'Rourke was a promising Disciple of the Euthanatos who summoned forces beyond her control and became warped by a Demon named Wormwood. She is now a Nephandi agent.

Meggan wanders from city to city, spreading squalor and decay. She appears as a twisted old bag lady; the many Paradox Flaws with which she has been cursed have gnarled and deformed her body and soul.

Meggan's "bag" is actually a powerful Nephandi Talisman. By reaching within, she can draw forth a variety of hideous demonic spirits. She refers to these beings as her "children," and is extraordinarily protective of them (she lost her own infant son in a Paradox Backlash many years ago).

Pure Form

The Nephandi seed the various Realms with Pure Forms to oppose mages in their quest for Ascension. The following describes a Pure Form as it might appear on earth.

Pure Form: This entity appears as a patch of pure blackness absorbing the surrounding light. Innumerable tentacles, spines and mandibles surge about the indefinite floating body. Around the blackness, the air shimmers like gas fumes or heat on a highway; sound waves distort with a Doppler effect; reality runs like a Dali painting.

A Pure Form seems to be created from antimatter; all that it touches simply ceases to exist. Attackers lose limbs, weapons disappear, and no structure can hold it for long. Luckily, attacks seem to damage the entity before being rendered useless. If a Pure Form remains in one place too long, a temporary "afterimage" burns itself onto the structure of reality, causing a major Paradox. If a Pure Form were to hover in a sealed room, the air would disappear and reality would distort. Then it would tear through the Spirit Realm and finally damage Prime itself.

The destruction caused by a Pure Form Birth is different from that caused by the Sphere of Entropy; matter does not just break down, but utterly vanishes. Note that magick can affect a Pure Form before the magickal effects are destroyed.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 1, Intelligence ?, Wits 2

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Intimidation 5, Survival 5, Enigmas 4

Willpower: 10

Arete: ?

Quintessence: ?

Paradox: At least 8

Health Levels: OK (x3), -1 (x6), Banished

Attacks: A Pure Form can attack anyone and everyone within two yards of itself, using a multitude of limbs (one attack per opponent). Physical attacks damage it, but the weapons are destroyed thereafter (bare-handed strikes result in the attacker automatically losing three Health Levels). Assume that a Pure Form's Strength increases by a factor of one each round after the first: thus it can disintegrate wood in a single round (Strength 4), melt soft metals within two rounds (Strength 8), break though one-inch sheet metal in three rounds (Strength 12), and destroy most materials by the fourth round.

The Zigg'raugglurr

These utterly mysterious and unknown alien beings live beyond the Horizon. Even some Oracles do not understand them. They are fourth-dimensional entities with a vast understanding of the "map" of time and space. They are malevolent and enigmatic in the extreme.

The first encounter the Traditions had with these entities was a near defeat for the Traditions. The creatures materialized into space and assaulted a cabal. The things appeared to be

giant, segmented lizards with nothing but empty air between their segments — there seemed to be nothing holding their various floating body parts together, yet they functioned as if they were whole beings. They seemed to know a lot about the cabal's powers and tactics, and almost won the engagement. The cabal survived, but subsequent investigations revealed nothing about the mages' foes.

Then, three years after the attack, the cabal again encountered the beings. This time the creatures were weak and ignorant of the cabal's tactics, even though one of the cabal mages swore the creatures were the identical entities whom they had previously fought. The creatures escaped from this second encounter, leaving the Tradition mages perplexed.

The ensuing debate was only quelled when an Oracle of Time came forth with an announcement. The beings existed fourth-dimensionally. They perceived time as we perceive space, and in fact they probably possessed a geometry of time similar to humans' Euclidean geometry of space. The second encounter with them had in fact been the first. Their failure there caused them to step back in time to defeat the cabal before they had even attacked (hence the first encounter). This also explained the creatures' strange appearance: they did not wholly exist in three-dimensional reality, and thus only portions of them could be perceived (the segmented bodies).

The Traditions realized that the Spheres of Time and Correspondence would be required even to perceive these beings. Magickal scrying by the Oracles was performed, at great danger, and some secrets were finally revealed. The beings, called the Zigg'raugglurr, live beyond the Horizon, which is the only barrier preventing them from regular congress with the Earth. They are allied in some mysterious way with the Nephandi, perhaps in a bargain to break through the outer gates together.

One of the questions on the Oracles' minds was: how do the creatures survive without Quintessence from earth? Where were they getting it? The terrifying answer was finally gleaned: they have already manifested within Earth's space/time continuum — in the past, before the Gauntlet and Horizon were erected. They take what Quintessence they can on these expeditions before they are forced to return by Paradox spirits. So strong are these Paradox spirits that they hunt the past for anomalies to the present. These spirits alone prevent the Zigg'raugglurr from wreaking havoc in Earth's past.

Now the question on the minds of all the Tradition mages is: how do they stop a menace they can barely understand, let alone perceive?

Spirits and Umbral Denizens

In their quest for Ascension, mages have found that they are not alone in the Tellurian. Indeed, the many Realms house a variety of beings — beings bizarre, beautiful, nightmarish, and all too often hostile.

Umbrood

But trick us again, child, and your suffering will be legendary, even in Hell.

— Pinhead, *Hellraiser*

An immense variety of strange creatures hail from the depths of the Umbra. Mages have come to categorize all such creatures and beings as Umbrood. Some of these creatures, called Lords, wield staggering power, especially when confronted in the Umbra where they are not subject to the laws of Earth.

Lesser powers are called Preceptors. These beings also possess great power, but mages can at least comprehend these beings, as many of them have been personified by humans. Among the ranks of the Preceptors are such mythical creatures as dragons and unicorns — while they cannot currently exist on Earth, they have still been defined into existence by the human mind.

The least powerful Umbrood are called Minions. These beings are often anthropomorphic and possess human or lower intelligence. However, as they are more powerful than normal humans, they can be dangerous.

A sample of each of these types of Umbrood is provided later in this section.

Umbrood Powers

Umbrood have a variety of powers. The more powerful ones, especially Lords, are mightier than the greatest mages. Before discussing how Umbrood work in game terms, it is important to create a distinction between different types of Umbrood. Umbrood are either considered intelligent beings subject to the same basic rules as mages, or they are considered creatures that use slightly different rules. Lords and the majority of Preceptors are of the former variety, while Minions are generally of the latter.

Lords and Preceptors should be treated exactly as mages. When in the Umbra, these beings are very powerful because their powers may operate uninhibited. On Earth, though, they are subject to the same laws of reality that hinder mages, so the Umbrood can gain Paradox, spend Quintessence and create magickal effects just like mages.

Minions, on the other hand, do not generally store Quintessence or Paradox and their powers are not as expansive. Instead of having complete command over a Sphere, Minions (and a few Preceptors) only gain one specific power at each rating point of a Sphere. An Umbrood with Entropy four, for example, possesses a list of just four powers that it can use.

Minion powers are used in a fashion similar to magick, but such use is always considered to be vulgar magick, so a Minion's Arete limits the number of dice that may be rolled. The creature can also gain Paradox. Each point of Paradox gained inflicts a Health Level of damage upon the Umbrood. This damage is considered aggravated damage that cannot be

healed with Life (or Matter if the Umbrood would "heal" itself in that way) as wounds inflicted by guns and the like may be.

Finally, while Lords and most Preceptors have a complete set of nine Attributes, Minions normally only have Physical Attributes.

Almost all Umbrood have a natural ability to use aspects of the Spirit Sphere. Unless the creature is given an actual rating in Spirit, assume that its abilities are limited to those listed here:

- Airt Sense: Umbrood have an innate sense of the airts (directions) of the spirit world and are able to travel the Umbra without much difficulty.
- Materialize: A spirit may materialize and affect the physical world. The Gauntlet of the area limits whether certain Umbrood can move directly into it. Minions may only manifest in areas with Gauntlets of four or less, Preceptors can enter Gauntlets of six or less, and Lords may materialize directly into any area below Gauntlet nine.
- Reform: This ability allows an Umbrood to dissipate itself and reform elsewhere in the Umbra, usually far away from its enemies.

Lord Killavaro, Umbrood Lord

An amazingly powerful Umbrood, Killavaro freely wanders the Umbra. He has no permanent home, but instead wanders in search of something — something he alternately claims does not exist, he doesn't remember, or he really doesn't seek at all. He has a brooding nature and an evil intelligence that would be classified as at least sociopathic by humans.

Killavaro appears as a man of medium height and slim build. His coloration is a mixture of blacks and deep purples, except for his eyes, which blaze with a fierce white energy of unknown origin.

He has visited Earth many times in the past, and the planet seems to be the focus of his search. Mages have attributed certain ancient cataclysms to his magick, but Killavaro does at least appear to use only coincidental magick while among humans, except for his periodic use of various Talismans.

The Talisman he was last known to carry is a glove of thick, unearthly leather studded with small gems (also of alien origin). When the fingers of the glove are pressed together a victim suffers a magickal effect called Anchor (Correspondence 4, Life 4) that attaches a Life Pattern (e.g., a human body) to any one spot within three-dimensional space and does not allow the Pattern to move from that spot. Anchor effectively chains a living being to one spot. No other powers of the glove have been witnessed.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 5, Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intuition 2, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 3, Melee 4, Cosmology 5, Enigmas 4, Investigation 3, Occult 5, Science 2

Backgrounds: Arcane 3, Talisman 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 4, Forces 6 (allows huge "natural" disasters like earthquakes or volcanic eruptions), Life 3, Matter 3, Mind 3, Spirit 5, Time 3

Arete: 6

Willpower: 10

Quintessence: 14

Paradox: 4

Health Levels: OK (x3), -1 (x6), -2 (x6), -5 (x3), Banished

Lady of Feathers, Umbrood Preceptor

A beautiful, guileless and seemingly naive Preceptor, the Lady of Feathers has been connected to many ancient myths describing bird goddesses. The Lady of Feathers appears dressed in an ornate cloak of yellow and red feathers. Atop her head is an elaborately decorated crown of white gold with a number of glorious purple feathers highlighting its edges.

The Lady almost never leaves her Deep Umbral home, a luxurious manse in a Domain of Air, though she can often be found near Earth's Horizon. She deals truthfully with all she meets and apparently thinks it impossible for anyone to do otherwise. This has caused her to be treated cruelly by Umbrood and some humans whose motives are worldly.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Dodge 2, Expression 4, Cosmology 3

Backgrounds: Dream 2, Talisman 2

Spheres: Life 4, Prime 2, all others 1

Arete: 3

Willpower: 5

Quintessence: 3

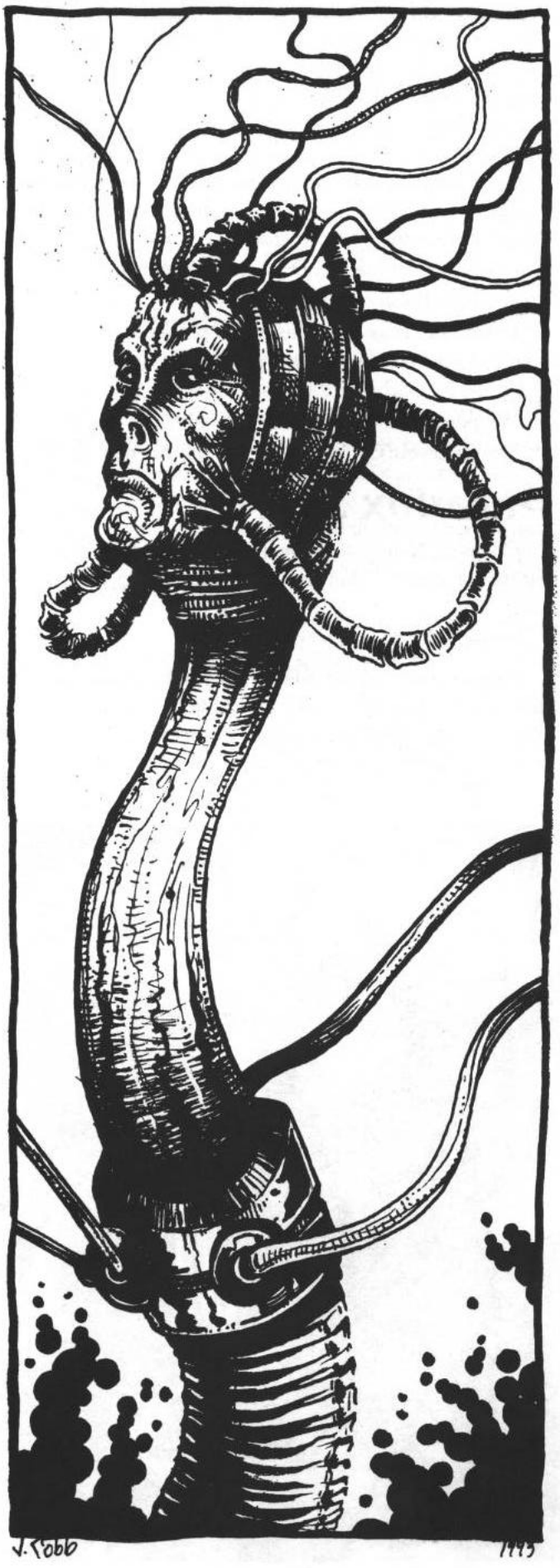
Paradox: 0

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Banished

Vincula, Umbrood Minions

This race of Minions can be found almost anywhere in the Umbra, but do frequent the Umbra near Earth. They appear as long, luminescent yellow snakes that seem to "swim" in the Umbra in slow, wavy motions. They can move with incredible speed, though, so this usual lethargic motion can lull potential targets into complacency.

Vincula are so named because of their tendency to bond with their victims. Though vincula usually bond with only one victim (via its bite), sometimes a vinculum bonds two individual targets, one at each end of its slithery length. When a vinculum bonds to a target it begins siphoning thoughts from the victim, effectively causing the victim to forget that thought. The first thought targeted is that which would allow the victim to realize that the vinculum is a threat. It "feeds" upon these thoughts to survive.



If two victims are connected via its length, the vinculum begins to transfer thoughts between the victims. Love for a wife in one person may be traded with a passion for composing music in another. In this way the vinculum upholds its dynamic essence, which calls for it to create new thoughts and ways of living.

A vinculum may also memorize a victim's memories and thoughts, allowing it to access that victim more easily. This reduces the difficulty of future magickal attacks by one.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Abilities: Brawl 3, Dodge 5, Stealth 2

Powers: Exchange Thoughts (Correspondence 4, Mind 4), Steal Thoughts (Mind 4), Memorize Pattern (Mind 1)

Arete: 5

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Destroyed

Paradox Spirits

Oh, great. Now I've got Sam trying to contradict the immutable laws of science. When am I gonna learn to keep my mouth shut?

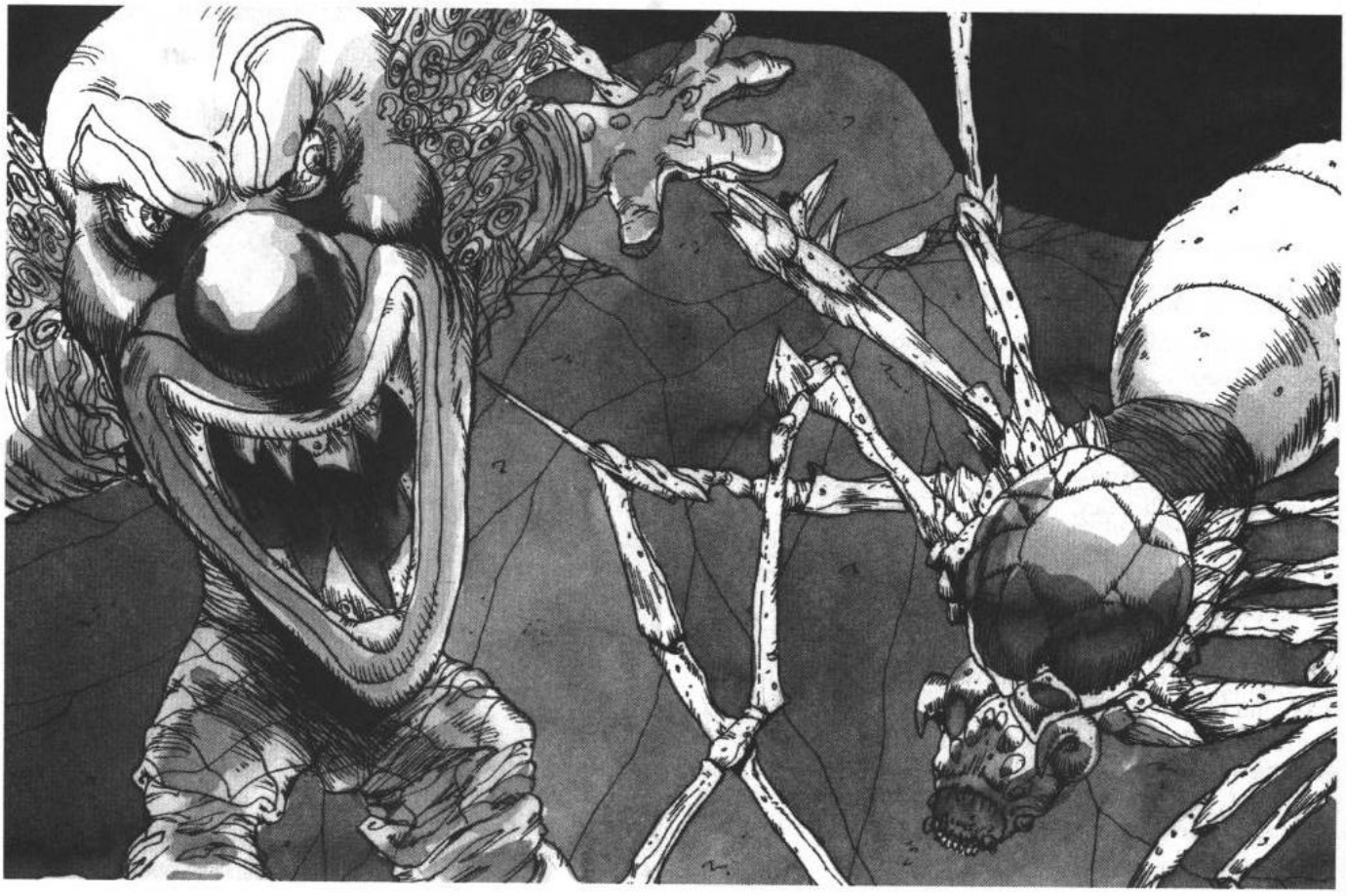
— Woody on *Cheers*

Paradox spirits are the defenders of reality, whatever that reality may be. Paradox often attacks those who create anomalies in the structure of the universe. Sometimes the force of Paradox manifests in the shape of beings known as Paradox spirits.

The appearance and powers of a Paradox spirit are determined by the Sphere of magick being used when the spirit is forced to take shape. In general, Paradox spirits are manifestations of the universe's sense of "poetic justice." Thus, if a mage tampers with reality's laws using the Sphere of Matter, the Paradox spirit invoked manifests as a being of Matter (perhaps a stone or metal golem). If the magickal effect is conjunctional, then the Sphere with the highest rating involved is the one that manifests.

The Technocracy has recently attempted to make active use of Paradox spirits. Apparently, it wasn't enough for them to gain this ally by default (as the reality protected by Paradox is that of the Technomancers). Technomancers often purposefully create paradoxes in order to summon a Paradox spirit. Other kinds of Paradox energies attack the offending Technomancers at times, but through trial and error these mages have evidently found ways to improve the odds of generating a Paradox spirit.

The Paradox spirits so created are bound by the Technomancers and sent to hunt down and punish the enemies of the Technocracy. The normal means of using them is to attune them to a certain person or place, like a human



under the protection of the Technocracy. If the target is manipulated (i.e., magick is used on that person or place), the Paradox spirit attacks whether or not the mage actually generated Paradox.

Paradox spirits may physically manifest to attack. If they do so, any damage they inflict is aggravated. Paradox spirits may also utilize Sphere magick (they can only have points in their own Sphere). Spirits enter the real world and can be seen with a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6). Paradox spirits can be banished in one of three ways: by being physically destroyed (those with Attributes and Health Levels); by being disrupted by magick; or by their targets surviving their assault.

To provide some ideas of the kinds and powers of Paradox spirits, below are a range of them, one from each Sphere. These spirits can either be ones that attack mages as part of a Paradox Backlash, or that have been tied to people or places by Technomancers. The spirits' names are those provided by mages.

Farandwee (Correspondence 4)

The spirit known as Farandwee resembles a clown whose form seems to shift and bulge beneath his baggy costume and greasepaint. When attacking, he traps the mage in a maze of funhouse mirrors. These are unbreakable, magickal reflectors; a mage who runs into a mirror finds herself turned around and reflected back into the maze. The Paradox spirit appears in the maze, grapples his prey, and attempts to teleport her to some extremely dangerous spot (as a Paradox spirit, Farandwee has less difficulty teleporting than do mages; the difficulty for this Shift Other is the target's Willpower). In addition, Farandwee may create a twisted duplicate of himself each round; these duplicates may team up to grapple and teleport a mage.

To defeat Farandwee, a mage must either kill all of his physical manifestations (this becomes increasingly difficult as he multiplies) or escape the mirror-maze using Correspondence magick.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Abilities: Brawl 3, Dodge 3
Willpower: 4
Arete: 4
Health Levels: (normal human)

Hex (Entropy 1)

Hex manifests as a symbol of bad luck: a broken mirror, black cat, inverted horseshoe or other such omen (it cannot be banished by destroying the symbol, though). It lurks by the mage until the first potentially dangerous situation, such as combat, travel by car, or other risky circumstance. Then it strikes, using Entropy magick as a jinx. Suddenly the opponent hits when he should have missed, or the vehicle's brakes fail...

Willpower: 5
Arete: 2

Igtukra the Unbridled (Forces 5)

Igtukra's favorite tactic is to manifest in the physical world as a pinprick of gravity waves, appearing in the same location as the target mage. Igtukra then begins to increase its mass each round. The mage feels as if he is growing heavier; soon he begins to take damage, as he is torn apart by the tiny, internalized black hole. Eventually, the mage is compressed to infinity. The only way to banish Igtukra is through countermagick.

Willpower: 10
Arete: 5

Prokaryote (Life 1)

As a weak Paradox spirit, Prokaryote uses itself as a weapon. It appears as a sort of virus inside the mage. Each week of "infection," the mage loses one Health Level as the virus attacks his body. This damage may not be restored until Prokaryote is banished. A physician can locate Prokaryote and destroy the virus with an Intelligence + Medicine roll (difficulty 8); three successes are needed, but the roll may be made each week. Life magick and countermagick also work.

Willpower: 5
Arete: 1

Terra Firma (Matter 4)

Blunt like the earth from which it is formed, Terra Firma manifests as a golem-like creation and attacks by bludgeoning and suffocation (by forcing earth down its victim's throat).

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5
Abilities: Brawl 5
Willpower: 5
Arete: 1
Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -5, Destroyed

Dementia Paradox (Mind 3)

Dementia Paradox appears as the mage's worst fear. It attacks using Mind magick to drive the mage insane. Typical tactics include illusions of the mage's phobias and temporary losses of Intelligence, Perception, or Wits. The spirit's goal is to render the mage incapable of further magick use rather than killing him outright.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1
Abilities: Brawl 2, Dodge 4
Willpower: 10
Arete: 4
Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -5, Banished

Dorobo (Prime 2)

Dorobo is a thief of Quintessence. It drains the mage of his surplus power and fluctuates the flow of his Quintessence, stunning him during crucial moments. Mages with Prime 1 can sense Dorobo only as a disturbance in the Prime.

Willpower: 1
Arete: 3

Rune-Fetter (Spirit 3)

Rune-fetter operates entirely in the Umbra, where it appears as a spider-like creature. It captures the mage's Avatar in its web, thus rendering the mage unable to use some of her powers. When this happens, all magickal difficulties increase by three and the mage no longer regains Quintessence. To restore herself, a mage must enter the spirit realm in her weakened state, find Rune-fetter's lair, and attempt to release its hold on her Avatar.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Abilities: Stealth 5

Willpower: 4

Arete: 3

Health Levels: (normal human)

Wrinkle (Time 5+)

Wrinkle is one of the most powerful Paradox spirits of time. He appears as an ancient man dressed in a white tuxedo with so many creases it appears he sleeps in it. Wrinkle approaches the mage quite openly, explains his mission, and asks, if he could, if the mage would change the event that caused the last offending paradox. A refusal is bad news; Wrinkle simply goes back in time and makes sure that the mage was never born, or ensures his death as a youngster. An affirmative answer takes the mage back in time, just before he caused the paradox; he may now try again.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Willpower: 8

Arete: 5

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Banished

Guardian Spirits

A great variety of spirits haunt the Nodes of the world, feeding on the residual Quintessence contained at these sites. These spirits are usually quite territorial, and generally attempt to drive off or destroy intruders of their domains. Nonetheless, many spirits have been subjugated and bound by mages and werewolves. Other spirits are compelled to obey certain inscrutable cosmic mandates, forcing them to allow access to beings who defeat them in a contest (such as a riddle game or mystic duel). These spirits are collectively known as guardian spirits, despite differing motivations for their "guard duty."

Typical Guardian Spirit – Olonga the Whisperer

Attributes: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Manipulation 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Awareness 5, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Enigmas 4, Occult 4

Spheres: Forces 3, Life 3, Matter 3, Spirit 4

Willpower: 8

Arete: 5

Quintessence: 10

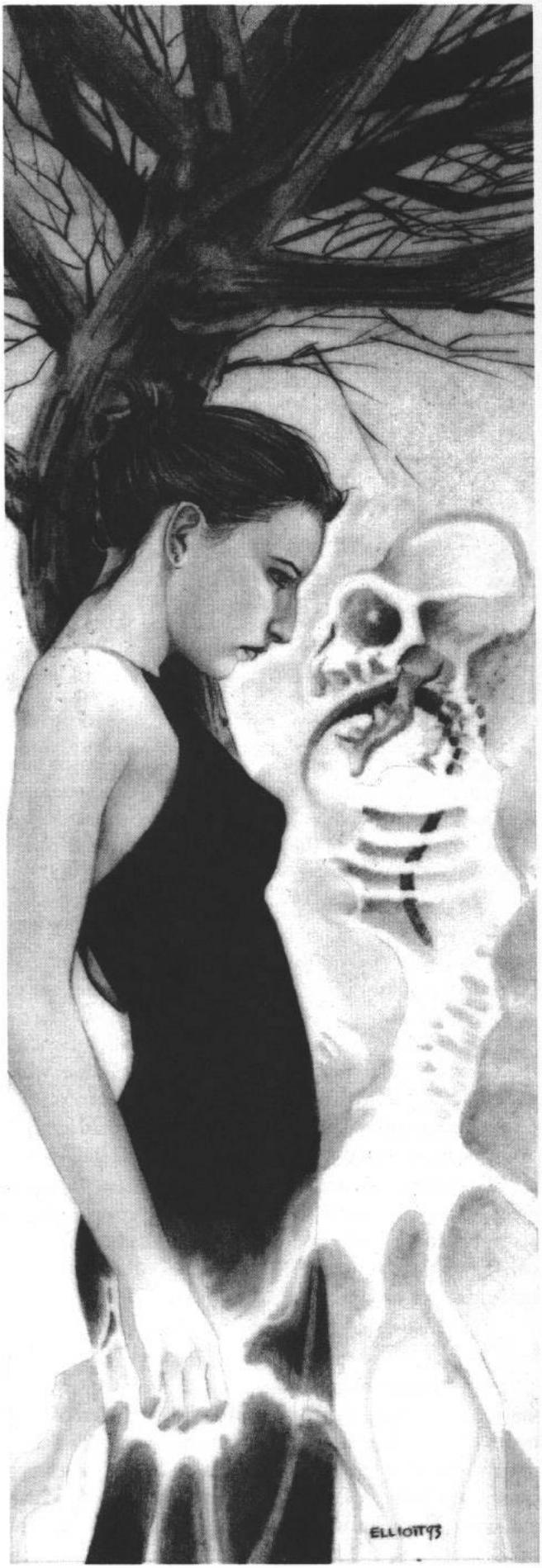
Paradox: 0

Notes: Olonga is an ancient spirit that feeds on the Quintessence inherent to the sites of Nodes. Once Olonga has found a feeding site, it remains there for years or even centuries, and Olonga is extremely possessive of its "property." Any who trespass on its domain risk terrible retribution.

Olonga may manifest in the physical realm, but the laws that bind the spirit's existence allow it to manifest fully only against beings whom it defeats in a contest of riddles. When intruders enter its domain, Olonga utters a ghastly howl and becomes visible, though intangible. Olonga appears as a tall, gaunt African warrior, wearing a carved devil-mask and carrying an assegai; lightning dances along the shaft of the spear, and the mask's eyeslits blaze with eerie green light.

Olonga addresses intruders in a chilling whisper (thus the sobriquet). If they wish access to the treasures of the Node, Olonga says they must defeat it in a contest of riddles. If they win, Olonga admits them to the Node. If they lose, Olonga takes their Avatars and hearts, to add to the Quintessence of the place. To do so it must attack. Olonga may materialize; its body solidifies (Physical Attributes 5, Melee 4, one extra "Bruised," "Hurt," and "Injured" Health Level), and it may employ its spear or Spheres to destroy trespassers.

The riddle contest may be roleplayed (preferably), or handled as an opposed roll of Intelligence + Enigmas. According to Olonga's rules, the first side that fails to guess two of the opponent's riddles loses.



Converting Spirits

A number of spirits are described in another Storyteller game, **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** and in many of that game's supplements, notably *Book of the Wyrm*. It is a simple matter to convert these creatures into Umbrood enemies for mages. If you play both games, use the statistics that are presented for the creatures or convert them to the system you prefer.

Spirits in **Werewolf** are described by Rage, Willpower, Gnosis and Power. Willpower is the easiest to convert; that Trait is common to all Storyteller games.

If a **Werewolf** spirit is lacking them, Physical Attributes are determined by dividing Rage among Strength, Dexterity and Stamina, as appropriate. If a spirit lacks Social and Mental Attributes, the spirit's Gnosis may be divided in half and allocated to the Attribute categories, again as appropriate. If a spirit doesn't have a physical presence — e.g., the spirit is a Vortex — then simply do not assign Attributes to it. The same stands for Social and Mental Attributes. Abilities are assigned as you see fit. A **Werewolf** spirit's Gnosis equals its Arete. Health Levels are determined by dividing a spirit's Power by

five (so a Nexus Crawler with Power 60 is a real mean one, with 12 Health Levels!).

Spheres are a little more complicated to translate. The idea is to assign an Umbrood Spheres that make sense for its spiritual origin. The total rating of all the Umbrood's Spheres cannot exceed the spirit's Power divided by 10 (so that Nexus Crawler may have a total of six points in Spheres). A fire elemental (Power 30) would therefore have Forces 3. Its Forces powers could then be some of the exact ones listed in **Werewolf** — create fire (Forces 3) and blast fire (Forces 2 to control the fire it creates). The Forces 1 power could allow the elemental to sense fire and thus find its way to large sources of fire on Earth.

Talismans

Here are five sample Talismans — one each for Background ratings one through five.

• **Spirit Goggles**: This Talisman is an enchanted pair of ether goggles, like those worn by the Sons of Ether. Like all such goggles, the Talisman is large, clunky and straps onto the head. A slight greenish mist floats suspended in the multifaceted lenses. As long as the goggles are worn, the mage can automatically see into the Near Umbra.

•• **Sword of Discharge**: This katana can release a burst of electricity when it strikes an opponent. The effect resembles the Discharge Static power (Forces 2). A second Matter effect ensures that the edge of the blade is always razor-sharp. The weapon damage is Strength + 5 and the difficulty is six.

••• **X-ray Glasses**: These glasses have two different powers, one each from the Life and Matter Spheres. A conjunctional Correspondence effect allows a person wearing the glasses to see only the Life or Matter Pattern she desires, as long as it's in normal eyesight range. Therefore, when wearing the glasses a person who lost his keys could filter out all patterns but those of the keys, thus finding them easily. Of course, while she's walking toward the keys she should beware of obstacles, for she can see only the keys. Likewise, a person could filter out everyone in a crowd except for the victim she is stalking.

The wearer sees nothing else but the pattern sought, so eyesight range is potentially the horizon. A person using the glasses might see a tiny dot at the edge of the horizon if the object was that far away. The curvature of the Earth stops sighting after a certain range.

Incidentally, the glasses correct the eyesight of whoever wears them.

•••• **Peacemaker**: This Colt .45 Peacemaker is an old weapon by mortal standards (about 1870), and even older to mages, who saw its predecessors in the early 1800s. A dedicated mage worked powerful enchantments on one of these guns, causing any bullet it fires to be affected by a sort of Matter immunity. The bullet will pass harmlessly through any matter except biological material, which it impacts normally. A bullet fired by the gun could pass without restriction through a wall and strike a foe on the other side. If the target is wearing a bulletproof vest, the bullet will pass through even that. Bullets for the gun are difficult to find, unless a ammunition dealer "coincidentally" has some in stock. (Damage 6, difficulty 7)

Peacemaker also has a "speed draw" Correspondence power that can be used. With this effect that mage could outdraw the fastest gun of the West and get the first shot in gun battle. This power effectively gives the gun wielder three automatic successes on his initiative roll while using the weapon.

••••• **Prodigy**: This amazing computer is the work of a genius Virtual Adept. Essentially, it provides the processing power of a NSA Cray supercomputer in a portable terminal that weighs about four pounds. It has a number of powers, but the most amazing is its data collection ability. The computer can tap into any electronic storage system on the planet and retrieve information from it. This is possible even if the target system doesn't have a modem. Even a floppy disk sitting on somebody's shelf can be targeted for retrieval. Prodigy completes the task through a phenomenally advanced technology (magick).

Prodigy can also slow time around it, allowing its user to do more work in a shorter amount of real time. The effect includes anyone within a few paces of the computer if the owner of the Talisman desires it.

Chantries

Here are two especially active Chantries among the dozens that exist in the Umbra. These Chantries are at the center of the Horizon War and are constantly engaged in recruiting new apprentices and hunting sources of Quintessence. These Chantries are particularly open to newcomers, and are very willing to serve as "patrons" to young cabals.

Doissetep

A truly ancient Chantry, Doissetep has existed since prehistoric times. Originally founded in southeast Asia by a Thai sorcerer-king, the Chantry has moved many times in its long history. During the Middle Ages, the Order of Hermes moved it to Earth to use it in their experiments with the more mundane Order of Hermes.

Now Doissetep is once again in the Umbra, in the Shade Realm of Forces. From the outside, it appears to be a huge mountain that resembles Mount Celidar in the Pyrenees, where the Chantry appeared in the physical world. Atop this is a sprawling castle. Its architecture is irregular and apparently reflects nothing of its original design; the exterior and many inner areas were changed to resemble medieval styles of building. The interior is dark and the libraries, though extensive and among the best the Traditions possess, are dusty and filled with huge, folio-sized, handwritten volumes.

Beneath the fortress is a maze of catacombs and labyrinths. These tunnels lead (for those who know the way) to a

great chamber known as Gateway. This nexus contains Portals centered on Doissetep from many locations. These include some 40 to Earth, perhaps a half-dozen to other Shade Realms, and a few to other Chantries. The mages of Doissetep journey to the Umbra through these portals.

Doissetep's mages live in small, spartan cubicles, and until recently this kind of regimentation and monasticism was reflected in their organization. Older mages from all Traditions at the Chantry (primarily the Order of Hermes, Akashic Brotherhood and Verbena) went into a long period of somnolence after the return from Earth. Only during the last decade, after successfully repelling a number of attacks from Iteration X Chantries, did Doissetep's mages find new vigor, becoming actively involved in the Horizon Wars. Now younger mages (nearly second-class citizens before) have a voice, and the Chantry is recruiting new blood and associate memberships. Today Doissetep is the political center for those who oppose the rule of the Technocracy.

This Chantry has no definite leader, but one mage, Caeron, who first proposed the new policies, now wields considerable influence.

The Chantry also possesses a huge numbers of servants. Most were born here and come from long lineages of Acolytes.

Null-B

This is the Technomancer Chantry most dedicated to the imposition of industrialization and reason — the Technomancer view of reality — upon the Earth . Null-B is also the headquarters of most Technomancer campaigns in the Horizon Wars. The Chantry is the result of efforts to create a place for research in the Umbra.

Null-B looks like a gigantic Victorian factory, floating on a slab of gray rock. The architecture is Early Industrial, and the building is littered with courtyards, smokestacks, leaded glass and bustling workers. From the outside, the Chantry seems quite archaic, but it is actually very high-tech. The mages there have access to the newest developments of the Machine World.

Null-B is where the Technomancers study the use of technology and magick in the Umbra. The mages of Null-B develop hybrid Talismans for war in the Deep Umbra, and the Traditions have lost several battles because of such innovations.

Of late, Null-B has perfected the design of a Techno-spirit called the webspider. These creatures travel through the Umbra, seeking out Nodes and reporting whatever they find. Vendiz, the leader of Null-B, uses the spiders to spy on Chantries. Webspiders are self-replicating and extremely hard to detect. They seek out any mechanical or technological device and build nests inside it to maintain and even increase the machine's efficiency. On Earth they operate as spirits, but in the Umbra they take on physical form. No more than an inch in length, they look like tiny robotic spiders. Woe to the mage who forgets to leave his watch or Walkman behind on a trip to his Chantry, for a tag-along webspider may become an unwanted passenger.

Null-B is connected through portals to five different military-industrial complexes in North America and England. It also has one carefully guarded gate to the Machine World. The Chantry is extremely wealthy in Quintessence because of these rich contacts.

For other travel through the Umbra — particularly of a military nature — Null-B maintains and equips a fleet of PT boats, converted for use in the Umbra and manned with a standing army of 'marines.' The infamous Umbra jet-skis are used as scouts for the main force of PT boats. Engagements with other Chantries persist on a virtually constant basis.

Once the marines take a Chantry, traps are laid at all portals and entrances. During the next month, anyone passing through is captured and put on trial. After that, Portals are closed, the Chantry structure is utterly destroyed, and a garrison is left to ensure that it is never again used. In this way, seven Tradition Chantries have been destroyed by Null-B.

The only thing that keeps Null-B from completely destroying all Tradition Chantries is the fact that the Technomancer base is under constant attack by a group of mysterious Marauders.

All Hollow's Eve

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow.
— T.S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men"

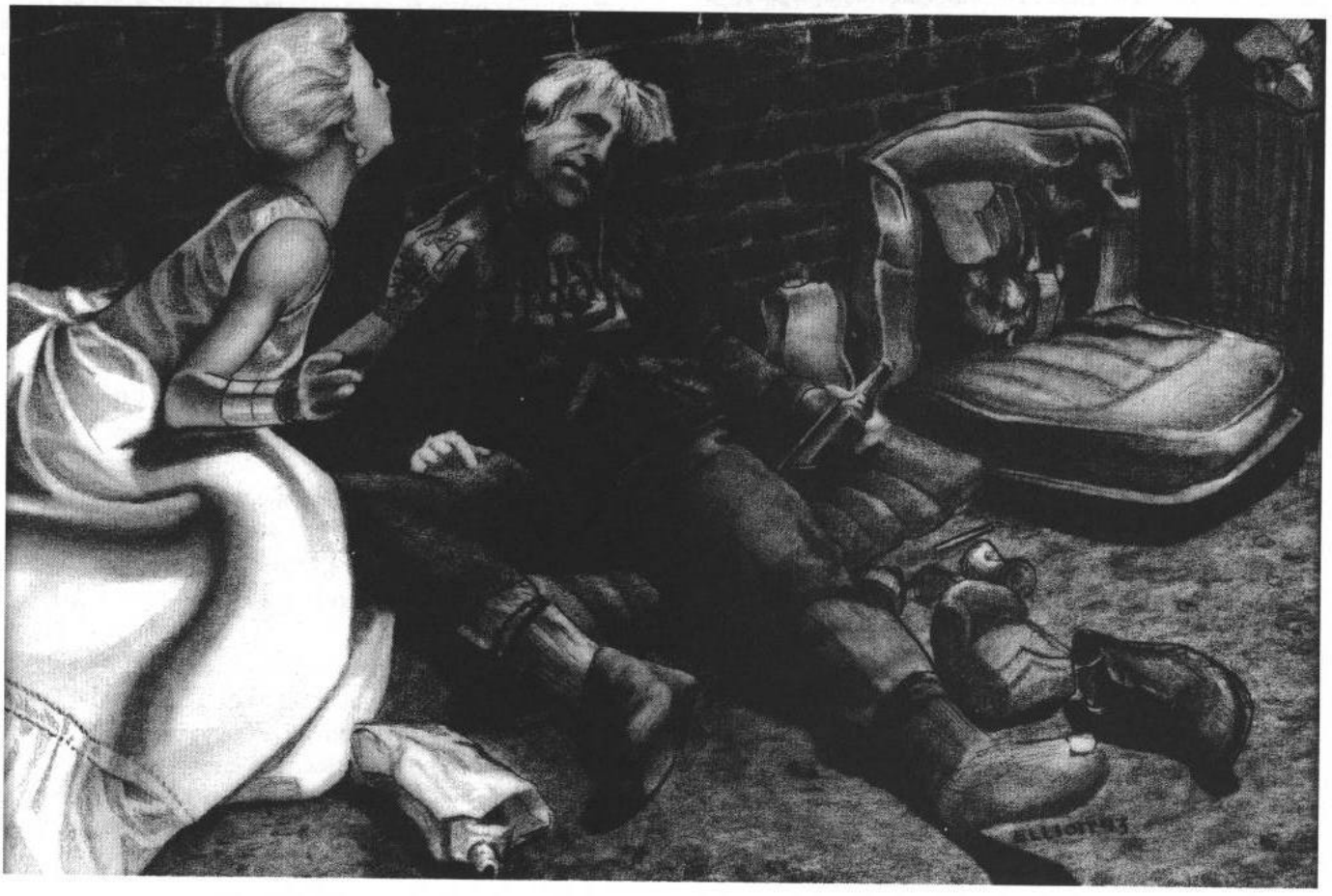
"All Hollow's Eve" is the first chapter in a longer story called **Loom of Fate**, published separately and available where you found **Mage**. However, this introductory story stands alone, and allows players to pursue various tangents. Toward that end, you will find suggestions for weaving these plot threads into whatever chronicle concept you choose.

This story introduces the Gothic-Punk setting and presents one way in which a **Mage** story can unfold. Chapter Three described a number of story types; this story expands upon the *Traditions vs. Technomancers* concept. While San Francisco is the assumed setting, you may change it as you wish.

Theme and Mood

You might describe the dominant theme as "things are not always what they seem." Think back to those *Twilight Zone*™ episodes, such as when a woman discovers she is really a mannequin, or when a conscientious man frees a prisoner — actually Satan! Norna Weaver, the Storyteller's main character in this story, is not just a young woman; in fact, she ends up being much more than her powers suggest.

To accentuate the theme, apply an eerie mood. The freak accident provides a good start. Expand upon it until events seem unbelievably coincidental, all the while keeping a straight "Rod Serling" face. After the calamitous accident scene, the players' characters might turn a corner to enter a deserted and silent street. Later, a sudden wind clears away drifts of gray fog, only to replace them with blowing debris. Confront the players with strange sounds and even stranger sights. Have them jump at shadows, some of which conceal very real threats...



Plot

No matter where they live, or how reclusively they live, all characters somehow acquire a parchment-colored business card:

MADAME CLEO VERTHANK
Old World Oracle
** Fortunes Told*
** Fates Revealed*
** The Gift Deck Is Never Wrong*
Tempest's Eye
Hyde Street Pier
San Francisco No Telephone

Written on the reverse in cramped calligraphy is the message, "I shall see you at dusk, on All Hallow's Eve." Additional motivation depends upon character personality and your chronicle style — perhaps characters intend to prove Madame Cleo a charlatan, or know her to be a true mage and decide to seek her advice. In any case, the plot develops around a trip to see this fortuneteller. However, the characters never actually make it there, so the details of actually meeting her are left to you (for now).

On their way, the characters are embroiled in a chaotic traffic accident. The most obvious catalyst is a little girl, Norna Weaver, who exudes magickal power. Spurred by curiosity, the characters pursue Norna. They discover that she is an Orphan (a likely Hollow One!), unaware of her power's true nature. Furthermore, she is hunted by the mysterious Men in Black, and haunted by visions of a horrible fate.

Besides these key developments, mages may pursue a number of other subplots. The accident provides them the opportunity to explore their feelings toward Sleepers (i.e., are they worth saving?) and perhaps begins a pattern of either static or dynamic magick use. Rescue attempts may make characters heroes.

Mages may further investigate Norna Weaver, the Men in Black, or return to the accident scene for more clues. The meeting with Madame Cleo still waits. These plot threats will unwind in **Loom of Fate**. For now, details are intentionally left vague, providing many tangents to explore in your chronicle.

Setting

On the evening of October 31st, mages cross downtown San Francisco on their way to meet the mysterious fortuneteller, Madame Cleo. Remnants of afternoon fog cling tenaciously to the concrete valleys below Nob Hill. While traveling north on Taylor, characters pass the aluminum-clad Hilton Hotel, apartments in Classical and Revivalist styles, and Victorian townhouses framed by wrought iron tracery. Some of the smaller buildings, such as clubs and theaters, boast Spanish-style roofs and architectural spillover from nearby Chinatown.

Children disguised as monsters and Ninja Turtles roam the sidewalks playing trick-or-treat. Concerned parents hover nearby. Here two punks fight over the right to smash a jack-o-lantern. There a leper seeking spare change first begs, then assaults a hippie. The street scene overloads all five senses: dense but speeding traffic, honking horns and squealing tires, the smell — almost *taste* — of vehicle exhaust, and constant feelings of claustrophobia.

From somewhere over this cacophony, the following radio message blares:

"...no comment. Now let's check in with Merika Seth, reporting live from Taylor and California. Merika?"

"Thanks, Bob. From this vantage, I suggest that listeners avoid the downtown entirely. Even the normally uncongested Taylor Street is crammed with vehicles spilling over from the gridlock on Grant Avenue. The traffic situation is partially due to a final surge of rush hour traffic and crowds of trick-or-treaters. But mostly we can blame this afternoon's win by our Giants over the A's. I think everyone agrees that the exciting result of this six-game series is well worth the delay.

"And those quakes which damaged the two stadiums earlier this month are all the excitement Mother Nature's given us. This last day of October ends with the average temperature of 61 degrees Fahrenheit. For tomorrow, I predict more exciting weather — thunderstorms and lots of rain for the first week of November."

The first announcer cuts back in: "And we all know Merika's forecasts have never been wrong. That's Weather and Traffic, here on WWGS. Next..."

Characters reach the intersection of Taylor and California in time to see the weather lady wrapping up her report. A red-and-green cable car runs slowly east, up Nob Hill. Amid apartments and hotels towers Grace Cathedral, its strange architectural style best described as "Gothic in Reinforced Concrete." Its rose windows illuminate its internal darkness.

Within Grace Cathedral, tiers of stained glass extend along its length, rising to the roof groins. Other details include a 15th century carved oak altar piece, a medieval Spanish crucifix, a 16th century Belgian tapestry, and an organ boasting 7000 pipes. Mages who roll Perception + Awareness (difficulty 8; three successes needed) feel uneasy about the place — and well they should. The bishop of this diocese, Reverend John Williams, has defected to the Technocracy.

Vehicular Chaos

A number of dramatic events occur during this scene. Not only are they intended to provide excitement, but to develop the personalities of characters as they react to the crisis.

As characters approach the intersection of Taylor and California, reality begins to unwind. Each character must roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 4) and consult the "Vehicular Chaos Perception Check" table.

After this initial event, chaos continues to escalate. Make this accident worthy of a high-budget action movie — that is,

totally unrealistic. Players who successfully dodge, but score only one or two successes in so doing, should suffer complications. Perhaps the driver of the characters' car (if they're in one) swerves to avoid the Honda, only to bear down on Norna Weaver... and the brakes fail! Meanwhile, the Honda strikes Merika Seth (the radio reporter). Vehicles and pedestrians tragically mingle. A petroleum truck skids into two streetlamps near Huntington Cemetery, and sparks threaten to ignite the fuel. Norna moves through the midst of this chaos, seemingly oblivious yet nevertheless escaping unscathed. Mages who act fast can prevent most of the impending fatalities.

Players are bound to work inventive magick to save themselves and others. Mages of Correspondence might use static magick to augment dodges, or dynamic magick to shift out of the way completely. Forces effects can drain a car's kinetic energy, while Matter effects may reduce its mass.

After the accident, characters may deal with injuries. With so many witnesses, all wounds are considered aggravated. Someone with an Influence Background finds himself interviewed by Merika Seth (who seems quite healthy despite her apparent "incident" — she is actually an HIT Mark monitoring the area; the Honda, however, sports a nasty dent).

Although characters may pursue a number of options from here (including a visit to the hospital), they probably pursue Norna Weaver. If not, prompt them toward that course via an Intelligence + Intuition roll (difficulty 6). After all, how could the girl have escaped all that carnage unscathed?

What's Going On?

The Technocracy, interested in perverting Norna's powers to its cause, has clouded her mind. She believes she's going to a nightclub called "The Cathedral" (and that it's later, or at least darker, than it really is). Inside, Reverend Williams is to restrain the girl and take her to the Technocracy's drop-point: Computer Junction, a computer retail store in a mall several miles away (see Computer Junction, below).

Though Norna is fooled on a conscious level, her subconscious is fighting back. It works magick which draws so much attention to her that the plans of the Technomancers will be foiled.

The Cathedral

To chase Norna Weaver, players must make extended Perception + Investigation rolls (difficulty 7) and accumulate five successes. Correspondence magick might also assist. The chase may be complicated by the need to avoid crashing vehicles and media coverage.

Norna takes refuge in Grace Cathedral, which she believes to be a nightclub. After entering she wanders around the perimeter of the place, but in a few moments makes her way to the center of the "dance floor" and begins to dance to nonexistent music.

If the characters approach Norna to speak, she apparently has a hard time hearing them (over the "music"). She ceases

Vehicular Chaos Perception Check:

Botch: The mage's mind is elsewhere, but she is jarred back to reality by impact with a car. She does not gain the benefit of a dodge roll, but can still roll for soak (see details in main text). A more alert companion could possibly push her out of the way or affect the car via magick.

Failure: Same as above, but she may still make a last-minute dodge (difficulty 8).

One success: She sees nothing but the obvious — that described above. She may also dodge the car hurtling toward her (difficulty 7).

Two successes: The character notices a Honda Prelude swerve toward her and may dodge (difficulty 6).

Three successes: The oncoming Honda swerves to avoid a girl (Norna Weaver) who hopped off a cable car in the middle of traffic. The character may dodge (difficulty 5).

Four successes: All traffic signals at the intersection show green or "walk." A character with at least one Sphere in Entropy realizes the malfunctioning signals and brake failures are caused by magick — Entropy magick emanating from Norna Weaver. The character may dodge the approaching car (difficulty 4).

Five successes: A character with Entropy 2+ is so alert she can attempt to minimize the randomness and bring chance back into balance. Otherwise, she may dodge (difficulty 3).

To dodge, roll Dexterity + Dodge (or Dexterity + Drive if in a vehicle). Each success reduces damage by one Health Level; zero damage indicates complete safety. Base damage from a collision is one Health Level for each 10 mph of the offending vehicle (assume a 40 mph speed limit). Seat belts add three dice when soaking impact damage.

even trying to listen to characters listening after a first attempt, unless one of the characters dances with her. Remember, she thinks she's at a club called The Cathedral, so talk of such a place does not faze her.

Norna only speaks at length to those who gain her attention (Appearance + Leadership; difficulty 5; two successes needed). A character who fails receives a sarcastic response.

Total acceptance of the characters takes time and extended Charisma + Expression rolls (difficulty 6; 10 successes). Mages who share similar philosophies with Norna face less difficulty; refer to the Hollow Ones' stereotypes in Chapter Six. Threats or hostility are greeted with Norna's subconscious magick — the offending character trips, perhaps.

Characters surely have many questions. You must determine how much Norna gives away, while at the same time preserving suspense.

Reverend John Williams

An ex-member of the Celestial Chorus, wooed by the words and power of the Technocracy, Williams has a simple task — subdue Norna and deliver her to his New World Order superiors. Neither they nor he counted on her subconscious magick drawing such a crowd.

If the characters arrive at the cathedral late, you have to decide whether or not Williams has already abducted Norna and left for Computer Junction. If so, the characters may be able to track him via magick (or the trail of damage left by Norna).

If characters follow shortly behind Norna, Williams watches the scene between the parties before deciding what to

John Williams

Tradition: Celestial Chorus (not yet New World Order)

Essence: Questing

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Director

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Talents: Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Research 3, Technology 2

Knowledges: Computer 2, Cosmology 1, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Science 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 1

Spheres: Forces 3, Prime 2, Spirit 2

Willpower: 5

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 6

Paradox: 0

do. As soon as the characters attempt to convince Norna to leave or begin to stumble upon the truth, Williams confronts them. His first tactic is to intimidate characters ("What are you doing in here!?" or "Unhand that poor girl!"). Failing that, he demands that they leave her in his care ("She obviously has problems so severe that only the love of family will heal her. She should remain here."). Failing even that, he is at a loss until the Men in Black suddenly show up to take over. If the Men in Black attack the characters, Williams helps at first but is soon commanded to take Norna away.

At all times, Williams should present the appearance of an interested, sincere priest. The only time this demeanor should change is upon the appearance of the Men in Black, or if the characters recognize the Node of the church.

If forced to fight in the cathedral, Williams takes full advantage of his home turf. In his Node he gains the benefit of 20 Quintessence.

There exists between the cathedral and Computer Junction a residual trail of magick, left in the Umbra by the constant motion of Technomancer agents between the sites. Mages with Rank One in either the Spirit or Correspondence Sphere may be able to detect this trail. They can follow it back to the store, the other major site of Technomancer activity.

If characters follow the trail to the computer store, Williams attempts to escape as soon as the players depart, or as soon as an opportunity presents itself.

What's Going On?

Williams is a recent convert to the Technocracy. He has used his magick to convince everyone in his "flock" to purchase new videophones. With such devices installed in every home, mages of the New World Order can better intrude upon homes and lives.

When the opportunity to snag Norna Weaver presented itself, the New World Order put Williams to the task while Men in Black were dispatched to back him up.

Men in Black

If the characters ever threaten Williams or try to remove Norna from the cathedral, they hear loud but distant footsteps echoing from the front of the nave. Turning around, they are shocked to see men standing no more than a yard away. Each is dressed completely in black — from mask to traction boots. The men are decidedly menacing. There is one Man in Black for every two characters, but no more than four total.

Because the Men in Black virtually ignore the characters unless attacked, and instead speak to Williams, mages may study them carefully. The mages may never have heard of Men in Black, and have probably never seen one unless they have had trouble with the Technocracy in the past. One Man in Black asks Williams, "Is there a problem, Reverend?"

Though the Men in Black make veiled threats, they do not initiate combat. They defend themselves by drawing and firing their pistols or using their Spheres. They never seek cover and never register pain. You may determine the Spheres possessed by the Men. Choose the Spheres with which you are most comfortable, so you can think of a great variety of effects and coincidences.

Here are some ideas:

Correspondence: the Men are so sneaky that one manages to get behind a mage; a bullet co-locates to hit a mage from several angles at once

Entropy: the chain on the big chandelier overhead weakens and snaps, sending the chandelier crashing into the characters; the mage meant to attack the Man in Black with Forces but chooses the wrong one (they all look the same anyway)

Forces: loose wiring allows a mage to be shocked

Life: the mage's leg breaks when the pews in front of and behind him happen to fall together and pin his leg; the damage to a Man in Black wasn't as threatening as the character first thought

Matter: the mage gets butterfingers and can't hold onto whatever's in her hands; the mage isn't even holding what she thought she was — she must have grabbed the wrong item

Mind: the character suffers from Norna's nightclub delusion; the mage can't think of anything but how much he would like to sit down and take a rest

Prime: the mage's Quintessence is being drained away; the Quintessence used by a mage to create Forces effects is rendered inert

Spirit: a Technomancer Paradox spirit is summoned; the mage's Avatar is momentarily confused, leaving the mage without magick for a few turns

Time: a Man in Black predicted what a mage would do next and is ready to thwart the attempt; the character is suddenly dizzy from a knock on the head (make dizziness coincidental if he actually did get hit in the head); his opponent seems to be moving twice his own speed

What's Going On?

The Men have orders to get Norna Weaver. The safety of the convert (Williams) pales in comparison to this task, so the ex-Chorus member is on his own after the Men arrive. However, if the Men are evenly matched or outmatched by the characters, they encourage Williams to depart with the girl. They assume he won't be stupid enough to go to Computer Junction, but he is, and does.

Computer Junction

The trail of wreckage left by Norna and her subconscious, or the magick trail left by the Technomancers leads characters to this store. The store is open until 9 p.m., so note when characters arrive. A few employees are inside, cleaning up until 10 p.m..

Unless the characters use some impressive magick and careful methods, the Technomancers clear out by the time the characters arrive. All trails have been cut and absolutely no

leads exist. The employees who remain are all innocent (though struggling with their chores because their minds have been left magickally numbed).

Only if the characters fail to catch Williams at the cathedral, and they follow him here, do they find anything of import. Williams is waiting in the back room with a bound Norna. Whomever he's waiting for never shows, and Williams himself is uncertain exactly whom he awaits.

Norna Weaver

The daughter of an eminent surgeon and a Rich Bitch, Norna grew up with all the luxuries money could buy. She developed into a child prodigy. Norna mastered Spanish and Latin by age eight. She showed promise in a number of artistic pursuits — such as poetry, painting and ballet — though her instructors were concerned with her morbid subject matter. Of course, Norna's parents denied that anything could be psychologically wrong with their brilliant child.

Despite Norna's apparent advantages, her upbringing was far from normal. Her mother treated her more like a possession than a loved one, paradoxically allowing free expression while confining her with overprotectiveness. Her father showed some true affection, but in a strange manner — they spent quality time in the emergency wards and research labs of the UC Medical Center. Norna's father is dead now.

Besides Norna's mundane problems, she suffers from two inexplicable phenomena: flashes of precognition, which too often come true and hint at a terrible fate that looms before her; and a charmed life despite the frequent accidents that seem to follow her.

Tradition: Hollow One

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Curmudgeon/Deviant

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Awareness 3, Expression 4, Intuition 4, Intimidation 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Etiquette 2, Meditation 1, Research 1, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Computer 1, Culture 2, Etiquette 3, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 5, Destiny 5, Dream 5

Spheres: Entropy 3, Time 3

Willpower: 10

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 3

Image: A young woman with black, braided hair pulled back severely from a high forehead. Her eyes are dark and knowing; those who meet her gaze invariably feel violated, as if she knows their innermost feelings and thoughts. Norna tends to dress in bulky skirts, stockings and soft shoes — all black; a dark-colored shawl covers her green sweater.

Roleplaying Hints: Continually stare at people, but rarely speak. What you do say should often be weird and disturbing (e.g., Player: "What's your name, little girl?" Norna: "We're all gonna die, you know."). Defy orders with sarcasm and smart-ass comments; if the authority figure fails to cave in easily, comply with a resentful glance.

Cabal: None yet. Those who recruit Norna would gain much power and prestige from her great Avatar and looming fate. Unfortunately, her attitude and the troubles that surround her might teach a some painful lessons.

Conclusion and Chronicle Ties

This story leaves a number of loose ends. Your troupe may investigate these as desired, possibly weaving an entire chronicle from one or more plot threads. Below are some ideas about how "All Hollow's Eve" might fit into each chronicle concept discussed in Chapter Three.

Founding a Chantry: Many things indicate that Norna Weaver has strong magickal potential and could contribute greatly to mage society. Many Chantries may fight for the prestige of recruiting her; among them are Hollow Ones, Primordial Essence mages and Technomancers. And why not the players' characters?

Retainers of a Chantry: Madame Cleo, the fortuneteller whose invitation started this story, is in fact a true mage — a Master of Time. She has foreseen something of her Chantry's fate and needs the characters' help to save it. She can continue to provide vague and subtle guidance throughout the chronicle.

Street Gang: Norna can only stay hidden from the Technomancers by living on the streets. They may continue to search for her, but the characters can (hopefully) keep her safe until she learns what's going on.

Fighting the Technocracy: Who was at Computer Junction? It must have been a powerful mage if Men in Black were at his command, so why didn't he stay to fight? Why did he remain unseen? He may well return to wreak terrible vengeance upon those who ruined his plans.

Espionage: After being informed of her true nature, Norna might be willing to serve as a front to get the characters inside the Technocracy. She just has to pretend to join the Technocracy after all...

Quest for Ascension: Norna has an incredible destiny ahead. Could it lead all the way to Ascension? Perhaps those who accompany her will Ascend as well.

Surmount the Quiet: The intensity of the characters' Quiets increases whenever Norna is around. Does this mean that Norna is actually a part of their delusions? Is she a Hobgoblin that returned with one of them? Where is she leading them with such certainty of purpose? It's best to ask questions, lest one be led altogether beyond the bounds of sanity.

Ivory Tower: This is what the characters get for trying to keep a mysterious appointment. In their naive way, they probably suspect Madame Cleo of some part in Williams' deception.

Exploration of the Tellurian: Marauders also seek Norna. Was the traffic incident intended to kill her, or merely an accidental side effect induced by the imminent appearance of one or more Marauders? This may be the first in a series of chaotic events, each tied to Marauder activity.

Bibliography

Creativity is hiding your sources.
— Mark Rein•Hagen, *Vampire: The Masquerade*

Whoops! I don't think I've hidden *too* well. Robert M. Pirsig's work had an unmistakable effect on the design of this game. I read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* in the hope that it would get my mind on the right track for designing **Mage**. I enjoyed it, so I jumped on *Lila* when it was released at the end of 1991. **Mage** was originally being designed as a game about modern users of magick who could forge their own paradigms, but *Lila* gave me an entirely different slant on that approach and gave me irreplaceable terminology at the same time. What if mages were the embodiments of the Dynamic Quality Pirsig preached?

Books other than these two by Pirsig were useful and often influential in designing this game, and I would like to mention as many as possible. Here is a list of some of the books I referenced when working on **Mage**:

• Bach, Richard, *Illusions*, Dell, 1977.

— *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* would have been appropriate too, but there is only so much time for reading (even when it's only a one-sitting book). Two different people suggested *Illusions*, so I took note and read this one-sitting book.

• Barker, Clive, *Imajica*, Harper, 1991.

— This book was one of many synchronicities that seemed to surround the early stages of **Mage**. It has unbelievable similarities to many concepts embodied in **Mage**.

• Castaneda, Carlos, Journey to Ixtlan, Touchstone, 1972.

— I was told that this was the best of the Don Juan books and it's chock-full of good quotes for **Mage**.

• Carse, James P., *Finite and Infinite Games*, Ballantine, 1986.

— This book was a mind-blowing case of synchronicity when I discovered the Pirsig quote on the back.

• Denning, Melita and Osborne Phillips, *The Foundations of High Magick*, Llewellyn, 1991.

— My copy is full of highlighted passages, so this book must have been useful to me. A very good overview of the kind of magic with which most roleplayers will be familiar — Hermetic magic.

• Dick, Philip K., *Clans of the Alphane Moons*, Bluejay Books, 1984.

— Long recognized by insiders as a writer of extraordinary talent and insight, Dick is now achieving notice by a more mainstream audience. I've read only a few of his wonderful books, but of them this one qualifies as a **Mage** book. It's about drawing the line between sanity and madness — an issue at the heart of this game.

• Hardison Jr., O.B., *Disappearing through the Skylight*, Viking Penguin, 1989.

— A great look at how times are changing, and people along with them.

• Howard, Michael, *The Occult Conspiracy*, Destiny Books, 1989.

— An intriguing look at how mages might be directing events in the real world.

• Keyes, Daniel, *Flowers for Algernon*, Bantam Books, 1975.

— This book is often part of middle-school summer reading programs; I finally got around to reading it at age 24. Besides being a fine story, it's a **Mage** book because it concerns changing perceptions of the world. It also describes the cruel fate the Progenitors inflict on many of their flunkies.

• Kraig, Donald Michael, Modern Magick, Llewellyn, 1992.

— A reading won't do much for you unless you're really into this stuff, but it's full of interesting symbolism.

• Pirsig, Robert M., Lila, Bantam Books, 1991.

• Pirsig, Robert M., *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Bantam New Age, 1981.

— Read 'em both, though I think *Lila* is the better of the two.

• Postman, Neil, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, Vintage Books, 1993.

— Released in April of 1993, this book almost came too late. If it had been published a year earlier, developing the Technocracy (a term Postman also uses!) would have been a snap. This could be a handbook to the Technocracy.

• Tyson, Donald, *The New Magus*, Llewellyn, 1988.

— The introduction alone is worth the price of admission.

• Tyson, Donald, *Ritual Magic*, Llewellyn, 1992.

— A fine summary of the history of magic with a brief discussion of several different kinds of magic as well.

• Vertigo Comics, an imprint of DC Comics.

— Various comics in this new imprint of DC Comics are incredibly useful for **Mage**. There are a couple of obvious ones — *Sandman* and *Hellblazer* — but for pure "mageliness," you can't beat *Kid Eternity*.

• Yatri, *Unknown Man*, Fireside, 1988.

— One man's view of Ascension.

Last Words

I was driving home from the White Wolf Game Studio early in the morning one night last week. While making my usual left-hand turn off Brer Rabbit Road, I caught a glimpse of the moon through my open window. It was a full moon, and for a split second I thought I saw a face. A really detailed face. It was a full, friendly face with a bulbous nose that seemed to extend beyond the edge of the moon. The motion of my glance, and a desire to watch the road as I drove, drew my eyes away from the moon before I realized what I saw. When I again looked, the face was gone, of course.

It's that "of course" which I find most disheartening, and that sense of loss is woven into **Mage**. I chuckled at my folly of seeing a face in a moon before I realized that my presumably mistaken perception was the stuff from which ancient people built their mythologies. It is nothing but my belief in science that caused me to dismiss what I saw. It was nothing but a belief in magick that made those ancient people believe what they saw.

I don't want to seem as though I'm looking back fondly on some innocent, lost age. Science is simply providing man's best way of describing the universe. Maybe it will turn out to be the right way, but considering its current, single-minded course, I have my doubts. Science is teaching us how to think as surely as it is revealing "truths" to ponder. The difference between science and its agent, technology, is substantial, but that's dealt with elsewhere in this book.

Humanity's existence could be described as a pursuit of the secret order of things we know must exist. We have to discover and quantify this order. Others have raised the question that by defining the truth, we change it — perhaps change it so much that it's no longer the truth but simply our perception of it. Where in this result is the end or security we crave? Without an end, without a goal, what will come of us when we're forced to admit that the universe is unknowable, as it just may be?

Mages have the benefit of knowing with absolute certainty that there is a greater truth, that there is something worth striving for. This is the perennial advantage of fiction: the characters can often be sure of their actions because they are operating in a world created for them to understand. It's an immense thrill for the creator as well. It makes the act of creation more than just that of creating a world. It means he creates *truth*. And when a creator does that, it can be a disappointment to return to the real world, a world where he no longer knows the truth. In the real world, like everyone else already there, the creator remains hesitant, unenlightened and uncommitted.

In **Mage** I hope you will enjoy embracing a "truth" for a time.

* * *

As a final note, I would like to do more to thank those who helped create this game than simply list a name in the credits. I want them to know that despite my extremely cantankerous mood at times, I do appreciate the comments and advice they offered. I spent endless hours wrestling with this monster and at a certain point it became very difficult to work from the framework of anyone's thoughts but my own. I may have gone for too much in my first game, so thanks for reeling me in when I needed a good bop on the head.

Thanks to Mark Rein•Hagen. I cannot fully express my gratitude for his guidance. He steered me onto a path of storytelling and now I want to blaze it with him.

Thanks to my brother, Stephan Wieck. In addition to his colossal contributions to the game, his very timely arrival in Georgia and extremely capable administrative hand allowed me the necessary time to devote myself to **Mage**.

Thanks to Chris Earley. You took my "metaphysical" concept to heart and may have been burnt by it, but conceptually the game simply would not be complete without your fine ideas.

Thanks to Chris Hind. Some of your ideas from early exchanges became major building blocks for the game.

Thanks to Travis Williams for organizing the playtest. I kept the playtesters' comments in mind and they often served as the proverbial straw when someone closer to the design of the game pointed out the same shortcoming.

Thanks to Rob Hatch for dealing with my strange hours and not throwing pencils at me when I finally showed up for questioning. Thanks for your dedication to a job well done and thanks for doing just that.

Thanks to Sam Chupp for being available for all those last-minute writing chores that I no longer had the patience to tackle. You didn't have time either, Sam, but you did great.

Thanks to all those members of the Game Studio who gave me their thoughts throughout the process and especially to those who rallied in the last few weeks (Bill Bridges and Andrew Greenberg in particular) to put the game through its paces.

And thanks to all you members of the Studio who may never have batted an eye at Mage but allow for its existence through your careful and considerable efforts elsewhere.

Stewart Wieck
July 1993

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MAGE™

The Ascension

Name: **Essence:** **Tradition:**
Player: **Nature:** **Mentor:**
Chronicle: **Demeanor:** **Cabal:**

Attributes

Physical

Strength _____ ●OOOO
Dexterity _____ ●OOOO
Stamina _____ ●OOOO

Social

Charisma _____ ●OOOO
Manipulation _____ ●OOOO
Appearance _____ ●OOOO

Mental

Perception _____ ●OOOO
Intelligence _____ ●OOOO
Wits _____ ●OOOO

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ OOOOO
Athletics _____ OOOOO
Awareness _____ OOOOO
Brawl _____ OOOOO
Dodge _____ OOOOO
Expression _____ OOOOO
Intuition _____ OOOOO
Intimidation _____ OOOOO
Streetwise _____ OOOOO
Subterfuge _____ OOOOO

Skills

Drive _____ OOOOO
Etiquette _____ OOOOO
Firearms _____ OOOOO
Leadership _____ OOOOO
Meditation _____ OOOOO
Melee _____ OOOOO
Research _____ OOOOO
Stealth _____ OOOOO
Survival _____ OOOOO
Technology _____ OOOOO

Knowledges

Computer _____ OOOOO
Cosmology _____ OOOOO
Culture _____ OOOOO
Enigmas _____ OOOOO
Investigation _____ OOOOO
Law _____ OOOOO
Linguistics _____ OOOOO
Medicine _____ OOOOO
Occult _____ OOOOO
Science _____ OOOOO

Advantages

Spheres

Correspondence ___ OOOOO
Entropy _____ OOOOO
Forces _____ OOOOO
Life _____ OOOOO
Mind _____ OOOOO
Matter _____ OOOOO
Prime _____ OOOOO
Spirit _____ OOOOO
Time _____ OOOOO

Backgrounds

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

Arete

O O O O O O O O O O

Willpower

O O O O O O O O O O
❑❑❑❑❑❑❑❑❑❑

Quintessence

Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ❑
Hurt -1 ❑
Injured -1 ❑
Wounded -2 ❑
Mauled -2 ❑
Crippled -5 ❑
Incapacitated ❑

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Experience

Study Points

Attributes: 7/5/3 Abilities: 13/9/5 Spheres: 5 Backgrounds: 7 Freebie Points: 15 (7/5/4/2/1)

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