

# SORCERER

REVISED EDITION



THE BOOK OF SORCERERS AND PSYCHICS FOR **MAGE: THE ASCENSION**®

# SORCERER<sup>TM</sup>

REVISED EDITION



BY CONRAD HUBBARD, HEATHER GROVE AND SCOTT TAYLOR



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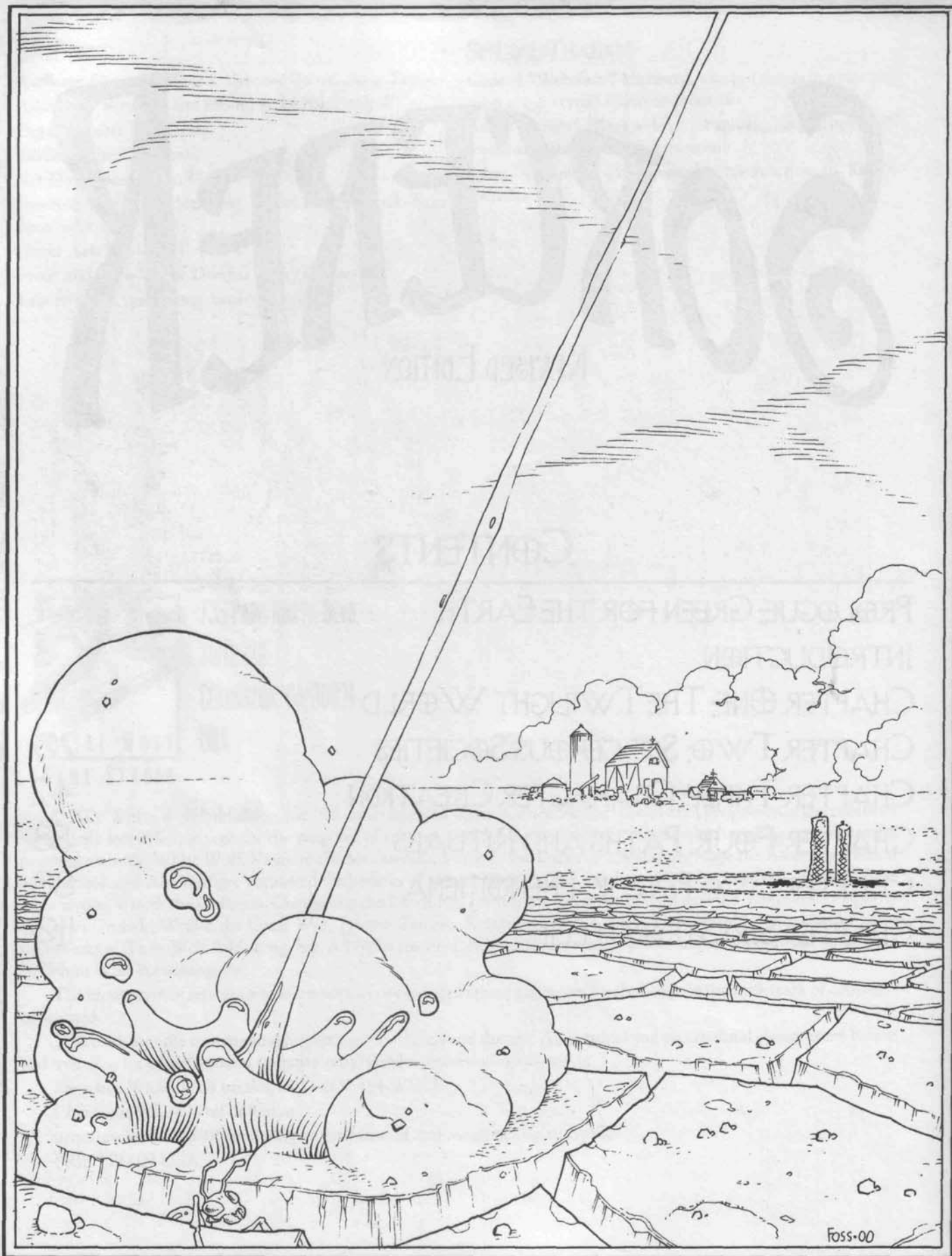
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# PRELUDE: GREEN FOR THE EARTH



Jeb Moran stared at the earth beneath his feet. The ground was dry and dusty; most of the grass had already died. Jeb's skin was dry and dusty too — he refused to use the rose-scented moisturizer his wife Mandy bought at the grocery, so cracks split the calluses on his fingertips open. Short, gray hair stuck to his forehead in the heat. "So you see," he said, "if this

crop dies, we'll lose the house." His voice cracked. "Mandy's relatives hate me, so we'll have no place to go." He kept his eyes on the ground.

Bruce Clark nodded, his eyes on the sky. The sky was clear and achingly blue, and the weather report that morning had only predicted more of the same. His own dark hair stuck up into the air in places where he'd run his hands through it, and rivulets of sweat beaded along his jaw-line. He was a big man, and he moved



slowly, thoughtfully. He nodded. "That would be a right shame, it would." He chose his words carefully — he knew how difficult it had been for Jeb to come to him, and he didn't want to hurt the man's pride. "I'd hate to lose you as neighbors. I'm sure there'll be some rain soon."

Jeb glanced up at him sharply. "You're sure?"

"As sure as I can be." Bruce smiled. "Now why don't you go home. Weather like this is nothing to be running around in; you heard the advisory on the radio. I'll see you tomorrow."

Jeb relaxed visibly. "I'll do that."

Bruce nodded and smiled.

...

"But sweetheart, are you sure this is such a good idea?" Emily's brow furrowed right up the middle, pointing straight to the part in her red hair. "Your father said that big things like rainstorms were only for emergencies...."

Bruce put his hands on his wife's arms and smiled down into her warm brown eyes. "I can't let Jeb down, you know that. Now please call my sister and tell her to come home for dinner tonight."

Emily pulled her flower-printed calendar and address book from the hand-carved bookcase next to the dining room table. She flipped through it until she found the right page and picked up the phone.

Bruce kissed his wife on the forehead. "Thank you."

Emily smoothed one sweaty hand against her yellow dress. "Well, like you said, we can't let Jeb down." She smiled.

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Dinner had come to an end. Emily and Susan cleared away the last of the dishes; Emily had brought out the good blue tablecloth for the occasion, and Susan had made her famous maple-apple pie. Everyone was stuffed and happy.

Emily shooed Anne, her 12-year-old daughter, into the kitchen. "Take care of dishes; we need to handle the crops."

"Can't I help? I'm old enough now. I've been doing my studies." Anne put her hands on her jeans-clad hips.

"Don't argue with me." Emily glared at Anne, and Anne turned to the kitchen with a roll of her eyes.

Bruce watched her go and shrugged. "We should initiate her soon. She is old enough."

"Oh, don't you let her hear you, or she won't give up nearly so easily next time," Emily teased him.

...

By the light of a flashlight, Bruce took a sturdy hunting knife from the trunk and a grass-green beeswax candle. He stuffed the knife under his arm, while he pulled out a cheap plastic lighter and lit the wick. "Green

for the earth," he whispered as he put the lighter in his pocket and turned off the flashlight. Susan had taken out another knife, and both of the women lit their candles, whispering the same benediction.

Bruce held his candle high, as he drew a circle around them in the dirt with his knife — he tried to relax and hold his concentration as he felt the hot wax drip onto his fingers. He put the candle down on a rock near the center of the circle and lifted an old, leather-bound book from the trunk. He read rough, guttural words from its pages — no one knew what the words meant, but they'd been taught to pronounce the syllables long ago. Not knowing what he said only heightened the sense that something special was about to happen. He felt the quickening of his heartbeat, at once familiar and exciting. He passed the book to Emily, and each family member in turn read from its pages.

Emily put her candle on the ground and stepped to the center of the circle. She closed her eyes and reached out with her hands and her mind. She felt a spark as her awareness touched the sky, and she gasped for breath. "As our fathers and mothers before us have always done, we call to the earth and beg a reply. Bring rain for the crops, or we shall die." In the distance, a faint peal of thunder sounded.

Susan looked up into the night sky at the sound of thunder and shuddered — she'd done things like this for years, but it never failed to bring a flush to her cheeks. She brought her attention back to the circle and took her place in the center. "In return, we give of ourselves. We nourish the earth, so that it might nourish us in return." She ran her knife along the inside of her left arm and stiffened at the pain. Her breath hissed as she squeezed her arm so the blood would drip onto the dirt and the yellowed grass. Another peal of thunder sounded, a little closer this time. A cool breeze cut through the heat.

Bruce closed the book and put it back in the trunk. The knives joined it, and the extinguished candles. The flashlight shone out over the field once again. Emily laughed as she shut her eyes and turned her face up to the breeze. She could already feel the moisture in it, the promise of rain.

"It feels incredible," she said.

"The magic or the coming rain?" her husband asked with a smile as he wrapped his arms around her from behind. They heard Susan gather up the last contents of the trunk and carry it back toward the farmhouse.

"Both." She pressed her hands into his and stood for a long time, until a drop of rain fell onto her face, landing in the corner of her closed eye.

She shivered.

Nothing had ever felt so perfect in the entire world.





2nd floor



# INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the newly revised edition of *Sorcerer*, the book of Numina for *Mage: The Ascension*. While *Mage* deals with those phenomenal humans who've Awakened to the power to change reality, *Sorcerer* details those who have discovered a more limited path to power. Still, they're nothing to sneeze at — a sorcerer, though perhaps not as flexible, is just as much a dweller in the occult world as any mage.

A sorcerer leads a sort of half-Awakened life, right on the cusp of the magical world but without the breadth and flexibility of a full Awakened mage. Grasping at the mythic threads held in legend and history, some resurrect ancient magics from ages long ago. Others push themselves to extraordinary understanding of science or spirituality and develop the capacity to exceed normal people in phenomenal ways. One can hardly call sorcerers "limited" — they have far more wisdom, and far more concomitant peril, than most mundane humans. While Awakened mages are the trailblazers who forge new ways, the sorcerers are those humans who dare to walk those paths opened by the Awakened instead of complacently waiting for the world to come to them.

Herein, you'll find newly updated rules for sorcerers, their Paths, their societies and practices, plus a complete set of psychic Numina, new guidelines for storytelling and character creation rules for the numinous mortals of *Mage*. So, without further ado...

**Chapter One: The Twilight World** introduces the world from the point of view of a sorcerer.

**Chapter Two: Sorcerous Societies** looks into the many groups of sorcerers, how they operate, who they recruit and what they believe. Here you'll also discover the role of sorcerers in the various Traditions and Conventions.

**Chapter Three: Character Creation** examines the creation rules for numinous mortals, including their special Merits, Abilities and powers.

**Chapter Four: Paths and Rituals** covers all manner of magical abilities that sorcerers practice, from alchemy to techno-sorcery.

**Chapter Five: Psychic Phenomena** unearths the strange mental powers possessed by a blessed (or cursed?) few.

**Chapter Six: Storytelling** advises on how to include sorcerers in games, how to integrate sorcery with the World of Darkness and ways to make sure that sorcerers don't take second seat to more flexible mages.



# CHAPTER ONE: THE TWILIGHT WORLD



*I know what my sisters do not know. I have seen what my brothers have not seen. And I can never tell them, for it would break our circle. All I can do is protect them from what they do not know.*

— Caroline Goldberg, Newburg Night Cabal, at age 26

## Who Are We?

My name is Caroline, and I have lived for more than 70 years; I spent the last 30 of those chronicling the details of cabals from Maine to Zimbabwe and Cambodia to Alaska. In those years, I have seen things that do not exist, and I have done things that cannot be done. Yet, I am nothing compared to the monsters that walk in the shadows. I am a “just,” like normal humans are “just” — at least, to those others. Among my own people, I am respected for my knowledge and wisdom, looked up to for the powers I have gained. Some would say that I have achieved my hopes and dreams — far more so, at least, than most people ever have the chance to.

We sorcerers are the in-betweens — we walk the twilight world. We are human, entirely mortal. No spirits ride our backs. We have a pulse and warm blood. And yet we can do things no human should do. We are a contradiction



of terms, and that makes us outsiders to everyone. Those who know of us fear us, respect us, worship us — or think we're kind of pathetic. We are religious leaders, professors, businessmen, farmers and housewives, and we are pawns, fodder for other people's wars and sometime-companions to those other creatures. Perhaps you can see now why we set such stock in secrecy.

What is it like to be one of us? It's heartbreaking. Every child dreams of magic. Everyone wishes they had powers beyond the norm. Who hasn't daydreamed of calling forth fire, summoning a spirit or changing their shape? Who hasn't longed for the things our parents told us weren't true? Who hasn't wished, just for a moment, for even the dark things to be real — just so long as it meant that magic was real, too? To be a sorcerer is to know these things, to understand them, to feel the rush of them in your belly — to gasp at the thrill along your spine when you create that first spark, when you summon that first breeze to caress your palm. We fight hard for every understanding we reach, and this only makes the knowledge that much more exciting when we uncover it.

Few mention this to their students along with the more traditional warnings, but sorcery is addictive. Once you see someone do something that cannot be done — once you taste real magic — you can never go back. This addiction bites both ways, of course. It gives us the enthusiasm and motivation we need for the endless studying and practice, the incredible effort of will that is sorcery. Yet, it also leads some of us to make bargains with devils, demons and far stranger things in the rush to learn more.

For those very few of us who have seen the other things that walk the earth, it bites even deeper. Imagine if you will that you've just gotten your first car, after working for years to pay for it. You're incredibly excited that you can drive now, you can go wherever you want. You're free. Then you discover one day that there are people out there who can fly. Suddenly your car doesn't look so amazing any more. It's slow and clunky. But you will never be able to fly — it's impossible for you. And you can never return to your innocent state, to your enthusiasm and your freedom. You are forever defined by the boundaries of your now much-smaller car.

I suppose I am a little bitter. Pay me no mind, please.

I think the ritual of sorcery attracts as many people as the power. People have an instinctive love of ritual — it makes us belong. I believe this is the secret behind the great power religion has over the masses. Even some mental illnesses breed ritual — the motions an obsessive-compulsive performs make her feel better; she becomes stressed if she is prevented from performing them. Whispered prayer calms us. Prescribed motion settles us. Ritual focuses our will, helps us to control our bodies and centers our minds. Many meditations involve breathing exercises or precise bodily motion (such as tai chi, which to some people is a meditation-in-motion) — another type of ritual. Those people who lead us in ritual, such as priests, hold great sway over our emotional and spiritual lives. People give money and time to churches in return for the comfort of ritual. They turn to religion — to ritual — whenever they are most in need, when they have lost loved ones, jobs and homes.

I took an evening psychology class some few years ago, and the lecturer said, "neurosis is a private religion; religion is a public neurosis." Sorcery is both our religion and our neurosis. It is our comfort and our obsession, our solace and psychosis. It may help us to put our lives back together after some tragedy, or it may send us over the edge. It gives us something to belong to and believe in and sets us forever apart from our fellow man. It is the between-place, the sharp divide, the fine line and the twilight path. We stand between the mortals and the terror that hunts the night, and we may give aid in the form of potions, devices, voodoo and spells, or we may apprentice ourselves

to those same terrors in the hopes of gaining greater power. We may not be at the top of the food chain, but we do matter. Don't ever let bitter old people like me convince you otherwise.

### Companions

What most people call a cabal, I call a church, but I'll stick to the usual terminology so as to avoid confusing you. As I said, I see no real difference between ritual and religion, so my ritual is my religion. Those who try to convince themselves that their cabal does not matter to them or that their cabal is only a collection of colleagues are lying to themselves. You cannot put such an emotional stake into your work and claim that those you work with mean nothing to you — and you cannot perform magic without emotion. There comes a point when the work and those performing it become one and the same, when the magic and the man become inseparable. That is the act of will.

Cabals soothe and welcome. They give us a place to be who we are. They help us to reach our full potential. Or they can pressure us into doing things we aren't ready for, keep all of their secrets from us and lead us along the darkest of roads with bright promises and lies. I've known cabals that make demons look slack, they're so adept at sucking people down the wrong path. Cabals can be about the search for knowledge, companionship, simple practicality, religious zealotry or several things at once.

Never make the mistake of believing that cabals are simple social clubs. Your cabal is your responsibility. You have responsibilities to your cabal — these differ from cabal to cabal — and you have responsibilities with respect to your cabal. This includes the need to take note if your cabal appears to be headed down the wrong path and to either help to turn them back if possible or turn them over to someone better able to handle the situation if you cannot. Worst case, if there is no one better able to handle the situation — and there rarely is — it's your responsibility to run away. You're just as guilty if you stand by and watch atrocities being committed as if you'd committed them yourself.

Membership in a cabal may come with resources and responsibilities. It often comes with a cause, as well. If you're lucky, you may be filled with the rightness of your cause, uplifted and inspired. If you aren't lucky, you'll find yourself wondering what your cabal is really up to and why they seem to be hiding things from you. You may be pulled into a search for forbidden knowledge, an exploration of self-discovery — anything from devilry to divinity and everything in-between. Cabals are essential — it's almost impossible to learn what you really need to know without one. But cabals are also dangerous. They concentrate all the human frailties of their members in one direction — sorcery.

I'll give you a few examples of cabals I've seen and heard about; I suspect it will be far more effective than any pontificating I could do.

A group of students at the college I went to sat around doing drugs and having visions. They seemed pretty harmless. I wasn't into the drug thing, and at the time, I didn't even realize they were anything other than lazy students — it wasn't until later that I could look back and recognize the signs. They sucked people in, though, and those people lost months and years to the drugs and visions. Some of them went crazy from what they saw and ended up on psych wards. One killed himself; I still don't know why he did it. Others just lost time that they could have spent learning other magics. I don't want you to think that they were bad — some of them went on to do great things, and one or two developed true power in those smoky rooms. They just weren't for me.



It does go to show you that you have to be careful about the cabal you join. Don't assume that anyone who does sorcery is capable of teaching you wonderful things. I could tell you to treat it like going to college, to interview and look around, take tours and stay overnight. But that wouldn't be helpful. Maybe in an ideal world this would be possible, but it isn't as though there's a list of cabals somewhere with names and contact numbers and lists of their likes, dislikes and bad habits. (This one's a party cabal; that one's for serious scholars; etc.) Just be careful is all.

I once met a member of a cabal that operated much like a writer's group. They got together once or twice a week and presented their latest magical work to each other — the results of their studies, their newest accomplishments, their theories and moments of enlightenment. They pointed out the flaws in each other's work and helped each other to figure out how to make things better. Other than that, they stayed out of each other's lives, apart from the occasional dinner together. They convinced themselves that they didn't matter all that much to each other; it was just an issue of practicality. Eventually, one of them slaughtered half of the group before he could be stopped — the danger of telling powerful people to not care about each other.

My own cabal was a tight-knit group. We bought a house in the suburbs, because that way we could get lots of space for not too much money. We spent the rest of our pooled money on books and ritual materials and on the special renovations we wanted. We performed rituals in the morning to greet the day, rituals before meals and rituals for every sort of special occasion. We studied when we weren't working, and we spent our evenings in quiet contemplation, in study or in the practice of our art. You haven't seen anything until you've seen an entire floor of a house with the interior walls knocked out, huge windows reflecting the light of 100 blue candles, arcane symbols painted on every wall and





floor — some even on the ceiling. And who could forget the figures draped in white robes, chanting in every language from Latin to Egyptian. We did this on the fourth floor, and enough trees grew outside that we felt no need to cover the windows while we worked. This eventually proved to be our undoing, but that is another story. If there is anything you can learn from my cabal, it is to keep a cool head. Don't get too cocky, and stay in touch with the real world. No matter how well intentioned your cabal, it's dangerous to lose touch with life.

I knew a band that acted as a cabal; some of their stage shows were intricate rituals. Don't laugh. Words carefully scripted, every note accounted for, and they knew exactly where on the stage they'd move at every turn. It was beautiful to watch them. I also knew a traveling theater group that worked sorcery, but they didn't work it into their performances — they tried to keep the two parts of their lives as separate as possible.

And then there was the earth cult one of my cabal-mates almost joined. It was one of those earth-mother Gaia-worship sorts of groups. Lots of crystals and litanies about the moon, that kind of thing. They were so sweet; I'd almost expect them to hold bake sales. But once a month, when that precious moon of theirs grew dark, so did they. Rumor has it they sacrificed babies on those nights, but I expect that's hyperbole — it must have been animals, or someone would have noticed all those children disappearing. Anyway, those sweet girls went out into the woods, painted themselves up with blood and called down dark magics upon everyone who'd ever wronged them. You really didn't want to get on their bad side. The plumber who hit on one of them never walked again after the next new moon. Maybe you can say they didn't hurt anyone who didn't hurt them first, but if you ask me, they went more than a little overboard.

It's easy to go overboard, though, when you get caught up in magic. You think, I can make charms and call down hellfire upon my enemies' heads, so it's okay for me to do it, right? I mean, what's the point of having these abilities if I don't use them? And when you're hurt because someone betrayed you or angry at the trick someone pulled on you, it's hard to remember that they're just mortal — they don't have the resources we have and have no protections against our magics. I think the difference between a "good" and a "bad" cabal is the ability of the cabal to gently restrain its members' darker impulses. A good cabal will find a way to repress or channel those impulses to another end, rather than allow them to run rampant. Don't be fooled, however; very few cabals ever figure out how to do it successfully. Eventually, someone always snaps.

### The Difficult Road

There are those for whom magic comes naturally, instinctively, intuitively. Oh yes, they have to work for it, but not like we do. They have spirits to guide them and push them in the right direction. And where one of us might create a ritual through years of study, a few can weave with a simple word or gesture; they have the *knowing* of magic, they can bend it as they will without following all of its rules. Where we must study for years and years to be able to see into the spirit world, some of their basest beginners can do the same. They study for decades in order to become powerful beyond your wildest dreams; we study for decades to be able to heal someone's wounds without too much trouble. We both do magic. A few of these think that they have some special gift or talent that sets them apart. Perhaps they do; I have my sorcery and if, perhaps, I am limited by the rules and rituals I know, so too, do I not suffer the mistakes and backfires of someone who tries to tamper wantonly with such potent forces.

Don't listen to anyone who tells you that your magic is inferior. We're sorcerers, and that's honorable. So we may not have some spirit or inspiration giving us a leg up and shortcut into the theory of magic. It means we also don't

have some spirit telling us what to do. I hear that, for some shamans, their spirits hold their magical ability hostage until they learn to jump through the right hoops. And if you don't do it the way the spirit wants, well, you don't get that little bit of enlightenment you were searching for, too bad for you. You just have to start all over again until you get it right. If you ask me, that's too high a price to pay for any power. Might as well sell your soul to the Devil at that rate; at least you get to choose that — I understand that many don't choose their muses; just as they have inspiration, so too, are they driven, and it can drive you to madness or death. I hear some of these chaotic spirits are pretty nasty too, with their own agendas and goals. Why leave yourself at the mercy of something you didn't even get the option of choosing, when you can learn magic on your own instead? So our magic will never be as powerful or as versatile as some of those who just have "the gift." So what? At least it's ours.

Our magic almost never "just comes to us." Some sorcerers have a greater intuition than others regarding their Path, it's true. Others have "psychic" abilities that are more inherent than learned. But by and large, we're on our own. We must find a mentor, a teacher or a library to get anywhere, if not all three. Rituals don't just pop up out of the earth, after all. We must research and develop them, painstakingly, over time. We dig up what others before us have done and recreate what was lost. But at least once we're done we know that, time after time, unless we screw something up, we can repeat the same ritual over and over and reliably get the same result. I can paint the same symbols, speak the same syllables, make the same motions and have the same spirit appear in my attic. There's a lot to be said for this sort of dependability.

Also, while our magic may go wrong — say, if we break the circle we stand in or pronounce a syllable incorrectly — it doesn't mess with us the way it does to those who try to bend its rules. Those who try to force their will over the proper rituals are subject to the vicissitudes of the world in a way that a careful magician never is. Bad things may happen if we screw up, but at least we aren't as likely to take a building of innocent bystanders with us when we go.

Secrecy is of paramount importance to us. Without it, our lives become incredibly difficult. Normal mortals will fear or revile us. Some will worship us — and this can be even worse than their fear. Other magicians and the other creatures you know nothing about will look down on us, use us to fight their battles or kill us when we become an annoyance to them. Some lead us along with promises, claiming that they can teach us what they know — do not believe them. What they are we either cannot or must not become. The only ones who are capable of conferring their ability upon us are the very worst of all.

Far too many of our kind have died in the service of other creatures' battles. Do not allow them to recognize and categorize you, or you, too, will likely end your life on someone else's battlefield. It isn't worth it, no matter how sexy you think the vampire is, no matter how beautiful or powerful the ghost. The monsters out there can eat you for breakfast — don't forget it. Our weapons are secrecy and subtlety. We can hold our own but only if we're careful.

At this rate, though, you're going to think the sorcerer's life isn't worth it. Emphatically, it is. When you get something right, you know you did it yourself, with perseverance and hard work — it wasn't some damn spirit doing it for you. You answer to yourself and your cabal, not some overarching Tradition or Convention (although some of our people have been known to willingly help those magicians and their enemies — I'll never understand why). You don't follow the dictates of some spirit, and you aren't required to throw your life away in some ancient and misunderstood war. In short, you are free. You may think your magic limiting, the rules stifling and the price high, but



you have a talent that obeys your commands and brings you knowledge and confidence, and you owe it only to yourself, not to some demon or curse or spirit. We are our own masters. We rule our magic and ourselves. What we do, we do by our own choice. That is something we have gained by being human, and it is something we should hold onto for dear life. It is far more precious than any power on earth.

### The Why of What We Do

Why do people become sorcerers? You might as well ask why people become police officers or professors or parents. They do it because they want to. They do it because it fascinates them. They do it because they think they can do some good. Or they do it because they feel they have no choice. Everyone does it for his own reason. In my 30 years of traveling and studying various cabals (and even a few solitary sorcerers), I've heard almost as many reasons for the study of sorcery as I have met sorcerers.

Some people do it to protect themselves against the evil things that walk the earth. When you're mortal, it's easy to feel powerless against the monsters; anything that gives you a leg up is desirable. Some do it to protect themselves against mundane enemies — wouldn't you like to be able to get the police off of your back if you're wanted in five states? Protection is a heavy part of sorcery. Look in any paperback on magical herbalism and you'll find that roughly 80 percent of the herbs out there can be used for protection against "evil spirits." (The other 20 percent are for fertility. Some of the 80 percent are for fertility and driving away evil spirits) Evil spirits, of course, can be interpreted to mean almost anything. For example, garlic was never a specific ward against vampires — it was, like every other herb, a ward against evil spirits. Vampires just fell into that category along with everything else out there. Bad luck was an evil spirit, and the hatred of your enemies took the form of evil spirits. So protection, as a blanket desire, holds a powerful place in the annals of sorcery, and many of our rituals can be either directly or indirectly used in the attempt to protect ourselves from the dangers we encounter.

Others become sorcerers in order to protect the people around them. The altruistic use their skills in order to keep others alive, protect people from knowledge of the supernatural and undo the harm that befalls those around them (physical and emotional, natural and supernatural). I've known doctors in hospitals who practiced sorcery on their patients. I've heard of detectives who used sorcery to help them track down criminals. Not all sorcerers are gray-bearded old men in ivory academic towers, studying dusty old books.

Many variations upon the traditional theme of revenge exist. What better way to strike back against your tormentors or those who killed someone close to you than to learn the ways of sorcery? It is traditionally the tool of she who has no other way to strike back against those who have harmed her, she who has no other recourse — she who could not find redress within the standard means provided by society. This is perhaps why so many who were "outsiders" in their youth find their way to sorcery — they had no other way to repay those they hated. They had no other means to feel powerful.

This brings us to the next reason — to feel powerful. So many of us feel as though we're at the bottom of one food chain or another. No matter what we're at the top of, there's always someone else looking hungrily down at us. Sorcery can make you feel a little more in control, although there is always a debate as to whether or not this feeling is illusory. It can make you feel worthwhile and special. Some say this is not a good reason to learn sorcery. But who can say that this reason is not at the heart of most of the others? You may claim that you learned sorcery in order to protect other people, but



you obviously felt that you were not powerful enough to do it on your own, didn't you? So isn't power once again at the heart of the matter?

Some learn sorcery simply as a means to an end, a way to accomplish some specific task. It rarely stops there, of course. As I said earlier, sorcery is addictive; it's a shiny thing that's hard to put down once you've picked it up. Very few of these people learn only as much as they need to know and no more. Most continue their studies long after their goal has been achieved. Some lose sight of their goal in the pursuit of their studies.

Simple curiosity may be the reason behind one's forays into sorcery. You read about a spell, and out of curiosity, you try it. Maybe it works, maybe it doesn't, but now you want to know about other spells. Is this stuff real? Is it not? So many people get hooked just trying to find out if this kind of thing can really work. I would include in this group those people who delve into sorcery in order to feel what I call "the touch of magic." These are the people who would do anything to get that thrill along their spine that working magic gives them. These are also the people most likely to perform sex magic, but I digress.

Family tradition is a powerful reason. Some sorcerous orders require blood relationship as a precursor to initiation (although some will allow those who marry into the family to join, under certain circumstances). I met a man once who had been trained in the ways of his cabal since he was five years old. Rituals were weekend family outings with picnics and barbecue. I'll never understand it — it seems to lack the sense of mystery and wonder that to me characterize so much of sorcery — but I guess it works for them.

Mental illness is another reason that someone might choose to pursue the sorcerous arts. Some would hate me for saying this, would say that I'm perpetuating a bad stereotype. But it's true. Sometimes people try to muck with the stuff of the universe because they're messed up in the head. Maybe they think they're gods, or maybe they want a way to hurt lots of people. Maybe their illness makes them think they're capable of sorcery, and somehow, it really works. Not all mentally ill sorcerers are bad people — mania is a popular disorder to find among sorcerers, perhaps because one of the symptoms of mania is "religious feelings" — which brings us back to "the touch of magic." Who can say you'd know the difference between the two? But some of those who find their way into sorcery through mental illness are dangerous people indeed. Luckily, they're also the ones who are most likely to get fried when they decide they're capable of calling on massively dangerous spirits and demons.

One reason for becoming a sorcerer that may surprise you is peer pressure. When the rest of your family does it, every one of your five brothers went through initiation when they reached puberty, and it's expected of you, it can be hard to say no. The same is true when your friends try to push you into it. Too many people embarked upon the road of sorcery not because they want to, but because someone dragged them into it.

### How We Become What We Are

Much of the how is wrapped up in the why. The family initiates those people who join family cabals. If your friends push you into sorcery, then they're usually the ones handing out books, telling you to sacrifice small animals and cobbling together some trumped-up "initiation rite" they found in a fantasy novel. If simple curiosity drew you into sorcery then you probably learned your first stumbling spells from books at the library, or a New Age bookstore. Intense personal study and meditation have a long and venerable tradition; don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

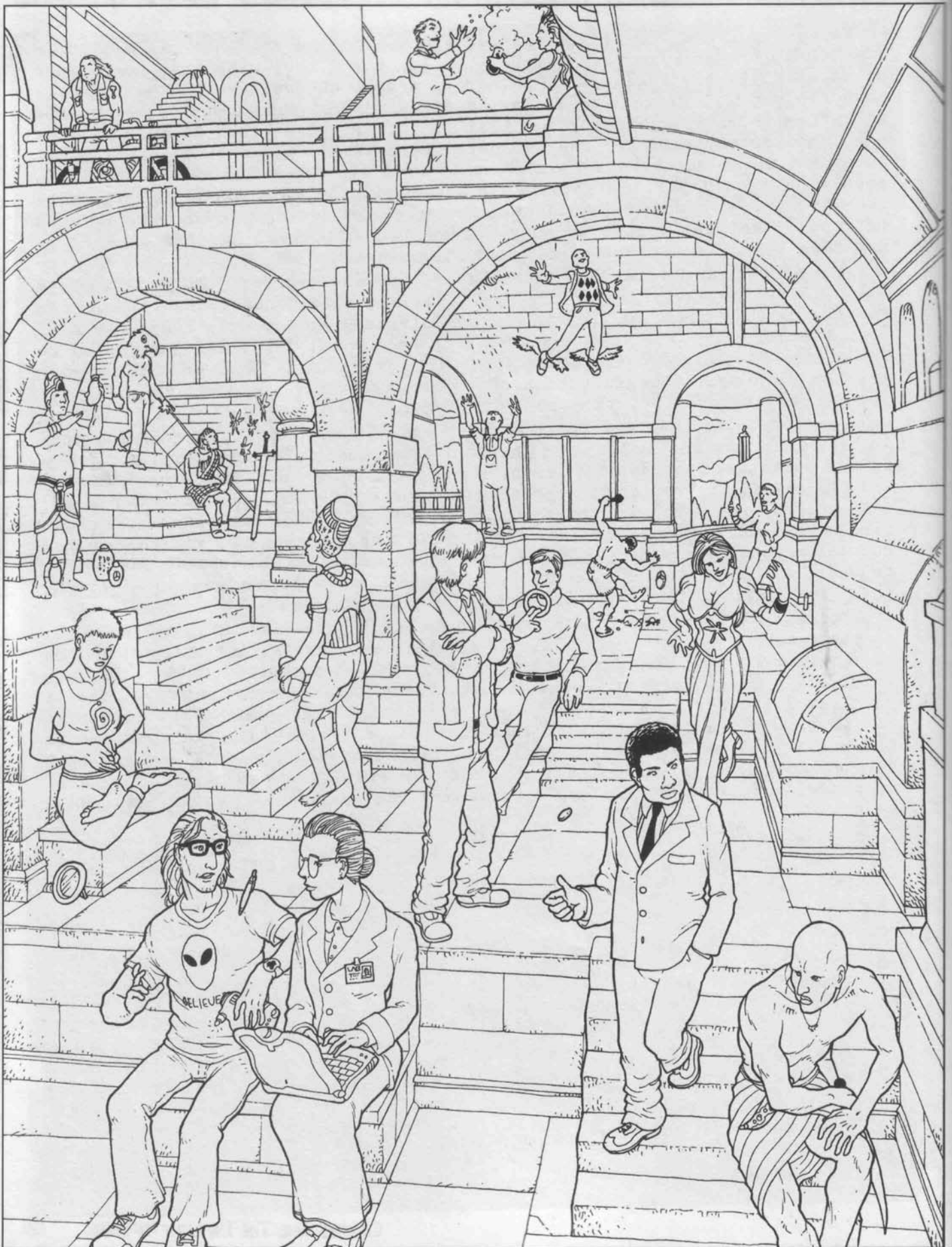
Maybe you found some weird site on the World Wide Web that had spells on it. Don't look so surprised — I may be old, but I'm up with the times. Some of these sites are legitimate, put up by people who believe that all people have the right to protect themselves against the bad things out there. Others are attempts to recruit people — they'll put up spells that are wrong, that shouldn't do anything and see who comes back with, "well, the spell you put up didn't work, but then I thought, what if I did this? And it worked." Some people have an intuition about spells and rituals, and those are valuable recruits. You must beware, however; some web sites are traps. There are groups out there that don't like it when people mess with reality, and they'll do anything they can to root us out and stomp on us.

Some people, as I said, have an intuitive sense for sorcery. They might start out with things they find in the bookstore and alter them to suit their own tastes. Or they might make up their own material. Most people really do need some teacher — whether it's a person or a book — but these few can get by on their own. They might never learn the really powerful things, and they rarely get far with spirit magic (which often requires that you know which spirit you're calling on), but they hold their own.

A mentor is the best way to learn sorcery but, of course, leaves you open to the perils of finding the wrong mentor. Some cabals and individual sorcerers follow potential recruits for weeks, even years, before deciding to invite them in. Others simply provide the opportunity to the potential recruit and declare that recruit ready to join when he figures things out for himself. Some people find cabals and invite themselves in — this is a dangerous game, though, because not all sorcerers are nice people; some would rather kill you than invite you to share their fire. Some cabals put their recruits through tests — some of these are ritualistic, but others may be quite deadly.

Ultimately, there are as many ways to do sorcery, as many ways to learn it, as many ways to get involved with it, as there are cabals. And there are a lot of cabals out there. Oh, they're not on every street corner — not even in every major city. There are whole states without any sorcerous communities. But if you travel the world as I have, you'll eventually find quite a few sorcerers out there. Be careful — most of them are not your friends. Until you are as old and as learned as I am, I would not recommend doing what I have done. I have escaped from privacy-minded cabals by the skin of my teeth, and I've taken my share of wounds. Hopefully, my research will mean that you may stay safe at home.





# CHAPTER TWO: SORCEROUS SOCIETIES

*They can because they think they can.*

— Virgil



## THE FORTIS OF MAGIC

For the last time, I get so sick and tired of hearing about “hedge magic.” Hearing that particularly stupid phrase just makes me think of enchantments for clipping large ornamental shrubbery. Magic is magic.

If it will help you to understand better, think of the universe as an old dog. You try to

teach it new tricks, and so, it tries to bite you now and then. I am trying to get it to do tricks it already knows, which may take longer sometimes, but at least the old girl seems happy to roll over, fetch or play dead without ripping my arm off. Think I am limiting myself? Well, this universe of ours is an awfully old dog, and she’s got a list of tricks we may never exhaust.

— Hurai the Acolyte



## Linear Magic

### *Studies of the Nature of Linear Magic in Effort to Further Expand Universal Understanding of the Word*

-Excerpts from the lectures of Hurai, Practicus of House Bonisagus

Greetings, fellow Hermetics. I hope that you will forgive me if I do not sufficiently explain myself, but I have been given the difficult task of explaining the underpinnings that static magics from traditions as diverse as shamanism, Hermeticism and Kabbalah share. I am sure that many of the terms that I have chosen to use would confuse, surprise or perhaps even anger those of whom I speak. It is nonetheless true that every theory of magic includes recognizable elements that we can easily categorize for simple explanation. I am not purporting that the study of magic by any tradition is a simple matter, only that it is more useful to establish some terminology with which to refer to commonly shared concepts.

I suppose we should start with the exception to which I am certain many of you will take to my terming what has traditionally been called static magic as linear. In truth, what we commonly refer to as static magic still contains elements of change and would thus be considered a dynamic force. What separates my manipulation of reality from that of more dynamic practitioners, known amongst many of the Order as True Mages, is the following of established paths. These paths may seem winding and lost to the uninitiated but grow clear cut to those who have spent long years studying the ways of magic. By following a set method of enunciating certain words of Enochian while exercising the Will in a precise faction, I can cause *Creo Ignem*, the creation of fire, like thus. Through rigid practice of meditation, certain monks have been shown to have the ability to induce ecstatic visions.

I am quite aware that some of you here can do these things and more. But my point is this. I can create this flame in precisely the same fashion every single time via the same action. To make fire from nothing, from the mindset of myself and others who practice so-called linear sorts of magic, is a step by step process. First, I learned to make a spark, then a candle and, eventually, under the right circumstances, a bonfire. The move from spark to bonfire has been a linear progression using the same principles and elements with greater and greater refinement and application of Will. When Lucian Dark described his realization of the mastery of the element of fire to me, it became clear that he had realized some sort of commonality of forces in the Word that granted him control of all kinetic energies under one set of principles. I can assure you that this is not the case in my own studies. I am still struggling with the spells to gently nudge the smallest rock practically, yet can easily incinerate that table in front of you.

Thus, I propose that the art of static or "hedge" magic be termed "linear magic." Magic generally called dynamic or "Awakened" displays categorical control that suggests the designation of "affinitive magic." Various magnitudes of use of the same effect shall be termed Degrees. The study of how

to enact a single effect to greater and greater degree most easily lends itself to being called a Path. I hope it will not be taken as hubris to further point out that all magic, whether affinitive or linear, follows principles of dynamism, stasis or entropy. This is why I recommend a different label with which to discuss the differences between the two forms of magic.

A practitioner of affinitive magic, for example our esteemed colleague Lucian, manipulates reality with a model that declares that all energies are similar and thus can be manipulated the same way. The limitation appears to be that, in order to learn to affect all energies once one decides that they are the same, one must expand a much larger model to a higher Degree. A linear practitioner, by way of contrast, uses a very tightly defined model of one aspect of reality at a time, say fire for example. Advancing the Path that composes this much smaller model is a significantly easier task than advancing through the more comprehensive affinitive degrees. In a sense, it requires that one step back again and again to the beginning of a new Path every time one wishes to pursue a new Linear magical effect. I find that I must begin at the tiniest Degree with virtually no benefit gained from knowledge of Paths that have been followed to their current conclusion.

One of the greatest contributions of our Order to the Council of Traditions was the theory that unified magical concepts into Spheres of influence. In order to prevent confusion between the Spheres of affinitive magical thought and the spheres of influence which are used almost precisely the same by linear magic, I propose a return to the classical term Elements. Modern magical theories have grown far beyond those of the Mythic Age, and magical Elements are commonly accepted amongst the traditions to include nine Arts. Herein, I shall refer to them in their Latin names: Ars Animae (Life), Ars Conjunctionis (Correspondence), Ars Essentiae (Forces), Ars Fati (Entropy), Ars Manium (Spirit), Ars Materiae (Matter), Ars Mentis (Mind), Ars Temporis (Time) and Ars Vis (Prime). In the affinitive school of magical study, these nine Ars (Arts) are treated as complete models of practice; learning a Degree of Ars Animae is very trying but gifts one with an incredible range of magic tied into one theory. Linear magic recognizes the usefulness of the Elements, but breaks them further down into actual applications.

An Element is directed in use towards a Principle, of dynamism, stasis or entropy. An effect derived from Ars Animae utilizing the principle of stasis might be to heal the human body. The linear practitioner literally learns how to use this combination of Principle and Element in one specific way. At first, a shaman may learn to apply certain herbal remedies to heal the mildly sick. Over time, she may learn to regenerate the limbs of an amputee. This expanding ability to perform greater Degrees of the same refined magical power is the Path of the linear mage. Each magical Path is an effect of various Degrees of magnitude that falls into one of the nine Elements of magical manipulation and under one of the three Principles of metaphysics. What this allows us to do is to create a model of 27 types of Paths. Regardless of the source of the linear mage's power, every Path of sorcery can be classified thus. My creation of fire, for example, is Ars Essentiae Dynamism.



## AWAKENED OR NOT, IT'S STILL MAGIC

Though the preceding essay clearly shows a delineation between Awakened and non-Awakened magic, matters aren't necessarily so simple in the World of Darkness. The opinions of one Hermetic scholar, even if they happen to fit the model of the "game rules," do not comprise the entirety of Hermetic thought on the subject. Indeed, many mages would argue that the distinctions are

unnecessary. Why bother labeling some of the less gifted, less creative magicians as "inferior" or "linear" magicians? They still do magic. Trying to create divisions is a waste of time — magicians have better things to do. The typical mage or sorcerer neither knows nor cares about the real boundaries between Awakened and non-Awakened magic.

## METAPHYSICAL SOCIETIES



Magical study by the sorcerer of the World of Darkness is a path worn deep by the travails of generations of past students and masters. For most of us, the steady progress offered by systems that teach, "Do this, and this shall happen," is far easier to understand than the broad strokes of affinitive magic and its almost revelatory methods of learning. The linear path offers the ideal of hard work achieving great results. One of the most important facets of linear magic is that it is more readily able to be taught. Affinitive magic, such as that practiced by "Awakened" mages, seems to require a mindset that can be helped by teaching but must initiate itself through some sort of internal breakthrough. Linear magic, in contrast, demands tremendous degrees of practice and education in its ways, with personal leaps consisting mostly of finally realizing what some lesson means. Indeed, many linear practitioners seem to have a miniature epiphany, similar to an Awakening but less profound, when their understanding of mysticism crystallizes into a practical form. However, they lack the wild flamboyance of the shatteringly Awakened — they learn through heritage, not through dynamism.

This principal difference creates a cultural community that is stronger than most affinitive practitioners' links. The importance of mentors within linear magic societies is much greater. The relationships between students and masters are stronger. One of the results of this closeness has been lower visibility of sorcerers within mage society; the actions of a group are quickly credited to the entire Tradition, whereas the actions of one powerful independent mage gain her personal fame within magical society. When a mage looks around her at who is best at what, it is so easy to fall into the hubris of assuming that those who are well known are the most potent. In reality, the groups of sorcerers who grow together through extended mentor and student lines form tight factions that should not be ignored.

When a student early in her path finds a mentor who satisfies her dreams of discovering how to perform miraculous feats, a bond forms that can never truly be broken. Think back to the first schoolteacher that ever taught you something you found amazing at the time. Now imagine if

they had instead taught you to fly, turn lead into gold or empathetically read emotions. It can be difficult not to accept the political and social ideas of the teacher, as well as his metaphysical education. Some teachers even take advantage of this bond to manipulate their followers into acting to further their mentors' own interests. Other times, students simply find their masters have so much to teach that they never leave. With so many enemies, ranging from bloodsucking vampires to tyrannical Technocrats to raging werewolves, many simply band together for survival.

On the mentor's side, there is much he gains from continuing to help his students. Though many would not admit it, it is a simple fact that often students show aptitudes for Paths that even masters find difficult. A student may help even an aged professor finally understand through some fresh viewpoint or may simply be able to perform whatever uses for the Path the mentor might have in his stead. As noted above, some teachers are willing to exploit their position in order to further their own agendas. This may be as benevolent as convincing one's students to do healing and charity work or as dangerous as inciting murderous hatred for his enemies. Prestige can also be gained by mentoring a particularly successful student, raising a master's position in the eyes of his peers.

Generations of students learning at the feet of those who have already mastered the secret arts inspires tight, loyal groups of fellow practitioners. There are always those who don't fit in though. A young student might realize that he has taken up a Path that is not to his true taste and, thus, start again elsewhere. He might be subjected to a cruel master's games and seek safety in escape from the society. Depending on the nature of the sorcerous society, it may seek to silence him or simply let him go about his way. Even masters may find reasons to leave their groups. A talented biogeneticist may find her work claimed by a ruthless rival and decide that she is tired of being used. Perhaps she starts her own lab and takes on her own students. She might just retire to private practice. A psychic master might be expelled by his order for abuse of power, instigating a psychic war as he and his students seek revenge upon the rest of the order. Splinter groups and loner sorcerers add a great sense of uncertainty and spice to the Tapestry of reality.

## GREAT AND SMALL

The societies that form when practitioners of the metaphysical gather are generally small, for a number of obvious reasons. First of all, only a small portion of humanity as a whole has the patience or desire to learn how to truly manipulate the world around them. Most of us have already been convinced that our environment rules us, rather than the reverse. Large organizations require strong public support, which is also lacking for the sorcerer. Many sorcerous groups are subsets of an even larger organization. This is the case most clearly with the Traditions and the Technocracy, but mystical orders capable of practicing magic have also hidden within larger orders only reputed to have miraculous powers or simply assumed to be ordinary sociopolitical forces. Most of these groups possess less than 100 members; many of them consist of a mere handful of students surrounding a single teacher.

## FORIAT

### INITIATION

This portion of each society's description presents you with a brief history or introduction to the group from the point of view of someone inside or an outsider watching. It is up to you as the Storyteller to determine how much of what the order believes is real is actually true in your personal World of Darkness. Some very deluded people can still manage to learn incredibly potent ways to manipulate reality. Some of them might not be doing exactly what they think they are doing.

### ORGANIZATION

Any time you have more than one person together, some sort of natural, or unnatural, order results. This part of their description will briefly show you group dynamics and give insight into how new students are chosen and what they should expect.

### STYLE

Each society has some special way in which they believe their metaphysical powers work. This model includes the trappings usually associated with or required by the group's practitioners.

### PATHS

Essentially, this will list the game titles for the various metaphysical Paths practiced by the magical group in question. In parentheses, any alternate name the society uses for a Path will be noted. For example the Path of Hellfire when listed with the Star Council might be (Fire in the Sky) and indicate the mysterious burns associated with UFO sightings.

## SORCERERS AMONG THE TRADITIONS

Many "Awakened" or affinitive mages do not actually see any real difference between themselves and their linear partners. Others indulge in hubris based upon a perceived difference between their magic. The truth of the matter is somewhat more complex, of course. In a sense, each type of mage naturally serves a particular sort of role in their Tradition, normally without any realization of exactly why they act as they do. The linear mage is the backbone of the Tradition, upholding practices of the ages and acting as the strong link with the beliefs of their culture. The affinitive mage is the pioneer of the future and the hope that it will be better. Every Tradition and every faction therefore contains both linear and affinitive mages, though certain groups' mindsets favor one or the other.

## AKASHIC BROTHERHOOD

### Initiation

The first footsteps of the Akashic pathways are familiar to most people, at least vaguely, from watching attempts at dramatizing the lifestyle. A lot of hard work and dedication goes into learning the techniques that masters make look so effortless. Of course, not every group that falls under the Akashic rubric practices martial arts, or violence of any kind. Strong ascetic principles practiced on a regular basis can also create the signature unification of body and mind. The approach to enlightenment in this manner can be a quest for grand universal breakthroughs or a methodical search for the truth one step at a time.

Strongly traditional factions within the Brotherhood, such as the Shi-Ren and Kannagara, teach powerful regimens of ancient practices that lead to incredible power over both mind and body. Even the hot-blooded warriors of the Vajrapani study rigid forms of combat maneuvers until they become so instinctual that they dynamically flow forth as needed. The Omoto-ryu religion blended Shinto, Taoism, Buddhism and Christianity with a respect for Budo that incarnated in Morihei Ueshiba, the great teacher who founded Aikido. It is perhaps one of the best examples of teaching a linear path, formulaic almost in its menu of maneuvers, with a stated goal of eventually creating an infinite repertoire of reactions. As such, it respects the eternal student and master equally as long as they both continue upon the path of what is right.

### Organization and Style

The master-student relationship of the Akashic Brotherhood is described very well in the *Mage* rulebook. Similarly, their style of practice and foci are already noted. Given that there is no particular difference between the practices of



## UNDER MY UMBRELLA

As human beings, we like to name, label, classify and categorize everything. Once we have named something, we think we know it and, thus, to a certain degree, can control it. It becomes a part of our reality and is thereby somehow suddenly sensible. Nevertheless, this is somewhat of an artificial, man-made convention. It is a practice that we overextend, ever broadening categories until they inevitably include pieces that just don't fit. Even our social organizations follow this course. Arrogance and the quest for power drive great leaders to bring more and more territory under their control. People band together for protection, states become nations, and nations become coalitions or empires. An eerie facelessness is achieved in the name of compromise and safety. A bizarre, and ultimately false, stereotype evolves in our minds that suggests that everyone from one of our classifications is really the same.

The same thing has happened in the World of Darkness. The Traditions are a misshapen clump of disparate magical heritages struggling to maintain a reality in which they are free to practice their beliefs. The Technocracy, no matter how unified it may appear, is a glued together claptrap of conservative minds who essentially believe that safety and perfection are worth sacrificing freedom. The Nephandi serve so many dark lies that they cannot even truly know one another. The Marauders don't even pretend to any sort of homogeneity. In a world shattered by antagonistic ideals, each struggling for control of what is the truth, thousands of cabals, fellowships, cults, orders and individuals cast aside some part of their identity in the name of safety in numbers. That does not make them the same, though. The Bata'a voodoo has little truly in common with the dying Ainu mystic. The astronomical physicist may not even understand the chemistry behind the same metallurgy that lets her rockets be built. Nevertheless, we want to think of them as shamanic Dreamspeakers or scientist Technocrats. The only thing they really share is a desire for the right to continue with their studies, beliefs and lifestyles. It is this desire that has been exploited for better and worse by the leaders of the Traditions and the Technocracy, and it is in those leaders' interests to paint a unifying veneer of stereotype.

linear and affinitive Akashic brothers, you should be using the same organization and trappings. If your Storyteller uses Merits and Flaws, you might note the especial usefulness and appropriate nature of the Flow of Ki Merit.

## Paths

The Internal Do Path and the External Do Path are common amongst Akashics, in some form or other. Subtle spiritual Paths and magics that strengthen the mind and body are appropriate, if they have a suitable Resonance. If you use psychic powers as Paths, then Akashic practitioners are likely to have some degree of Mind Shielding or Astral Projection, depending upon their practices, but channeled through intense meditation, mantras and other such foci.

## CELESTIAL CHORUS

### Initiation

As early as the Egyptian pharaoh, Ikhnoton, and probably even earlier, the idea of a single, unique higher consciousness responsible for creation and the order of the universe gained a popular voice. Inexplicable events worldwide, from mass miracles to individuals exhibiting powerful influences explained only as divine aid, seem to support the claims that there is One True Source. The power of faith endows the Celestial Chorus with their mystical might, but it is a power that the wisest amongst them understand is available to the most humble mortal.

It might seem as though tapping into the infinite essence of the divine assures one of the mindset of affinitive magic. Ages of religious righteousness and rights and wrongs clearly defined for the masses have created an equally strong opposing pathway, though. Thousands of rituals with the force of thousands of believers have built a veritable fortress of faith for the mystic soul that is willing and able to learn their divine majesty. The shelter provided by organized religious groups is an invaluable boon as well. When you know that the Creator Itself is behind your power, it is almost as strenuous to walk the path as it is to try to ignore it.

### Organization and Style

Every aspect of the Chorus from divided, often antagonistic, factions to devoted worshipers is as equally applicable to the linear path followers as to its Awakened members. The same religious styles and iconic symbols that serve affinitive devotees grant power to the strictest adherents.

### Paths

Paths of Binding, Ephemera, Healing and Hellfire, perhaps some Wards of divine nature.

## CULT OF ECSTASY

### Initiation

Many the practices of the Ecstatics are not seen as true magic by anyone. Even to cultures that respect the use of hallucinogenic drugs to obtain trances or pain and deprivation to achieve visions, the excesses of many Cultists are regarded as mostly overindulgence of sacred experiences. To modern law enforcers they are dangerous elements out to corrupt the rest of society with their malevolent immorality. The world culture seems to have turned against the mass distribution of various cultures' easy roads to opening the

mind to the spiritual. Even the ubiquitous queen, alcohol, which has served as the holy essence for sacrifice, ritual and even the madness of the Maenads has been reduced to a crass commercial product that is demonized by DUI law and raving hate-mongers.

Unfortunately, the most common reaction amongst Ecstatics is to further their rebellion against the establishment. If the Powers That Be want to belittle and punish them for seeking freedom, then fuck the higher ups! This attitude only strengthens authoritarian response and solidifies the position of authorities that treat the public backlash as an opportunity for power and extra me-too votes come election time. The youngest, most rebellious Ecstatics either never achieve enlightenment or, at the very least, tend to avoid the older, more insightful members within the Tradition.

### Organization and Style

The Aghoris, Hagalaz and Fellowship of Pan teach ancient pathways that, however chaotic, actually possess a long tradition of powerful passions. The bulk of linear Ecstatics come from one of these long-standing groups. Complete sensualists such as the Acharne and the Klubwerks are too wild and dissonant to create much of a tradition and are likely to fade away eventually if they never find a long-lasting focus. Music, dance, drugs, sex, meditation, fasting and exercise play as vital a part in the advancement of those Ecstatics who practice some orderly path to enlightenment as they do amongst the wide-open dreamers.

### Paths

Paths of Divination and Oneiromancy; psychic Empathy or Empathic Hypnosis, insight into the nature of mankind and the universe.

## DREAMSPEAKERS

### Initiation

When the blossoming Council of the Traditions looked for those magicians who might hold knowledge outside their fold, they could not help but notice an incredible variety of shamanic and spiritual traditions around the world. In a monumentally shallow move, more reminiscent of the broad stroke stereotyping generally attributed to the Technocracy, the Tradition Council chose to invite all of the disparate spiritual magicians into the fold as a single metaphysical and political body. The political seat dubbed Spirit in the Horizon Chantry was offered, and desperate magicians beleaguered by Technocratic expansion around the world were convinced to take up the Traditions' banner.

Unprecedented spiritual connections arose between places extremely remote from each other. Some of these Umbral ties came about as masters of the shamanic Dreamspeaker groups encouraged young initiates to set out upon long spirit journeys. Others, ironically, owe their origins to the very manifest destiny that the Technocracy created and the Nephandi exploited. Displaced Native

Americans and aborigines passed far from their homelands into the lands of their neighbors or even thousands of miles away. Cruelty and twisted ideals of racial supremacy subjected African tribes to capture, transport across the Atlantic and enslavement at the hands of those who treated them as property rather than people. Cultures and peoples battered by the new masters of the physical world sought to defend themselves with the aid of the spiritual world they had never abandoned.

Those who make their way into the spiritual fold must, perforce, understand and live through a heritage equally burdened by this bitterness and exalted by their own shamanic ties. May are activists or traditionalists who feel a drive to preserve their culture and history. Others feel a near-instinctive pull to the spirit world or are chosen by the spirits themselves. Even those who do not Awaken into dynamic magic still have a huge legacy of cultural indoctrination, be it joy at their shared history or bitterness and a desire to lash out at their perceived oppressors, and either can be a strong motive for the study of magic.

### Organization and Style

In the past few decades, leaders of abused ethnic and cultural groups have been more politically successful than ever before. The plight of oppression continues, but efforts to fight against it earn at least lip service on the floor of the United Nations, in the chambers of the United States government and over the airwaves that blanket millions of television screens every day. Unfortunately, that is precisely what many Dreamspeakers consider such activities — lip service. Casinos, reservations and alcohol continue to erode the traditional Native American way of life. Land rights disputes push the Australian aborigines further from the Dreamtime. A legal system that is blatantly prejudicial grinds up the lives of black Americans while promoting continued slavery under an economic mask. This isn't to say that matters are universally all bad or that some Dreamspeakers don't overreact — those who are caught up in being victims too often succumb to bitterness and fail to accomplish anything — but by and large, the Dreamspeakers contain cultures who have suffered harshly under the industrialized age.

"What have you done for us?" the Dreamspeakers ask the Tradition Council increasingly. Council meetings see fewer of the spirit mages every session, as, more often, they just stay home to protect their own people. There is also a sense that the worst times are beginning. The spirit realms seethe with deadly storms, and the Gauntlet bites with razor sharp fangs. The dead walk the earth in startling numbers. It is as if the world has begun its death throes.

Every spiritual tradition at least shares some concept of standing as the doorway between the two worlds. Magic depends upon the relationship between the physical and the immaterial. The ancient origins of these ways also encourage a similarity in use of foci. Chanting, fire, drums, earth, bones



and plants are universal and vary only in form. Dreamspeaker groups have rarely paid any attention to the differences between linear and affinitive pathways anyway. The power always comes from the spirits and the maintenance of proper relationships with them. Keepers of the Fire, Solitaries, Ghost Wheel Society, Red Spear Society, Baruti and Bata'a alike treat the sorcerer with the respect she earns.

See also **The Spirit Ways** for a plethora of information regarding un-Awakened shamans.

#### Paths

Cursing, Enchantment, Ephemera, Herbalism, Oneiromancy and Summoning/Warding; if you use psychic powers as Paths, Astral Projection is also appropriate.

### EUTHANATOS

#### Initiation

Euthanatos philosophies regard personal choice and the karma it creates as very important. Euthanatos also believe it is their duty to make choices for others sometimes, most often that it is time to move on to another life. An Acarya (mentor) will not discourage a student from any particular Path that might help her along the road to enlightenment, unless he senses great danger of it corrupting her soul. The Tradition's home lies in the cradle of Buddhism and Hinduism and, therefore, simultaneously offers an overwhelming array of mystical dogma and a call to rise above the illusion of it all. The factions most likely to serve as home to linear Euthanatos are the Natatapas, Madzimbabwe, Pomegranate Deme and the Aided.

#### Organization and Style

Sorcerers amongst the Euthanatos differ only in that they appear to be in a more materialistic karma cycle. There is nothing wrong with the necessary steps a soul must take through multiple lives in the quest for enlightenment, so long as the sorcerer is true to the Wheel. It is worth noting that the act of choosing life or death for another often means helping them live. There are Buddhist and Hindu Euthanatos who believe in the necessity of death but will not corrupt themselves in such a way. Fate will bring those who deserve death into situations where they will meet it. The true duty of the death mage, as they see it, is to ease the suffering and confusion that living and dying causes, so that the soul will not have to repeat its mistakes.

The faction styles and a general list of foci are found in **Mage Revised**. Other ways of focusing magical energy used by the Euthanatos include meditation, fasting, medicine and physical representations of the Wheel. Even games that encourage concentration or test one's character are useful. One can watch for telltale signs of frustration, gloating, obsessive behavior, recklessness and learning potential across a game table, all while promoting joy in the world and without endangering anyone.

#### Paths

Cursing and Divination; Euthanatos also practice Paths that could be used to promote healing or (sometimes) death.

### ORDER OF HERMITIES

#### Initiation

The history of the Hermetic tradition is a long one, extending back to Egyptian alchemy and spells. Formalized during the Dark Ages into approximately its current shape, the Order receives some criticism for doggedly clutching to its ancient truths even in the faces of the other Traditions. A hopeful initiate into the Order undergoes tests, trials and a long apprenticeship. The secrets of the Enochian language and the powerful Seals of Solomon become second nature to the student. She learns to craft numerological patterns, wands and pentagrams. Every Hermetic student is initiated into the linear paths of the Order's theories. Many of them stay that way.

One of the great weaknesses of the Order comes, perhaps, from its own image of the universe. Even as the alchemist seeks to create perfection from the base metal, so the Awakened see themselves as above the lesser mage. This arrogance and hubris is not universal, but it is certainly a powerful force in the Order. Through their own training methods, they push the student into a sorcerer mindset and then lord it over them if they never "rise above" that state. With the crashing fall of Doissestep and the destruction of most of the affinitive Masters, theorists like Practicus Hurai are finally able to put forth their proofs that neither method of magic is superior, just different.

#### Organization and Style

There is a saying, "Civil servant equals civil master." The implication is that those who perform your everyday affairs are really in charge of those affairs. This has long been true within the Order of Hermes. Awakened Masters placed themselves so high above the society around them, often removing themselves to pure Horizon realms or spirit domains, that they left the management of the day to day to their "lessers." Realistically, those who achieve an affinitive Awakening are merely accorded status because it is traditional. Like kings born to the title, they sometimes fall into the trap of feeling that they especially deserve it. Looking at the smoking ruins of their kingdom, some of these princes are starting to see the value in those they once saw as mere building blocks.

The vast and incredible influence of the Order before its fall left a legacy that still reflects in the stories of the fantastic. So widespread were its arts, and so intricately dependent upon a pool of specialized, talented craftsmen, that even today it is easy to find suitable ritual paraphernalia and texts. What is difficult is separating the good stuff from the garbage, manufactured or printed by companies that

either intentionally or ignorantly water down, romanticize or outright lie about magic.

### Paths

Alchemy (especially among the Solificati), Binding and Warding, Conjunction, Enchantment, Hellfire (or other Forces creations) and Summoning.

## SONS OF ETHER

### Initiation

There is a rugged individuality found in the Son of Ether soul that drives him to seek understanding of reality like a starving man looking for food. Once he achieves the breakthrough that marks his real-life achievement, everything else is almost gluttony. Having created a model of reality, the Son of Ether fits everything into it, continuously expanding his theories to explain the functions of the universe as he sees it and the interaction of his creations with those theories. At times, individual Etherites may become fervent about discarded ideas or lost secrets that once embraced so much interest that they possess a body of beliefs and lore sufficient to provide a path. Other times, an Etherite may discover some principle so difficult to integrate with the rest of reality

that he may only develop it one facet of creation at a time. Such individuals follow a linear path, but amongst the Sons of Ether, they are a minority. All too often, the radical theories and models of the Etherites die with them, leaving no path for others to follow.

### Organization and Style

Recognition within the Sons of Ether means work. The brilliance of your creations and the sublime understanding of your personal theories is what is important. If you aren't performing groundbreaking research, you better be busy expanding upon the work of someone who has, or you are just wasting precious grant money or the time others bother to spend listening to you. Gaining a teacher amongst the Etherites means impressing him with your intelligence or your usefulness to his projects. After that, your contributions to Science are what matter.

The apparatuses, machines and devices of the Sons of Ether are what generally identify them to others. Their tools are the source of their power and the result of their inspiration. Nothing works if it does not fit into an Etherite's theories. In addition to those foci listed in **Mage Revised**, some Scientists use artifacts from ancient, lost civilizations.





### Paths

Technological Alchemy, Conveyance, Weathercraft. Note that Sons of Ether practice a wide range of technomysticism. To some, technology harnesses powers in ways that can only be described as magical. To others, it's extraordinary science. Rarely do two Sons of Ether share the same theories unless they trained together.

## VERBENA

### Initiation

Like the Dreamspeakers and Celestial Chorus, the Verbena owe their origins to roots so old that they are buried too deep to find. Verbena unification has been a natural growth, stemming from a common European cultural basis, powerful group symbols like the Tree of Life and a shared persecution. Verbena view the twin paths of linear and affinitive magic as a necessary division that naturally occurs, like male and female or night and day. Most of them are aware of some difference, however small, but really don't care. Certainly, a majority of linear Verbena gravitate towards the Gardeners of the Tree and the Twisters of Fate factions, while most affinitive Verbena are attracted to the Moon-Seekers and the Lifeweavers. However, this is just a natural tendency of the like minded to flock together.

### Organization and Style

Verbena covens usually contain mages and sorcerers. Wisdom of age, insight and past lives earn respect beyond any concern for how one perceives magic. It is only natural, however, for some conflict to result between traditionalists who desire that the old rites be faithfully kept and progressives who want to expand into new ways. The initiation tests vary from coven to coven, but they always reflect the personality of the student and a sense of connection to the natural world (however unforgiving Mother Nature may be). Her magical style and foci will reflect the types of magic her coven teaches her.

### Paths

Cursing, Divination, Herbalism and Shapeshifting. Some Verbena might perform Enchantment as well.

## VIRTUAL ADEPTS

Though the computer grants unparalleled communication to vast segments of the world population, it has not yet proved to be our salvation. War, disease, hate and misery continue to exist. In fact, new crimes find their creations in the cyber realms, like twisted reflections of the physical world. Hate groups put up websites; thieves steal credit card numbers or even personal information about people's lives. Raving antisocials curse, rant and threaten with a passion born of the sudden ability to vent every pent up aggression they have been too cowardly to express to those around

them. Nevertheless, it is a powerful tool and one whose potential we have undoubtedly only begun to tap.

### Organization and Style

Given the vast hordes of people who manage to use computers every day without even a glimmer of Awakening, linear computer mages should be no real surprise. In fact, an almost supernatural realization of the capabilities hidden within computers is much more common than a complete Awakening to the idea that the computer might be able to control the entire physical universe. As Elitists, of course, the Awakened, affinitive Virtual Adept definitely looks down upon his satellite imagery enhanced lessers. Most linear Virtual Adepts have no power over reality outside of their computers and the Digital Web. Inside the Digital Web, though, a potent linear Adept can hold his own with no one the wiser.

Obviously, the linear computer mage is just as much a technician, hacker, scientist or techno-geek as any other Virtual Adept. She just doesn't understand some of the links yet. Foci are predictably the same computers, programs and equipment that their affinitive brethren use.

### Paths

Scrying (on the physical world and in the Digital Web), within the Digital Web only — Binding and Warding, Conjunction and Summoning. Remember that Virtual Adepts tend to use exceptional science, though a few "wizards" (to borrow a Unix term) also have a decidedly superstitious bent to their hyper-computing capabilities. Virtual Adepts are also good candidates for Cyberkinesis and Cyberpathy psychic powers.

## ORPHANS AND HOLLOW ONES

### Initiation

The dispossessed mages of the Orphans and those called Hollow Ones generally piece their magic together from bits stolen from other Traditions. The result is a sort of cobbled-together eclectic mix of mythic heritage. A linear Orphan or Hollow One is the same. She has gathered a hodgepodge of paths from sources ranging from New Age practices to archaic, forgotten arts.

### Organization and Style

There is virtually no organization amongst most Orphan or Hollow Ones groups. At best, they are loose social groups with a few common meeting places. The magical style of each individual is just a mix of whatever magical practices she has picked to follow. Foci are similarly jumbled collections of items deemed important to the sorcerer.

### Paths

It probably doesn't need saying, but so long as you and your Storyteller can come to an agreement as to how your sorcerer views magic, then whatever Paths fit that vision are available to her.

## TECHNOCRATIC SORCERERS (EXTRAORDINARY CITIZENS)

### Initiation

Though the Technocracy boasts hundreds of Enlightened members, most of its true strength comes from the support of the Masses. Chief among these are the few extraordinary citizens who manage to grasp the Technocracy's hyper-advanced theories — the doctor who manages to grasp a treatment for lymphoma, the highly trained technician who can maintain a secret shuttlecraft, the computer engineer who delivers phenomenal precision in his clockwork numbers and parts. These extraordinary citizens have a gift to expand beyond the normal bounds of science, just as sorcerers tap into the wellspring of the mystical.

The *Guide to the Technocracy* is an invaluable aid in understanding the scientific mages' society and the rules that govern it. Ironically, probably the most clear difference between linear and affinitive mages is within the Technocracy's ranks. The Order of Reason has pushed for change for the sake of mankind since its inception. As the Union increasingly maps, catalogs and labels reality, the difficulty of continuing to push the envelope grows. Mundane craftsmen and intellectuals are as much responsible for winning mankind over to the Technocratic ideals as the inventor geniuses whose work they disseminated were. As their own webs of static control close over them, the Technocracy is discovering that the linear scientists may be their future.

### Organization and Style

Extraordinary scientists fill the gap between the mundane specialists that practice the every day works of the Technocracy and the dynamic visionaries who strive to make the future brighter. They are capable of understanding theories that still

defy what the general public comfortably accepts but that have already been established with the elite scientific community widely enough to at least be acknowledged as "possible." The linear technocrats of Iteration X build cybernetic devices, fusion-powered machines and supercomputers. Their New World Order contemporaries practice incredible multilevel satellite surveillance programs, deep hypnotic programming and subliminal propaganda. Progenitors limited to linear paths create designer drugs, practice genetic engineering and limited cloning. The Syndicate manipulates national economies, remakes ideas by commercializing them and generally assures that money is the modern God. Void Engineers venture in to space and voyage to the bottom of the sea.

All sound familiar? That's the point. The linear mage of the Technocracy is performing the techniques taught to him by his Awakened counterparts. However, his Awakened counterpart is having greater trouble coming up with new tricks. The two groups' foci and styles grow closer by the day.

### Paths

"Alchemy" and "Enchantment" work for the Iteration X, as creations of scientific devices and formulae. "Divination" and "Fascination" suffice for the New World Order, to represent their command of personality and psychology, as well as media manipulation. "Conveyance" and "Conjuration" cover the Void Engineers' devices. "Alchemy" and "Healing" fit the Progenitors, as drugs or advanced treatments. "Cursing" and "Divination" give the Syndicate power to affect odds and outcomes. In all cases, the citizen sees what he does merely as an extension of highly advanced scientific principles; although a Progenitor extraordinary scientist might recognize her work as special and advanced, she'd hardly consider it magical. In all cases, the Technocrat uses special procedures and devices to perform the "rituals" necessary.

## OTHER SORCERERS



Of course, the Traditions are hardly the only magicians with sorcerous counterparts. Several other groups of organized magicians still exist, with their own praxes, their own designs and goals. Shielded from the vicissitudes of mystic warfare by their own ignorance, they have their own take on the practice of magic.

## THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE AEON RITES

### Initiation

If the study of magic is a search for truth and the practice of magic is a pursuit of perfection, then the Ancient Order of the Aeon Rites truly have a pure vision. Combining the

mystic threads from thousands of years of civilization, the Order's sorcerers seek out the purest original paeans to divinity in each magical practice. Hidden in the language of angels — Enochian — the Order's practitioners find the secrets of the Aeon Rites, the great magics that will usher in a new, pure, golden era. Once they have mastered the proper formulae and chanted the hidden words handed to man by the Creator, the world will blossom into perfection. The Order truly believes that its practices herald the way to a better world for all humanity.

From the manuscripts and rites passed down from 1873 by Master Agrippa — the Order's modern founder — the group initiated (and continues to initiate) compassionate, dedicated seekers into its mysteries. Convinced that they have the Great Answer and One Truth at the heart of their rites, the Ancient Order firmly guides its members and companions down a humanitarian road. Other magicians



find themselves alternately aided and chastised by the Order, which believes that all sorcerers have a duty to use their powers in service to the rites that will eventually bring humanity to a new age of enlightenment.

### Organization

As a pseudo-secret cult society, the Ancient Order keeps a multi-tiered initiation structure. New pupils make up the outer level; these are the first-, second- and third-degree magicians — those who have just joined or who still struggle to unlock the basic secrets. These pupils perform mundane work on behalf of the Order. Next is the inner level, three grades of brothers and sisters (*frateres* and *sorores*) — those who've unlocked enough knowledge to pursue and promote greater truth to the Order's mysteries (that is, those who can develop or master various Paths of magic). These mid-level members also oversee important Order matters like finance, local political connections and the dissemination of secrets or the training of novices. Finally, the three degrees of magisters devote most of their time to furthering the Order's esoteric studies. The magisters still have their own lives and concerns, of course, but they also hold the greatest mysteries, including the Order's most valued texts and secret knowledge.

Beyond the mortal realms, the Order believes that its most enlightened magisters pass on to become Secret Watchers, disembodied spirits that guide the group in its search. Indeed, founder Johannes Agrippa has appeared from time to time to offer his advice and wisdom — be he ghost or spirit, none in the Order can definitively say, but he has often given aid even to fledgling sorcerers and seems truly concerned with the continued existence of the Order. As "tenth degree" initiates, these Secret Watchers comprise the most knowledgeable of the Order's members, and only the Secret Watchers can initiate other magisters into their ranks after death. Unfortunately, the Secret Watchers rarely seem to attend the functions of the Order; apparently, their higher concerns in guiding humanity keep them rather occupied.

Materially, the Order functions much like many other secret fraternities: Members contribute a small sum of money for facilities (in this case, the AOAR sponsors tabernacles for quiet study, storage of ritual materials and meetings) and participate in charitable events. Such events also serve as good recruitment drives, chances to look for other helpful and intelligent individuals who might have the minds to learn the Aeon Rites. The center of the Order, though, is in Amsterdam, where Johannes Agrippa's copies of the complete rites are stored.

### Style

Meticulous, precise and ritualistic, the AOAR magicians use elaborate and carefully constructed trappings to perform their rites. Each tool has a symmetry with the Otherworld and with the numeric keys hidden in the rites themselves. As a result, each tool must be built to the true specifications prescribed in the rites. A wand must be exactly

so long; a tablecloth *just* so big; a circular pattern made in *just* such an amount of time. Each ritual is equal parts preparation and execution, and if even a single minor error results, the entire ritual must be redone. Each sorcerer thus builds his or her own tools and pores over the tomes of the Order to memorize and reference the steps for each rite.

In their tabernacles, the AOAR sorcerers don elaborate robes and carry wands all sized to their personal numeric correspondences. Swords, pentacles, altars and cups have both symbolic and practical applications. A participant can expect stands with heavy tomes opened to the appropriate pages for each ritual, as the AOAR members reference the exact words, steps and motions for each casting. Even in the outside world, the AOAR sorcerers rely heavily on the precise steps that they've memorized; to bring about a perfect world, one must follow the perfect steps, after all.

### Paths

AOAR magicians have a wide range of skills available — Hellfire, Summoning, Binding and Warding and Weather Control are only some of the more common powers. Nearly any Path that could be formulaically studied can make its way into the AOAR's ritual grimoires, decoded from the Aeon Rites themselves.

## BATA'A

Once, the Bata'a comprised one of the largest organized Crafts of magic, surpassing even the numbers of some Traditions. Since that time, the Ascension War has ground away at magical societies and created some new bedfellows. Most Bata'a have thrown in with the Dreamspeakers. Nevertheless, they retain a degree of cultural identity far greater than that left to such splinter groups as the Templars. The Bata'a represent one of the largest still living magical traditions in the world.

### Initiation

The brutal legacy of exploitation and slavery by Europeans hungry for easy wealth left a vicious scar upon the psyche and spiritual landscape of the New World. Long ago, before the slavers came, the island people of the Caribbean were called the Qua'ra. They practiced an art known as *quinshi* — the ability to act as a link between the worlds of spirit and flesh. In return for giving their bodies to ghosts and spirits who desired to experience the material realm, they received favors and power. The neighboring Arawaks and Carib people called those talented in *quinshi* *cholés*, or Godflowers. Especially devout *cholés* gained their villages plentiful harvests and fishing, benevolent weather, warnings of misfortune and other boons. In return, the people forgave the *cholés* the strange and often dangerous behaviors the spirits made them perform. This paradise was lost to the European invaders, though. Spanish and French settlers brought disease and murderous pirates. They even enslaved the natives to work their farms and fought those who sought to keep their land.



The Qua'ra people died en masse and, by 1550, were no more. Determined explorers chose to import black slaves to take their place.

According to tradition, seven tribes were first chained and brought to the Caribbean as slaves from Africa. Early slaves managed to escape and fled to hide amongst the last of the Qua'ra. The last Qua'ra taught the earliest black escapees the arts of *quinshi*. The spiritual wisdom they gained resembled the beliefs of their own traditional African religions, and over time, the two became one. Christian conversions by their former masters also entered the mix, creating creeds like Voudun and Santeria. The forgotten gods of the Qua'ra became the loa of the new traditions. From the sacred drums used to awaken the spirits, the new magical society drew its name, and from the spirit world, to which they sacrificed their bodies, they drew their power.

#### Organization

Strong personal, community and spiritual relationships join to create the Bata'a lifestyle and society. Traditions emphasize union in a number of ways. The sacred partnership between male and female Bata'a is known as *Marassa*. Most of the partnerships culminate in marriage, but a few remain as nonsexual symbols of union. Most Bata'a also claim lineage to one of the seven original tribes, whom they

call *Rangi*, or colors, in honor of the many-hued Rainbow Serpent goddess. The *Rangi* serve as extended families and tight knit communities. Anyone within a particular *Rangi*, whether a normal person or a Bata'a, expects to give and receive help from his fellows if he needs it. The relationship between the material and spirit worlds is extremely important to the Bata'a sorcerer. Through sacrifice of food, livestock and themselves, the society strives to gain the favor of their ancestor ghosts, *Les Invisibles*, and powerful godlike spirits, the loa. To those who achieve it and outsiders who observe it, the power gained is regarded, rightly, with fear. The Bata'a see that the dangerous, sacred duty they perform may be the only way to break the chains that continue to bind their people. Even without the physical chains of slavery, the *Rangi* are bound by poverty, exploitation, prejudice and horrible living conditions.

#### Style

*Les Invisibles* are the wraiths of the Caribbean Skinlands (detailed in the *Wraith Player's Guide*). Some are ancient Qua'ra still around after centuries. Others are ancestors of the *Rangi*, slaves who died during the horrible years of chains or new ghosts resulting from the violence, disease and misery that still plagues the region. *Les Mystères*, or the loa, are powerful beings, not quite "gods" but functionally the same.



Some, especially those practicing Santeria, see the loa as messengers from greater gods or God. The greatest desire of every Bata'a is to ensure beneficial relations between their community and the spirit realm. This means serving their ancestors and the loa with respect and by acting as their "horses" — that is, letting themselves be possessed by spirits who wish to have a physical form. This practice is divine, but incredibly dangerous; when one opens the gateway for spirits to step inside, evil spirits known as baka sometimes take the invitation. With the Sixth Maelstrom raging through the deadlands, even once benevolent spirits are desperate and angry. The Bata'a job has become more important and terrifying than ever before.

Most Bata'a deal with the Petro, who are dark spirits of the elements and conflict, and the Rada, who are spirits of healing and wisdom. The Rada, Ayida-Wedo, is the Serpent Lady of a Thousand Rainbows, and acts as a feminine principle of creation and protection. Baron Samedi is the chief Haitian god of Death, and he kills or grants necromantic powers. (Further details on Baron Samedi can be found in **Blood Magic: The Secrets of Thaumaturgy**.) Chango, or Shango, is a warlike Petro who commands the weather, guns and explosives. Damballah is the Petro serpent Father of Falling Waters and Serpent of the Sky, consort to Ayida-Wedo. Erzulie, a Rada and one of the most popular loa, is called upon in the name of love, lust and beauty. Ghede is a Rada form of Baron Samedi who watches over the dead. Legba is the Rada Walking God, who guards the crossroads between all journeys, whether physical or spiritual. The Rada Loco rules healing, herbs and visions. Fire, wrath and liberation are the spheres of the Petro Ogoun the Chainbreaker. The Petro Simbi represents the elements of air and water, and grants freedom or knowledge of magical powders and potions.

The Bata'a originally appeared in **The Book of Crafts**. Additional information can also be found in the **Mage Storytellers Companion**.

#### Paths

All of the power achieved by the Bata'a comes through interaction with spirits. Most Bata'a believe that the "Avatar" of an Awakened mage is simply a spirit who has chosen to permanently ride the mage in question. The Bata'a have no respect for those who do not acknowledge the origin of their Avatar and the responsibility it represents. Of course, anyone from their own society who has been chosen as a permanent host is regarded with respect, especially as they can still host other spirits. Sorcerers are those who manage to learn charms from the spirits who possess them. This knowledge is known as Mjane, and though it can be used without the spirit's help, a devout Bata'a must always remember its source. Misusing such power, without a spirit's help or permission is a selfishness that the spirits may not forgive. Not all of the cholés, known as horses, or Les Chevaux, can perform any magic without the spirits' aid.

The loa and the ancestors choose some completely normal people as gateways. Every cholé is eligible for the title of papé or papa, or mae or mama, granted by popularity amongst the Rangis, not according to actual power.

Conjuration, Conveyance, Cursing, Divination (secrets told by the spirits, actually), Fascination, Healing, Herbalism, Summoning, Binding, and Warding and Weathercraft are all possible with the help of the loa; through Summoning and Binding they may even create zombies (see **Hunter: The Reckoning's** sourcebook **The Walking Dead**).

## THE CHILDREN OF OSIRIS

*I am the life; I am the resurrection.*

— from pre-Christian Egyptian tomb fragments

#### Initiation

In ancient times, prehistoric vampires of incredibly potent blood ruled as divine beings over men, and some claim that even the god-king of Egypt, Osiris, was seduced by their power. Whether the lord of the resurrection martyred himself to steal the power of the demons of blood or made a terrible mistake that cost him his life, is uncertain. His fate has been the source of deadly sect warfare that has waged for millennia across sorcerous and undead lines. For centuries, worshipers worked in conjunction with a sect of vampires who followed a small core of kindred who claimed to be directly descended from the god-king. Harsh regimens of self-deprivation and devout prayer granted vampire and mortal alike incredible control of their bodies and souls. Recently, the vampiric priests of the Children of Osiris have all disappeared. Vampires in the know believe that their Setite enemies finally eliminated the ancient sect. Mortal members of the Children of Osiris have faded into obscurity, but some whisper that the cult has merely returned to their ancient homeland and is engaged in strange activities near various ancient sites.

#### Organization

For a very long time, the Children of Osiris organized around temples led by vampires practicing the rigid path known as Bardo. This strict discipline tied control of the vampiric nature into the religious beliefs in Ma'at, or truth, balance and right. Strange dichotomies existed, as the immortal blood drinkers seemed to embody the eternal nature of the god and yet were forbidden from granting their cursed nature to others. Apparently, some of the most enlightened amongst the undead priests learned to escape death repeatedly even in ways beyond that of the blood demons. The resurrection promised by their god, as living beings, remained beyond their power, however.

The mortal Children continue the quest for eternal life, and now that they are free from the unnatural concerns sparked by their undead leaders, their vision of their god may finally become clear. In recent times, apparently coinciding

with the disappearance of their undead priests, the Children of Osiris have removed themselves to Egypt. Ancient temples resonate with chanting, forgotten tombs open in efforts to raise their inhabitants, and new acolytes plunge into the mysteries. Though the ancient god may not have been resurrected, it is as if the hopes of cult have been.

### Style

The Children of Osiris share many of the foci and style elements of the Cult of Isis; however, they are predominantly a resurrection cult. Embalming, tombs, funerary practices and protection for the dead until their return are all parts of Osirian ritual.

### Paths

Alchemy and Summoning, Binding and Warding (Necromantic). If you use **Mummy**, some mummy hekau might make useful Paths, with a little work — the Sekhem cost can become a cost in mana instead. Don't give away all of the mummies' secrets, though; in general, it's best to assume that mummy hekau, if used by a sorcerer, must be reformulated (research work!) and is one level higher.

## THE CULT OF ISIS

### Initiation

Almost no mystical heritage has endured so long or reached such incredible heights and depths of power and persecution as that of the magicians inheriting the ancient teachings of Isis. One could spend a lifetime of study simply following their origins and fate throughout the ages. Founded in service to the goddess-on-earth, the sister-wife's followers pledged loyalty to the principles of Ma'at and learned the secrets of the Ra-hekau. Possessed of the very names of creation, they shaped an Art upon the banks of the Nile that has survived as one of the wonders of the world. Love for her brother-husband, the god-king Osiris, led Isis to turn from the pursuit of the teachings of Thoth. Her associates became engrossed in the fraternal war between Osiris and his demon-tainted dark brother, Set.

Some of the descendants of her magical tradition believe that this marked the fall of humanity's chance to ascend into the blessed fields of eternity through Thoth's learning. They say that she forgot the name of Ra in the name of Osiris and cursed mankind to struggle for a pale shadow of the mystery so auspiciously revealed to them. Others hasten to argue that had the goddess not acted against Set, who had become representative of Apophis on earth, that all of Ma'at would have been cast into the void. They claim that she sacrificed her life and personal attainment of immortality in order to ensure that hope remained to restore the Balance of Truth for the entire world. As evidence, they offer the proof that Western mysticism virtually all descends in some part from the knowledge of Isis and Thoth-Hermes-Trismegistus.

### Organization

During the goddess-queen's lifetime, the Cult of Isis was a loose confederation of magicians whose peaceful meditations gave way to desperate warfare against the dark god and his corrupt followers. After the death of his mother, reputedly at the hands of Set, Horus the Avenger seized control of the Cult and actively pursued every opportunity to cast off the yoke of the serpent. These magicians became the backbone of the priesthood for virtually every god in Egypt. Set and his vampiric children loathed her legacy and spent millennia tearing it apart. By the reign of Cleopatra, the Cult had become a dull band of drug addicts and prostitutes, surrendering even the sacred Spell of Life to their enemy and forgetting the rites of their gods.

Ironically, the very same weakness resulted in a sort of resurrection for the inheritors of Isis. As Egypt fell to Roman rule, her culture was plundered as effectively as her tombs and riches. Fertility cults halfway across Europe breathed the sacred name of Isis and tied her power to their own goddesses. After Set's sudden exodus from Egypt around the third decade CE, Isis's immortal son, Horus, tried to rebuild the Cult of Isis into a useful tool. A few factors seem destined perpetually to hamper the recovery of the Cult's original power and unity. Horus continues to treat them as lesser, mortal, beings and ruthlessly conceals some of their own ancient secrets from them. The dilution into hundreds of pagan mystery cults has created innumerable branches and sects, sometimes with dangerously radical beliefs. Resentment of centuries of being treated like simple children even threatens to cause rebellion amongst the modern Cult against the eternal Son of their founder.

Branches of the Cult of Isis tie directly to or play part in many other mystical organizations within the World of Darkness. The Hermetic House of Shaea shares the ancient origins of the Cult, and it is certain that some members of this House belong to the Cult of Isis and vice versa. Fallen members of the Cult remain twisted kindred of the Followers of Set, their morals and spirits broken by the dark god's corruption. Many of the undying mummies of the Shemsuheru owe their very safety and preservation to the Cult. There are even Isis cultists of orgiastic nature found in Ecstatic and Verbena cabals and of studious bent amongst the Alexandrian Celestial Chorus and Hermetic Solificati. It is important to note that the Cult of Isis is by no means a unified force — factions even work against each other for political gain or even out of ignorance of their rivals' origins.

### Style

Seven thousand years of learning has created a plethora of different images of the original Ra-Hekau of Isis. A number of factors have successfully remained throughout the ages, however. Sensuality, sex and their power in ritual and social interaction have always played a part in Cult



magic. Hieroglyphics, Demotic Egyptian chanting and geomantic architecture continue to empower rituals. Amulets with powerful symbols, including the scarab, ankh, djet pillar and faience images of ancient gods are not even that difficult to find 2,000 years after the final fall of Egypt to invaders. Some even suggest that the gigantic millennium celebration held at the Great Pyramids on the New Years Eve when 1999 gave way to 2000 was a powerful Cult ritual with thousands of unwitting participants.

#### Paths

Alchemy, oracular Astrology and Enchantment of amulets and statues. Some Healing directed toward fertility would also be appropriate.

## THE CULT OF MERCURY

#### Initiation

The Cult of Mercury inherited practices directly from Greek and Roman sources. From Roman cultures they derived the idea of expanding upon the power of orderly mass rituals and drew unparalleled numbers of initiates during the growing fervor of large mystery cults such as those of Mithras and Isis. Great gatherings of hundreds of Mercurian followers granted sorcerers the ability to enact spells that assured their positions of protected wealth and political dominance. Eventually, even a couple of Senators of the Republic owed their rank to the Cult.

Constantine's conversion of Rome to Christianity hurt the Cult badly. Its practices declined in favor of the mastery of single powerful mages, while its initiates scattered into the arms of the Church.

#### Organization

Today it is difficult to hold together masses of devoted practitioners in virtually any environment. The surviving Cult is motivated by a few very charismatic sorcerers and their deacons' hard work. The modern Cult's followers expect a return for their participation, learning their parts of rituals in expectation that some portion of their efforts will reward them and their families.

#### Style

Ritualistic in the extreme, at least 100 participants are required for any creation of magical effect. Individual masters may in cases of emergency call upon Wards or spells previously empowered by their congregation for later use, but they may never simply cast spells on the fly. Depending on the actual spell invoked, the initiates, clothed in clean white robes, may burn candles or incense or simply hold some representative object. The entire assemblage intones the incantation in Latin and ancient Greek.

#### Paths

Fortune (Prosperity and Providence) and Wards. It is important to remember that every Mercurian Path is all ritual. To reflect this, assume that the sorcerer gains no

instant effect from her level in a Path, but gains two extra rituals at each level. Thus, a Cult of Mercury magician with Path of Providence 3 would begin with nine rituals in that particular Art.

See also **Dead Magic** for information regarding the Cult of Mercury's foundation.

## MAISON LIBAN

#### Initiation

The first decade of the 11th century featured one of the dark signs of ill-fated Tremere's growing power hunger in the form of the Hermetic Schism and the resultant destruction of House Diedne. According to teachings of Liban mentors, Mathieu de Calice was a trusted pontifex once apprenticed to Master Goratrix. Discomfited by the brutal magical fratricide of the schism, de Calice began specialization in the practice of the Order's Parma Magica and in various arts destined to defy scrying attempts. When he became aware of the plans behind Goratrix's experiments with vampiric blood, de Calice fled to Northern France. Within a month, the conversion to vampirism erupted, with Tremere himself seeking immortality.

Fortunately for the Magus de Calice and his apprentices, the Tremere's new difficulties with local vampires combined with the effort necessary to *bother* tracking down a few insignificant expatriates, along with de Calice's protective and evasive magics, allowed a small house to survive to the modern day. Initially, the Tremere vampire-mages moved quietly, careful not to let their nature be discovered by the Order of Hermes as a whole. It was 150 years before the Order reacted with the *Massasa* purge, and that violence lasted for a century. The treachery of Goratrix, who had been assigned to France, also shielded the house's presence, as most strange reports of Tremere-like secretive orders were quickly blamed upon the old master. In the end, de Calice was forgotten to everyone — except his few apprentices and, perhaps, Tremere himself.

#### Organization

One of Mathieu de Calice's first actions was to hide the House at a basic level. He renamed the tiny group, which consisted mostly of himself and his apprentices and later French and Spanish refugees whom they adopted and protected from Tremere persecution. In recognition of the fact that they remained human, the house became Maison Liban — Liban meaning "live, leave, survive" in the tongue of the Visigoths.

Students are encouraged to keep their private lives separate from their magical practice, yet to maintain normal respectable habits and employment. Unless deemed responsible enough to learn the Art, a sorcerer's family, friends or co-workers may never even know that they have been the beneficiaries of numerous spells of protection cast on their behalf.

Maison Liban are not crusaders, though. They do not encourage violence or blatant activities. Even the relationship between master and student only requires students to be titled initiates until they are deemed worthy to teach, when they become a prater or mater. The "House" Liban does still recognize a single greatest teacher with leadership responsibilities earned through age and respect of peers. In deference to their founder, this position retains its honorific, Pontifex.

#### Style

Not all of the trappings of Hermetic sorcery have been left behind by the Liban nor even all of the antesanguinary practices of House Tremere. Seals, rings and magical circles predominate, due to their natural resonance with protective rituals. Symbols remnant from Hermetic tradition still find use, as does Latin, descending from a trove of tomes apparently plundered by the Visigoths from Rome, but both are supplemented with a liberal use of the Gothic tongue. The concepts of contagion and sympathy remain very strong; objects that resemble or once belonged to the focus of a spell play a prevalent part in nearly every mystical ceremony.

#### Paths

Countermagic (Parma Magica), Protection from Scrying and Divination and Summoning, Binding and Warding.

## NEBUU-AFEF, THE ORDER OF THE GOLDEN FLY

#### Initiation

Reputedly, during the reign of the Pharaoh Ramses the Great, the Exodus from Egypt was foreshadowed by a series of divine disasters that befell the land. One of the products of that horrific devastation was bitterness and a deep desire for revenge amongst the Egyptian people. A small group of warrior-mystics, each of whom had lost their firstborn child and suffered from the plagues of warning, gathered together in a brotherhood born of hatred.

After years of research and experimentation, their work paid off — maybe. They discerned the secret names of the angel sent by the god of the people of Israel and determined to control it. A summoning was begun and the ways were prepared. Blood was cast upon the door, a thousand locusts burned in an incense of sulfur, waters from the Red Sea scribed symbols in a circle of dark, wet sand and the firstborn child of an Israelite was offered as sacrificial bait. The angel of Heaven descended upon the house of the mystics. The sorcerers demanded recompense, and the angel assented.

Gloating in their new patron, the mystics hungrily learned the secrets of Heaven. They gathered charms to bring plagues or raise fires. What they failed to consider is that they had not controlled the angel. The angel, Mastema, felt anger and hurt pride because it had not been allowed to complete its reputedly divine task of murdering Moses. The angel had turned from the service of Heaven of its own accord, corrupted by its own deeds in the apocalyptic ravag-

ing of Egypt. It answered their demands with its own desires, wants born of an unexpected love of death and fear. The order was taught only the darkest of magics.

The name of the Order of the Golden Fly comes from the ancient Egyptian practice of honoring brave warriors with a piece of jewelry in the shape of a golden fly. Essentially, this badge of honor was the Egyptian equivalent to the Iron Cross or the Purple Heart. The original members of the secretive order were all dangerous soldiers, their skills already honed by magical edges, even before their tapping into the might of an angel. It is mere irony that their service to a fallen angel suggests the name might imply the Lord of the Flies.

Despite its Egyptian origins, the Order has not remained in Africa for its entire history. Always remaining rather small, as its power derives mostly from the contact with a single angelic figure, the Order has, at times, entirely uprooted and fled persecution by other powers. Notably, the forebears of the Celestial Chorus, descending from the principles of Ikhnaton, drove the Order out of Egypt during the Coptic period. For a time, the order survived in Turkey, before violent confrontation with Muslim zealots drove its members into Greece. By the early 20th century, they were hiding in Austria and Hungary, and the deep anti-Semitic movements of the period provided them with some protection.

The German occupations of the second World War, however, pushed the Order too far. During the War, the Priest of the Order tried to contact certain members within the Nazi party close to Hitler with offers of assistance of a mystical sort. Too many parties took interest in this turn of events, and mysteriously, an explosion destroyed the Order's meeting house. Only a few apprentices and the Priest's acolyte managed to escape. No one is really sure exactly where the sorcerers went next. Various factions that watched the exchange and perhaps even caused the explosion to prevent the Order's involvement have searched and, so far, been unable to find any solid leads. Traces have turned up in places as far apart as Boston in the United States and Lebanon in the Middle East.

#### Organization

The members of the Order of the Golden Fly are not withered, bearded old scholars searching for lost knowledge. The fallen angel they believe that they have bound to their service does not want weak or meek servants. From its origins to its present day incarnation, members have consisted of remarkable individuals, possessed of strong, fast forms and quick, tactical minds. Policemen and soldiers with the rare sleepless energy to invest in strange extracurricular studies of esoteric power are the preferred recruits. Over the years, though, not a few bouncers and even dedicated serial killers have been accepted into the Order. A new apprentice learns the arts of hatred, fear and death.



Members of the Order gain authority through their mastery of their angelic patron's powers. A novice recruit may suffer tortures and humiliations at the hands of his superiors — this is to be expected. The strong-willed and hardy survive and, in turn, become ruthless killers capable of channeling the power of an angel of slaughter.

### Style

Rituals and spells used by the sorcerers of the Order have come to depend more upon the power of their fallen angel than they did at the outset of the original mystics' plans. Over time, their patron has taught more and more of what it wanted them to know and less of the secrets of things like binding and command. The angel does not want them ever to discover that it is not really under their control.

### Paths

Apprentices to the Order learn Binding spells that appear to command the service of the angel, but these are ineffective. It merely masquerades as performing their wishes. (Sorcerers learning the Path of Binding from the Order may learn it for a mere 2 experience times new rating.) Really, all that their Path is capable of doing, though, is sending out a mystical call to their angel, which it may or may not choose to answer. During any use of the Path, the Storyteller should roll all of the player's Binding rolls in secret. If the player succeeds, the Path's power has contacted the angel, but the angel still may choose not to appear. All the Path can do is contact it. All of the sorcerer's other Paths are limited by their knowledge of the Path of Binding, because in learning the Path, Golden Fly sorcerers are deluded. They believe that it is their mastery of the angel that permits them to force it to teach them everything else. Other Paths include multiple forms of the Paths useful in warfare, destruction and suffering.

## THE SILVER PORTAL

### Initiation

Most Awakened magicians would be surprised to discover that the raw chaos that is the hallmark of the Marauders lurks within some linear mage societies. To the rare mage who understands the basic reasons why insanity grants power to the Mad Ones, it is inconceivable that the firm study of the sorcerer could render such mayhem. Thankfully, such disbelieving individuals are for the most part correct. Still, there are deviant orders such as the dreamers of the Silver Portal who shatter this conception.

The sorcerers of the Silver Portal are oneiromancers of a sort, and their power rests in dreaming trances. The group inherited eldritch techniques from an 18th-century book supposedly translating a 14th-century Byzantine Greek tome derived from a 5th-century Persian scroll manuscript known as the *Zolondrodere*, which itself claimed an even older source. Study of the twisted work is intensely difficult, as it has undergone numerous revisions and hints at secrets that seem ridiculous to the sound mind. Reputedly, every thought



and idea exists in a dream-state, waiting to enter reality through someone with the strength to breach the barriers. The magicians of the Silver Portal gaze into the primal tangle of myth, fantasy and fear, seeking wisdom.

Unfortunately, mankind has abandoned its visions, and they have become like wild things. The Dream Realms, known as Maya, are said to be ruled by fabulous lords similar to the mightiest of the Umbrood. Dreamers of the Silver Portal return from their rapturous slumber with insights and extraordinary gifts from beyond the shining veil. All sense of reality erodes, though, as the sorcerer encounters nightmarish horrors and mundane triviality juxtaposed with ancient fading gods and desperate hopes for the future. The psyche of the dreaming sorcerer bobs upon the ocean of humanity's illusions until he no longer truly knows when he is waking.

#### Organization

Given the nature of the Silver Portals' magic, it is not surprising that there are few real points of order within the group. Initiation occurs when someone stumbles into the waking reality of magician and catches her attention as deeply as the dream world has. A new student is encouraged to read the enlightening secrets of the *Zolondrodere* tome and practice obtaining the deep trance thought of the Silver Portal. Early on, this will probably require hallucinogenic drugs and self-hypnotic sessions in front of a mirror marked with exotic symbols. Later, extended sessions of sleep deprivation and even lucid sleepwalking are likely to occur. As the unconscious mind of the initiate gathers the power of the Dream Realms, her path mostly reflects unseen bargains with dream-denizens called Oneira, or with quests to bring the majestic beauty and grandiose splendor of her fantasies to life.

#### Style

Diligent and very deliberate strengthening of the unconscious connection with dreams is the linchpin of every Silver Portal sorcerer's power. Physical foci inevitably include mirrors, which are regarded as symbolic of the portal to dreams and scribbled chants copied from the group's only complete copy of the *Zolondrodere* tome. Specifically avoided are any items like alarms or clocks that might dispel any illusions of time or cause premature emergence from a trance. Power derived from a trance session varies with the success of a sorcerer's lucid control over the visions that come and the interference of sentient Oneira from beyond the walls of sleep. Such power is always lost in the maelstrom of imagination during normal, uncontrolled dream periods.

Storytellers and players interested in this fascinating sorcerous society must be prepared to deal with its difficulties and look upon them as boons. Create exciting stories revolving around bargains made with Umbrood from the Dream Realms. Indulge shamelessly in confusing imagery. Abuse botched magic rolls in reality bending manners. Cast shadows that provoke paranoia. Start sessions that seem to be real but turn out to be dreams. Evoke incredible mirages of

grandeur and apparitions of unspeakable terror. Don't let anyone fall asleep at the wheel.

#### Paths

Keep careful track of the total number of Path points and rituals that a Silver Portal sorcerer "knows" at all times. Each time he enters a dreaming trance, have the player choose which Paths and rituals he would like to "spend" these points to gain. Success is measured with a pool of dice equal to Perception + Dream (if the sorcerer has that background) or Hypnosis (if he uses such). Roll once for each Path or ritual the dreamer wishes to use in the Dream Realms, with a target difficulty of 6. For Paths, each success results in temporarily dreaming the equivalent of one level in the Path — as the sorcerer dreams, he awakens his mystic powers, but the slumbering mind is not always constant in its capabilities. Any points allocated, but not gained with successes, are inaccessible for that particular trip into slumber. Rituals are harder to obtain from the chaotic jumble of the Maya Realms. For each ritual, the sorcerer must garner a number of successes equal to the level of the ritual sought. Failure means that particular ritual expenditure is simply lost. The Storyteller should note a botch on any roll and take advantage of the source of the sorcerer's power. A Path or ritual used later may malfunction in some bizarre way that reflects the power he failed to gain, or the poor magician may suffer from hallucinations. Dream-gained power only remains until next time the sorcerer sleeps normally, at which time it returns to the world of fantasy. Evidence of a balance even in dreams is evident in the fact that the Silver Portal sorcerer cannot enter another magical trance until his mind spends time in unfettered rest.

Note that a Silver Portal sorcerer's powers aren't limited to dreams — rather, the sorcerer taps into the dreams to unlock his powers and then becomes able to focus them in the waking world. Because the sorcerer can only draw a limited amount of power from the chaotic Dream Realms, he must choose what unconscious knowledge to bring forth each time he casts his consciousness into mystic slumber. When he awakes, he "remembers" these Paths and rituals and focuses his ability to use them, until he sleeps again and the knowledge floats away again like some unremembered dream.

## THE STAR COUNCIL

#### Initiation

Sightings of objects flying through the sky date back to ancient times, but it was not until the publicized Roswell, New Mexico incident that the term UFO came into mainstream thought. The US Air Force even investigated incidents from 1947 to 1969 as a potential threat to national security. Since the 1969 declaration that not one single case had been proved, no official acknowledged program has been active. Many UFO fans note that even the Air Force could not explain over 700 of those reports and further hint that the



government could be hiding the truth. Whatever the facts of the matter, it is certain that the Technocracy wishes no public panic over the issue, and therefore, we may never learn what UFOs are until they are ready for us to know.

The sudden flurry of publicity about the Roswell incident created a feeding frenzy that encouraged frauds and those hungry for attention to perpetrate hoaxes, simple and elaborate. Others were just crackpots who believed in the hype and imagined the worst. A few students of the paranormal took the sightings seriously but chose to study them. Their quest for knowledge seemed destined to clash with military intelligence intent upon keeping whatever knowledge they might gain secret. In 1969, a group called the Star Council managed to break into a restricted hangar and retrieve some very strange devices. Even they aren't completely sure what they have, but it seems as if it could be alien. The Star Council continues to find it very suspicious that the government chose that particular year to announce its official lack of concern and hide any public acknowledgment of UFO study.

#### Organization

The Star Council is a small group composed of loose cannon intellectuals, numbering less than 50. A few of them are older discredited professors of astronomy, linguistics or physics. Others are young hackers, intent upon cracking into whatever government mainframe possesses the Holy Grail of knowledge they seek. Two of them are lawyers who no longer have a career left outside of defending other Council members. The Star Council has suffered from an antagonistic relationship with the government since its formation, as one might expect — only its small size and secretive nature, combined with the technical expertise of its younger members, prevents the group's total arrest and collapse.

During the early 60's, before members successfully entered the hangar, the Council was not so selective in its recruitment. Naïvely, the Council didn't fear the government or other UFO nuts. Bizarre fruitcakes with theories about dead planets, lost underground alien civilizations and chariots of the gods were as welcome to attend meetings as the most serious students. One group of attendees even claimed to be in contact with an immortal being of light they called Khuvon, and dubbed themselves the Thal'hun. Ironically, the crackpot theories of the Thal'hun were so close to the way that the devices discovered in '69 worked that the Council believed them. It was almost the group's undoing.

The Thal'hun managed to convince a number of Star Council members to participate in an expedition to a site in the Middle East. Somehow, the expedition erupted in violence, and authorities started seriously investigating the Council. A scared, leaner Star Council abandoned its public offices in San Francisco and went underground. The members know their bizarre comrades were lunatics, but they also know that what they have found is still possibly the biggest secret mankind has ever kept.

#### Style

The origin of the technological artifacts the Star Council has hidden in a couple of abandoned warehouses is uncertain. The Council is not aware of the Technocracy and, thus, has no real way to distinguish between ultratech and alien technology. Nevertheless, the devices they do have seem to have inhuman markings on them and exhibit properties that defy scientific principles. The Council feels as though they are on the verge of learning *the truth*. It has broken some of the linguistic code emitted by the devices through odd beeps and buzzing. Repeating these codes to some of the artifacts has triggered the discharge of powerful pulses of energy, with inexplicable effects.

Disappearances reminiscent of UFO abduction stories have plagued the Council since 1969. They have also witnessed burns without fire or radiation, flying objects moving in impossible ways, signals from empty space on static channels and random failure of radar and compasses. Three of the Council even returned after extended periods they can't seem to remember. Hypnotic sessions hint at their abductions but cannot explain newfound psychic abilities. The Star Council is sure that either aliens or the government is using human beings for some sort of experiments. It is desperate to decipher more of the codes, figure out what the government knows and learn the truth, if it isn't already too late.

#### Paths

Conveyance, Hellfire and Weathercraft are appropriate for Star Council members with their alien technology; many also have various psychic abilities. Note that most Star Council members consider their "magic" to be alien technology and language — essentially, a sort of mystical hyper-science.

#### MINOR OR DEFUNCT ORDERS

Several sorcerous societies have fallen by the wayside or been absorbed. These include, but are not limited to:

**Asatru Futhark** — A group of pretender-biker-Norse-wannabe sorcerers, the Asatru Futhark promoted hate crimes and random violence and rebellion, partly out of a misguided racial superiority complex and partly due to juvenile boredom. After several run-ins with other magical authorities bent on putting its activities to rest, the Asatru Futhark met its match. A small group of Aeon Order magicians managed to utterly destroy half a dozen of the Asatru in a direct confrontation, and the group splintered. Now, the former Asatru tend to take up nomadic criminal lifestyles, and some have left their former ways completely behind. However, the Aeon Order members involved note that some *other* group was apparently funding the Asatru — a group calling itself the Thule Society, a group hailing from actual ancient Norse religion as transliterated in World War II German society. The true extent, influence and goals of the Thule Society remain unknown.

**Balamob** — In Mesoamerica, a few sorcerers continued to follow the shapechanging ways of warriors from the old Aztec Empire and its contemporaries. These bloodthirsty sorcerers have since found their way to the Dreamspeakers, recruited by the other Native Americans who study their culture. (See *Dead Magic* for details.)

**The Dozen Priests of the Pythian Order** — A small cabal of divinatory priests, this Order found itself co-opted for its ties to the mythical Greek Oracle. Now, the priests serve whatever entity decided to overtake Delphi. (See also *Dead Magic*.)

**The Fenian** — Not so much a sorcerous society as a family, the Fenian claimed lineage to the fey and had strong magical powers to back up their claims. In recent days, the number of mystical family members has dwindled. The Irish legends maintain their geasa and pass on their secrets of shapeshifting and kinship with spirits and faeries. Still, the family's heritage runs thin these days, and only a few are born with the natural gift.

**Mogen Ha Chav** — The "Shield of the 36" undertakes a search for the 36 perfect human beings whose truly good hearts protect the world. The New York based group uses a combination of divination and protective magic to locate and protect these paragons of virtue. In concert with the Lions of Zion, it functions as a small, hidden subset of Kabbalistic practitioners. Though it is reclusive and does not often interfere in worldly affairs (due to its highly specialized nature), it likewise does not draw undue attention to its actions or to the existence of its Lion patrons.

**The Nephite Priesthood** — An apocalyptic group of Mormon priest-magicians, the Nephites prepared for the coming millennium and hunted down threats to its religious community. On January 4, 2000, *something* happened as the Nephites met in Salt Lake City. Stories are contradictory,

but rumor holds that one Nephite survived some sort of massive apocalypse, carrying the knowledge of his order so that it might again be reborn someday. Others argue that the militant Nephites obviously confronted something beyond their limited capabilities and won't be coming back any time soon.

**The Seven Thunders** — At the dawn of the 16th century, a group of seven powerfully faithful sorcerers rampaged across the European countryside, destroying any heretical or magical enemies they came across. They struck fear into the hearts of unbelievers and carried out a crusade with powers both mystical and Heavenly. In 1992, their testament was rediscovered, and new Thunders took up their mantle, to purge the world of evil before the prophesied apocalypse at the turn of the millennium. When the fore-casted disaster failed to materialize, many of the Thunders' followers went their separate ways. Now the Thunders have come to realize that perhaps they are *not* the prophesied messengers for the new age, that some otherwise normal humans have been touched by strange Messengers to perform their duties. At this time, the Seven Thunders remain alive and active, but how long they will continue their modern crusade is a matter of some speculation.

**Thal'hun** — Believers in UFOs and vibratory supertechnology, the Thal'hun were subsumed into the group calling itself the Star Council (see p. 39).

**Uzoma** — The keepers of African mysticism have been actively sought out by their brothers the Ngoma, who had long ago joined the Traditions. After settling some initial differences, most Uzoma have seen the benefits of working under a worldwide aegis that provides them with knowledge and resources to promote their practices. Conversely, the Uzoma do not have a distinct identity any more but remain sorcerers attached to the Traditions.

## CREATING NEW ORDERS



Storytellers and players should by no means feel constrained to the example orders in this book, of course. The World of Darkness has seen many sorcerous cabals rise and fall. Take an idea that has some mystical weight to it, and build a society about it. How might sorcerers take a specific cause or belief and use it to empower themselves? What magic hasn't been

explored by other societies? What cultural practices lend themselves to mysticism? For inspiration, try your own take on any society or group from a novel or film that you enjoy — odds are you can find a way to make it a sorcerous society. Not all groups need to be "wizards in robes," either; cabals can be religious, secular, political, physically oriented — any practice that captures human imagination can also extend beyond the mundane.





# CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTER CREATION



*Natural abilities are like natural plants; they need pruning by study.*

— Francis Bacon

"I see you have returned, Lisa," the old man muttered without even glancing up from the strange machinery over which his fingers played. "I know I have been hard on you, but it is because you are special. Have you figured out yet why it is so hard to pronounce the words I keep trying to teach you?"

Lisa paused, surprised at the immediate question, but happy nonetheless that her somewhat erratic friend greeted her so after her abrupt departure during the previous month's frustration. "Because they were not created by human beings?" She could not keep the tone of questioning out of her voice because even now it seemed incredible. "But why must we learn their tongue?"

"How do you suppose they arrived here? Think of it! These beings have traveled the stars and now shepherd humankind toward some unseen goal. If we can but decipher their meaning and their sciences, we shall inherit the universe, rather than being enslaved by it."

A shiver crept up Lisa's spine as a picture of slimy gray fingers manipulating the very object Dr. Cartier thrust into her hands

slipped into her thoughts. The professor's experiments suggested that the metal half-disc was some sort of computer. If only her voice could crack the codes of the heavens. "What if they just use telepathy or something and only have to speak to their machines? Maybe that would explain why no one has ever heard one talk." Suddenly, imitating the sounds the crescent disc occasionally emitted seemed far more important than ever.

## THE QUEST BEGINS

Sorcerers in the World of Darkness practice magic, but they view it differently than those popularly called mages by the Traditions. For centuries, they have been called "hedge" or "static" mages, but with the close of the Ascension War, the weakened Traditions have been forced to realize the equality of their magical brethren. In truth, all mages and sorcerers practice magics that are static, dynamic and entropic. What separates them is the path to power. The sorcerer may practice shamanism, technological advancement, hermetic theory or even the martial arts, but her study proceeds along very linear paths.

It is extremely important to realize that these are individuals who know that they are every bit the equal of their more dynamic partners. Practitioners of linear magic spend long years advancing



their knowledge of powerful paths and are confident in their potent abilities. The wisest sorcerers may realize that they are limited to performing permutations of magical feats pioneered by others in ancient times, but they also know that there are ages of power to tap. A lifetime spent digging deep into the universe's secrets can prove more fruitful than stumbling around looking for some new way. It has been said that everything has been thought of before, and at least amongst religious sorcerers, this is considered a divine truism.

## SHAPING SORCERERS



A sorcerer character is built according to **Mage Revised** character creation rules, except that she usually has fewer points and somewhat different skills. This chapter begins with the basics of how to design your sorcerer and expands to provide her with new options that will help you define her magical gift and her place in the chronicle.

The basic steps of character creation are very similar to those from **Mage Revised**. For an overview of the whole procedure and abundant advice for both Storyteller and players, see pp. 86-94 of the **Mage** rulebook. The chart above provides a quick reference, including changes to reflect sorcerers' different points and costs.

### STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

#### Concept

You did decide upon some sort of starting concept, right? What was your character before she became a sorcerer? What made her step onto the Path? A great deal of who we are is reflected in what we do, and a strong initial concept will help you make many other decisions while designing your character. Think of the details that you can guess just by knowing someone is a police officer or a dentist. Well, perhaps the individual will not fit your picture exactly, but many generalizations will prove true.

#### Society

Linear mages owe more of their knowledge of the metaphysical to their mentors and associates than most affinitive mages. There are always exceptions, but a sorcerer will most often continue to belong to the assembly of fellow students and master(s) who originally instructed her in the Art. Examine the sorcerous societies in Chapter Four and choose one that fits your ideas for your character. You should make sure that any choice you make fits into the chronicle with the rest of the players and with the Storyteller's vision. Autonomous magicians still possess an origin, from those who have decided to leave the mystical organization that spawned their learning to the rare self-taught wizard struggling through lost tomes or the nervous recipient of alien "visitations." Despite Nephandic claims to the contrary, nobody comes from a complete vacuum.

It is very important to remember that the stereotypical images of a typical member of a society are exactly that — stereotypes. Your character is a person first, not some faceless entity known to

The first thing that you should do is to decide what made your character step onto the path of sorcery. Some vision, experience, discovery or fanatical desire sparked the impulse to search for the mysteries of creation and formed the incredible will necessary to carry on that search. From this initial concept, every single aspect of your adopted persona will flow naturally, and you will find it easy to follow him down the mystical path.

the world as a Cultist of Isis or an Order of Aeon Rites member. In fact, most people that your character knows probably aren't even aware of her sorcerous affiliations. To them she is Chris or Tamika or Dr. Smith. Magical teachings do come from a source, however, and that source colors the sorcerer with its own prejudices, beliefs and thoughts about the universe. She is still a sum greater than all those parts, and ultimately, hers is the choice of what to adopt and what to discard. Of course, to close-minded individuals, bound up in their own vision of how the world works, she may be seen as exactly the stereotype. A government agent stumbling across the Star Council is certainly likely to see them as a bunch of crackpot UFO conspiracy theorists.

#### Nature, Demeanor and Essence

Choose your personality archetypes as stated in the **Mage** rulebook. (You may wish to peruse the additional choices included here.) You should choose an Essence fitting to your concept and society, as well, but be aware that the influence of the Avatar is far subtler within the linear mage. If the sorcerer ever comes to understand this influence consciously, he will likely experience it mostly as a force guiding him along certain paths of development.

### STEP TWO: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

The inherent qualities and personal characteristics of your sorcerer character are determined in the same fashion as detailed on p. 89 of **Mage Revised**. Unless your Storyteller is allowing the Equal for All option noted previously, your sorcerer begins with fewer points than a normal mage. You must prioritize Physical, Social and Mental and spend 6 dots on your highest priority, 4 on your secondary and 3 on your tertiary Attributes.

### STEP THREE: SELECT ABILITIES

Next, as normal in the creation of a **Mage** character, you need to assign the Abilities that represent your sorcerer's learning, practice and academia. Again, the sorcerer does not receive as many points, unless your Storyteller chooses the Equal for All option. Prioritize Talents, Skills and Knowledges, spending 11 dots toward the primary, 7 upon the secondary and 4 to raise the tertiary categories. Remember that no Ability may be higher than 3 at this stage. You will have the opportunity to spend freebie points later. New Abilities designed to represent some of the rare secrets or arts of linear mages are listed later in

## CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS

### Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, society, Nature, Demeanor and Essence

### Step Two: Select Attributes

Prioritize the three categories: (6/4/3). Begin with one dot in each Attribute and assign points to your Physical, Social and Mental Traits.

### Step Three: Select Abilities

Prioritize the three categories: (11/7/4). Choose Talents, Skills and Knowledges. No Ability greater than 3 at this stage.

### Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (5 points).

Choose Numina (5) (Paths, rituals, psychic powers, foci).

### Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Willpower (5) and Mana Pool (equal to Mana Background).

Select a Resonance Trait (Dynamic, Entropic or Static).

Spend freebie points (21).

Choose Specializations.

Ignite the Spark of Life.

### FREEBIE POINTS

| Trait      | Cost      |
|------------|-----------|
| Attribute  | 5 per dot |
| Ability    | 2 per dot |
| Path       | 7 per dot |
| Ritual     | 3 each    |
| Background | 1 per dot |
| Willpower  | 1 per dot |

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

| Trait       | Cost             |
|-------------|------------------|
| New Ability | 3                |
| New Path    | 7                |
| Willpower   | new rating       |
| Ability     | new rating x2    |
| Attribute   | new rating x4    |
| Path        | new rating x7    |
| New ritual  | rating of ritual |
| Background  | new rating x3    |

this chapter. One of the important changes is that the core book of *Mage Revised* does not contain any Abilities that are unsuitable for sorcerers. This should help you close any artificial gap between the two types of practitioners.

## STEP FOUR: SELECT ADVANTAGES

Just like other mages, sorcerers have their own ties to mortal society. In the case of a sorcerer, such ties may even be stronger — often, the sorcerer does not have the all-consuming drive of a pushy Avatar or an overwhelming Tradition and, thus, pays greater attention to worldly details. Conversely, many sorcerers have rather weak magical affinities; they just don't "stumble into" the bizarre situations that many mages encounter. This doesn't mean that sorcerers are without mystic allies and trinkets, just that such toys tend to be hard to come by! Prioritize your advantages according to the way that you see your sorcerer's interplay with magical and mundane society. If your Ancient Order of Aeon Rites sorcerer also happens to be an upstanding city councilman, you'll want to pay attention to that with Influence and Resources. A sorcerer who makes a

### EQUAL FOR ALL

One of the themes inherent in *Sorcerer Revised* is that all magicians are special and that most individuals, supernatural or otherwise, cannot tell the difference between a "sorcerer" and a "mage." Nevertheless, efforts have been made to keep from stealing the thunder from our Awakened protagonists. Some Storytellers may wish to run chronicles in which sorcerers play alongside mages or just want to further emphasize the fact that linear mages are not some inferior, lesser cousin to affinitive mages. Try creating some Storyteller character mages with Attribute, Ability, Background and freebie points using *Sorcerer Revised* starting allocations instead of the normal *Mage* levels. Or you may wish to have some or all sorcerer characters constructed using *Mage Revised* build values of 7/5/3 to determine Attributes, 13/9/5 for Abilities, 7 Background points, 6 Numina and 15 freebies. With an even playing field to start, the artificial differences between sorcerers and mages dissolve and the real differences can stand out on their own merit.



finding or tracking mystical artifacts may well have a useful Wonder or two.

## CHOOSE BACKGROUNDS

Sorcerer characters receive five points of Backgrounds. However, not all of the Traits included in the **Mage Revised** rulebook are suitable. The common Backgrounds available to all sorcerer characters are Allies, Contacts, Influence, Library, Mentor and Resources. A sorcerer may even begin play with some sort of Wonder, if the Storyteller approves a relic, device, talisman or fetish as being suitable for her style. Arcane, Destiny and Dream are sometimes suitable for the occasional sorcerer but bear careful consideration by the Storyteller as to whether they fit the role of linear mages in her chronicle. The Node Background requires special mention. Unless the style of the magician strongly encourages ideas of a place of power or the chronicle contains a mixture of mages and sorcerers, Storytellers should not allow this option. All mortals, of course, possess an Avatar, but the linear mage guides his down a set road and, therefore, does not possess a rating in the background. New options for Backgrounds intended to help detail your character's special advantages are included later in this chapter.

If you use some supplemental material like **The Bitter Road** or **Guide to the Traditions**, the additional Backgrounds in those books may be useful as well — Rank, Fame and even Cult might all be appropriate.

## CHOOSE NUMINA

All of the basic decisions you already made in designing your sorcerer character should have you well on the way to designing his magic. In the world of **Mage**, we know that all powers beyond those of normal humans are forms of magic. Our magicians do not see this overarching unity so clearly, and therefore, their beliefs and styles limit them in how and why this power manifests. In the World of Darkness, the cultist, Reverend, spoon-bender, mad scientist and telepath see their abilities as entirely different and probably consider them unrelated or even deny the existence of other powers. Seemingly endless traditions, unnumbered rituals, holy miracles, spells, incredible devices and fantastical physical feats form a body of lore that even White Wolf will never fully tap. For convenience's sake, we call supernatural abilities possessed by otherwise normal human beings Numina, from *numen*, or "divine nod." The Storyteller system reflects the common roots that these spiritual arts share with a system of rules that, for the most part, achieves the unity that defies the characters behind them.

The expenditure of Numina points depends totally upon the style of the sorcerer's powers. All styles fall into categorization as mythic, technocratic or psychic, and though this division is arbitrary in a metaphysical sense, it does reflect the basic rules differences and differences in paradigm. Each style controls the type of Numina that are available and the foci necessary in order to use them. Unless the Equal for All options are used, a character has five Numina points to spend. It is perhaps worth noting that the linear mage is NOT limited to spending only three points in a single Path. Reaching the heights of power in

a narrower field is one of the advantages of the sorcerer. (Of course, the Storyteller may well veto a character who seems to be nothing more than a bunch of dots geared toward, say, Hellfire.)

### Mythic Numina

If her style is mystical in nature, distribute five points for the sorcerer within Paths listed from the society that you chose for her. Then choose one ritual per level of each Path from those listed in Chapter Four. This does not mean that you have to take a ritual at each level of your Path rating, though you cannot take a ritual of any specific level unless you have at least one of each lower level. Thus, if you have a Level Three rating in the Path of Alchemy, you could take a Level One, a Level Two and a Level Three ritual, or three Level One rituals, or single Level One and two Level Two rituals. Unless you spend freebie points to gain more, this results in five total levels of Paths and five rituals.

With your Storyteller's permission and assuming the new Paths fit the character, you may even spend freebies to obtain Paths and rituals outside of her society's basic list. Perhaps your magician has studied with other orders or comes from a different cultural background than is typical for her group. The important thing to remember is that all Paths and rituals chosen should be mythic in style and that they should make sense for the story behind the origin of your character. The majority of sorcerers fall into the mythic style, either through their affiliation with a Tradition or because they retain the practices of ancient societies.

Next, choose a signature focus for each Path. Any time the sorcerer uses this specialty tool or keystone, she gains a one-point break on the difficulty. As per normal **Mage** rules, the magician may choose some unique focus for her signature tool and thereby receive a two-point break on casting difficulties — penalized by the normal loss should she find herself without access to it. Other possible foci for standard use in magical invocation are listed under the society's section on style. Sorcerers of a mystical bent caught without any focus at all may still seek to cast their magic, surpassing the temporary need for a focus, but it is immensely difficult. In addition to requiring a point of Willpower and imposing a penalty of three to the magical feat roll, the power enacted must be similar to a previous usage. Hurai could light a candle, even bound and gagged, as he has performed that particular trick many times in the past. The Path, once woven distinctly into the Tapestry, serves to empower the mystic to tug upon the universe's memory of the act. Sorcerers cannot abandon foci entirely unless they someday lay aside the linear path for an affirmative Awakening.

### Technocratic Numina

Technocratic sorcerers practice a scientific style of magic. Of course, they see their miraculous achievements as merely the logical extensions of scientific theorem, but the effect is essentially the same. They receive the standard five points of Paths and five rituals, but these powers predicate upon scientific principles and laws. Because their Arts fall into the realm of possibility, scientific-based magicians are less likely to face persecution or absolute disbelief from bystanders. The flip side to this is that their ways are newer and have been accepted in reality for a far shorter time, and thus there are fewer established Paths. Chapter Four provides a number of examples of

## MODELS OF THE COSMOS

Every model of the universe finds reflections in the nature of the magical societies who inhabit it. The static, dynamic and entropic triangle finds respectively the Technocracy, Marauders and Nephandi embodying its extreme points with the Traditions theoretically walking down the middle. Another division of reality often described by mages is that of body, spirit and mind. The extremes of the Traditions' enemies are nonexistent or at least muted among sorcerers, if only due to the nature of linear magic. Nonetheless, there is a certain obvious correlation between the basic types of sorcerers and the segments of the cosmos. Three basic styles of willworking dominate amongst sorcerers and their Numina.

Scientific or technocratic Numina revolve almost entirely around the physical realms and thus easily reside in the province of body. From astronomy to zoology, the technological logic seeks to redefine all of creation within the scope of its own reason. The power to alter reality in the material universe is potent in the modern era, but it foolishly ignores the wisdom of the ages and suffers from a lack of spirituality that invites moral decrepitude. It is common for a scientist to see experimentation as the greater good and to accept other evils in the name of science — “we don't drop the bombs, we just build them,” as the saying goes.

Numina Paths of mystical might derive from long-honored rituals that allow the diligent and faithful to draw upon the power of millennia of philosophical and divine thought. The brief explosion of the present is not yet enough to shatter the historical inertia of thousands of years of mythic tradition. The tapestry of ancient myth is an ocean still waiting within the spirit of everything for its deepest secrets to come forth. Unfortunately, the traditional sorcerer resides largely in the past, and every day leaves her a bit more lost to abandoned ideology and forgotten practices.

Mind is not remotely a surprise as the province of the psychic practitioner. He likely beats you half to death with continuous reminders that it is all that matters, the mind overcomes all other concerns, whether body or spirit. Purity of purpose lends the psychic a strength that is difficult to steal. A sorcerer who has mastered her own mental abilities to the point that she can control the world around her can almost never be deprived of her power. Short of insanity, drugs or some other loss of control, she will always be sharp and ready to act. Unfortunately, absolute dedication to one's own mind encourages hubris. Specifically, it denies access to the immense power that resides in mythic resonance, confuses spirituality with personal achievement and creates an adversarial relationship between the material world and the ego.

Perhaps your sorcerer will transcend the limitations that arise naturally out of his style, but it is important to keep them in mind. Whether you allow your character to fall prey to his own Arts or excel at guiding him to rise above them, they will play a strong role. The roles of body, mind and spirit are so basic and pervasive that you may even discover they are easier to see and incorporate than the principles of stasis, dynamism and entropy. Perhaps you can finally recognize that the linear path is more readily seen, followed and mastered.

technocratic Paths, but you can always adjust other Paths thematically if you can agree with the Storyteller how to explain their logical super-scientific theory.

Choose a specialty focus for each Path, for which you receive the standard one-point break, and note the standard foci listed under your society's style. Whether due to some remarkable personal invention or a theorem yet unaccepted by the scholarly community at large, a technocratic willworker may choose some unique focus for their alterations of reality. As usual, this results in the two-point break on Path difficulty rolls, penalized by a three-point penalty plus necessary Willpower expenditure should he lose it. Scientific willworkers cannot perform miracles without their tools, though, and, thus, can never surpass or abandon foci. Due to the ubiquitous nature of technology in the modern world, technocratic sorcerers do not often find themselves deprived of all foci. When doomed by fate, stranded without tools, the technocratic sorcerer is at the mercy of his raw wits, skills and physique. Some schools of technocratic thought prepare for this possibility by seeking to redesign the sorcerer's mind and body.

### Psychic Numina

To the psychic practitioner, powerful feats occur solely by the extension of the might of the mind over the reality of the body and

the physical universe. In one sense, they have earned the ultimate respect of many mages, for nothing but will is required to change the world around them. Dedication to the purity of the mind, unfortunately, has cost the psychic the ability to draw upon the inherent power of outside foci and their resonance. To represent this, the psychic practitioner does not have access to rituals. Chapter Five goes into more detail about the psychic and her powers.

While the psychic individual cannot engage in rituals in the traditional sense, he can work together with other cooperative psychics. Parapsychology studies allow multiple minds to work together to achieve a more powerful effect. Each psychic capable of the power in question and working in conjunction may assist and thereby contribute a die pool as if he were splitting actions between a skill roll of Perception + Parapsychology and a psychic power roll of Path Rating + Attribute, i.e. since the two skills are wrapped together, use the lesser die pool less two dice. As an example, two psychics are trying to warp the mind of a target, working together. Dr. Dunglas has four dots of Perception and one of Parapsychology, with three dots of Psychic Hypnosis and three dots of Manipulation. He may roll five dice as the leader of a conjunctural effort. His partner, Dr. James, possesses two dots of Perception and two of



Parapsychology, with three dots of Psychic Hypnosis and two of Manipulation and, therefore, may add but two dice to the conjunctual effect. Between the two of them, they may roll seven dice to alter the mind of their victim.

The only focus that a psychic practitioner uses is his own mind's concentration. Concentration requires a full combat turn during which the psychic may do nothing else, and thus, the psychic power roll and effect will occur on the following turn. If a psychic chooses to do anything else while trying to enact mental powers, he must split actions between a Wits + Parapsychology roll and whatever other action she wants to achieve. At least one success, and possibly more if the Storyteller feels it is fair, is required on the Wits + Parapsychology roll to successfully maintain concentration.

In some situations, a psychic may wish to try to "fast-cast" some mental power in a real hurry, forbidding her the time necessary to concentrate properly. If she invokes a mental discipline without any time for concentration, the psychic must expend a Willpower point and accept a penalty of three to the target difficulty number, as she is essentially surpassing her focus. Psychics can never completely abandon the focus of concentration.

## STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

### Willpower

Sorcerers require the same headstrong and willful nature found in mages in order to persevere through the trials and nuances of magical initiation and training. Your sorcerer may find herself requiring a mighty will even more often than her affinitive mage fellows as she cannot simply tap into reality's underlying power. All sorcerers start with a Willpower of at least five dots, bolstered by freebie points if you wish to spend them thus.

### Mana, Quintessence and Paradox

Linear mages do not make a habit of slashing the tapestry into bits or creating new laws of reality from raw power. Drawing their mastery of the world from its own secret nature, they can coax it into cooperation without suffering the resounding backlash wrought by shattering its subtle surface. Therefore, they do not suffer from Paradox in the same way as their affinitive friends. This is not to say that a botched spell or ritual cannot cause a sorcerer dangerous problems, but overall, the softer footsteps she takes upon the face of the earth promise her endeavors a somewhat smoother course.

Sorcerers do not foster the wellspring of creation within their Avatars strongly enough to drink directly of its unadulterated energies. Thus, they do not receive Quintessence either. Some magicians, psychics and martial artists learn to absorb some bit of the soul of the universe, thought of as Mana or a sort of mystical breath or spiritual energy rather than the pure creative energy of reality. Those with the Mana Background begin with a pool of points equal to the Trait rating. Without some gift upon which to draw, it is difficult and unlikely for the linear mage to gain any sort of power outside of her own skills.

## COMBINING AND CONVERTING NUMINA

Typically, an extraordinary mortal has only one sort of Numina — mythic sorcery, True Faith, exceptional science, psychic powers, etc. However, in *very rare* cases, someone might have multiple talents. To represent this, the cost of any disparate talent after the primary one is *doubled*. For instance, if a player wants to build a character with both psychic phenomena and mythic sorcery, she can do so by spending *two* Numina dots for each dot of powers in the secondary aptitude. Say the character is naturally psychic; the player would spend five Numina dots but could swap two of those dots for a single dot of mythic sorcery, leaving the remaining three for psychic phenomena. Similarly, additional dots purchased with freebies have double cost as well. This applies to all modes beyond the primary. Thus, a character might primarily study extraordinary science but also have some skill with technomancy (a pseudo-mystical discipline) and psychic phenomena; the latter two would come at double cost. Or the character could have True Faith but at a cost of 14 points for the Merit instead of the usual 7. (This does not indicate that Numina dots can be used to purchase True Faith, simply that True Faith's normal cost is doubled if it's a secondary area of power.)

Once a character is created, all experience costs are normal. Thus, a character with both psychic phenomena and mythic sorcery can advance both areas at the normal rate, though of course he has fewer powers to start with and will have to split his experience between the two separate areas.

Alternately, you may choose to pick some psychic power and use it as a Path of sorcery, or vice-versa. For instance, you could use psychic Telepathy, but state that your magician uses spells and rituals to communicate mind-to-mind. Or you could have a psychic who's capable of altering the weather with concentration. Ultimately, such conversions rely upon the discretion of the Storyteller. As a good rule of thumb, such a power should have a strong story reason behind it (a sorcerous society that has a strong mental discipline might teach magical Mind Shielding) and should have some ready correlation. Psychic powers can easily become sorcerous Paths; most of the powers are instant effects, accessible with a short spell. Conversely, the instant effects of a sorcerous Path can form the core of a psychic discipline; the rituals would remain out of reach of psychic power — the price of a power that springs up from inside without the aid of focusing tools and aids.

### Select a Resonance Trait

A sound exists that causes every object to resound with a like vibration and an article exists for reflecting every emanation of sonic energy. Magic is no different and, in fact, may be even more interconnected. Any effort to change the universe works equally within the one who acts, for the magician is the ultimate mirror warping the vision of reality like a funhouse reflection. It may be difficult to see the entire path upon which your sorcerer will embark, as any decision is heavily marked by specific delineated Paths. Thus, initially you should only choose one Resonance trait, whether dynamic, static or entropic. Assign one dot to it and a descriptive term or specialty. Try to remember that often the resonance of a linear mage is tied into the very structured way in which they learned to perform magic. As your magical knowledge continues to develop along different lines, you and your Storyteller should come to any agreements about additional resonance traits or gain in level of resonance rating.

Though sorcerers do not make Arete rolls, because their magic depends upon Path rolls instead, Resonance still has an effect upon everything they do. Color a magician's Paths with his Resonance. As an example, a sorcerer with the Dynamic Resonance of *Fiery* would tend to do his magic in flickering waves of flame and probably uses a focus that involves fire. Perhaps he meditates upon a candle or his spells always cause a wash of heat. Even a psychic could have such a resonance; his telepathic powers make people feel hot or cause objects manipulated to become warm.

### SPEND FREEBIE POINTS

The final hard-and-fast rules step is spending the pool of freebie points that lets you really go to town modeling your sorcerer to fit your image of her. Unless your Storyteller is using the Equal for All option, you receive 21 freebie points to spend according to the chart found in the condensed Character Creation chart. Try to fill in places you missed. Is there a skill your character really should have or have at a higher rating? Have you given her Background points to cover your vision of her history?

If your Storyteller allows Merits and Flaws, this would also be the time to choose them. Some new Merits and Flaws, especially for sorcerers, appear later in this chapter, but it is worth considering how those already presented by the basic rules might apply. All of the normal Physical and Social Merits and Flaws easily transfer from affinitive mage to linear sorcerer with no noticeable changes. In fact many of them could even be found amongst mortals or thus far un-Awakened acolytes. It is worth noting that the Primal Marks Flaw might be suitable for Maison Liban sorcerers whose genetic traits strike a sense of reminiscence within Tremere vampires. Most Mental Merits and Flaws can be used without change, including the Time Sense Merit. Those affecting sleep would cause serious problems for sorcerers such as the oneiromancers from the Silver Portal. Due to the difference in magic rules, the Sleepwalker Flaw is not suitable for linear mages. Supernatural Merits and Flaws that affect the Avatar or Spheres of a mage obviously are not appropriate for a sorcerer. These include Circumspect Avatar, Manifest Avatar,

### PARADOX AND NON-MAGES

We have already spent a lot of time explaining why the power of the Awakened mage is different from the structured and residual threads that give magical strength to linear mages and other supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness. However, does this mean that Paradox never strikes at other beings? Well, no. As the defender of consensual reality, Paradox levies its toll on anything outside the common world. One could theorize that Paradox affects the vampire by forcing him to drink blood, the werewolf by causing vulnerability to silver and the changeling by making iron particularly deadly. Nevertheless, might there be ways that sorcerers and other supernatural creatures could directly suffer from Paradox — or at least from these scourges, wherever they spring? Not if the Storyteller wishes to keep things simple and avoid that particular path, but if she wants to explore it, here are some options:

The most common source of such a situation might be that some Wonders enact affinitive magical effects and yet are useful to anyone, potentially even sleepers. If such an item has a vulgar effect, the Paradox gained will channel into the user rather than the item. In fact, some Marauders intentionally make items that do just that. Paradox gained in this fashion acts as normal for **Mage** characters but is tempered in style by the wondrous item used and the purpose to which it was put. The Resonance that the item holds — often gathered from its creation and its creator — always flavors such Paradox.

Other possibilities include victims altered by magic in such a way that their very presence is an affront to reality. If the Storyteller does not wish to use any Paradox rules for non-mages, the easiest solution is that the force of Paradox acts as unbelief and returns the victim toward its “normal,” uninfluenced state. Alternatively, the force of Paradox further harms the target, focusing on her aberrant nature and its damaging influence. Certain Merits and Flaws may open a linear mage to the assault of Paradox. In addition, other strange situations may arise that offer opportunities for Paradox to strike other beings who are not mages. If a vampire, for example, seeks to gain some special power from the potent blood of a mage, he may discover himself strangely influenced by uncontrolled forces released by that blood, one Paradox point for every blood point spent, perhaps. Options like this arm those Storytellers who wish to emphasize the inscrutable face that mages present to other denizens of the World of Darkness.



Twin Souls, Shattered Avatar, Sphere Natural, Avatar Companion and Sphere Inept. The Legendary Attributes Merit, however, is a very good way to help represent some of the remarkable achievements of various physical Paths. Most other Merits and Flaws of a supernatural origin fit sorcerers just as easily as they do mages or, at least, can be easily altered to fit. As always, Merits and Flaws remain a wholly optional system, but they can be useful to underscore your sorcerer's magical heritage or to underscore a particular break from convention.

## CHOOSE SPECIALIZATIONS

For each Attribute, Ability and Path rated at four or higher, you get to assign a specialization. As per the normal **Mage** rules, any time you perform an action that uses the Attribute, Ability or magical Path in a way that reflects your character's specialized talents, any 10s are kept and another die is added to the pool. In the case of Path ratings, this can be very powerful, since die pools are often higher than Arete ratings for mages. Of course, with less flexible magic, it can sometimes be harder to manipulate the situation such that a specialization comes into play.

## IGNITE THE SPARK OF LIFE

You have been making decisions about your character at every step of the way, so far. Hopefully, you have had a lot more on your mind than just some dots on a piece of paper, but just in case, now is the time to flush out the whole picture. Look at what each of your traits says about your sorcerer. Breathe life into him by deciding what each dot means. What does your magician look like? What are her hobbies? She is a human

being, right? Don't skip this stage, please, you might not respect yourself in the morning.

Put some thought into the following questions, and try writing them down. Who are your friends, family and associates at your job? Or do you have any? Where do you live, in a house or apartment or on the streets? What are your quirks, mannerisms and habits that others might remember or find annoying or attractive? Describe your own personal magical style and the types of foci you use. And then go back and examine the questions in the **Mage** rulebook. How old are you? How was your life different (what made you step onto the path of magic)? What "touch of strange," or mini-Awakening, opened the mystic to the possibilities of the magical world? What was your upbringing? When did you first encounter magic? How did you join your magical society? How did you join your cabal? How do you deal with the mundane world? What's your motive? Does your character have a sense of her future? How does your character see his mystic path? What conflicts wait in the road of magical development?

That should be enough to get you started, but don't be afraid to write up however long a description you think you would enjoy. Just remember that any particularly bizarre back-grounds need backup by points in Traits and, as always, are subject to your Storyteller's permission. Don't worry, though, most Storytellers are happy to accommodate any work you put into your character's past, as long as it is reasonable and not ridiculous. Remember, you were a somewhat normal person before stepping foot upon the mystic path.

# NEW TRAITS



Most of what sorcerers do already fits neatly into the capabilities of normal humans or those of mages. There are things that set sorcerers aside from the norm, however, that are not always directly related to their magic. This section details some of those special abilities and skills.

## NEW ABILITIES

### TALENTS

#### Lucid Dreaming

For most people, dreams are something that happen to them that they are lucky even to remember. From choosing the subject matter of your dreams to altering their conditions, you have some degree of control over what happens when you are dreaming. This talent is useful for achieving insight into one's subconscious and gaining incredible details for stories. Because dreams gain special meaning and power in the Maya Realms, the talent also is useful for building status and reputation amongst the Oneira lords and dream-spirits and weaving new dreams and realities to populate the dream world. Without magic that lets one explore the Dream Realms, though, you will never know whether your dreams were merely self-restricted

hallucination or epic fantasies envied by the mightiest of Oneira.

- Novice: You eat heavy foods and watch strange movies to inspire your nightly sessions.
- Practiced: You often dream about things that interest you.
- Competent: The contents of your dreams are open to change.
- Expert: Your dream world is a continuing project.
- Master: Do you ever wake up?

**Possessed by:** Oneiromancers, Dreamspeakers, Authors

**Specialties:** Specific Changes (such as adding one consistent component), Somnambulation, Nightmares

## SKILLS

### Hypnotism

Though the true limits of this skill remain unknown to modern science, psychics and psychiatrists continue to test its nuances. While myths of sleeper agents and "Manchurian candidates" are probably far-fetched but hidden truths in the World of Darkness, it is up to the Storyteller to decide how useful this skill truly proves. Careful attention should ensure

that mundane talents do not create feats that should only be possible with magic. Hypnotism can place a subject into a trance, which lets the practitioner gather information or treat psychological problems. To put a subject into a trance state requires an opposed Charisma + Hypnotism roll against the target's Willpower. An unwilling subject may automatically resist simply by expending a Willpower point, so breaking a strong mind may be a very time consuming process. The number of successes indicates how much can be learned or the extent of psychiatric help applied. Hypnotism used in conjunction with various mental Numina or Mind magics may have increased effects, such as programming specific actions to occur at a later time. See also the psychic Numina of Empathic Hypnotism, in Chapter Five, which allows a far wider range of effects.

- Novice: People you entrance probably got road hypnosis even without you.
- Practiced: You can learn some interesting things.
- Competent: You feel comfortable enough to engage in self-hypnosis.
- Expert: You can reach deep into the mind of your subject.
- Master: An entranced mind is like clay in your hands.

**Possessed by:** Psychiatrists, Interrogation Experts, Holistic Healers, Psychics

**Specialties:** Interrogation, Behavior Training, Regression, Hypnotherapy

## KNOWLEDGES

### Lore: Specialized

Some types of knowledge are very specialized and involve many details that bear little or no reference to anything else. Thus, these secrets are extremely useful when applied to the specific subject at hand but relatively useless in any other context. Knowing the inside circle of the Arcanum or the truth about vampires could very well get you that needed research grant or save your life if you are faced with the subject of your knowledge. But knowing about vampires isn't going to do a single other thing for you. When you choose a Lore knowledge, it must be specialized, such as Vampire Lore, Arcanum Lore, Technocracy Lore.

- Student: You know many of the basics.
- College: You are starting to understand some of the secrets.
- Masters: You are well versed in your subject of Lore.
- Doctorate: You know as much as most of your subjects.
- Scholar: You know your subjects better than they know themselves.

**Possessed by:** Occultists, Anthropologists, Witch-hunters, Kooks

**Specialties:** Tradition Lore, Mummy Lore, Shapeshifter Lore, Faerie Lore

## Parapsychology

Serious study in the field of parapsychology dates to the 1882 founding of the Society of Psychical Research in England. Such knowledge continues to be regarded with suspicion by the scientific community at large, but a few of its ideas, such as hypnotism have even managed to enter mainstream medicine. Basic experiments and theory concern one of two phenomenon: extrasensory perception or psychokinesis. For the theoretical student, parapsychology involves the search for evidence of the nature of psi phenomena, including non-sensory detection, influence of random events, after death existence and out-of-body experiences. All too often, such studies are frustratingly inconclusive. For the real psychic, however, Parapsychology teaches one how to use his own powers.

You should use Parapsychology rolls for psychic powers to maintain concentration, perform group effects and delve into the possibilities of what can theoretically be done with psychic energy. Maintaining concentration will sometimes require a Wits + Parapsychology roll. Working in conjunction with a group usually demands a Perception + Parapsychology roll. Use of Parapsychology with Paths is as indicated under the specific power in question.

- Student: This stuff is interesting, isn't it?
- College: You have spent time observing experiments in the field, or you have read many serious works on the subject.
- Masters: You could even make a living by teaching or doing research.
- Doctorate: You engage in groundbreaking work such as that which created hypnotism.
- Scholar: If you aren't already a psychic, you are getting close.

**Possessed by:** Parapsychologists, Psychics, Charlatans

**Specialties:** ESP, Psychokinesis, Trances, Conjunctions

## NEW BACKGROUNDS

People don't actually start as blank sheets of paper, and neither do sorcerers. The friends and acquaintances a magician makes may serve to help her find out information or get out of danger, but they say a lot more about her character. Keeping a job and, thus, an income may not always seem glamorous, but it helps pay the bills and keep food on the table. Nearly every sorcerer belongs to the normal society in which he resides as firmly as he belongs to his magical society. Still, the very nature of sorcery is intent upon gaining other advantages over the surrounding world. The crafty magician will usually gather mystical books, exotic materials, a safe place to work her rituals and even a reputation amongst other practitioners. The Backgrounds detailed in this section represent special advantages that set sorcerers apart from mages and mortals alike.

### CHOLÉ

You are a medium in the voodoo sense, originally known amongst the Bata'a and other similar practitioners as cholé or Godflowers. That is, your body and mind are open gateways to



the spirit world. Ghosts, nature spirits and the mighty loa ride you like a fine horse. Today called Les Chevaux, literally The Horses, amongst the Bata'a and other voodoo practitioners, sorcerers and mages with a strong connection to the spirit world are suitably respected. The sacrifice intrinsic to acting as the open door between the realms is a sacred duty and garners immense attention from otherworldly powers and deep honor among spiritual cultures. The power you represent is demonstrated in the ease with which spirits may possess you and channel their magical charms through you into the material world. The higher your rating in this Background, the more easily spirits can use you, for good or ill. This is the ultimate sacrifice, however, and at least some of the loa will truly appreciate and reward you. It is worth noting that this Background can even exist amongst otherwise normal mortals. The will of the other world is not limited to the enlightened alone.

X The only voices you hear can be cured with psychiatric help.

- Weak — you are the equivalent of a lame nag; -1 to spirit difficulties through you.
- Medium — you have practice, and spirits appreciate this; -2 to difficulties of possession and charms.
- Strong — spirits favor a link such as you; -3 to difficulties to affect the world through you.
- Powerful — the loa enjoy the gateway you provide; -4 to difficulties to enact spirit powers.
- Legendary — even the unbelievers see the divine in you; -5 to target numbers for spirits.

## GUIDE

A mystical animal or minor spirit has chosen to help the sorcerer along her magical Path. Generally such entities are very interested in the welfare (or at least foibles) of humans but have some motive to attempt to encourage certain types of behavior in their sorcerer companions. Crafty, knowledgeable in magical concerns and possessed of inhuman senses, these beings have a lot to offer their patrons. Nothing is free, though, and this relationship is a two-way street. Guides expect special treatment, including food, shelter, friendship and even strange supernatural necessities. In return, guides can help a sorcerer learn mythic lore, gain new Paths or discover unseen things. Take the opportunity to create an interesting, unique creature who has reason to share your sorcerer's fate and influence her behavior.

X Get a pet.

- Weak guide — a talking, relatively non-combative animal with a few occult skills.
- Minor guide — exceptionally bright small animal or spirit with detailed occult knowledge.
- Apt guide — a large, intelligent animal or a smaller supernatural creature.
- Strong guide — an animal or spirit with a few magical abilities of its own.
- Powerful guide — a creature with magical talents, vast knowledge and probably a reputation.



## MANA

Whether they call it chi, essence, ki, pneuma, psychic energy, ionized electrolytes or any number of other traditional names, sorcerers can tap into sources of energy that empower them in their performance of magic. Meditating or resting on ley lines, in holy places or even in supercharged chemical baths grants the magician who understands their nature a source of power. Other sorcerers ingest a diet of rare substances believed to invoke potency or engage themselves in strenuous rituals, exhausting daily regimens of practice or hypnotic empowerment. Whatever the individual's methods, she exhibits an energy that helps her work her Art, a force described by some as being akin to breath or spirit, or, in Latin, "Mana."

When performing Path or ritual magic, a sorcerer may expend Mana to lower the difficulty target number. As usual, her difficulty cannot be lowered by more than three; however, Mana may reduce threshold instead, though never below one. Recovering Mana requires the sorcerer to perform her chosen method of recharging and succeed in a Perception + Meditation roll, difficulty 7, with each success restoring one point.

- X You have to get by on your skill alone.
- May store a pool of/expend one Mana
- May store a pool of/expend two Mana
- May store a pool of/expend three Mana
- May store a pool of/expend four Mana
- May store a pool of/expend five Mana

## STATUS

You have recognition within your occult, religious or super-scientific society. This may be due to anything from the circumstances of your birth to remarkable personal achievements. Note that this does not necessarily mean that you are powerful, but you have a reputation amongst others of your kind. This standing means associates listen to you and generally defer — it does not automatically mean that you are well liked and, indeed, may even gain you enemies who are jealous of your fame. The esteem you have gained may not always translate into authority in outside organizations either. Words of wisdom spoken by the Pope seldom move even the poorest shaman. Status may be gained in different groups with points spent separately (i.e. Church Status, Bioengineer Status or UFO Experts) or the character may hope that the Storyteller will rule that it applies to the situation in question. Very high levels of Status may garner some small recognition among mortals, but any real temporal power must be purchased with Influence. The size of the sorcerer's group also defines Status within it. High status for a small group may indicate virtual life and death influence and medium status within a very large group may still mean being unknown outside of your home turf.

- X Who do you think you are?
- Close associates respect you
- You have great influence over your branch of the society and those attached to it

- Others often seek your wisdom, sometimes from far away
- Your reputation extends far and wide, potentially even to other cultures
- The Dalai Lama

## NEW MERITS AND FLAWS

Use of Merits and Flaws is by no means mandatory. In fact, if your group is happy assuming character weaknesses and roleplaying their difficulties and strengths without some magical carrot on a stick, you are potentially better off without them. Liberal use of Merits and Flaws encourages goofy, weak, one-note character concepts and min-maxing munchkin twinks. On the other hand, they make extremely handy tools to customize your character in ways that bend the standard rules yet keep a universal reference point for everyone playing the game. If your Storyteller sees them as tools rather than a pain in the ass, prove her right. Take them in small doses, and make sure you have a strong story motive for doing so. Otherwise, you may just be the straw that broke the camel's back and soured her on their presence in the game at all. Many of the following sample Merits and Flaws are intended to help show the special differences between sorcerers and other denizens of the World of Darkness, but read carefully, some of them may be useful in other venues as well.

### PHYSICAL MERITS AND FLAWS

#### Sterile (1-pt. Merit or Flaw)

Put simply, your sorcerer cannot have children. For those who practice Tantric rituals or require sex as a focus, but do not desire pregnancy or unwanted children, this is a Merit. For those who belong to cultures, strong families or marriages that expect them to have children, this is a Flaw.

#### The Flow of Ki (3-pt. Merit)

Most advanced practitioners of the martial arts spend a lot of time trying to explain that their prowess is not simply a result of skill. Desperately, they seek to explain that their might comes from an understanding of the energy we all possess, the breath of the inner spirit. You understand that lesson in a way that allows you to apply it to physical feats. You may spend Mana (chi, ki, whatever your style calls it) points to reduce the difficulty target number of any die pool for a physical action. The difficulty number may not be reduced lower than two, nor may you reduce it by more than three. Obviously, you must already have the Mana to spend or this Merit is useless.

### SOCIAL MERITS AND FLAWS

#### Faction Favorite (2-pt. Merit)

Awakened mages may be the visionaries who help the Traditions and Conventions build the future, but it is the linear mages who provide the bedrock foundation upon which new recruits, cultural identity, stable Chantries and hopes for the future are actually built. Whether due to a special distinction for conserving the past glories of a Tradition or a solid reputation



as one of the backbones of organizational power, you command respect in your Tradition or Convention. This is important because the worldwide influences of the mighty keystone associations of magicians transcend most of the smaller societies that manage to survive the ages. Modify all social rolls connected to Tradition or Convention Status or decision-making by two points of difficulty in your favor.

#### **Force of Spirit (2-pt. Merit)**

The raw inner force of your soul grants you a certain character that others may find irresistible. Perhaps you glow with an inner light; maybe your beauty seems virtually divine. You may spend Mana points to reduce the difficulty target number of a social roll. No difficulty may be lower than two, and none may be lowered by more than three. Obviously, you must possess Mana points to be able to spend them.

#### **Ritual Congregation (4-pt. Merit)**

Some magicians require large numbers of believers to aid them in creating the resonance and trappings necessary to invoke spells or rituals. Most individuals limited in such a way become adept at manipulating or swaying audiences into helping them, unwittingly or not. You have carefully cultivated a group of at least 100 members who are at least familiar enough with the concepts of your magical style to serve as useful aids in the process. Of course, most of them are expecting something in return, whether it be redemption, social interaction or direct magical benefit.

#### **Mistreated Minority (1-or-more-pt. Flaw)**

In many cultures, some group of people falls outside of what is considered normal and acceptable by the majority. Prejudice and racial hatred are powerful forces that continue to divide and harm mankind throughout the world. You may be homosexual or of a different color of skin or even just speak a different dialect. Whatever the difference, it must be something that causes you penalties in social interaction due to no real fault of your own. The degree of penalty, and thus the number of Flaw points gained, depends upon just how harmful and prevalent the prejudicial behavior of the majority is.

**Storyteller's Note:** Even discussing this sort of Flaw may cause unexpected arguments within your group. If you do not feel that your group is mature enough to explore themes of hatred motivated by race or sexual orientation, then leave them alone. If you do decide to explore it, you will probably learn a lot about yourself and others that you never knew, but make sure everyone goes home happy and still friends. If things get tense, take a break, get some coffee, remind each other that you are all friends and that the reason you are together is because these prejudices are NOT something you feel, just something you know exists. Unfortunately, these sorts of uncomfortable ideas are often exactly what motivate real-life villains.

## **MENTAL MERITS AND FLAWS**

#### **Strength of Psyche (2-pt. Merit)**

Your character has trained her mind to tap into the deep reserves of mystical energy she possesses. Flooded with increased power of thought or perception, her mental faculties are tempo-

rarily increased greatly, and she finds whatever task she undertakes much easier to accomplish. Your sorcerer may channel her mystical energy into mental activities other than magic. You may spend Mana points to reduce the difficulty target number of any die pool for a mental action. The difficulty may not be reduced below 2, nor be reduced by more than three points. Depending upon the use in question, her psyche empowers her perceptive nature, grants her insight into the strange tongue or plunges toward a solution to her puzzle.

#### **Detached (4-pt. Merit)**

Your psychic has the rare ability to view his psychic abilities as separate from his physical existence and can maintain this distance even under adverse conditions. Wound penalties don't affect your use of psychic powers until your character reaches Incapacitated. If he's Incapacitated, then you may spend a Willpower point to use a psychic power at half the normal dice pool (rounded down). This action may be performed only once per scene, after which the character falls unconscious, so choose last-ditch efforts carefully.

#### **Black and White (1-pt. Flaw)**

The world is really a collection of shades of gray, but your character doesn't see it that way. To you, everything is clear as black and white. You think in terms of people being either for or against you, hot or cold, good or evil, easy or impossible, stupid or genius. This closed mindset can cost you dearly in missed opportunities, misunderstandings and under- or overestimation of others. In social situations where your judgmental nature comes to bear, which are more often than you might think, you suffer a one-point penalty to difficulties of rolls. This Flaw is particularly suited to pair with things like Code of Honor and other overly focusing Merits.

#### **Pacifist (5-pt. Flaw)**

Truthfully speaking, this sort of behavior should probably not be considered a Flaw, but as many in society view peace as weakness, it can be a disadvantage. Due to strong religious or moral convictions, you will not harm another being. You may defend yourself with warding magic or deflective effects, and may even engage in peaceful demonstrations and resistance. However, you may not cause damage to anyone. It is important to note that this is a psychological restriction, not a supernatural one. Certainly, it is possible for you to hurt someone accidentally, but you would never do it on purpose. Players taking this Flaw should be prepared to play its difficult restrictions. In most Storytelling games there is likely to be some level of physical conflict that makes playing it seem impossible. Nevertheless, great men from Martin Luther King to Gandhi have practiced pacifism.

## **SUPERNATURAL MERITS AND FLAWS**

#### **Psychic Ritual (2-pt. Merit)**

Your psychic is a true rarity amongst the pure practitioners of the Arts of mental magic. Some realization of the importance of the universe has crept into his consciousness sufficiently that he has even managed to create a ritual that allows him to perform some extended psychic effect. You need to create a ritual, approved of by your Storyteller, for one of the levels of one of your character's psychic Paths. When your character perform

this ritual, you may use the normal rules for rituals and extended magic rules, with minor necessary changes. Obviously, as your psychic does not gain Paradox, the penalty for a botch falls to the Storyteller, greatly increasing the horrific effects of the catastrophic failure. Your roll is limited to no more dice than your psychic's Stamina + Parapsychology. (In this case, you may roll simply your Stamina dice, even if you don't have the Parapsychology Knowledge.)

#### **Style Sleeper (2-pt. Merit)**

Magic only works one way, and your character knows it. When other people try to pull stupid tricks, your sorcerer sees them for what they are, or at least tries. Anytime you witness magic that fits into your character's style, everything is fine; your sorcerer is treated as an Awakened being. Any time she witnesses any magic that falls outside of her style, she counts as a Sleeper. Because this specifically targets your character's enemies while allowing you to merrily continue with your magic as normal, this disbelief in other magic is considered a Merit. There may be times it harms your character, such as when another mage is trying to heal her and she just thinks he cannot do so. More often, however, her incredulity serves as a partial defense against the Arts of others.

#### **Twin Link (4- or 6-pt Merit)**

Akin to the Mage Merit Twin Souls, the psychic shares a constant psychic bond with another person. This gives them the benefit of the Level Two Synergy effect. Additionally, the psychics joined by a Twin Link get +2 to their Empathy score but only with regards to what their twin is feeling. As a 6-pt. Merit, the members of the Twin Link can purchase the power Synergy, in addition to other psychic powers they may have, at a cost of 7 freebie points per dot and 3 experience points per dot to raise. This Synergy power works only on the other member of the Twin Link.

#### **Wild Talent (4-pt. Merit to 4-pt. Flaw)**

Though many psychics lack formal training of their gifts, some lack even the most basic control of their powers. These "wild" psychics tend to have powerful gifts, though the lack of control makes up for the extra power they might have. To determine the level of the Flaw, use the following table. The total Merit or Flaw cannot exceed 4 points.

- +1 For every extra die the character has when using the power.
- 1 The character must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to use the power.
- 2 The character can only consciously use the power defensively. (i.e., A precognitive character can activate her Danger Sense, or a telekinetic can use the power to deflect attacks.)
- 3 The character has no conscious control of the power, but it works more often to the character's benefit than not. (A clairvoyant who has useful clairvoyant dreams.)
- 4 The character's power activates randomly (at least once per game session) and often at inopportune or





embarrassing moments. (The channeler contacts the spirit of an ancient warrior during a fancy dinner party.)

#### **Blood Magic (5-pt. Merit)**

Perhaps you learned magic from a particularly dark cult. Maybe your spirit needs additional energy, beyond your strength of will, to enact magic. Perhaps you foolishly studied under a vampire or from tomes plundered from vampires. Whatever the reason, your sorcerer's use of magic always requires the sacrifice of his own blood. In some cases, it will simply burn away from inside. In others, the magician must cut himself and include it in the ritual. Each use of magic causes an unsoakable level of bashing damage. Furthermore, the Resonance of your magic is likely to be dark, or at the very least, martyred in nature.

#### **Path Natural (5-pt. Merit)**

Your sorcerer is especially talented in the exploration of a single Path of power. He may have a natural inclination toward expressing its nature due to incredible related mundane skills, spiritual might deriving from past lives or a supernatural heritage. He may even have struck holy or unholy bargains for power. During character creation, you should choose one magical Path. In this Path, you pay only three-quarters experience to advance to higher levels or to obtain rituals for the Path chosen.

#### **Struggling Awake (5-pt. Merit)**

For most mages, the act of Awakening is a sudden explosion of realization, regardless of how long the study has taken to get her there. For some, however, the trip to understanding affinitive magic is a bout of glimmering sputters, and this traipsing back and forth across the veil may even happen to sorcerers. A subtle understanding of the broad theories that bind together vast forces of the universe can briefly seem crystal clear and quickly dissolve into a vague sense of loss. In the face of the empty feeling of a deeper understanding, the linear mage once again takes up the reins of power that have been so thoroughly ingrained in her nature, until the glimmer recurs.

Whenever the player tries to call upon his Avatar's struggling magic instead of just practicing his normal Paths and rituals, he must first declare what he is trying to do. The Storyteller then rolls a single die. A result of one is a botch — yes, the Awakening is dangerous — with the most likely result being some episode of Quiet as the sorcerer strives to come to terms with his consciousness. Otherwise, calculate the effect's rating in Arete and Spheres. If the single die roll equals or exceeds this total, then the player rolls normally to cast the effect, using the minimum dice possible — that is, trying to affect minor forces (Forces 2) would require at least a four on the initial single die (two for the Forces, two for the Arete) and would allow the player to roll two dice for an effect. If the single die roll falls short, then the magician probably gets some minor effect in the desired direction but fails to do anything spectacular. All other rules apply as normal to a mage, including suffering the forces of Paradox. Fortunately, specialization also applies: All rolls of 10 garner a free additional roll, and a roll of 10 on the

initial single die grants one automatic success to the magical effect itself.

As one example, Conrad wants to summon an angel to the aid of his Red Monk sorcerer, but does not have the necessary Paths or rituals. His pedagogue of an Avatar pushes him to try anyway. Jess rolls a die and gets a 10, lucky for Conrad. Merely calling a spirit is a Level Two Spirit effect and therefore Conrad's character gets to roll an Arete of two (the minimum required) for the effect. The ten on the Struggling Awake Merit roll does grant him one automatic success, however. Rolling with an Arete of two Conrad proves exceptionally lucky scoring a success and a 10, allowing him to roll again, which grants him another success for a total of four. Jess rules that a lesser angel hears and decides to make an appearance. Unfortunately for Conrad, this is definitely vulgar, and there is a sleeper present (surprise), so his Red Monk garners three Paradox points. "The Lord is meant to move in secret," he laments to himself. If the die rolled a mere two, Conrad's sorcerer would have had but one Arete and one level of Spirit available, and he would be potentially granted a vision of the local spirit realms and any angels that might be there. In desperate trouble, he might soon find himself joining them.

#### **Totem (5-pt. Merit)**

A powerful spirit has taken a special interest in you. This is probably part of your shamanic path, but it is possible that the spirits have simply chosen you for some higher purpose. Maybe you are somehow related to one of the Changing Breeds. The spirit acts as a mentor, and all of the normal rules for mentors apply, allowing the sorcerer to learn Abilities or Paths related to the nature of the spirit more easily. You should come to an agreement with your Storyteller as to a type of spirit that might adopt your sorcerer for what he can offer the natural world. Essentially, the spirit acts like any other mentor except that the wisdom it has to offer are mystical and cosmological beyond the ken of most masters. Unfortunately, its knowledge of the real world, outside of whatever its realm of dominion might be, is extremely limited, and it probably believes firmly in the concept of chiminage. (Chiminage is the idea that service between the material and the spiritual is the expected way that things work.) This attitude might be present in a mortal mentor, but it is sure to exist in a Totem.

A more comprehensive version of this Merit (and of shamanic principles in general) can be found in *The Spirit Ways*.

#### **Psychic Feedback (1-, 2- or 6-pt Flaw)**

While the psychic is gifted with potent powers, the use of the talent tires him. Some psychics even experience minor cerebral hemorrhages from the strain of using the power. As a 1 point Flaw, the character experiences headaches or dizziness from each use of the power. Roll Stamina + Meditation (difficulty 7) or experience a round of pain or disorientation. All actions while in this state are at +2 to the difficulty number. As a 2 point Flaw, the psychic experiences minor long-term pain

from use of the power. You should roll Intelligence (difficulty 6) to “soak” the power’s activation successes, which are scored as bashing damage. As a 6 point Flaw, the psychic takes this as lethal damage, though a “mental soak” is still allowed.

**Unsettling Effect (1- or 3- pt. Flaw)**

Though many psychic powers are completely intangible and unnoticeable, something about your character’s psychic phenomena causes others to recognize that there’s something *weird* going on. For one point, you have a single intangible power (like Telepathy or Psychometry) that generates an unsettling effect — perhaps your subjects can feel your character paging through their minds or everyone around the psychic feels a welter of harmless but eerie emotions when she touches a psychically-charged object. For three points, *all* of your intangible powers (including ones that you learn later) have some sort of unsettling effect like this. This is *in addition* to any Resonance that your character may have.

**Big Mouth (2-pt. Flaw)**

You talk too much, and it gets you in to trouble. You tend to blurt out painful truths at inopportune times. At least once per high-tension social scene, you must speak your mind. You can avoid the pain and embarrassment this costs by spending 1 Willpower point. This Flaw is particularly dangerous for information-based psychics, who tend to blurt out other people’s secrets as readily as their own.

**Psi Focus (3- or 5-pt. Flaw)**

Perhaps your psychic needs his lucky crystals to properly heal the sick. Possibly, his cyberkinetic powers require him to mime the action he wishes the machine to perform. Maybe his telekinesis only works on a hubcap he found one afternoon.

Either way, he requires some form of crutch for his psychic powers to work. For 3 points, the character must gesture or speak some catch phrase or incantation for the power to work. For 4 points, the power requires a physical focus to work (crystals, a hypnotist’s pocket watch, a harmonica). For 5 points, the power only works with a specific focus, akin to a mage’s unique focus. (See pages 202-203 of *Mage Revised*).

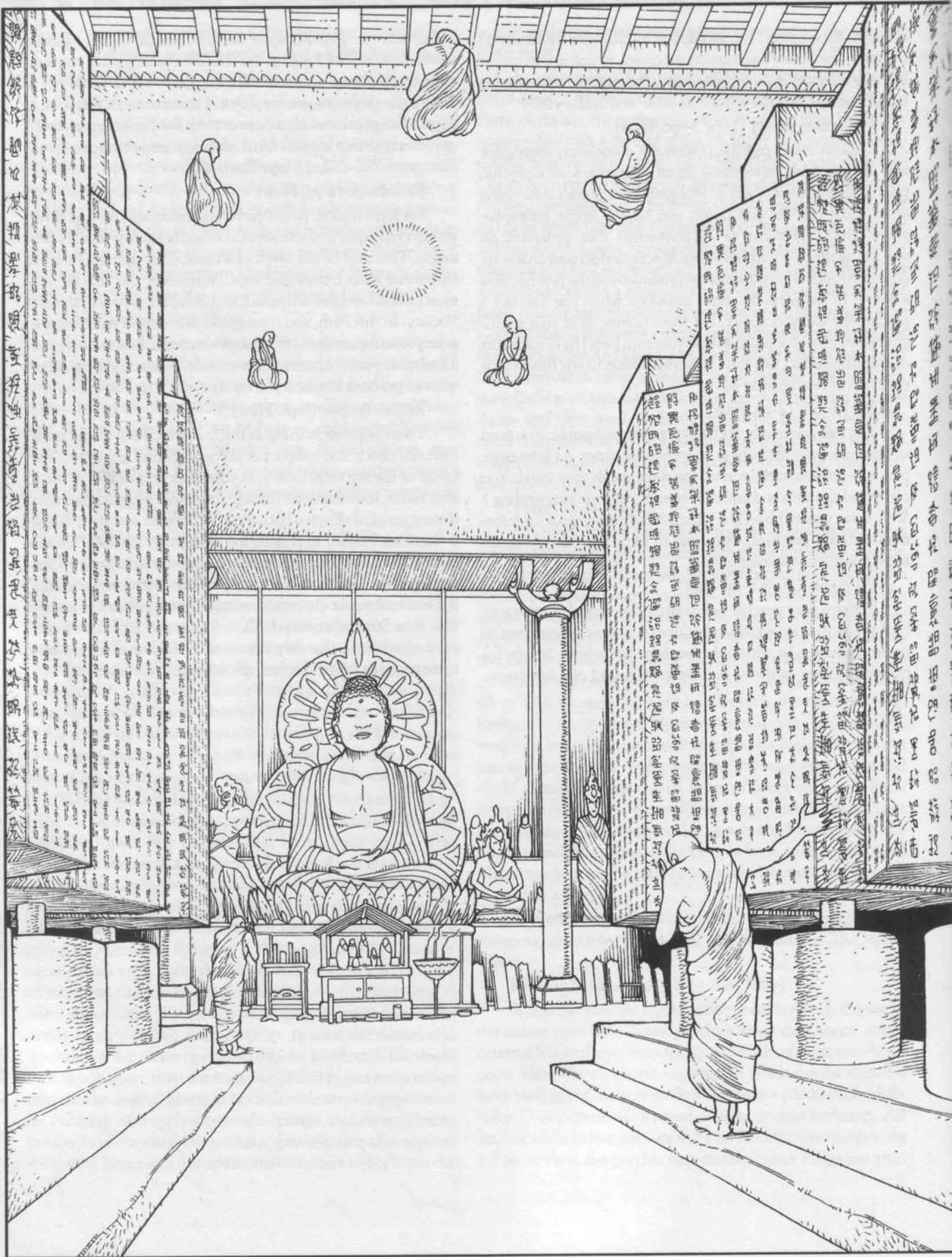
**Path Inept (5-pt. Flaw)**

For some reason, your sorcerer is considerably limited in his ability to advance in the study of a certain branch of your chosen magic. This may be the result of a curse, poor training or even emotional scars from childhood. Whatever the reason, you must choose a single Path from that available to your character’s Society. In this Path, you must spend one quarter more experience points for any gain of Path level or rituals. Be sure to choose a Path that your character plans to study — your Storyteller has ways to get back at you if you try to avoid your Flaw.

**Ritual Sleeper (5-pt. Flaw)**

There is no such thing as the quick fix. Real magic takes time and effort. You cannot just wave your hand and expect the forces of the universe to leap at your beck and call — at least, that’s what your character thinks. You do not have access to any instant magical effects whatsoever. All of your sorcerer’s magic is therefore limited to rituals. Even normally “instant” effects require some ritual; your sorcerer must devise rituals to perform the equivalents of the fast effects that other sorcerers perform. If the rules for your character’s magical society already consider this, your Storyteller may disallow this option for Flaws. Ironically, this means that any time your character witnesses any instantaneous magical effect, she is treated as a Sleeper.





# CHAPTER FOUR: PATHS AND RITUALS



The arcane arts follow specific rules and forms that those with the necessary talent and dedication may exploit. The sorcerer learns the laws that govern powers beyond nature, whether through extensions of science or progressions into the supernatural. For each route to power there is a Path. Be it a mythic thread hidden in legend — the home remedies passed down in a family or the 100-year-old formula of a secret society — or a highly-specialized branch of science,

each Path exerts influence over a power beyond the reach of normal, unaided humans.

A sorcerer's study of Paths opens the door to various forms of magical practice. Each Path offers command over one aspect of nature or supernature. Though each Path has limits — one's understanding of the arcane principles of fire does not necessarily translate into a mastery of transportation — the diligent student carefully takes step after step until, hopefully, complete dominion over a given area of study is achieved. Other magicians study many Paths in dilettante-like fashion, gathering a smattering of arcane knowledge over several mystical or super-scientific principles — just enough to perform curious and impressive feats but far from the power wielded by a master sorcerer.

While each Path breaks down the components to command and control a specific discipline of study, the Paths

themselves give only the most general instruction. A sorcerer's knowledge of Paths opens the door to true study but only provides the tools. True, a sorcerer can perform many tasks with a few steps along a Path, but there is a difference between *controlling* something's nature and *understanding* its nature. As a sorcerer gathers experience, he broadens his knowledge of the Path with rituals. By means of rituals, the sorcerer applies the Path's principles to greater effects. Perhaps the scientist undertakes a long laboratory process designed to distill out the pure form of an element, or a magician reinforces his Path skills with lengthy chants and paeans. In either case, the ritual represents a strength born of comprehension, the means to turn simpler Paths to more complex and spectacular ends.

## THE STRUCTURE OF PATHS

The Paths of magic and science are not dependent on the tools the sorcerer uses or the studies that the sorcerer undertakes. Be it a technosorcerer using a teleportation apparatus or a student of arcane magics transported by a spirit of wind, both use the Path of Conveyance, although they have very different means of implementation.

Paths are broken down into two different parts: spells (also referred to as effects) and rituals. Spells can be cast quickly and can be modified and customized easily to allow for changing environments and situations. Rituals are much longer, more



formalized and often more powerful castings that can work permanent changes. Spells and rituals are divided up into six levels; only the first five are available during character generation (and, in all fairness, Storytellers should restrict newly generated sorcerers to no more than the third level of experience in any given Path).

## ASPECTS

Some spells have aspects (or effect components), parts of the spell that the sorcerer must specify prior to casting. When a spell is cast, the player determines how much he wants to emphasize each aspect, by according dots from the Path rating into the various aspects. In essence, a sorcerer must divide up successes among various aspects of the spell, just like a mage — affecting multiple people requires several successes, extending the duration requires extra successes and so on. *The default success for a Path assumes casting the spell on one target for the Path's usual specified duration.* Anything beyond this requires extra successes placed in the aspects, to gain additional targets, longer duration, wider area, stronger effect and so on. Each Path lists several aspect possibilities. These aspects show the typical limits of the Path at that level of casting — if your sorcerer has three dots in a Path, then the typical spell hits the third aspect level at best. If you wish, you can cast a spell with a lower aspect; since you use the highest aspect to determine difficulty, this means that a sorcerer with a high level in a Path can cast lower-level effects more easily. Each aspect that you invoke *beyond the first level* costs one success — so many Paths require two or three successes to affect anyone other than the caster for more than a moment. Conversely, if you score enough successes, your Storyteller may allow you to pick a higher level aspect: If you manage to *double* your required successes, you can push one aspect a level above your normal limit! Thus, on a really good roll, your sorcerer might cast a spell with a much stronger effect or longer duration than normal.

## ROLLS

Almost all spells and rituals require an Attribute + Ability roll. Often, this is Intelligence + Occult (Intelligence + Science or Intelligence + Technology for those practicing extraordinary science or technosorcery), but some Paths have different requirements (see each Path for details).

## DIFFICULTY

Effects have a base difficulty of (4 + level of the path used, or the highest desired aspect if an aspected effect). Some effects will have modifiers to this base level of difficulty; these modifiers are detailed in the text for each Path.

## TIME

Effects normally take one turn per level of the effect (or the highest aspect of the effect) to cast, unless noted otherwise. Rituals take a minimum of 10 minutes and normally take much longer; most rituals have a description indicating their time component.

## EXTENDED ROLLS

If a spell needs more successes than the sorcerer thinks he can get in a single period of casting, he can try for an extended

## IGNORING ASPECTS

The new system of aspects for spells and rituals adds flexibility and detail to Sorcery, but at the cost of some simplicity. If Storytellers prefer, they can easily ignore the aspects and merely set all aspect ratings to equal the dots of knowledge the sorcerer has in the Path or that he is using. So, for instance, if a sorcerer has three dots in Healing, then any healing he does will cure one level of bashing damage, relieve fairly major pains, cure any disease of Toxin Rating 2 or lower and cause lethal damage to heal 25 percent faster than normal, with a difficulty of 7. When choosing to ignore aspects, the Storyteller will have to adjudicate how many successes are necessary for an effect to work; generally, however, a single success will allow for a relatively simple effect to come off, while 3 successes will ensure that most spells will work without difficulty.

Note that the psychic phenomena in Chapter Five do not use aspects; they're assumed to be simpler in effect, generally because they're easier to perform. You can easily convert psychic phenomena to use aspects if you want, though this can make them more powerful — at the cost of additional successes the player could specify a much larger area or effect than normal.

roll, just as with most skill checks. Each additional roll adds time equal to the amount already spent in casting. For example, if Father Michael had determined that there was little chance of him actually making the blessing work, he could try for an extended roll. Since the highest aspect is 3 dots, the first die roll of the casting will take 3 turns. The second die roll will also take 3 turns, the third die roll will take 6 turns to complete, the fourth 12, etc. As with all extended task checks, a failure on a die roll simply means no successes are gathered, but a botch instantly kills the spell, and any chance of success.

## FAILURE

If a sorcerer fails to generate enough successes, the spell fizzles. Most such failures merely result in the energy being wasted, with only minor inconveniences or side effects (indeed, for most simple effects, failure has no further results).

## BOTCHES

As sorcerers don't tug and pull at the Tellurian with the same dynamic force that Awakened mages exert, they don't suffer the burning backlash of Paradox. On the other hand, a sorcerer *does* still do magic, and channeling such forces is not without inherent risk. When a sorcerer botches, those risks come home.

Typically, a botch results in some sort of chaotic misfire or horrid backlash from a spell. The exact effects depend upon the Path in question and the use in particular. Most Path descriptions include ideas for various botch possibilities. The Storyteller should tailor the results of the botch to the Path's power level, the desires of the sorcerer and the style of magic used. For instance, a machine designed to harness metaphysical energy is far more likely to explode than a flying carpet.

The Paradox rules (p. 194 of *Mage Revised*) give some ideas for magical botches. Of course, sorcerers don't usually have matters end as badly. In general, a sorcerous botch doesn't automatically inflict damage and almost never results in a manifestation of a spirit, realm or Quiet. Usually, the botch simply means that the spell fires off an effect completely out of the sorcerer's control and against his desire. There are exceptions, though! Sometimes spirits *do* show up to chastise errant sorcerers, and sometimes the magicians find themselves shunted to strange realms or struck insane. It's all part of the price of power....

## RITUALS

Many Paths have rituals associated with them (and some Paths can only be used as rituals, such as Enchantment and Alchemy). Rituals are collections of precise mystical formulas that take time and effort, and usually some small expense, to bring about but have effects that are greater than a quick spell. Rituals normally take longer to work than a spell or effect, but their power can be much greater — often greater than that which a student of the Path would normally be able to summon at their current level of experience.

Most rituals require a basic level of knowledge about an associated Path; those that do not can be learned by anyone, even those who have not studied the Path (an example of this is Counterspells, which are really just a set of rituals and spells that are common knowledge to all Paths). This knowledge requirement is indicated by the dot rating of the ritual; if a ritual has a rating in dots, you must have at least that many dots in the Path to learn it. All rituals cost 3 points to learn; finding someone to teach one to your character, or the grimoires necessary, is always another matter... many of these rituals are known only as rumor or legend. In some exceptional cases, even the totally uninitiated can use rituals, casting them by rote out of a grimoire... or they can try! Botches in these cases are usually incredibly bad.

## CREATING RITUALS

Sorcerers can create new rituals, under certain special circumstances. They might happen upon a new alchemical formula, for example, or they may perform a given extended casting of a spell so many times that they formalize the process. Storytellers may also wish to create their own rituals for inclusion in their games. The guidelines here are just that, guidelines; as always, let your own judgment as Storyteller and the needs of your chronicle be your guides.

That said, typically, a ritual allows a spell to have a greater duration, power or area of effect than a normal spell will allow, at the cost of a much greater casting time (most rituals take at least 10 minutes to cast, and many take hours or even days). Some rituals will give the sorcerer access to more ability than he would normally have (usually equal to an additional dot in the Path; so a Level Three ritual might let the wizard cast an effect that would normally need Level Four in the Path). In the case of Paths with aspects, a ritual might allow the sorcerer to cast an effect created with twice the normal amount of aspected suc-

cess, or might give access to powers that are related to the Path, but not a normal aspect of the Path.

The creator must have knowledge in the Path at least one dot higher than that needed to learn the ritual (especially if the ritual allows the sorcerer using it to exceed his normal knowledge). He must also spend some months in research, working on perfecting the new ritual (during which time he will cast the ritual many, many times and likely become thoroughly sick of it before he is done). Once all this is accomplished, roll Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9). You must achieve at least 3 successes for the sorcerer to successfully create a ritual that will actually be useful and comprehensible to others; otherwise, it's back to the drawing board. At the Storyteller's discretion, an astounding success (6+ successes) may result in a ritual that is exceptional in some way; it may be easier to learn (lowered Path knowledge), have additional (beneficial) effects or take less power or time to cast. A botch might mean that the work is simply wasted, that the final test ritual backfires (injuring the creator) or that the ritual works, but has some unexpected (and undesirable) side effect.

## PATHS AND STYLES

Though not technically a "game mechanic," a sorcerer's style is as important as any other aspect of practicing a Path. Each sorcerer learned to do magic in a specific, linear fashion, and that form always colors the sorcerer's technique, even if the character later learns new methods. The members of the Ancient Order of Aeon Rites, for instance, base much of their work on Pythagorean numerology and Enochian rituals; practicing Paths through such means seems very different from a wise woman's use of herbs and songs or an extraordinary scientist's high-tech tools and labs.

The primary division is whether the character is a mythic sorcerer or an extraordinary scientist. The former relies upon magical techniques and builds Paths through supernatural correspondences, tables, rituals, prayers, chants or similar methods. The latter uses extremely advanced scientific theories, specialized tools, delicate procedures and specially-prepared research environments. To the uneducated observer, the advanced research lab is just as arcane as the magician's library, and the maddeningly complex 12 circles of ritual summoning are just as indecipherable as a scientist's tensor calculations relating to space-time motion. Both use "magic," but one proceeds from the mystical while the other proceeds from the rational. The two rarely work together, given the dichotomy between Traditions and Technocrats. (Technically, psychics could be considered a third style, but their phenomena have special rules detailed in Chapter Five and are typically not included in the usual groups of sorcery.)

Once the base type of style is established, look into the sorcerer's style in a more personal fashion. Does the mystic rely upon runes, charms, special words of power or elaborate dances? Does the scientist study pharmacology, high-energy physics or bionics? See Chapter Two for several societies that give examples of styles.



# ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

## FAST CASTING

In a crisis, a sorcerer can choose to trade difficulty for speed — by cutting corners and leaving out controls, the sorcerer is able to get a spell done more quickly, although the spell is much more difficult to control. For every turn you shave off the casting time for the effect, add a +1 to the difficulty (maximum 9; additional modifiers create a threshold, as in *Mage Revised* p. 62). Spells cast this way always require a Willpower point, above and beyond their normal costs.

## HANGING SPELLS

Sorcerers have long realized that while their spells and rituals can produce some impressive results, they are not normally fast working. Some sorcerers dealt with this problem by studying the martial arts as well as the mystical ones. Others hired guards to protect them or attempted to make themselves so indispensable to their community that none would want to visit violence upon them. Some, instead, learned new ways of casting spells and rituals so that the sorcerer could carry them, nearly but not quite activated, until they were needed. These spells are commonly referred to as being “hung” or stored by the sorcerers who practice this art.

To hang a spell for later casting, the sorcerer casts the spell as per normal but pays one Willpower immediately and adds one to the difficulty. The player then marks down the name of the spell and the number of successes scored. The sorcerer may then release the spell at any time (so long as the sorcerer would normally be able to cast a spell — an unconscious magician can't release a held spell). Releasing a spell takes one turn; at that time, the player must pay the normal casting cost for the spell or ritual and allocate successes on the spell's aspects, if any.

A hung spell is a constant distraction to the sorcerer; it requires a small level of semi-constant attention, even when sleeping, that is a persistent drain on the sorcerer's focus. The sorcerer adds +1 to all mental and social tasks while she is carrying a hung spell. This penalty increases by an additional +1 for every additional two spells the sorcerer is carrying (+2 at three spells, +3 at five spells, etc.).

Note that Awakened mages tend to “hang” spells by using a Time effect in conjunction with the regular effect, and a mage's “hung” spell usually only counts against additional magic, not against other tasks. Depending upon how flexible you want to make sorcerers, you could allow a sorcerer to hang spells with only a concentration penalty to additional magic, or you might have an entire Path devoted to hanging spells (in which case the sorcerer would need a Path rating for Spell Hanging equal to the Path rating of the spell stored).

## TRADING SKILL FOR POWER

Experienced sorcerers can reduce or even eliminate the high price most Paths charge in Willpower. A sorcerer with two more dots in a Path than the minimum required for a desired effect may choose to cast the spell at the higher difficulty and reduce the cost in Willpower by one.

## MESSING WITH THE VARIABLES

By default, sorcery is a mysterious, meticulous art that takes time to build up, time to work and, in return, has fairly reliable set effects. Some Storytellers, however, want a faster-moving system for sorcery or one that is easier to work and more potent. Conversely, other Storytellers want to make sorcery harder to work, especially in any kind of hurry and much less reliable. Here are some suggestions for each. Usually, adjusting only one of these variables will have the effect you want; modifying all of them will make for a very different magic system.

### DIFFICULTY

Reducing the difficulty roll to 3 + level of effect brings sorcery on a par with a vampire's blood magic and makes sorcerers a little more competitive with other supernatural creatures. Increasing it to 5 + level of effect makes it much more difficult to pull off large effects of any kind.

### TIME

Reducing the time cost to 1 turn per 2 levels of effect makes small effects very easy to use and large ones feasible even in combat. Doubling or tripling the time cost makes effects strictly non-combat (since most fights will be long over by the time the casting is done). If this option is taken, you may want to eliminate the concept of Fast Casting altogether.

### WILLPOWER

Many effects cost Willpower to use; reducing or eliminating these costs make sorcerers able to carry on their activities for a much longer period of time (possibly too long). Increasing the Willpower costs makes spell casting a much more unusual activity, something to be done only when all other chances have been used up.

### RESTRICTING KNOWLEDGE

Some of the higher levels of Path knowledge can wreak some pretty impressive effects. Even with Storyteller prerogative and the need to work behind the scenes for the most part, there may be levels of a Path (or entire Paths) that the Storyteller simply doesn't want her players to have access to. This is fine; not every Path is appropriate for every game, and some games will stress some Paths above others. Storytellers should therefore feel free to restrict, or even disallow, any and all Paths from unlimited advancement or charge extra experience costs (or other, darker, costs) for some Paths.

*Example: Danielle is a master Shapeshifter, with four dots in the Path. She decides she would rather be a redhead, and works a spell to change her hair color and adjust her skin and eye color slightly to match. Normally, this would cost 1 Willpower, require*

•• in the Path (to effect multiple small changes at once) and have a difficulty of 6. She decides that she'd rather not deal with the cost, casts the spell at her highest difficulty (8) and forgoes the cost in Willpower.

## WILLPOWER AND QUINTESSENCE

Spending a point of Willpower (in addition to whatever costs the spell normally incurs) gives the sorcerer one automatic success, in addition to those rolled on the dice. Raw Quintessence is typically useless to a sorcerer; she literally does not know it is present and cannot interact with it in any meaningful fashion. A particularly potent bit of Tass might be of use to the adept sorcerer if she uses it in some appropriate fashion: ingesting a bit of faerie food, burning the remnants of an archmage's staff in a ritual fire, etc. Normally, this will reduce the difficulty of a sorcerer's task by 1 or 2. Most sorcerers stick with a specialized form of Tass or Quintessence according to their version of magic — a sorcerer used to chi energy will store and concentrate only that sort of power (see also the Mana Background, p. 53).

## COMBINING PATHS AND SPELLS

Spells from disparate Paths cannot be combined for additional effects: Each spell is a separate entity, and the knowledge of one Path does not easily mesh with that of other Paths. A series of spells could be linked together (using Conjunction to summon a weapon, then the Hellblade ritual to set it on fire immediately), but both spells must be enacted separately. Alternately, a sorcerer might be able to fashion a ritual that relies upon the knowledge of multiple Paths or hang one spell in order to cause it to affect a later spell, but these complexities are in the Storyteller's hands. Most sorcerers should be restricted to the limits of each individual Path. By definition, such Paths are linear magics, not the affinitive, flexible power of the Awakened Spheres.

## TEAMWORK

Sometimes, you can only get by with a little help from your friends. In order for two or more sorcerers to cooperate on a spell, they must both have the same Path (a master Conjuror is of little help to the Healer trying to cure a cancer patient). One sorcerer (usually the most skilled) is chosen as the prime caster, makes all rolls for the spell and determines how any aspects are set. Note that, generally, sorcerers can only cooperate if they have roughly compatible practices. A magician from the Ancient Order of Aeon Rites, used to using precise Pythagorean formulae, may not have any reference point to combine her spells with a psychic's powers or a techno-shaman's spirit machinery.

Each assistant rolls her magic check as well, to see if she succeeds in helping the lead spellcaster. Two sorcerers can operate together without a problem (aside from the clash of personalities, magical styles, foci, agendas...); each additional sorcerer adds one turn to the casting time for the spell. Each successful assistant reduces the difficulty of the leader's magic roll by one, to a minimum difficulty of 3.

Failure can carry a heavy price. If none of the assistants succeed at their magic checks, there is no additional problem, but if any assistant botches, add 2 to the prime caster's difficulty (anything above 9 adds thresholds, as usual). If the leader of the spell botches, any complications gathered fall not only on the leader, but on the whole team. This can be very unpleasant when performing major rituals or Summonings....

## COUNTERSPELLS AND UNWEAVING

Any sorcerer who does more than dabble in the Arts will learn at least some basic countermagic, if only so that they can try and undo the messes they inevitably create while learning. There are as many different forms of countermagic as there are spells; in plain terms, however, they are divided into two basic types: Counterspells and Unweaving.

Counterspells are cast at an incoming spell or effect and serve to blunt or dispel it before it can take effect. Roll Wits + Occult (difficulty 8); each success you score cancels one of the opponent's successes. If the opponent ends up without enough successes for the spell to go off, then it fails (but she still loses whatever costs she paid, be it blood, Quintessence, Willpower or whatever). You can spend Willpower to aid a Counterspell, but you must score at least one natural success for the Counterspell to work at all.

Unweaving is the art of disassembling another spell caster's effect. The sorcerer must have knowledge of the Path that was used to create the effect in the first place (if trying to unweave an effect not based on sorcery, such as Thaumaturgy, Sphere magic or the like, use the Path most applicable). If your character has at least one dot in the Path (or a related one) being used, roll Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 8), using the Extended Rolls rules (see above). You must score at least as many successes as the original caster scored to unweave the spell; otherwise, it may be weakened, but it will remain. Long standing Enchantments and those based on Thaumaturgy or Sphere magic can take more effort to unweave: In the case of very ancient, very powerful Enchantments, sometimes as many as 15 or even 20 successes might be needed (time for some teamwork).

Spells cast by sorcerers (or others) that are more knowledgeable than the unweaver are significantly more difficult to undo. For every two levels of difference between the unweaver's level in a Path and the original caster's level, an additional success is needed. Thus, if you have no knowledge of the Path of Hellfire and your opponent has four dots with 6 successes on an effect, you would need 3 successes in order to cancel the first success and 8 to completely wipe out the spell.

Counterspells and Unweaving work against sorcery and Sphere magic (and, if the Storyteller wishes, against the mystic powers of vampiric magic, faerie glamour and the like). There are also specialized versions of Counterspells and Unweaving designed to work against spirit powers (such as spirit Charms, ghostly manifestations and similar otherworldly occurrences). These must be bought separately. Each group of countermagic costs 3 freebie or experience points, so buying a full set of countermagics costs 12 points. For a sorcerer more interested in staying alive than in dealing damage, it's an investment well worth the cost.



## STORYTELLER'S PREROGATIVE

Sorcery is an imprecise and mysterious Art that tries to blend into the shadows whenever it can. With the powers of knowledge, will and desperation behind them, sorcerers can perform mighty feats, but they cannot move mountains, raise the long dead or blast elder vampires into dust. If a sorcerer attempts some magic that obviously flaunts reality (blasting police officers into flinders with Hellfire in the middle of a prison or making the Statue of Liberty walk down Broadway) without some seriously good explanations, the Storyteller is perfectly within his prerogative to simply say "That fails utterly," no matter how many successes the sorcerer generates or how much Willpower the player spends. Some things are simply impossible for a sorcerer.

While mages have the risk of Paradox when performing impossible feats in public, a sorcerer tends to risk outright failure. If

a sorcerer attempts an obviously impossible feat in public and rolls a failure, the result is treated as a botch. (This does not apply if the Storyteller rules a failure with no roll.) So, although a sorcerer may not be carted off by a Paradox spirit, he will still suffer the consequences of his hubris, and his magic will still turn the universe against him. Just as the sorcerer's power is more limited in some ways than an Awakened mage's, so too are the consequences for failure *usually* less severe. *Usually*. In short, a sorcerer doesn't have the power to fling around disaster-free magical effects in public any more than a mage does, but at least he's less likely to explode.

**Storytellers Note:** This should not be thought of as a loophole with which to dick your players at every turn — or even just because what they are trying to do will mess with what you want to have happen. It is merely intended to reflect the limitations a sorcerer works under, while discouraging those who try to abuse the systems presented.

## THE MANY PATHS



### ALCHEMY

Alchemy is the science, art and study of the transformation of the base and profane into the pure and the sacred. At its heart are the disciplines of the Hermetic student, the holy words of the Kabbalah and the Koran, mystic secrets from Asia and China and an inherent assumption in the perfectibility of all things — often tied up with a healthy dose of Christian beliefs and heresies. Although thought by many to be Western magic and to date from the Renaissance, its ties and history trace themselves throughout Asia Minor and Europe, and even to China, where it is known as Tan, is closely tied with the Wu Keng and dates back at least 2,000 years.

The alchemist believes that all things in nature can be transformed, or purified, into a higher essence. At its most basic, Alchemy is the pursuit of the Philosopher's Stone (which, depending on the alchemist you listen to, is either a tincture [usually red], a glowing stone of beauty, a powder, a solvent, a waxy substance or some other form), which can transform lead into gold (from the basest metal to the highest), grant immortality, raise the dead and perform a host of other miraculous deeds (exactly which deeds are, again, rather hard to pin down).

An alchemist could spend a lifetime trying to separate truth from the legends, lies and myths that are wrapped up in alchemical lore and still not get very far (especially because in a practice that wanders the line between art and science, one person's lie is another's solid truth). So most alchemists don't try, instead spending their lives experimenting and analyzing what has worked for them, painstakingly measuring the results of each test for any new insight or path forward on the way to their Philosopher's Stone or spend years apprenticed to another, more knowledgeable alchemist, learning his craft by rote. A few recognize the underpinning truth of alchemy: The process of purification leads inevitably to the purification of humanity, the pursuit of spiritual perfection.

### ALCHEMY, HERBALISM OR ADVANCED CHEMISTRY?

So which is it? Well, all three, actually. Depending on the sorcerer and what belief structure she has, she may study any of them or some strange mixture of all three! Alchemy as a Path simply represents any number of material transformative skills that result in elixirs useful as potions, salves or unguents.

Herbalism and Brewing is the art of using the natural properties of various plant and animal parts (ranging from St. John's Wort and dried bear gonads to even more exotic ingredients) to enhance the natural processes of the human body. In so doing, the herbalist can also induce effects that may seem magical to others but are (in the herbalist's eyes) merely examples of what the human body can do when properly motivated and reinforced with the power of nature.

Advanced Chemistry is a science, and its practitioners don't even think of it as being magic at all (although some of its effects, they admit, may seem magical if you don't understand the science behind them). Advanced Chemistry is similar to the more mundane chemistry studied in high school labs around the world but is more impressive in its application thanks to the advanced understandings that are its foundations. Some Advanced Chemistry relies on chemical formulae and processes as yet undiscovered by more mundane scientists or on new and unique implementations of already existing knowledge, while other advances require the use of basic nanotechnology and DNA/RNA resequencing.

### SYSTEM

**Roll:** Intelligence + Alchemy (Alchemical Procedures)  
Intelligence + Herbalism (Herbalism Procedures)  
Intelligence + Science (Advanced Chemistry Procedures)

**Cost:** One Willpower per operation  
**Modifiers:** -1 difficulty if ritual is known  
**Time:** Default is one day per level of effect. For each dot of knowledge the alchemist has that exceeds the level of the effect, reduce this by one day (So an alchemist with four dots of Alchemy can do a Level Two operation in a few hours). Rarely less than an hour.  
**Duration:** Varies, but normally one scene

Each dot in this Path represents an overall knowledge of the chosen specialization (Advanced Chemistry, Alchemy or Herbalism); more dots indicate that the sorcerer can make more advanced or difficult compounds with greater effects. The rituals are examples and can be undertaken by anyone with the appropriate knowledge (most rituals have a counterpart in the other branches of study; an alchemist's Dust of Revealing the Unseen is a technosorcerer's Radioactive Tracking Powder or Etheric Interference Detection Gas).

An alchemist may spend one experience point (or one freebie point during character creation) to master a particular ritual. This gives the caster -1 difficulty on all rolls for that ritual, and lets him use it as if he had one more level of Alchemy when determining the brewing/casting time.

## EFFECTS

Note that Alchemy does not have "aspects" as such. The caster need only score basic success to make a given elixir as listed below. However, the elixir may lose its potency or work with only partial strength if the player does not score three or more successes.

- The alchemist can create compounds and substances that are simply more advanced and potent versions of chemicals that already exist. These compounds don't appear magical in any way. Painkillers, soporifics, poisons and glues are common examples.

- More advanced versions of what is available already with one dot. Some of these substances might allow the imbiber to exceed his normal physical limits or to gain access to more mystical senses, in dreams or hallucinations. You can raise one attribute by one dot (up to the normal maximum of five dots) for up to a scene.

- You can make substances that enhance their target to superhuman levels or create materials that exceed normal limitations (supernaturally strong alloys, etc.). Some of these substances can temporarily invest their imbiber with some low-level psychic ability (see Chapter Five) for a limited period of time (no more than one hour or so).

- You can create substances that will enhance Attributes by up to two dots for a scene (one dot if affecting multiple Attributes), even beyond normal human maximums, or minor items with some potent effect.

- With this level of knowledge, you can duplicate the powers of supernatural creatures, including Gifts, Disciplines and other abilities of up to the third level. You can also duplicate the innate powers of those creatures (the powers of the fae, wraiths and the imbued, cannot be duplicated). These potions will normally require some sample from the being in question (Vitae, powdered

dragon fang, hair from a werewolf, etc.) or extended close up and personal study of the subject (this is usually only appropriate for students of Advanced Chemistry and may still require tissue samples). Such concoctions often have nasty side effects as well (the more powerful the Gift or Discipline, the more pronounced the side effects).

- The pinnacle of alchemical tradition; transmutation of materials from one form to another, immortality regimens, the Philosopher's Stone. In theory an alchemist of this level might even be able to concoct a potion that causes Awakening, transformation into a vampire, mummification or true immortality.

## SAMPLE ALCHEMIST RITUALS

- A powder that, when mixed with alcohol, induces slumber almost immediately. The target must roll Stamina (difficulty 8) or spend a point of Willpower to stay conscious; he must remake this attempt (at a -1 to Difficulty each time) every round until he succumbs or the drug no longer has a chance of success. Unconsciousness lasts for (10 - Stamina) hours, during which they cannot be roused. Vampires are almost immune to this drug (+2 to Stamina, add Fortitude, and effects, if they succumb, last 10 - (Stamina + Fortitude) minutes), but werewolves in their "normal" form (Homid or Lupus) are susceptible (+2 to the roll).

- A pill that removes all side effects from a minor cold or flu for 24 hours when taken and reduces the recovery time for the illness to one half.

- A form of prophecy-bearing super-LSD. When ingested, the user will be able to see things that were not previously obvious to him or will be granted a vision of the future. These messages will always be cloaked in symbolism and analogy, but will be correct... to the limits of the user's understanding.

- A potion that doubles the user's running speed for one scene. After using this potion, the user must make a Stamina check (difficulty 6) or be totally out of breath and shaky (-2 on all physical die rolls) for the next hour.

- A metal alloy that is lighter and stronger than titanium (but easier to work), retains an edge almost forever and stays more resilient than the finest blade. Armor produced with this alloy gets an extra dot of bashing and lethal soak, and melee weapons made of it do one more die of damage and are -1 difficulty to hit with (due to their light weight and fine balance).

- A fine metallic dust that reveals hidden, disguised or invisible things for what they truly are or disrupts illusions.

- A chemical compound that raises the user's Physical Attributes for (Stamina +3) hours. During this time, the user will be very hungry, due to the excess strain being placed on her metabolism. This chemical may raise user Attributes to 6 dots or higher.

- A regimen of drugs and potions that extends the user's life (though not indefinitely). While on the regimen, the user ages at the rate of one month for every year. If the regimen is halted, these years come back upon the user at the



rate of one month per day, until the regimen is started back up or the user dies of old age.

..... A compound that werewolves find anathema. When spread on the skin, no werewolf (or other Changing Breed) can approach within striking range of the user; they can throw things or use ranged weapons but will not willingly get within 10 feet of the wearer. Of course, the substance smells so bad that most humans won't want to either....

..... A potion that gives the user the Stamina, Strength and speed of a vampire for a single scene. The user has one extra action per turn, one automatic Strength success and one extra soak die versus all attacks for the scene following ingestion. The user will also have an unnaturally high temper and a thirst for blood.

## COST OF FAILURE

Beyond the inevitable ruined glassware and loss of ingredients, a simple failure also normally means a nasty, smelly and hard to clean up mess in the lab. Botches can be much more severe; the substance may look okay but really have very different effects (and a simple toxin is the best that can be hoped for, in many cases), the substance may catch fire and explode, or something totally different from what was expected or anticipated may happen, which is almost always a bad thing.

## CONJURATION

The master conjuror can move items (though not himself) through space; scientists call this ability apportionation or telekinesis (depending on whether or not the item passes through the intervening space between where it is and where the conjuror wishes it to be), while those knowledgeable in Sphere magics claim that this is a limited application of the Sphere of Correspondence.

Many sorcerers who choose to practice their Arts openly, or somewhat openly, master Conjuror, if only to earn a living from their studies. With it, all manner of parlor tricks and stage magics can be emulated — of course, when a conjuror claims that there's nothing up her sleeves, there really isn't!

For the best effect, an object must be prepared ahead of time, in a ritual designed to bond the item to the caster, making it easy for her to latch onto and command later on. This doesn't mean that the Conjuror has to do this; theoretically, a conjuror can take control of anything that she can see, although in practice this is very difficult to do and much more draining.

The more experienced the conjuror is, the more she is able to move and the farther and more precisely she can move it; an experienced conjuror can thread needles, summon a rabbit into a hat from miles away or move an elephant across a room. The skilled conjuror can also manipulate multiple objects.

It is very difficult to use conjuration offensively (even beyond the length of time it normally takes to effect a change).

A willing subject, properly prepared (which usually involves at least a low level of mesmerism) can be the subject of a conjuration, but the least resistance renders the effect almost impossible. With enough luck (and Willpower), a sorcerer might be able to conjure a weapon out of the hands of an opponent, but attempts at this are dreadfully prone to failure.

## SYSTEM

**Roll:** Dexterity + Occult

**Modifiers:** +1 for working against an object in the hands of someone who is resisting  
-1 for an object that is well known to the caster (Storyteller's discretion).  
+2 to work against a resisting, living, target

**Cost:** None for prepared object, one Willpower for object that has not been prepared

**Duration:** Instantaneous. For lasting effects (a set of puppets dancing without strings, a whirling dervish of knives, etc.) pay one Willpower for every turn you want it to last.

## ASPECTS

### Weight

- Less than an ounce. A coin, business card, penknife, etc.
- A few pounds, a hardcover book. At this level, very small or simple lifeforms (insects, snails, etc.) can be manipulated as well.
- A largish object (computer monitor, telephone) weighing up to 100 pounds. Living beings can be moved as well, although the conjuror cannot manipulate humans.
- Something as large as an armoire, weighing 1,000 pounds or so can be moved. Humans can be manipulated, so long as they are willing, unconscious or hypnotized.
- At this level, the conjuror can move a car or an elephant around. An unwilling human subject could also be moved, although this is very difficult.
- The height of Conjuror allows you to move things as large as a city bus or a loaded 18-wheeler. Feats of this magnitude must be carefully arranged and prepared for ahead of time, and the cost of failure is exceptionally high.

### Distance

- No more than a couple of feet
- Objects can be moved 20 feet or so.
- The conjuror can summon an object from over 100 feet away.
- The object being manipulated can be summoned forth from (or sent away to) a location up to a half mile away.
- Summoned objects can be made to appear from five miles away.

- The conjuror can bring forth items from almost anywhere within the city limits and even farther; maximum range is about 50 miles.

#### Accuracy

- Almost none; the objects quiver in ways you want.
- Rough motor control, about equal to being shoved around with an elbow or fist. Things pretty much go where you want them to but without much finesse.
- Some fine control; equivalent to an object in hands but slow and unwieldy. Clumsy attacks (+1 difficulty) can be made with this level of accuracy.
- Fine motor control. Equivalent to a normal pair of hands, able to perform fine tasks (opening locks, slowly threading a needle, etc.).
- Extreme control. The item(s) will do whatever you ask, quickly and efficiently.
- Objects do things you don't ask them to but in keeping with what you want done.

#### Number

- One item
- Two items
- Three items
- A small group (under 10) of near-identical items, or three items that aren't closely related to each other.
- 10-20 items of similar nature, or a lesser number of non-similar items.
- Up to 100 similar items, or 25 or so unrelated objects.

## RITUALS

### Sword Summoning (•••)

Although more often used to draw forth loaded shotguns than long swords in these modern times, many Templars are taught this ritual so that, in extremis, they are never without a weapon. This ritual is almost always hung — the Templar ritually prepares the weapon before entering some situation where he thinks it may be necessary, and keeps it always in his mind as he works. When he needs the weapon, he finishes the ritual and draws the weapon forth from some convenient shadow or out from underneath a trenchcoat. The difficulty is 7 (6 if the weapon or tool is well known to the user), and the device must normally be within a mile or so of the user and no larger than a shotgun or long sword. No summoning light machine guns with this ritual! If attempted in plain sight of unbelievers, this ritual will almost always fail (difficulty 9).

### Shitstorm (••••)

This ritual allows the sorcerer to take a large number of small objects and spin them about himself in a deadly whirlwind of flying debris. The difficulty of this ritual is 7 (8 if cast under duress). Each success gained increases the number of items in the cloud; the base whirlwind is two yards





in diameter (usually centered on the caster), plus one yard for each success gained. Anyone caught in the whirlwind takes (successes) dice in bashing damage; in some cases this might be lethal damage (if the caster is in a room filled with glass breakables or cutlery or other small sharp objects...).

## PRICE OF FAILURE

A simple failure means the object fails to move at all, disappears never to be seen again or drops to the ground at an embarrassing or dangerous moment (like the keys falling right behind the lecturing guard...). Botches can summon the wrong object (or person...), put it in the wrong place or destroy it in some particularly messy fashion. Botches with living targets are general very bad; stories tell of magicians assistants that disappear never to be seen again or, worse, show up in the disappearing booth days later, hideously mutilated. And few want to consider the fates of those magicians who have failed some tremendous feat of Conjur-ation, only to disappear themselves...

## CONVEYANCE

Seven league boots, flying carpets, witches brooms, demonic chariots pulled by skeletal fire-breathing steeds, teleportation gateways; myth and legend are full of stories of those who could bypass the hazards and annoyances of long journeys, spanning the lengths of countries in hours or seconds. At least some of these stories can be laid at the feet of sorcerers practicing the Path of Conveyance, avoiding the hassles of the road by flying over it, riding it at speeds no other could manage or bypassing it altogether.

"Conventional" Conveyance requires some sort of steed; this may be a broom, four-poster bed, bicycle, Oriental rug, giant cauldron or a fiery coach-and-four. More technologically oriented sorcerers use jet packs or impossibly fast Lamborghinis and Prowlers (the deluxe version has stealth capabilities, to avoid police radar, but this is superfluous in general; few troopers will believe that they saw a Ferrari doing over 500 kph down a busy thruway... especially when it looks like the car isn't actually touching the ground).

With enough understanding of this Path, the sorcerer need not bother with a vehicle at all, merely willing herself to be where she wants to be without actually crossing the intervening distance. Technosorcerers may refer to this as teleportation, using some kind of booth, apparatus or even phone lines, while a more classical sorcerer may summon up a friendly spirit to do the work for him.

Conveyance can be used on other people, although only teleportation effects can be used offensively and only with very great difficulty.

## SYSTEM

**Roll:** Stamina + Occult

**Modifiers:** +2 for working against a resisting object/target, -1 for a location that is well known to the caster (Storyteller's discretion). +1-2 if traveling somewhere while being observed.

**Cost:** One Willpower

**Duration:** The length of time it takes to pass from point A to point B

## ASPECTS

Traveling to a place you have never been to adds one success to the total. Teleporting requires two additional successes. (Teleportation is not necessarily instantaneous; you must still assign a rating to Speed.) Crossing through barriers in your way requires one success per barrier (and it must be something that you could actually find a way around; a hermetically sealed chamber is safe from your powers).

### Range

- 10 feet or less (across a room)
- 100 feet (across a warehouse)
- about a mile
- up to five miles
- approximately 10 miles (across the city)
- 100 miles

These ranges are guidelines and assume a relatively inhabited environment; passing through deserted prairies or arctic wildernesses is much easier, and ranges might be doubled or even trebled in such terrains.

### Speed

- About three times what you could manage on foot
- You get there about as fast as you would if you had driven, red lights and all
- As above, but you ignore speed limits and red lights and traffic; about 45 seconds per mile of distance traveled.
- You can cover miles in seconds.
- Instantaneously
- You can, when you have to, get there before you left... or that's the way it seems.

### Number

- Yourself, and if you're lucky, your clothes come with you...
- Yourself, some clothes and up to 20 pounds of stuff
- Yourself and one other person or a couple hundred pounds
- Two passengers
- Three passengers
- Up to five people can come with you

## RITUALS

### Teleport Ward (••)

Even a novice student of the Path of Conveyance can create wards against unwanted intrusion by others using this Path. To ward a room or building against teleporting intruders, the sorcerer must first mark the limits of the ward he is going to place. (technosorcerers, for example, will set up electromagnetic interference waveguides, subspace harmonic oscillators and other equipment, while a sorcerer trained in

the Hermetic Arts would scribe sigils of protection on the walls, doors, windows, floor and ceiling of each room he wanted to protect). Once this is done, the sorcerer rolls Stamina + Occult against a difficulty of 7. Each success rolled is an additional success needed by someone trying to teleport into the warded area without knowing how to bypass the ward. This protection degrades by one success per month; it can be maintained, however, with the expenditure of a point of Willpower and a single success on a Stamina + Occult roll (difficulty 6).

#### Get Me The Heck Outta here! (•••)

Often cast as a hanging ritual by those more interested in avoiding fights than finishing them, this ritual carries the user back to a home location (this can be any location the caster knows well but must be specified when the ritual is performed) instantaneously, as long as the locale is within range (no more than 50 miles). This ritual costs one Willpower, and the user must achieve at least 4 successes on a Stamina + Occult (difficulty 8) roll; additional successes scored can aid in the necessary range (20 miles per additional success). If the home location is out of reach, a Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 6) will allow the caster to retarget the ritual to another, closer point.

#### Teleportal (•••••)

Master sorcerers can build permanent gateways between locations. These gateways through space allow anyone

who knows the opening phrase or command to travel swiftly from one end of the passage to the other. This ritual takes days of preparation, some of which must be spent at both sites (making this unsuitable for stealthy infiltration of a location... most of the time). Once these preparations are done, the sorcerer makes an extended Stamina + Occult roll against a difficulty of 8; each success adds either 10 miles to the range (the total distance between the two gateways of the portal must be gathered before the ritual can be completed), five uses to the portal or some kind of specification to the gateway (at either or both ends; for example, a gateway could be designated as one-way, could be restricted to women only, only the sorcerer who created the gate or only those who have a special code word or amulet). Assistants can (and should) be used for this ritual. A Teleportal costs one permanent point of Willpower to create.

#### PRICE OF FAILURE

The Path of Conveyance is fraught with peril. Beyond any risks of being noticed and the problems inherent to a particular mode of travel (flying brooms are uncomfortable, especially at high speeds, flying carpets are fragile, flying ointments are a hassle to apply and usually smell funny, Teleportals often bring with them nausea and dizziness), those who travel in this fashion can draw the attention of... beings in the realms they travel through. Any journey of more





than a mile or so will bring with it the risk of an accident or misstep. Storytellers should feel to ask for a check midway through the journey to make sure that it is without incident (typically, a single additional success will be sufficient to avert any kind of disaster).

Normal failures simply mean that the spell does not go off at all; a botch, however, can range from calamitous to disastrous, depending on the method of travel and the distances involved; flying brooms may end up plummeting out of the sky, while teleportation botches give the Storyteller a perfect opportunity to recreate their favorite *Star Trek* transporter mishap or perhaps some choice scenes from *The Fly*. About the best the sorcerer can hope for is to be stranded in the middle of nowhere with no idea what has happened.

## DIVINATION (NØ RITUALS)

Lucky numbers for the lottery, whether happiness will be found in marriage, the outcome of a crucial battle — for as long as their has been a concept of “tomorrow,” people have wanted to know what would happen in the future. Rulers, merchants, generals and wizards have all said they wanted to know their fate, although they have just as often rejected that fate when apprised of it; Cassandra’s fate is one that no seer worthy of the title easily forgets. Despite the perils involved, this Path is a well-traveled one.

### SYSTEM

**Roll:** Perception + Fortune Telling

**Modifiers:** +1 if using extraordinary science style (but the answers will be more precise)

**Cost:** None

**Duration:** Irrelevant

**Note:** The Storyteller makes all rolls for divinations. A sorcerer rarely knows how accurate her forecasts are.

### ASPECTS

#### Time Period

- One week
- One month
- One year
- 10 years
- 20 years forward, up to 100 years backward
- Almost unlimited, in either direction

#### Accuracy

- Incredibly vague at best
- Generally accurate, but deeply cloaked in symbolism
- Accurate, but not always explicit
- While still cloaked in symbolism, the truth is in there, and digging it out shouldn’t be too hard
- Your results are almost always accurate and usually easy to understand
- You know what will happen, when it will happen and who it will happen to, without question... unless you’re wrong, of course

## TOOLS OF THE DIVINER

Different sorcerers use different paths of knowledge and tools to see the future. Most settle on one set of tools that suit them best, while a small few will select the tools that are most suitable for a given situation or a given client. Few use more than a handful of techniques, however.

In game terms, the tools the sorcerer uses are irrelevant. In the story, they are vital; you probably won’t find a technosorcerer using the entrails of a goat to tell the future or a neo-pagan using powerful probability analysis software. The tools you use can be a great jumping off point for stories; just possessing, for instance, an advanced laptop for statistical analysis could get you in trouble in some parts of the world, for example, and fishing about in the guts of a goat you just slaughtered would be a great way to get yourself imprisoned in some parts of the United States (and possibly killed in other parts of the world).

|                      |                                                                                                            |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Astrology            | Predicting the future through the interaction of the stars and the planets and their positions in the sky. |
| Augury               | Prediction by observing the actions and flight of birds                                                    |
| Bibliomancy          | Drawing the future from random page-turning in books                                                       |
| Cartomancy           | Using a deck of cards to predict the future (e.g. the tarot)                                               |
| Casting              | Using carved stones or sticks to study the patterns they make (runes, joss sticks)                         |
| Dowsing              | Searching for water, minerals, etc. using a forked stick or wire.                                          |
| Haruspication        | Reading the future in the entrails of a sacrifice                                                          |
| Oneiromancy          | Interpreting the symbolism of dreams.                                                                      |
| Palmistry            | Reading the future in the lines and structure of the palm of another.                                      |
| Probability Analysis | Using chaos math, statistical analysis and probability to determine what may happen in the future.         |
| Scrying              | Looking for the future in pools of water, crystal balls, mirrors, etc.                                     |

Other tools include reading tea leaves, numerology, examining the shoulder blade (scapulimancy) and a host of others — some would say that there are as many means of divination as there are diviners, although that might be a bit pedantic.

## STORYTELLER NOTES: MANAGING DIVINATION

Of all the Paths presented in this book, Divination can be the hardest to keep track of and cope with because no other Path has the ability to so totally derail what you have planned or what has been building up. It also brings up annoying questions about predestination, whether your players can flaunt fate and other tricky problems.

One way to deal with this is to simply disallow the Path of Divination to player characters. This is perfectly within your rights as a Storyteller (see *Messing with the Variables*). It allows you to keep a firm grip on the divinations, handing them out when you want to, not when your players can't decide which bus to take, so they throw the joss sticks!

If you do decide to allow players' characters to have Divination, it should be kept in mind that Divination works in symbolism and signs, not direct answers. (Even extraordinary scientists get only vague predictions and probabilities, rather than exact percentages and accurate images of the future — and their predictions are more prone to being upset by small changes and modifications than your average augury is). This means that, unless the sorcerer rolls exceedingly well (or you really want to drop a clue in their lap), you can, and should, be incredibly vague in your answers. "You'll die at the hands of a blind man" is a lot easier to fulfill (and a lot harder for your players to avoid) than, "You'll be run over by a bus driven by a really near-sighted bus driver who lost a contact lens at 8:30 in the evening on a Tuesday."

One thing to do, when working with a character who has Divination, is to keep the question "And what happens if he casts a Divination about <x>?" in your head. Even if you don't actually write anything down, asking the question gives you an idea of what the responses might be. Knowing this can also allow you to work divinations into your chronicle ahead of time....

Once a prediction has been handed down, you will have to decide if it is absolute or if the players will be able to avoid it or twist it in some fashion. In general, you may want to allow them to slip out from the noose of doom; predestination makes for great stories but can be hard on both the players and their characters. If you do decide it is an absolute, then the prediction should come to pass... in some fashion. Just because the players think a prediction is centered on their characters doesn't mean it has to be; a prediction of death doesn't necessarily mean that one of the player characters is going to die, for example. If it isn't absolute, the characters will be able to duck it... if they figure out the prediction in time and how to avoid it.

### Question

- A very simple question (can be answered with Yes or No... but don't expect to get that simple an answer!).

- A specific question that can be answered quickly: "Is this bridge safe?" is okay. "How are the bad guys are going to attack us?" is not.
- A query that is somewhat detailed but could be answered using publicly available knowledge, if you knew where and how to look and had the time.
- A detailed question that requires information or details that have been hidden by time, distance or deliberate obfuscation but can still be unearthed with effort.
- A very detailed question or one that would need access to information that has been lost to time, is very distant or has been actively guarded and hidden.
- No question is too complex, no information too obscure.

## PRICE OF FAILURE

Prophecies are fraught with mischance. A failed roll could mean something as simple as "Future cloudy, try again later" or a false reading. A botched roll indicates an omen that is dangerously flawed or inaccurate in some fashion. For example, telling someone that the guards are unwary and slothful when, in fact they are an elite force of highly trained professionals.

## ENCHANTMENT (RITUAL ONLY)

Enchantment is the art of creating (minor) magical Talismans. An enchanter imbues each of her creations with a small part of her essence and spends much of her time locked up in a workshop crafting each new piece, tracking down esoteric and mundane ingredients, putting out fires, researching new procedures and figuring out why the copper wire in the iron mixture didn't help the blade's temper. For those with the time and patience, though, Enchantment provides the ability to forge useful magical tools — most especially, devices that store magical energy for later use or empowered to function on their own, usable by anyone.

Creating a Talisman first takes talent; an enchanter must usually handcraft the object to be enchanted, whether it is a blade, a ring, a pair of shoes or a book. (This is not always the case, especially with items that have a close personal attachment to the enchanter.) Many enchanters choose one field of study and specialize in it, creating pieces of art for sale when they aren't working on pieces to be enchanted (after all, a sorcerer has to earn a living somehow). Others develop enough skill to create serviceable tools that can be enchanted in a number of different Crafts, relying on their magical abilities to suffice where their craftsmanship does not. Every ritual, therefore, starts with a Crafts roll to determine the quality of the item being enchanted; an exceptional result on this test may make the actual Enchantment easier. Depending on what is being made, this may take anywhere from a day or so, to months of careful crafting.





The next part of the process is the Enchantment itself. This normally takes one to three days per level of the item, depending on the Tradition of the enchanter and the particulars of the Enchantment (the more complex the Enchantment, in terms of who can use it, how many times it can be used, and when it can be used, the longer the initial work). At the end of this period, make an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 4 + level of the Enchantment), spend a point of Willpower and the Enchantment is completed.

Enchantments are never a matter of numbers and creation systems; they should flow from the story and roleplaying, not die rolls. While we've given some examples, a smart enchantress can come up with many more.

## SYSTEM

|            |                                                                        |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Roll:      | Intelligence + Occult (Intelligence + Science for Technosorcerers)     |
| Cost:      | 1 Willpower                                                            |
| Modifiers: | -1 Difficulty for Enchantments that have been mastered                 |
| Time:      | 1-3 days per level of the Enchantment, plus the time to craft the item |
| Duration:  | See following                                                          |

- Minor items that have a very limited utility and very limited effects that will never be seen as magical by any who don't know what to look for. They might add one (or, less frequently, two) dots to an Attribute or Ability, grant a bonus to an attack or skill (never more than a +1) or some other boon.

- An army surplus jacket that adds two dots to Arcane whenever the character is in a crowd.

- A custom made handgun that subtracts 1 from the difficulty of all aimed shots made with the weapon (or, alternatively, subtracts 1 from the difficulty of all wild shots made with it).

- A small stuffed animal that brings restful sleep, no matter the recipient's state of mind or state of intoxication; anyone sleeping in the same bed as the toy will sleep like a baby.

- A small medallion with a chrysoprase in the middle of it, carved in the shape of a hawk's eye, carried on a fine silver chain. Once a day, when rubbed, it will give the wearer the vision of a hawk for the space of one scene. (This adds 2 dice to Perception, for purposes of seeing things at long distance or noticing movement).

- A more powerful version of a Talisman that could be previously made (adding +2 to an Ability or Attribute or +2 to some task), or a Talisman capable of changing reality in some subtle but more noticeable or magical fashion.

## TECHNOSORCERERS AND ENCHANTMENT

Perhaps more than any other Path (saving only Advanced Chemistry), Enchantment (which technosorcerers know by a whole host of other names: material sciences, advanced ballistics, applied high-energy physics, etc.) is the forte of the technosorcerer. Working as it does with physical objects and definable effects, Enchantment is a Path that many technosorcerers will have at least a basic understanding of. Technology based Enchantments work slightly differently; many simple enchanted items can be used by anyone who knows how to use a normal version of the device (an unnaturally accurate handgun doesn't normally care who wields it). Given time, almost anyone can be trained in the use of even the most advanced technology based Talisman (called a *Device*).

Powerful Devices are almost as likely to fail in the public view as the most powerful of Talismans based on mystical principals are, for reasons that are still unknown. Technosorcery is something that works best when it works in the shadows, just as it's counterpart is.

— A liquor flask that, when carried in a breast pocket, will unerringly attract the first bullet that would hit the carrier to itself. This provides three dice of lethal soak. After, the flask is useless. (Apparently this Enchantment was very popular with Allied sorcerers during World War II).

— A handful of bullets (1 per success rolled on the Enchantment) that do an additional 2 dice of damage to whatever they hit.

— A silver ankle bracelet, with many hanging baubles, that gives the wearer an additional two levels in Dancing whenever it is worn, if it is plainly visible.

••• These items perform functions that are obviously magical to those looking for such things and that will be considered very weird by those who aren't.

— A pair of running shoes that doubles the running speed of the wearer. This ability only works when the wearer is trying to evade pursuit.

— An amulet inscribed with arcane symbols, on a leather thong. When grasped, it will act as a personal ward against sorcery, up to three times a day (number of dice subtracted equals the successes rolled on the Enchantment). This amulet must be kept in a jewelry box carved out of a single crystal when not worn or the Enchantment will fade (one success per night) until it becomes a simple piece of jewelry.

— A sword with a core of liquid mercury that does aggravated damage against the Risen and lethal damage to wraiths (if they can be seen; it provides no inherent ability to see the Restless Dead). A priest must bless the sword every fortnight, or the magic fails.

•••• Talismans of this power can defy reality to a large degree, as long as they work within certain restrictions. They can increase Attributes and Abilities past normal human

maximums, duplicate low-level supernatural abilities (no more than the second dot of Disciplines, Gifts, etc.) and otherwise work wonders.

— The fabled Heartseeker — a stiletto that aims unerringly for the heart when drawn and used in rage. This inflicts Strength + 5 dice of lethal damage, and the dagger may be thrown. It must be bathed in the blood of those it has killed after each combat or lose its potency.

— A solid silver torc that, when worn, grants the wearer superhuman Strength. The wearer's Strength rises to 5 when the torc is worn. In addition, a number of times per day equal to the successes rolled on the Enchantment, the wearer may boost his Strength past normal, gaining 3 automatic successes on all task rolls involving Strength (these successes are added directly to damage rolled, etc.). The torc must be kept in view of the moon whenever it is not worn, if the moon is visible.

— The skull of a long-dead wizard, which can be used to contact him for assistance. The sorcerer using this Talisman must donate a pint of blood and can ask the wizard as many questions as successes rolled on the Enchantment. These do not have to be yes/no questions, and follow up questions on the same immediate topic are allowed without using up a question (the Storyteller is the final arbiter of what is or isn't a question). This Talisman can only be used during the new moon, and the sorcerer must make a Willpower test (difficulty equal to the number of times the Talisman has been used + 4) or the skull crumbles to pieces after the final question is asked.

— A byrnie of silvered mail that converts up to 4 dice of lethal damage taken in a turn of combat into bashing damage. Each time this ability is used, a few more links fall out of the coat, until, eventually, it falls apart, unusable. The mail can never be cleaned or repaired, or it automatically loses its abilities.

## ALCHEMY VS. ENCHANTMENT

On the surface, Alchemy and Enchantment would appear to be almost the same Art, and in fact, many who study one Art have at least some knowledge in the other Path as well. At a fundamental level, however, they are very different. Alchemical elixirs can be used by anyone but have a definite life span; usually, this is measured in months or even years, but eventually most alchemical substances (other than mystical alloys or some other materials made through Alchemy) will decay into uselessness. Talismans created with the Path of Enchantment retain their power for decades, or even centuries in some cases, and, even once the power has left them, still retain some level of inherent mystic "otherness" that those knowledgeable in the Arts will be able to detect. With some research, almost all Talismans can be traced back to their creators. Where a long-dead alchemist is known only by the body of research he leaves behind (if any), an enchanter's legacy is wrapped up in every Talisman he ever created.



## TALISMANS VS. TALISMAN

The difference between a Talisman created by a sorcerer using the Path of Enchantment and one created by a mage using Sphere magic isn't always as clear as one might think. Both will detect as magical to those capable of sensing such things, and both may well have similar or even identical effects. To a lay person, there really is no difference; even some mages and experienced sorcerers may be unable to tell the difference.

There are, however, a couple of differences. Sorcery based Talismans are almost always single-function items; they do one thing and one thing only. Wonders based on Sphere magic are more likely to be multi-purpose (although many are not).

..... Items made with this level of skill are almost mythic; their powers are sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant and always unpredictable. When they work, they can perform minor miracles.

— A money pouch that will always have five dollars in quarters (or 6 Canadian loonies or three pounds sterling or whatever — always in small, but not annoying, sums) in it, as long as at least one quarter is left in the pouch. It can only be drawn from four times a day, or it will lose its power forever.

— An amulet that, when worn, renders the user almost immune to any kind of physical harm (granting the user five dice of lethal soak that is also usable against aggravated damage). Every time this ability is used, it subtracts five years from the user's life. The user evinces no outward change, but when he finally expires, he will appear to be an old man internally.

— An amulet that wards the user against all magical detection. The amulet adds 4 successes to the number required to find the user with any kind of magical ability (Auspex, Divination, Sphere magic, etc.). The sorcerer will be presented with a different riddle, puzzle or other enigma she must solve before the amulet will activate. Once activated, the amulet will be effective for a number of weeks equal to the number of successes rolled on the Enchantment.

— An animated servant. This might be the classical golem from Jewish mythology, a homunculus or some kind of robot. A servant like this is created like a character, but has only 10 points to spend on Attributes and 7 to spend on Abilities. It has human senses, Health levels equal to a normal human (but does not suffer wound penalties) and does not need to eat or sleep, though technologically based servants will usually need recharging.

..... Talismans of this potency are more rumor and myth than they are quantifiable fact. If items of this power still exist or anyone can still make them, they would be capable of feats that would be impressive even to the most powerful sorcerer.

## RITUALS

Although this entire Path is composed of various rituals, there are some that are more standardized than others. These include:

### Eldritch Mark (•)

The sorcerer scribes a symbol or mark into an object or onto the forehead of an individual. This mark then fades from view, but any student of the mystic Arts who looks at the object or individual will be able to discern the mark and will know the name of the sorcerer who marked it. This ritual takes five minutes to cast and has no cost in Willpower.

### Enhance Craftsmanship (••)

The enchanter uses his power to enhance the craftsmanship of an object he is making (something enhanced in this fashion can not thereafter be further enchanted). Thus, he can forge a blade that will never break, knit a sweater that will never unravel or ensorcel a mirror so that it will never crack.

An object made in this fashion is not inherently magical in any way, but an alchemist or another enchanter can discern the methods used to enhance it with a Perception + Occult task (difficulty 6). This ritual takes as long to cast as it takes to make the object (15 to 20 minutes for something that is being ensorcelled after the fact) and costs no Willpower.

## PRICE OF FAILURE

The best a sorcerer can hope for on a failure is that his time and effort will be wasted. It is more likely that the sorcerer will end up with a cursed item, one that has some side effect that was not anticipated, an accident that blows the workshop to bits or worse. Botching a creation roll is never a good idea: Enchanters have been engulfed in conflagrations or have simply disappeared, along with their workshops.

## FASCINATION

Call it bewitching, call it willbinding, speak of love philters and glimmers, speak of presence and awe. In the end, what you are talking about is a sorcerer's ability to fascinate — to compel a subject to listen to what she says, to force an attraction that would not otherwise be there. A master of this Path can instill loyalty, lust, confidence, faith and love in those she comes in contact with — in some cases, so much so that the sorcerer is bedeviled with followers so fanatical that they are willing to kill for the object of their affection.

Sometimes utter Fascination is not at all what the sorcerer wants. Stories abound of sorcerer and victim tied up in a web of conflicting loyalties and obsessions, with tragedy the nigh-inevitable result. Even worse is when a third party is brought into the mixture; some seek out sorcerers skilled in this Path, hoping to gain assistance in attracting the eye of some desired paramour.

But not all tales of this Path end in tragedy. Many sorcerers, careful to use only enough power to get what they want and no more, make a decent living in the media, as entertainers, as sales representatives and in almost any other job that requires constant contact with people.

Fascination works with the Social Traits; exactly which one depends on the circumstances. Normally, the client's most impressive Attribute will be enhanced; a good looking woman will appear stunning (Appearance), a smooth operator will become impossibly slick (Manipulation), and someone

with a powerful personality will become positively magnetic (Charisma). A sorcerer can choose to enhance any of the Social Attributes, however; an already charismatic wizard might choose to use Fascination to shore up his Appearance.

A sorcerer can inspire more than simple attraction or interest with Fascination; although it is more difficult, she can inspire loyalty, trust, camaraderie, faith, confidence or some other (generally positive) emotional link.

A subject has no real resistance to this ability, although subjects with a high Willpower are less likely to be affected. Some people are immune to Fascination altogether, however; anyone with Iron Will or similar advantages can ignore a Fascination (except from a master of the Path, at the Storyteller's discretion).

Any attempt to order a subject to do something that he would not normally do (kill that man over there, jump off a bridge) allows him a Willpower check (difficulty 4 + Path level). Each success he scores reduces the sorcerer's hold on him by one level. How often the subject makes these checks depends, in large part, on his personality; a strong-willed, confident person might make them rather regularly, while a weak-willed person with low self-esteem would be willing to put up with quite a bit. When a Fascination ends, it may taper off (allowing emotions and bonds built up in the intervening time to take hold), or it may snap, leaving the subject confused and bewildered.

Those who possess similar mind-influencing powers (vampiric Dominate and Presence, psychic abilities, the Sphere of Mind, etc.) can also typically ignore attempts to influence them with this Path. Innately mystical creatures (shapeshifters, the fae, etc.) can counter a spell with their own power if they choose to (spending their mystical power sources as appropriate; each point spent reduces the level of effect by one). The blood bond of vampires is not sufficient, in and of itself, to counter Fascination, but the bond remains in effect; any demands that run counter to the bond will automatically call for a Willpower check.

Students of this Path can sometimes recognize its tricks being used by others: Often times, they even have a small measure of resistance to its effects. When someone uses this Path, or a similar power (vampiric Dominate and Presence, certain Mind effects, etc.), the willbinder can make a Wits + Fascination roll (difficulty 7-9, at the Storyteller's discretion). He must score at least as many successes as the caster to detect anything is amiss. This gives the willbinder a +1 on all Willpower checks to resist any effects aimed at him (knowing is half the battle...) and an additional +1 to resist for every 2 successes scored over and above those needed to detect the use in the first place.

## SYSTEM

**Roll:** (Social Attribute) + Occult  
**Cost:** None  
**Modifiers:** +1 difficulty for emotions other than attraction or interest  
 +1 difficulty if subject's Willpower is 5 or greater.  
**Time:** One turn per level of effect  
**Duration:** See following

## ASPECTS

### Level of Influence

- Minor: In a crowd, you are noticed, and individuals will find you interesting. Add 1 die to your Social dice pools.
- Stirring: You aren't the center of the party, but you are being listened to. An individual will make it a point to hang out with you. Add 2 dice to your Social dice pools.
- Life of the Party: Of course you threw this party, didn't you? A subject will go out of his way for you. Add 3 dice.
- Major: You are throwing a party, aren't you? What you do, others pay attention to. Individuals will sacrifice quite a bit to earn your approval. Add 4 dice.
- Trendsetter: If you jumped off a bridge, more than a few people would follow. Your influence is unmistakable. An individual will do almost anything you ask him to, even kill or die. Add 5 dice.
- Your influence is legendary, when you want it to be. An individual is utterly besmitten of you, a virtual (and possibly literal) slave, and willing to do anything you command. Add 6 dice to your Social dice pools.

### Number

- One person
- Two people
- A small group (less than 10)
- A party of up to 50 people or so
- A crowd of people: hundreds
- A stadium full of people: thousands

### Duration

- A short while; a few minutes or so.
- One scene
- A day or two
- A couple of weeks
- Several months
- Indefinitely

## PRICE OF FAILURE

A simple failure means, at worst, having a bit of egg on your face, in most cases. Botches can be big trouble, however (as is often the case with sorcery). A spell could backfire making you as unattractive and unimpressive as it was supposed to make you impressive and attractive (reverse the adds to Social dice pools to penalties). Your meddling with other peoples emotions can have awful consequences; overuse of this ability can result in the emotional equivalent of a lobotomy, fierce fits of jealousy or just as fierce protective urges. And in extreme versions of the latter two problems, the subject will do anything to keep you safe/keep others from having you... anything.



# FORTUNE

Fortuna, both Buona and Mala, flows from the hands of the sorcerer who studies this path. By his will, probabilities alter, events realign themselves, and his target's future is changed. The superstitious ascribed this power to all witches (untrue), and call it the Evil Eye, scientists speak of altering probabilities and chaos math, and priests call it the Hand of God, but in every case, in the end, the effects are only partly in the hands of the sorcerer. Some mages look on this as being a set of interrelated effects linked closely with a rudimentary understanding of the Entropy Sphere. Sorcerers gifted in the Path just smile, nod and continue on their lucky way.

Supernatural beings can be cursed but get to resist the effect, if they are aware of it, with a Willpower check (difficulty = 4 + the magician's Path rating). Most curses will need only a single success, but very powerful or long-lasting curses can require more in order to be removed completely. Short curses normally won't be discovered unless they are announced ahead of time; a skilled user of Entropy or Prime might detect a curse looming over someone, or someone with Auspex might see it in their aura, however. A character's Arcane rating subtracts from the total successes scored on a one for one ratio (and could well cause the curse to fail utterly).

## SYSTEM

**Roll:** Manipulation + Intimidation (Manipulation + Mathematics for Technosorcerers)  
**Cost:** One Willpower  
**Modifiers:** -1 Difficulty if some sorcerer has some item closely linked with the target  
**Duration:** See below

## ASPECTS

### Target

In general, the target must be some specific individual or group of individuals but does not need to be specifically named (So, for example, the target might be "Jimmy Smith, who stole my essay" or "that son of a bitch who just cut me off," but not "everyone who hates me"). The more dots in this aspect of the curse, the more people it can affect, and the less specific the targeting needs to be.

- One specific, named, target
- Two targets, or one poorly defined one.
- A small group (no more than four) of closely linked individuals (a clique or family)
- A midsize group of people with some kind of relationship (an extended family, a football team, etc.)
- A large group of people (no more than 100): all of the patrons of a particular bar, a small company, etc.
- An entire town or corporation or military unit (like a battalion).

## Duration

This is how long the effect will last; whether it coils, strikes and disappears or hangs about to discomfit the recipient for months or even years. At their most powerful, effects can last for generations, striking at a specific target in each generation (first born son, for example).

- One shot. The effect waits for an opportune moment, wreaks its vengeance (or benefits) and then dissipates.
- The effect lasts a day, inconveniencing the target whenever possible.
- The effect lasts for a week or more (up to three), helping the target when appropriate.
- The blessing (or curse) lasts for several months.
- The curse affects the target for years, blighting his very existence.
- "...And unto the seventh generation shall the family of Hedley-Smythe be cursed with madness, and terror shall follow them all their days!"

## Severity

The severity of a Fortune effect depends in large part on what the sorcerer wants to do, but the specifics of the effect are never completely under the control of the sorcerer; the caster can suggest, but in the end, every curse or blessing takes its own way.

- A brief inconvenience, or a minor wound; dropping something, saying something utterly stupid (or perfectly brilliant), smashing your shin into the table, catching a bus at just the right moment.
- Something that results in a lasting inconvenience or injury or some minor advantage. Sprains, bad cases of the flu (or other annoying, but not life threatening, diseases), breaking something difficult to replace and committing some major faux pas are all possible curses, while blessings might convey some minor advantage in battle, render the target immune to some sickness or misfortune or prevent some difficulty that might hinder her path.
- A serious, but not normally life-threatening injury or illness, or some permanent social setback. This kind of curse should be a major setback for the short-term goals of the target. As a blessing, this level conveys some major advantage. An additional die in combat dice pools, continuing minor luck with dice (or women) or the good fortune to always get the person at the DMV who actually wants to help (and always getting there when there aren't many people in line) are all possible effects.
- A permanent, debilitating injury or illness, or a major turn of events socially or financially. Bankruptcy, spinal injuries, psychosis, blindness, an accountant taking off for Barbados with all of your savings and indictment on tax evasion are all possibilities. Blessings of this magnitude include things like winning the lottery, excellence in battle in some critical fight or overcoming incredible odds against some major social endeavors.

••••• Normally, a death curse (and usually not a pleasant death; decapitation, wasting diseases, mangling car accidents and worse), although some incredible turn of events might fulfill a curse of this magnitude. Blessings at this level of power involve cheating some inescapable death or misfortune: a last minute reprieve from the governor, landing in the only pond deep enough to cushion your fall after a parachute failure or being saved by the Queen's Gurkha Rifles just as the cultists start to lower you into the boiling lava are all possibilities.

••••• If there is a fate worse than death or a way to cheat death forever, it would take a curse or blessing of this power to do it.

*Example: Rachel stares daggers at that stupid jock that turned her down. Who does he think he is, anyway? What, isn't she pretty enough? Fine. She'll show him, dammit! Muttering a quick enchantment she learned in a book found in the back of the library, she finishes it with a curse and savagely stabs her athame into his footprint in the dirt near the stadium. She is lucky enough to be watching later that day when, showing off, he backflips off the bed of his friend's pickup truck, slips and smashes his knee into the pavement, cracking it. So much for the rest of the football season.*

Rachel has 3 dots in the Path of Fortune, her Manipulation is 3, and she has an Intimidation of 2. She sets up her spell as follows — Target: level one (she knows the name of the "dumb" jock in question), Duration: basic (she isn't quite bitter enough to want him seriously put out for any length of time) and Severity: level three (she is bitter enough to want him hurt, however). Since she's assigning each aspect, she needs three successes (one for each aspect). If she'd wanted to push the severity even higher, she'd have needed additional successes.

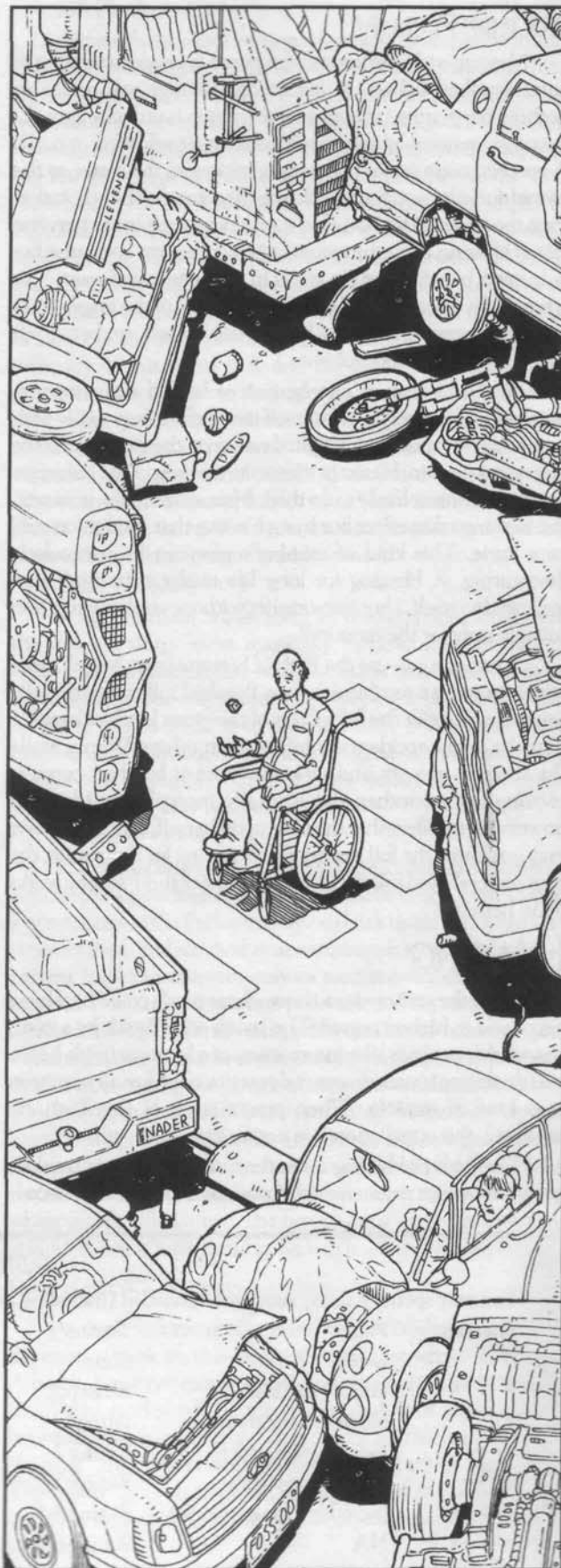
The Path of Fortune benefits from teamwork in a fashion unlike any other Path; each assistant who is successful in a skill check not only reduces the difficulty for the lead sorcerer by 1, but also adds a single success to the total pool for paying for aspects. In addition, every three assistants increases the effective knowledge of the Path by one, allowing the group to cast more powerful curses or blessings.

*Example: A curse performed by five members, all of whom have the Path of Fortune (with the leader having a rating of 3) would have an effective Path knowledge of 4 to determine what level of aspect could be used, and would gain up to 4 extra successes to spend on aspects, in addition to reducing the difficulty by up to -4.*

## RITUAL

### Death Curse (•)

A magician skilled in the Path of Fortune may invoke a Death's Curse. The magician spends all of her permanent Willpower, adds it to her dots and then spends them as she likes in a final curse (or blessing, although this is much less common), just as if they were automatic successes. For the purposes of this spell alone, the magician can buy aspects two dots higher than they would normally have access to; while a lesser magician might only be able to inconvenience a single person, a powerful one could lay waste to an entire family or wither an entire small town! Once this effect is cast, the character then falters and quickly dies, burned out by her rage or taken by her weal.





## PRICE OF FAILURE

Messing with destiny and the future is never something to be undertaken lightly. A failure on the dice roll results in nothing happening (of course, if the target is unlucky enough, the caster may not be able to tell if the curse took effect or not!). A botched curse might boomerang back onto the caster, as the hatred-fueled power feeds back into the source of the bile, rather than the target. Alternatively, it may twist itself into a perverse sort of blessing, something that at first appears to be a curse but is, instead, beneficial to the target in a strange sort of way. (This is especially appropriate if the caster's hatred of the target is not pure and savage enough — half-hearted curses are better left alone, especially powerful ones.)

Botched blessings can be just as bad, if not worse. A botched blessing might twist itself into a curse (especially with very powerful blessings), targeted either on the caster or on the target (once again, blessings where the motives of the caster are not pure are most likely to do this). More commonly, however, the blessing takes effect but in such a way that it might as well be a curse. This kind of monkey's paw can be particularly devastating. A blessing for long life might twist itself into immortality itself... but immortality without vitality is a prison suitable only for the most evil.

A sorcerer can use the Path of Fortune upon herself if she wishes but runs a terrible risk. Any Botched roll means that the sorcerer will suffer the full effects of the worst kinds of backfire that she might accidentally inflict upon others. Worse, while the sorcerer can try and unweave even a botched curse or blessing upon another, she is totally incapable of lifting or unweaving an effect that she casts upon herself. Since a sorcerer may not know the full impact of her casting for some time, the Storyteller should roll the dice for any use of this Path she works upon herself.

## HEALING

Since the earliest days, those whose touch could heal have been held in highest regard. The laying on of hands by a saint, the witch's poultice, the intercession of a houngan with Legba and the caring touch of a general practitioner have all been seen as a kind of miracle. When practitioners of this Path are involved, this appellation it is not far from the truth.

The Path of Healing takes time; there are no miraculous cures, no instant regeneration of wounds and no sudden recov-

eries from fatal illnesses. Even the most experienced healer can only force the body to do so much; a healer normally works by accelerating the body's natural processes, by helping it do what it would normally do anyway, only faster and better. Worse, use of this Path saps the user; overuse can lead to burnout and even death. A master of the Path can bring someone back even from death's door... but the cost is often more than he can bear.

Although not absolutely necessary for the use of this Path, most healers have at least some knowledge of medicine, although this may not be traditional Western medicine: Acupuncture, homeopathy, herbalism or knowledge of which spirits to propitiate and which to exorcise can all be effective to a healer who believes.

The Path of Healing can relieve pain, cure diseases, speed recovery from injuries (and heal some injuries outright), even restore sight to the blind. It cannot, however, do anything to alleviate aggravated injuries... fire, Pattern magic and acid all do things so heinous to the human (or inhuman) body that it cannot be healed in this fashion. For reasons that should be obvious, the Path of Healing cannot be used on the dead (or undead).

A sorcerer may attempt to heal any given injury, disease or condition *once*; if she fails or achieves only a limited success (due to skill), she may not go back and attempt to improve the situation later.

## SYSTEM

**Roll:** Manipulation + Intuition  
**Cost:** One Willpower per injury or disease  
**Modifiers:** -1 Difficulty if Medicine, or appropriate Lore is equal to or higher than rating in Path.  
**Duration:** Permanent

## PAIN

You can relieve the pain of an injury, even if you cannot heal the injury itself. With 4 successes, you can reduce the task penalties from injuries by -2; with 5 successes, the patient can ignore most penalties that don't involve actual amputations — and even then, the penalties are because of the missing limb, not because it hurts.

## TOXINS AND DISEASES

With a single success, you can virtually guarantee that a patient will not suffer from secondary infections or problems as

## ASPECTS

You may spend as many successes as needed (including none) on any or all of the following aspects:

| Success | Pain                    | Toxins     | Bashing        | Lethal            | Other              |
|---------|-------------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 0       | none                    | none       | none           | none              | none               |
| •       | minor (headache)        | antiseptic | minor bruises  | none              | none               |
| ••      | moderate (migraine)     | rating 1   | 1 level fixed  | stabilize         | none               |
| •••     | major (groin kick)      | Rating 2   | heal 25%       | none              |                    |
| ••••    | extreme (gut stab)      | Rating 3   | 2 levels fixed | heal 50%          | minor debilities   |
| •••••   | incredible (amputation) | Rating 4-5 | heal 90%       | eyesight, hearing |                    |
| ••••••  | NA                      | Rating 6-7 | 3 levels fixed | heal instantly    | major neurological |

a result of disease. With greater numbers of successes, you can cure diseases or counteract exposure to poisons of a Toxin Rating equal to or below the rating listed and alleviate the symptoms of diseases one level higher (the disease is still present and could still kill the patient, but the patient gets +1 on all survival rolls and at least won't be miserable as he dies...). Recovery time is dependent on the virulence of the disease or poison, how massive the exposure was and how long the patient has already been afflicted.

## BASHING DAMAGE

The healer can close up minor contusions, scrapes, etc. with but a single success; the injuries fade over the course of 10-15 minutes or so. For every 2 successes spent on dealing with bashing damage, the healer can reduce the damage taken by one level (from Wounded to Injured, for example). Bashing damage that has been converted to lethal damage cannot be cured in this fashion.

## LETHAL DAMAGE

Two successes lets the healer stabilize even a critically wounded patient; the patient will not regain any levels of Health but will be safe to transport and may even be able to move about under her own power, at least a little (dependent on injuries). More successes do not actually remove health levels of damage but do cause the patient to heal at an accelerated rate; this is in addition to any benefits gained by regular medical care (so an Incapacitated patient who is being treated in a hospital by a doctor who also happens to be a healer who scores 4 successes on healing lethal damage would recover completely from her injuries in 51 days, instead of 102 (or the almost a year that it would take with no medical attention or healer intervention).

## OTHER INJURIES OR DEBILITIES

With great effort (a minimum of 4 successes needed), a healer can correct congenital defects or problems incurred after birth. Many problems are beyond the ability of even the greatest healers to cure (they cannot regenerate limbs, etc.), but they can cure bad vision or tone deafness (with 5 successes) and even some neurological conditions (6 successes). Exactly how many successes are needed, and what is beyond the scope of the healer, is up to the Storyteller.

## RITUALS

### Healing Sleep (•)

The healer can place a patient in a deep, restful sleep that relaxes and revitalizes. The patient wakes from even a few hours of sleep refreshed and alert, with a clarity of thought and purpose. In game terms, the player rolls Manipulation + Intuition versus a difficulty of 6; if more than one success is rolled, the (willing) patient falls into a deep slumber. This ritual normally results in 9 hours of sleep; subtract one hour for each additional success. At the end of that sleep, the patient awakens revitalized; all bashing damage is healed, and the patient regains a point of Willpower.

### Mike's Cure-All (••)

Although the exact version referenced here appears to date from the Chicago speakeasies of the 1920s, versions of this ritual have been around for centuries. When cast on a patient who has been drugged, poisoned or merely over-indulged, the patient immediately begins to flush any toxins in their system; depending on the length of time it's been since the toxins were introduced and the method of introduction, they might be expelled through sweat, vomiting or diarrhea, tears or some combination. This is rarely pleasant for the patient, but in the end, the toxins are removed, and any effects they may have on the patient are negated (already existing damage will not be healed, but any side effects or further damage will cease). The difficulty of this ritual is 6, and the healer must score more successes than the Toxin Rating of the drug or poison that the patient has in their system (or the highest Toxin Rating, in case of multiple drugs or poisons). This ritual can be cast as an extended task, and while it will flush out even alchemical concoctions and poisons, it does not affect vitae in any way; a ghoul will not have the vitae in his bloodstream forcibly removed, nor does it remove a blood bond.

### Wakey-Wakey (••)

With this ritual, a Sorcerer can revive anyone from even the deepest sleep. Even magically induced slumber can be broken with this ritual, although the caster must generate more successes than the originator of the sleeping spell did. The base difficulty of this ritual is 6; normally only a single success is needed, although someone who is drugged, is a naturally deep sleeper or is incredibly exhausted may require more successes. This ritual costs one Willpower to cast.

### Revive (••••••)

The pinnacle of understanding in the Path of Healing is the ability to bring back one that has traveled beyond Death's Door. Even masters of the Path can only call back those who have very recently died, and survival is never assured; more than once, a patient has been revived, only to succumb once again to his injuries. The healer burns two permanent Willpower and rolls against a difficulty of 9; she must achieve at least 3 successes, plus 1 additional success for every three minutes the patient has been dead (not counting the length of time the ritual takes to cast). If successful, the healer loses any remaining Willpower they may have (these points, unlike the initial two, can be regained over time), is physically exhausted and at -2 dice on all dice pools for the next week. The patient, while revived, still suffers from whatever ills killed him in the first place; if immediate medical attention is not forthcoming, he will quickly die once again.

## PRICE OF FAILURE

A simple failure merely means that the healer has no effect; she cannot work on this injury or disease for whatever reason. A botch, however, can be particularly horrifying in the case of this Path; stories tell of tissue surrounding a wound going hypercancerous, orifices like the mouth, nostrils, etc. suddenly "healing" themselves over, diseases going berserk and worse. The healer can also backlash the injuries of the patient onto herself or subject herself to the poisons or diseases she was trying to cure.



# HELLFIRE

Thought by many to be at least tainted by darkness, if not outright of evil origins, the Path of Hellfire taps into the deepest, most primal, and destructive of forces. Legends ascribe the beginnings of this power to the infernal realms, pacts with malevolent elemental spirits, and bargains with beings better left alone. The master of the path of hellfire can demand, and receive respect; he will also receive suspicion and fear, whether he demands them or not.

A student of the Path of Hellfire learns to summon and control powerful elemental attacks; blasts of lightning, bolts of fire or mystic energy, clouds of poison gas or other deadly effects. Unsubtle and direct, these powers, utilized properly, can obliterate even the most deadly of foes, in the hands of a master. Students of this Path should remember that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing; they are not immune to the effects of their own powers, and using this power in combat normally requires planning beforehand.

Hitting a target with a blast of Hellfire requires a successful Dexterity + Melee roll (difficulty 7). Striking at an area lowers the difficulty to 5 but allows those in the area a chance to escape (see Dodging and Resistance in *Mage Revised*, p. 152).

## SYSTEM

Roll: Manipulation + Occult  
Cost: One Willpower  
Duration: Instant

## ASPECTS

### Damage

Two dice of lethal damage per success spent. Although the basic form of Hellfire is a gout of flame, Hellfire does not do aggravated damage by default: for aggravated damage, spend 2 additional successes (some special effects preclude aggravated damage). Total number of successes spent on damage (including to buy aggravated damage) cannot exceed the dots the caster has in Hellfire.

### Range

- Touch only. The sorcerer must make a successful Brawl attack in order to hit his target and deliver damage (which is in addition to normal melee damage).
- Less than 10 feet
- Less than 25 feet
- About 50 feet
- Any target within 150 feet
- A target within 200 yards or so

### Area

- A single target
- A small area; 3 square feet or so
- No more than a couple of square yards or so
- 10 square feet (which can be arranged as a wall, circle or whatever).
- 20 square feet

••••• Approximately 50 square feet

## Special Effects

All special effects are optional and, in fact, must be purchased (using freebie or experience points; cost is equal to the cost in successes +1), as each is a separate study in destruction. Each could be considered a separate destructive Path, of which Hellfire is simply a generic sampling.

•• Earthquake: The ground cracks open, engulfs the target and crushes him before subsiding. The target will then have to dig his way free (Strength roll against difficulty 6, need as many successes as health levels suffered, extended task). Lethal damage only.

•• Lightning: A bolt of electricity fries the target. If the target is touching any conductive material (water, a suit of plate armor, wires, etc.) and anyone else is touching that material, they suffer the same damage the target did. Can be aggravated.

• Decay: Does no damage to living targets, but anything they are wearing or carrying begins to rust, decay, warp and generally fall apart at a high rate. Within 2-3 turns, anything they are wearing or holding will be junk. This effect destroys three pounds of material per point of damage that would be scored (some substances and anything that has been enchanted, will be resistant to this effect).

• Dust Storm: A blinding, stinging cloud of fine dust whirls through the area, scouring everyone in the area. Must be bought with at least three dots worth of area. All beings in the path of this cloud are blinded for the duration of the cloud (one turn per health level of damage inflicted).

• Sleet: A blast of freezing water and ice cuts across the target. Not only does this inflict damage, but it can also obscure vision (at least momentarily), and the ground surrounding the target is at least wet and may be rather slippery. Lethal damage only.

• Smoke: A thick cloud of poisonous smoke billows forth from the caster, enveloping the area. (This effect must be bought with an Area of at least 3 dots). Everyone within the cloud takes one health level of lethal damage per turn, unless they have some kind of protection (a gas mask buys 2 turns of exposure but is then rendered useless) or do not need to breathe (like vampires). Vision is totally obscured (even advanced vision, like thermographic or night vision) while within the cloud. Can be aggravated.

•• Tanglewood: nearby plants lash out, throwing storms of splinters, thorns, etc. at the target. A truly lucky magician might be able to stake a vampire this way, but don't count on it (difficulty 9, at least 5 successes needed). If the target is actually standing among any kind of dense undergrowth, the plants will envelop him (extended Strength roll against difficulty 7, need as many successes as health levels suffered to break free). Lethal damage only.

•••• Drowning Tide: This effect requires a large body of water to work (an Olympic size swimming pool is sufficient). A sudden wave or undercurrent reaches up and drags the target under the surface, smashing her body and causing drowning damage. (See the rules on drowning in *Mage Revised*, p. 249). To escape, the target will have to get to "shore" and drag himself out of the water (Strength

roll, difficulty 8, number of successes needed depends on how long he is in the water and how far he is from safety, but at least 2 successes necessary). This continues until the target escapes or dies. Drowning damage only.

## RITUALS

### Fire's Weal (••)

This ritual allows the user (or whomever they cast the ritual upon) to resist natural flames, and provides at least some protection against even mystical flames. Roll (Manipulation + Occult) against a difficulty of 7; if you score more than 2 successes, you can soak fire damage as if it were bashing damage, instead of aggravated; more successes reduce the soak number needed (so 5 successes on this check would result in the recipient being able to soak fire damage as bashing, with a -3 on the soak difficulty). This ritual costs one Willpower and lasts one scene.

### Hellblade (••)

This simple ritual attunes a weapon (normally some kind of bladed weapon, often a dagger or sword) to the powers of this Path. By spending one Willpower, you may engulf the blade in mystical fires; while burning, the weapon does aggravated damage and does 2 additional dice of damage. These fires last for up to one scene, unless the magician tries to hand the weapon to another user, at which point the flames die out. Requires a Manipulation + Occult roll, difficulty 7, with at least 2 successes rolled to take effect.

## PRICE OF FAILURE

The price of failure ought to be obvious... the powers you are trying to wield rise up and engulf you! A simple failure just indicates that nothing happened, but a botch typically means that the attack backlashes onto the caster, inflicting whatever fate was intended for the target back on the attacker.

## MANA MANIPULATION

Nearly every sorcerer recognizes the flow of some sort of power: mana, sekhem, chi, vis or some other representation of magical potential. Most magicians learn to feel or describe the energies that course through them during the casting of spells. Some, however, learn to direct these power sources in order to reshape the fundamental mystic energy about them. Geomancy, ley line channeling, feng shui — all of these sense and redirect the power of raw magic energy into new directions and shapes.

Mana Manipulation is an esoteric Path, and few sorcerers would describe it in such abstract terms — rather, most see it as an exercise described by their specific magical style. A magician used to feng shui and chi kung, for instance, will channel chi energies with special mirrors or moxa burning. A sorcerer who relies on incantations and wands will use those tools to direct Mana and store it. Spirit-talkers and shamans may rely on elaborate designs to trap and hold energy or paintings that ward off negative energies.

## SYSTEM

Roll: Manipulation + Occult  
Cost: 1 Willpower

## DARK PATHS

Most societies of sorcerers consider certain Paths to be dark knowledge, Paths whose understanding brings with it certain costs of insanity, corruption or damnation. Depending on the society, these Paths may be forbidden, taught only to those already assumed to be free of corruption or forgotten altogether, known of only in legend and myth.

Exactly which Paths are considered Dark Paths depends on the teachings of the society in question. Most Western societies consider Paths such as Hellfire, Shadowcasting, the cursing aspects of the Path of Fortune and Daimonic Summoning to be Dark Paths, but in other cultures or societies, these powers may be considered totally normal, or even sacrosanct, while others are considered utterly profane.

## THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION

Many, though not all, societies have a tradition that states in brief that what magic is used for comes back to the user. "As ye reap so shall ye sow," and "what you send out, you get back threefold" are but two examples of this philosophy.

Although not universal, this belief seems to have some grounding in fact; those who use sorcery for evil often come to evil ends. Whether or not sorcery has a conscience is up to the Storyteller to decide; it should be kept in mind, however, that sorcery does not seem to mind being used for profit or even for justified retribution or self-defense. It is only when sorcery is used to needlessly harm others or to gain wealth or power at another's expense that the law of retribution comes into effect.

The law is also not universal... far from it. Many evil sorcerers live out their lives without any problems, comfortable in their villainy.

**Modifiers:** - 1 for areas of strong Mana (Nodes and the like)  
**Time:** One turn per effect level  
**Duration:** Varies

Instead of aspects, this Path offers certain feats that may be performed at each level.

- The sorcerer can sense Mana energies. In simple terms, a quick meditation or invocation allows the sorcerer to determine if an area or item is charged with power (Quintessence, Mana, vampire blood, what have you). With three or more successes, the sorcerer can tell if it has a specific Resonance — recognizing a sacred grove as a place holy to nature and growth or determining that some sort of stored Mana is actually flavored with a destructive, poisonous Resonance, for instance.



•• While an initiate can sense magical energy in places or objects, a sorcerer with this level of Mana Manipulation can see the magical energy in and around creatures. The sorcerer's perceptions let him determine if someone is using magic and allow him to see obstructed or occluded magical flows (like blocked chi energies or curses). The sorcerer can also make a rough estimate of the potential magical energy held by an individual, though this does not guarantee separating a supernatural creature from an otherwise normal human.

••• Skilled sorcerers can displace or alter the flow of Mana around an area. The sorcerer can briefly block a Mana flow (each success causes a Node or other wellspring of Mana to become dormant for a turn) or push it in a different direction (again, for one turn per success). The sorcerer can cause Mana to become trapped in a simple object, though a given object can only hold a single point of Mana through a brief spell of this sort.

•••• Manipulation of personal Mana energies allows a sorcerer to store additional Mana (temporarily), draw from a place of power to fuel his magic or even disrupt a person's Mana flow to cause injury. The sorcerer can draw Mana out of a place of power; each success allows the sorcerer to channel one point of Mana (to the limit of the area's power), which must be used in the next turn. Striking at a person to destroy Mana allows the sorcerer to strip Mana from the individual's pool at a one-success-for-one-point rate; this can also discharge the power in other magical pools (like Gnosis) on a two-successes-per-point ratio. Mana Manipulation at this level can cause injury or healing by altering the flow of life energy through a subject, essentially promoting health or disease. (This has no immediate effect, but over time may cause degeneration or better health; long-term or powerful alterations are better performed with the Healing Path.)

••••• The master of Mana can not only sense and redirect Mana, but can use Mana to infuse countermagic (creating a magical "shield" that allows him to add Mana to a countermagic dice pool), block another sorcerer's use of Mana (each success stops an opponent's point of Mana from empowering an effect) or even change the Resonance of Mana (turning poisoned Mana into neutral, "clean" energy that could be used with helpful spells or bending otherwise passive Mana to a more active, fiery Resonance for use with destructive magic), with successes dictating the level of change — one success would alter the Resonance slightly, three would cancel out a characteristic and five would reverse it.

•••••• A legendary sorcerer can briefly cause an area to become a nexus of Mana energy. With a spell of this level, the sorcerer creates a flow of Mana for a few moments, turning himself into a sort of magical magnet. Successes garnered on such a spell are split between duration (in turns) and power (in Mana per turn). The sorcerer or others present may channel this Mana normally. Doing so, however, can be very debilitating; such magic often has side effects or burns out the caster (score one level of bashing damage for each success rolled).

## RITUALS

Mana Manipulation rituals allow a sorcerer to extend his power over Mana to cover wide areas or long durations.

## Infusion (••)

The sorcerer takes an otherwise normal potion or other consumable object and places some of his own Mana into it for later use. The successes scored determine how much Mana can go into the item. Energy usually "leaks" during this process; every two points of Mana spent by the sorcerer channel one point into the storage receptacle.

## Shape Mana (•••)

With special mirrors, diagrams, carvings or the like, the sorcerer turns the flow of Mana in an area so that it changes direction and intent. The sorcerer could cause "bad" energies to become wholesome, alter a spell effect or turn a ley line so that it runs through his residence. The level of success guides the feat: With one success, the sorcerer could dissipate some unlucky energies so that a place does not attract evil spirits or ill fortune. With three successes, the sorcerer can channel joss so that a location has good fortune (lowering by one the difficulty of all commerce or practices of the area — a store would facilitate business, a hospital would encourage healing, and so on). With five successes, the sorcerer can reshape a magic effect already in the area to the limits of his own knowledge (turning, say, a ward so that it wards against a different creature type) or even cause a Node or other source of power to channel its energy to a location of his choosing. Mana reshaped in this form typically lasts until some force "snaps" it back to normal, though some places may require specific maintenance (yearly for simple effects like good luck, perhaps daily rituals for bending ley lines).

## ONEIROMANCY

It is a frequent theme in tales of the fantastic and the magical that odd things often happen in dreams. Omens of the future are sometimes seen, messages from gods or wizards are passed on. There are tales of lovers who have not yet met, destined for each other, dreaming of their first meeting. The Dream Realm is infinitely malleable, responsive to the conscious and subconscious of the dreamer. A skilled dreamer can impose his will upon the Dream Realm, creating new images and altering the behavior of old, banishing nightmares or crafting new horrors with which to terrorize other dreamers. It is said, too, that there are world and beings that exist wholly within the world of dreams and nightmares, from the realms of the fae to the strange worlds described in the writings of Burroughs, Lovecraft and Poe.

Nearly everyone dreams. The oneiromancer walks among those dreams. Like the dreamweavers of horror movie fame, she can craft images so realistic that it is hard to tell the difference between them and reality. Still, they are "only" dreams. Or are they? An overly imaginative subconscious can quite literally dream itself to death, though this is rare. More common are the tales of wicked men who dreamed of their ultimate fate and heeded the warning to reform their ways. Such messages are a fine and subtle weapon of those who walk the dreaming night. And sometimes, dreams can walk amongst men....

## SYSTEM

Roll: Wits + Occult.

Cost: None

## ASPECTS

### Distance

In order to affect a dreamer, the oneiromancer must have some sort of contact with her target. Physical contact is the best, obviously, but the principles of Sympathy and Contagion allow the use of other means.

- Direct physical contact
- True Name
- Body part/secretion\*
- Prized possession
- Other possession\*\*

\* Blood, hair, nail clippings, saliva, urine, etc. It must be unmixd with other materials.

\*\* Any item that is in frequent contact with or use by the target, such as clothing.

### EFFECTS:

• The first step the dreamwalker must master is the ability to reach out and touch the dreams of others. They come to her as do most dreams, in flashes of imagery, often highly distorted by the subconscious. The dreamwalker can, with considerable thought, interpret parts of these shattered fragments, perhaps giving her some insight into her target's nature or history.

•• Working out the methodology to enter and take part in a dream is the next step. Entering the dream renders you temporarily a part of it; the oneiromancer's dream-self takes on an appearance and initial role in the dream provided by the dreamer's subconscious (and the Storyteller's feel for what is appropriate). It is not hard to make small changes in the dream (conjuring a small item from nowhere, say), a Wits + Dreamcraft roll at difficulty 6 suffices. Larger changes are very difficult, and the basic theme of the dream sequence is unalterable. Any change which violates it will be at a minimum difficulty of 8 and require multiple successes — and will tend to undo itself unless the dreamer pays constant attention to maintaining it.

••• Eventually, the dedicated dreamwalker will learn to isolate himself from his subject's dreams. This allows observation of the dream images without being drawn into (possibly quite dangerous) direct participation. A greater degree of control over the dream is also possible now, the dreamwalker banishing or creating nightmares and fantasies. It is possible, for example, to guide a dream to images supporting the self-confidence and surety of the dreamer, helping him to regain a point of temporary Willpower or to cast horrible terrors that mimic the effect of the Nightmares Flaw.

•••• Once she has achieved sufficient control over the dream, the next step is to master dream sendings. The oneiromancer can craft a specific, detailed dream sequence and send it off to the target, to be repeated as many times as the caster gains successes on his casting roll. The prudent dreamwalker keeps these to one or two repetitions a night; any more and the subject may grow suspicious.

••••• A master of the Dream Realm is a powerful individual; she walks freely in the dreams of others and is capable of melding the dreams of several folk into one (she can

bring one person into the dream for each success on the casting roll). Of course, she has no control over the dreamers' actions, and the initial environment will be a mix of their subconscious influences, but careful nudges can send the group into a suitable dream with a bit of effort.

••••• The greatest and most legendary power of Oneiromancy is the ability to make the dream real: physical entry into the Dream Realm. One who accomplishes this incredibly difficult feat can walk from dream to dream almost at will and may even be able to bring items (or even living things) out of the dream into the real world — for a time.

### PRICE OF FAILURE:

A botched dreamweaving typically casts the sorcerer into a Nightmare Realm as his own subconscious takes control of the dream. Storytellers are encouraged to reach deep into their bags of tricks. Use the character's fears and memory of past disasters against him. The descriptions of Harrowings in *Wraith: The Oblivion* can be quite useful in this. Note also that stepping into the dreams of a person who suffers the effects of the Nightmares Flaw can be a disaster all by itself, their dream images are powerful and frequently painful.

## SHADOWCASTING

With mastery of this Path, the shadows become your tools, the darkness your ally, and the night your friend. Despite the accusations of those who claim that the Path is, if not actively infernal, at least tinged with an ineffable darkness that can corrupt the unwary, the Path of Shadows is no more inherently evil than most other Paths. Whatever evil a sorcerer finds on the Path of Shadows, he brought himself.

A shadowcaster learns to manipulate and conjure shadowstuff — at first, mere simple shade but, with experience, near-tangible blackness or total nightfall. Color and light are absorbed and extinguished by these shadows, which dance and caper at the sorcerer's beck and call. Needless to say, such displays can be quite unnerving; even a novice sorcerer can conjure effects that will frighten the wits out of most normal humans.

### SYSTEM

|            |                              |
|------------|------------------------------|
| Roll:      | Manipulation + Occult        |
| Cost:      | 1 Willpower                  |
| Modifiers: | None                         |
| Time:      | One turn per level of effect |
| Duration:  | Varies                       |

This Path does not have aspects per se; rather, its effects are limited by raw level.

• The caster can deepen and darken shadows and darkness in a room or area. The overall lighting doesn't alter, but those shadows that do exist will be much darker than they ought to be. If you desire, those shadows can carry with them a feeling of unease and spookiness. Exact effects depend on the situation (using this ability in a brightly lit office will have little effect, while doing it in a shadowy warehouse would give a sorcerer (and others) the effect of an extra dot of Stealth).



•• By shaping the shadows in his area and muffling the sounds he makes, the sorcerer can become almost impossible to discover. He can make his appearance indistinct, his voice eerie and creepy and the shadows deep and dark around himself. Add 2 dice to dice pools involving Arcane, Disguise (for purposes of hiding your appearance, not for taking on the appearance of others), Intimidation or Stealth. If the sorcerer casts the shadows on another, the victim will begin to see things out of the corner of his eyes, horrible shadowy forms that dissolve when the head turns. Strange creaks, ominous footsteps and hollow laughter will inhabit his hearing, and a rising sense of dread will occupy every spare thought. A Willpower roll (difficulty equal to the number of successes rolled) is necessary to avoid fumbling and hesitation; while not enough to cause penalties, this will cause someone to reconsider whether or not they should be here, instead of safe at home in his well-lit living room....

••• The shadows rile and coil about the shadowcaster. Color fades from the area, and sounds become mere whispers and murmurs... or sudden piercing laughs, screams and other sounds of terror. Panic rises in all but the most stout hearted (Willpower roll, difficulty equal to the successes rolled + 2; failure indicates either a sudden, near irresistible urge to be elsewhere or a -1 to all tasks). You may add 3 dice to your attempts to conceal your character (or another).

•••• The shadows are the sorcerer's allies in all ways. Those who oppose him must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) or be struck down in near-terror (-2 on all tasks — fear this great may drive some to frenzy). Add 4 dice to your dice pools for Intimidation, Arcane and Stealth. Cameras and other electronic recording devices will fail unless the operators succeed at an Intelligence + (appropriate skill: Computers, Investigation, Photography, Science) roll (difficulty 8, generally, although very simple equipment might need only a 6).

••••• The shadows reach out and engulf the caster's opponents; what they see there is enough to reduce even the greatest to shivering wrecks. Used offensively, the opponent must make a Willpower check (difficulty 8, 3 successes needed) or be reduced to uselessness for several turns; a victim that was already afraid of the dark or enclosed spaces will probably require psychiatric attention before recovering. Those shrouded in the darkness will be totally invisible to those outside it (and to each other). Naturally, the caster can see in his own darkness. Any recording device brought into the darkness fails immediately (no roll allowed); any pointed at the darkness see only roiling masses of... nothing. Inky blackness. Shadows.

•••••• The legendary sorcerer can give the shadows a physical form, shaping them into chains or tentacles to grab and hold those he wants stopped. The number of successes scored represents the total amount of Strength that can be brought to bear against opponents; you can divide these points up as you want. Bright light will weaken these shadows; sunlight will destroy them. Alternatively, the caster can use this power to dim even the brightest lights; even the sun will dim, although only temporarily, and only in a small, well-defined area (an alley way or courtyard, for example).

## PRICE OF FAILURE

The shadows are cruel servants... or are they masters? In any case, botches with this Path are certainly undesirable. Sorcerers can end up befuddling themselves as much (or more) than their opponents, drawing the shadows they intended to inflict on others upon themselves. Rumors speak of shadowy forms coming out of shadows that didn't exist... couldn't exist, in broad daylight, to draw a sorcerer who has badly botched into the darkness, never to be seen again. Others speak of things drawn forth that have forever pursued students of this Path... and those caught by them are never quite the same again.

## SHAPESHIFTING (NO RITUALS)

While the World of Darkness is indeed home to some shapeshifting monsters, a few sorcerers learn to alter their bodies through magical practice rather than inborn heritage. Perhaps it's a spoken word that calls to the primal animal within or the intervention of an animal-spirit or even a little judicious genetic engineering. This Path is very elemental, often calling upon instinctive knowledge, and many sorcerers have lost their personalities to the beast-side conjured up. Others lose their identity in malleability. For a few, shapeshifting is less an art than a natural talent, but one unchanneled by the callings of the true Changing Breeds. It seems that Shapeshifting comes in as many forms as its practitioners.

### SYSTEM

**Roll:** Stamina + Animal Ken (mythic sorcery)  
Intelligence + Science (extraordinary science)  
**Cost:** One Willpower per use  
**Modifiers:** None  
**Duration:** One scene

### ASPECTS

#### Shift Scale

- A minor cosmetic change: The sorcerer can change eye colors, grow hair, etc.
- Noticeable change: The sorcerer grows small claws, sprouts scales on the hands or the like.
- Significant change: The sorcerer replaces some body part with an animal feature — a full clawed paw, a nasty shark jaw or an externalized digestive system.
- Half-shift: The sorcerer can shift half of his body into another form or find some halfway point between human and animal with significant traits of each. The sorcerer might resemble a bipedal wolf (of size somewhere between human and wolf) or could have bird wings and a beak with human legs.
- Full shifting: The sorcerer can change completely into animal forms.
- Mythic shifting: Not only can the sorcerer take on animal forms, he may turn into forms that he only imagines.

### Subject

- The sorcerer can only affect himself.
- The sorcerer can affect a different subject instead of himself.
- The sorcerer can affect two subjects at once.
- The sorcerer can affect up to three subjects at a time.

### Disparity

- The sorcerer can only affect himself and must take only one animal feature.
- The sorcerer can make two unrelated shifts: having a wolf claw and a raven's head or changing himself to have fangs and an opponent to have whiskers.
- The sorcerer can make three unrelated shifts.
- The sorcerer can freely mix and match shifting traits.

## PRICE OF FAILURE

Shapeshifters have a tendency to lose control over their shifting processes; a sorcerer who botches might trap himself in an animal's body or accidentally give an enemy useful advantages. The sorcerer could replace his mental acuity with animal instincts, or his body might start shifting out of control.

## SUMMONING, BINDING AND WARDING (ALL RITUALS)

Perhaps the most ubiquitous among legendary sorceries is the ability to bind and control various natural or supernatural

entities. Sorcerers can use their powers to command ghosts, demons, animals — even other people. With protective circles the sorcerer hedges out enemies, while with summoning spells, he calls the subjects to him.

Summoning, Binding and Warding are perhaps the most dangerous of spells. Attempts to bind creatures almost inevitably make them hostile. A sorcerer may not know that a ward is unsuccessful until an enemy attacks! And, of course, many hapless sorcerers learn to summon creatures long before learning to bind and control them. Worst still, many extradimensional beings possess will too strong to be easily bound.

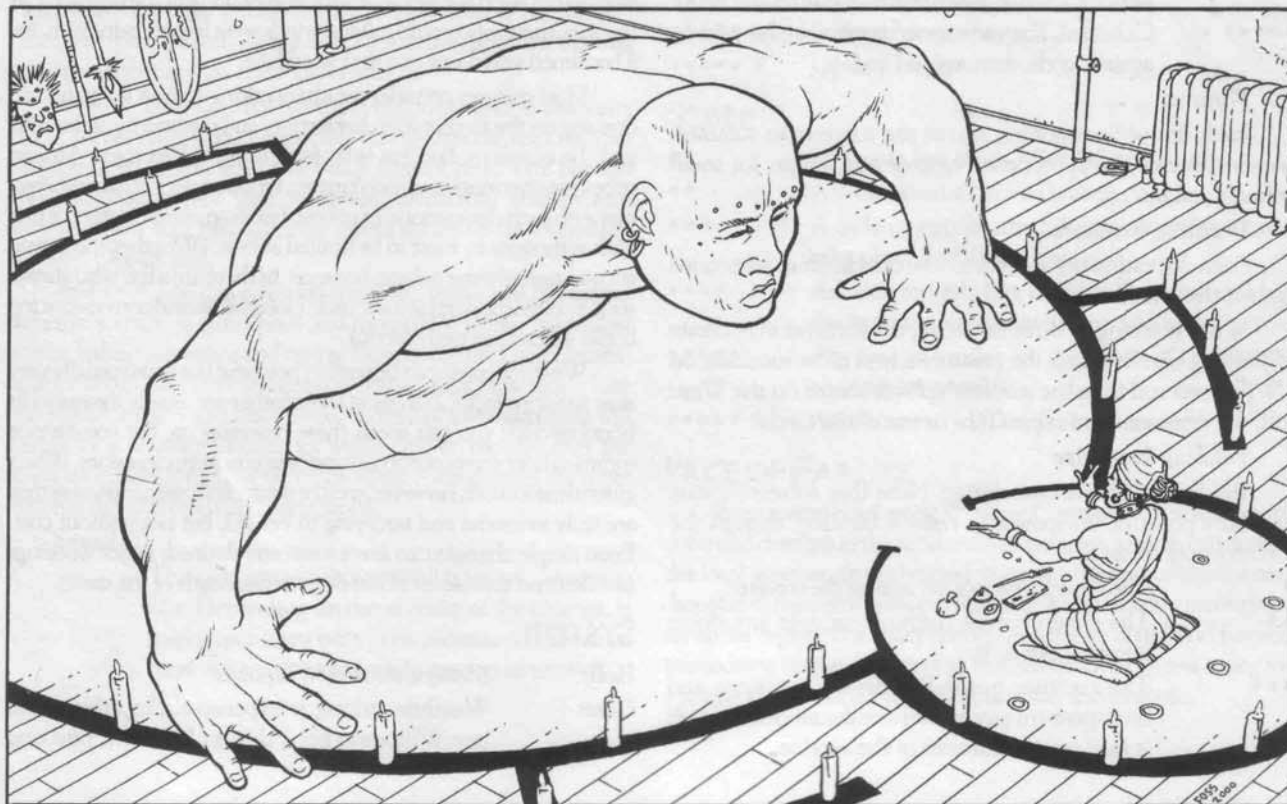
All Summoning, Binding and Warding powers are rituals; the sorcerer must properly prepare and incant to make the effect happen. The aspects determine the sorts of creature that the sorcerer can summon and for how long. Each type of creature requires a separate ritual: Summon Rats, Bind Rats and Ward Against Vampires are all separate rituals.

Summoning, Binding and Warding covers many different areas of study. Material Summoning refers to physical creatures, like the summons of rats or bats. Daimonic Summoning affects angelic or demonic entities. Ephemera refers to the practice of dealing with spirits in general; Necromancy covers dealings with ghosts of the dead. Coiling or Technomantic Summoning refers to the practice of summoning or binding technological items — some modern sorcerers might even call their cars to them or ward their computers against viruses!

### SYSTEM

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Cost: One Willpower





**Modifiers:** None  
**Duration:** See below

## ASPECTS

### Creatures Affected

A creature compelled by a Summoning must appear to the sorcerer. Thus, the sorcerer can see spirits or the like that are brought forth, vampires are forced from hiding, etc. Note that the creature must move under its own power; the spell does not teleport it into the location. Thus, Summoning a toaster does little good unless it has wheels.

- Simple creatures: The sorcerer can affect small, unintelligent animals, like rats, bats and insects. This also functions upon simple nature spirits or basic technological devices.
- Large creatures: The summoner may affect large animals like wolves. The summoner may also affect ghosts of the dead or larger technical devices like televisions.
- Humans: The summoner's magic functions upon *normal* humans or upon self-willed natural spirits. Computers and complex electronics may be affected.
- Paranatural: The summoner can affect ghouls, other sorcerers and similar supernatural entities. Technomagical devices may be affected.
- Supernatural: The summoner's powers reach beyond to affect truly supernatural material beings such as vampires, werewolves and the like. The sorcerer could use technosummons against airplanes, wards across entire buildings and so on.
- Celestial: The summoner can invoke his powers against gods, demons and angels.

### Number

Each dot of Summoning allows the sorcerer to summon one creature of the appropriate type or one swarm for small animals and insects.

### Warding Strength

Each dot causes the subject to lose one die from all actions against the sorcerer.

With Warding at three or above, the sorcerer may create a Warding Circle; unless the creature scores more successes on a Willpower roll than the sorcerer's player scored on the Ward roll, the creature cannot pass into or out of the circle.

### Binding Intensity

Binding levels are cumulative. Note that a creature may expend a point of Willpower to resist a Binding, though the sorcerer may recast it.

- The creature cannot act against the sorcerer.
- The creature must truthfully answer any single question put to it.
- The creature truthfully answers questions and must perform any one service demanded, though it may twist the intent of the service.

- The creature performs a task for the caster as directed, following the orders closely.
- The sorcerer may command the creature to perform one task on behalf of another person and order it to answer any questions put to it by others.
- The creature follows the spirit as well as the letter of the sorcerer's commands.

### Duration

- One turn
- Three turns
- One scene
- One day
- One story
- Permanent (?)

## PRICE OF FAILURE

The price of failure should be self-evident for Summoning, Binding and Warding. Those who meddle in the affairs of demons eventually get what they deserve. A creature may arrive and pretend to be under control; a warding circle might hedge against the sorcerer; a binding may simply enrage the target and even make the subject resistant to the sorcerer's spells.

## WEATHER CONTROL (NO RITUALS)

Weather witches have always been among the most revered and feared members of the sorcerer community. In ancient time, a witch could doom a community to a slow death by withholding the rains the crops needed... or could wreck it quickly by bringing on storms that flood the fields, destroy homes and kill the unwary. On the seas, those who could call the winds were lifesavers in truth, for a becalmed vessel was one that would die.

Most cultures consider weatherworking to be a woman's art, drawing on the ties between her fertility and the bounty of the land and the elements, but this is far from universal; in some African tribes, weather magic was men's magic, for example. Technosorcerers make no such distinctions, of course, but then, their mastery of this Path is thought by most to be limited at best. (Whether this is true is a question of some debate, however, as there are a few who always seem to have the wind at their back, cloudy skies and convenient fog banks when they need them.)

Weather magic can be terribly powerful but is also usually very slow to take effect. Changes in the weather are usually measured in hours or days; you can speed these processes up, but you cannot summon tidal waves out of nothing or storms from clear skies. When given time to work, however, weathercraft can command forces that are truly awesome and terrifying to behold, but not without cost. Even simple changes can leave a sorcerer drained; major workings can demand terrible sacrifices or even the death of the caster.

## SYSTEM

- Roll:** Manipulation + Willpower  
**Cost:** Weatherworking is expensive. An effect costs one Willpower per 2 dots in Intensity, plus one

for every 3 dots of Duration, Speed and Scale (or fraction thereof).

**Modifiers:** none

**Duration:** see below

**Note:** Because of the nature of weathercraft, the sorcerer does not gain the benefit of Path dots as freebie successes; almost all weathercraft casting will be performed as extended task checks.

## ASPECTS

### Intensity

• You can make small changes in the environment: a sudden cold breeze, a slight drop in room temperature, a softening of the light in a room, the sudden flaring of candles.

•• Minor changes to the environment are possible; you can summon up a dense fog, ensure that skies are cloudy or create favorable winds.

••• The rains and winds are at your command. Rain showers come when you call them, and strong winds blow where you will. You can change the local temperature by as much as 30 degrees in either direction and can calm strong seas or currents.

•••• Storms move and surge where you will; powerful rains, gale force winds, heat waves and cold snaps (changes of up to 40 degrees in temperature), and powerful tides and undercurrents are all at your command. You can also take control of existing weather patterns; an additional Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 7) allows you to direct some phenomenon of the storm (hailstones, powerful waves, lightning bolts, smashing winds, etc.) at a specific target. These attacks do (4 health levels + the caster's successes); a new roll must be made for each attack. Lightning bolts do lethal damage (aggravated if the subject "botches" the soak roll), other attacks do either lethal or bashing damage depending on their exact effects.

••••• Your control over the thunderstorm is absolute. Great waves surge and crash when you command, and no man can stand when you send the winds against him. The blizzard and the drought are your weapons. Elemental attacks sent against others do 6 health levels + your successes on a Manipulation + Occult roll.

•••••• You can summon the most destructive of weather patterns: tornadoes, hurricanes and monsoons, killing frosts, dust storms, lethal heat waves and raging thunderstorms. Their elemental attacks can kill even the most powerful of men; attacks do a base of 8 health levels + successes rolled. Storms of this magnitude will disrupt local weather patterns for weeks or even months after the storm itself fades away; the faster the storm is summoned the more extreme the aftermath and disruptions.

### Speed

• The changes you request will happen... eventually. Depending on the severity of the change, it might take anywhere from minutes to a week or more for the weather you summon to arrive.

••

Minor manipulations of the local weather occur within a few seconds or minutes of your enacting the change. Major changes still take long periods of time to take effect, depending on the severity of the shift.

•••

Small changes take effect within a minute of your calling them, and larger changes require only a few hours to a day to take effect. The most extreme of shifts in weather, however, still take several days to set up.

••••

Minor changes are almost instantaneous, larger changes occur within a few hours, and extreme changes happen in a day or two.

•••••

Minor changes occur when and how you ask them to, larger changes happen in an hour or so, and even extreme changes usually take place within a day of you asking for them.

••••••

Even the largest of storms come within an hour or two of your calling them. Summoning a storm with this kind of speed is guaranteed to mess up local weather patterns and will certainly attract large amounts of attention from those who watch the skies... not to mention weirding out every meteorologist on the same continent as you are.

### Duration

•

A few seconds, no more, and only for minor changes.

••

A minute or so. Major changes cannot last this short a period of time.

•••

A few minutes, maybe half an hour at most.

••••

An hour at most

•••••

Several hours, maybe a day.

••••••

Up to a week.

## SCALE

•

50 square feet or so. Minor changes only.

••

Affects about a half-mile area.

•••

A mile or two in size. Extreme changes cannot take place in this small an area.

••••

An area roughly five miles in diameter. All but the most extreme changes are possible.

•••••

An area 20 miles in diameter. Any kind of changes are possible.

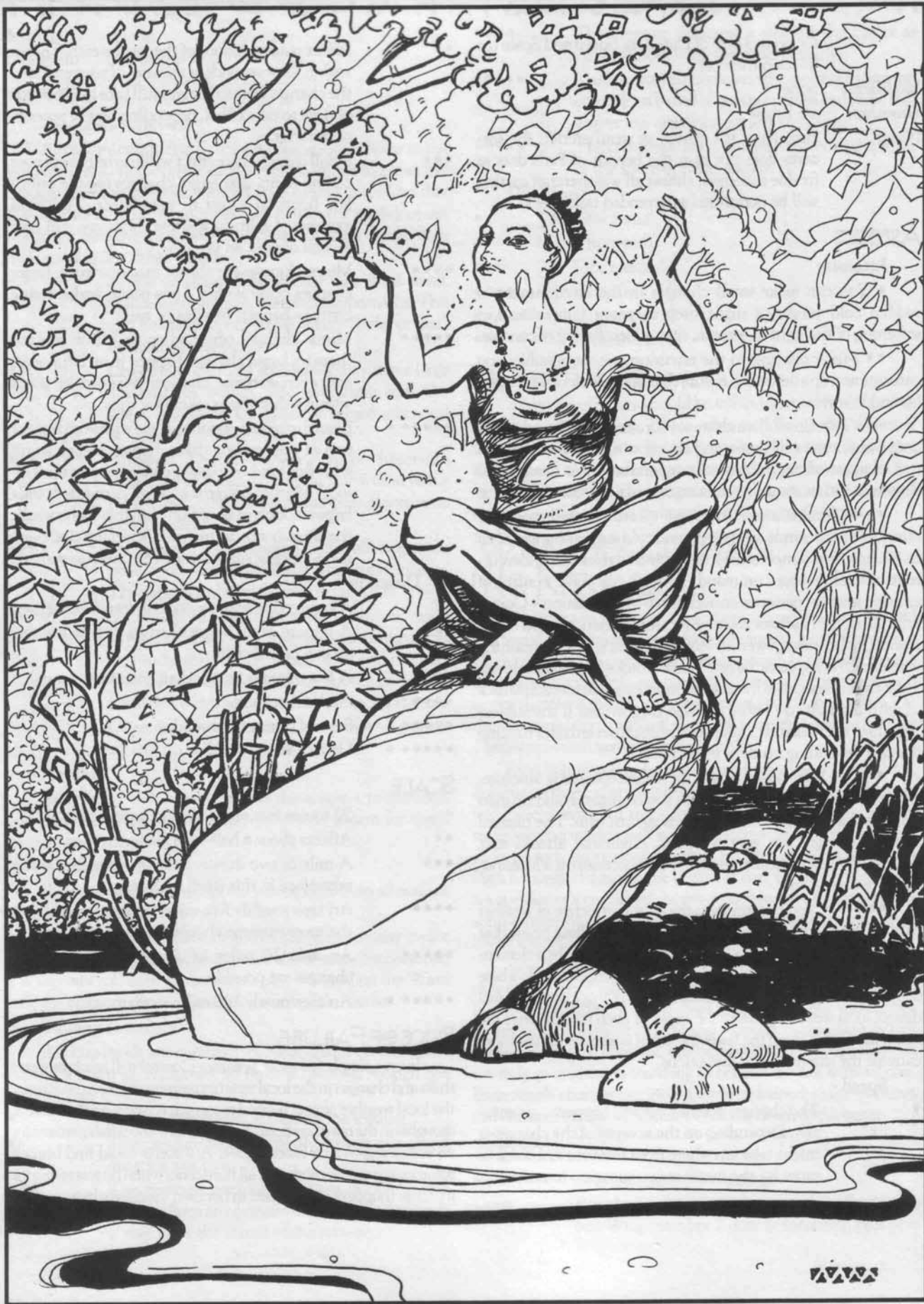
••••••

An area nearly 100 miles in diameter.

## PRICE OF FAILURE

Even a simple failure at Weather Control will result in weird shifts and changes in the local weather patterns; a botch can disrupt the local weather almost beyond recognition (snow on the Sahara, droughts in the rain forests, etc.) or muck up the weather patterns for an entire region to a lesser degree. A sorcerer could find himself summoning up the mother of all hurricanes when he was trying for a simple thunderstorm or fried in her own thunderbolts.





# CHAPTER FIVE: PSYCHIC PHENOMENA



While some few people study for years to unlock mystic potential, a few are born with an innate sense of the strange — the vague feeling that some deeper understanding lurks in the mind or the body, a visceral awareness of the intangible energies around them. Whether psychic phenomena are some sort of intuitive sorcery or an altogether different plane of understanding, nobody knows. Indeed, little is conclusively known about psychic

powers; few people believe in them, and fewer still have any sort of talent with them. The mysteries of the psychic world, it seems, will not fall readily to analysis.

Those who make a study of psychic powers, whether through science or mysticism, note many different realms of empathy, extrasensory perception, manipulation and detection. What most psychic powers have in common is their means of use: The majority of psychics find that concentration and visualization are the most important tools for their abilities. While such tools are also necessary components of



sorcery, few psychics feel a need for outside rituals or devices. Many simply extend a hand or close their eyes and exert their will, and something happens.

For most psychics, control remains rudimentary and haphazard. Psychic phenomena remain far from reliable or repeatable, in many cases. Under stress or test conditions many powers seem to fade or fail, and even a practiced psychic can rarely exert power with reliable precision. Sometimes, a power exceeds expectation; other times, it simply won't seem to come to the fore.

Theories of psychic development abound, of course, among those who make study of such things: Throwbacks to Atlantean forbears; alien intervention; the next step in human evolution; mutants; spiritual entities — the theories are nearly as wild and diverse as the powers themselves. In the meantime, the psychics hidden among the populace find their powers a mixed blessing, perhaps an insight into a wider and more maddening world.

## PSYCHICS AS SORCERERS (OR CHI MASTERS OR WHAT-HAVE-YOU)

Whether psychics are truly distinct from sorcerers or are simply a separate brand of them remains a matter of dispute. The very unreliability of psychic phenomena makes classification difficult. These rules assume that psychics are something relatively distinct, people whose minds or spirits give them access to unusual powers that are not exactly magical but far from normal. If you prefer, though, you can use something resembling more of a unified system: Just assume that a psychic is essentially manipulating the same powers as a sorcerer, but in a different way — through focus and concentration alone, maybe with one or two small items to focus the will but without elaborate rituals, tools or spiritual aides. In such a case, simply allow the full range of psychic and sorcerous abilities to overlap, and let characters learn either — the only difference is that the psychic uses fierce concentration (and lots of Willpower), while the sorcerer relies more upon tools. Conversely, if you wish to maintain a separate "feel" between sorcery and psychic phenomena, assume the separation between the sorts of powers and the idea that the two are totally different disciplines.

## PREVIOUS WORKS

Previously published works have listed a single psychic ability here and there, hidden kernels of psychic power among other magical abilities. While this list is far from complete (*Hey, where's the ability to psychically turn eggs into elephants?*), it does attempt to cover the range of psychic phenomena. Additionally, some of the abilities listed do not match previously published versions. Players and Storytellers should work together to decide which version they prefer.

## ANIMAL PSYCHICS

*The guard dog snarled. Hot drool dripped from its muzzle, and Kevin could almost count the teeth in the Rottweiler's mouth.*

## BUT I WANNA TELEPORT TO MIARS...

Players familiar with the White Wolf game *Trinity* will notice a difference between the powers and power levels available in this handbook and those presented in that game.

Good. Glad you were paying attention.

The World of *Trinity* and the World of Darkness are two distinct places. The higher power levels of *Trinity* fit that game world. Similarly, the eerie, somewhat unreliable psychic phenomena described here are more suited to the World of Darkness.

With that caveat, players and Storytellers interested in psychic phenomena should check out *Trinity*, especially the freeform psi system described in the *Trinity Players Guide*.

Oh, remember one thing, though: The World of Darkness a game of modern horror in a world almost our own. Really cinematic psychic powers don't fit into the feel of the game. Psychic phenomena should be mysterious and unreliable.

*"Good dog," he whispered. The dog's expression changed immediately. He sat down and let Kevin scratch him behind the ears. "That's a good boy." Kevin waved for his companions to join him. Kevin chuckled the dog under his chin. The formerly fierce junkyard dog licked Kevin's palm. With his other hand, Kevin reached in his pocket. "Got a treat for you."*

While most psychic abilities affect other humans, some psychics use their talents on the "lower" animals. The actual method of communication may vary. Some psychics bark or growl at the animal. Others use dressage gestures, even if the animal has never even seen a trainer before. A few simply speak their native language (or even an imaginary one) and hear the animal speak it back to them. Animals may communicate with the psychic, though the information they relate should be limited by their intelligence and perceptions.

Animal psychics may use their power on any mammal, lizard or bird with no change in the difficulty. In fact, highly intelligent animals (chimpanzees, dolphins, gorillas) or well-trained animals (dogs, horses, circus or show animals) are more susceptible to Animal Psychic. At the Storyteller's discretion, reduce the difficulty by one or two. Fish are harder to control; increase the difficulty by two. Insect minds are too simple (or perhaps too different) for the psychic to affect.

**Roll:** Charisma + Animal Ken

• **Communication:** The psychic may "speak" with a single animal, allowing two-way communication with the beast. This communication does not give the psychic control over the animal, though misunderstandings may be explained away. Roll at difficulty 6.

•• **Command:** The psychic can command the animal to perform for him. The animal will not endanger itself for the psychic. However, it can do any trick the psychic can

adequately describe. Under certain circumstances, an animal will attack for the psychic, though it would be under circumstances where the animal had some proclivity toward attacking in the first place. A police dog might bring someone to the ground, or a hungry tiger might go after a hunter. Roll at difficulty 7, with modifiers depending upon the complexity of the command (plus one for a rather complex command or one to which the animal is ambivalent; minus one for something it would do anyway).

••• Mass Communication: This power works like the Communication power, though it now works on all animals within earshot. Additionally, the psychic may communicate with multiple types of animals simultaneously. Roll at difficulty 6, plus one for each additional species of animal in the area of communication.

•••• Mind Link: With this power, the psychic joins his mind with that of a single animal. Once the link is established, the psychic's and the animal's minds are linked until the psychic drops the connection. While linked, the psychic can perceive whatever the animal perceives. She can also communicate with the animal, using any of the lesser Animal Psychic powers, with the difficulty reduced by one. The drawback to this power is that if the animal is injured, the mental feedback injures the psychic. For every lethal wound level the animal takes, the psychic takes one bashing wound level (soakable normally). Difficulty is 8.

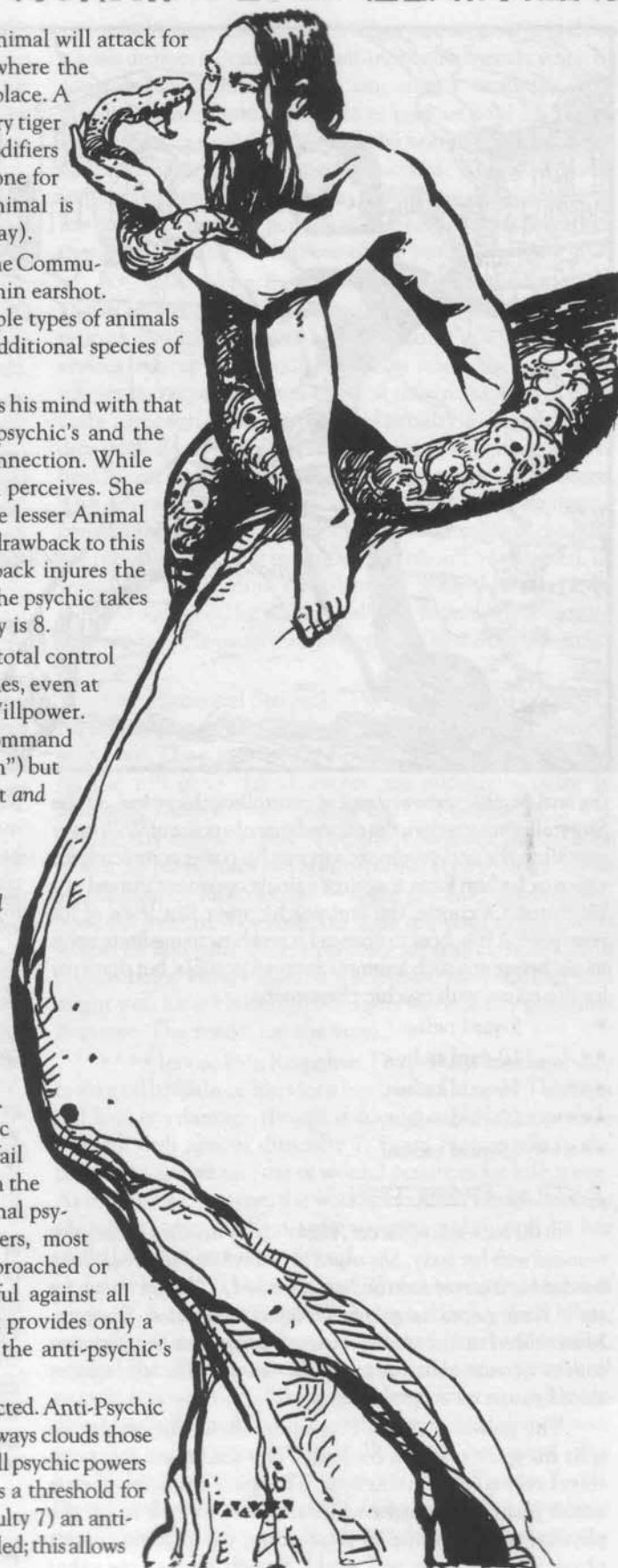
••••• Domination: This ability gives the psychic total control of an animal's mind. It will do whatever the psychic wishes, even at the cost of its own life. Roll at difficulty 8 and spend 1 Willpower. The animal will explicitly follow one command. The command may be conditional ("if somebody attacks me, then kill him") but can not be conjunctive ("follow the scent of this shirt and attack him").

## ANTI-PSYCHIC

*Zippo looked around at the basement of the abandoned building. This will burn nicely, he thought, very nicely. He snapped his fingers. His eyes widened, and he looked down at his hand. He snapped again and whispered, "burn." His voice quavered, and he snapped a third time, "burn, damn you." A voice came from behind him. "Sorry, firebug. Can't let you do that."*

Anti-psychic is the rarest psychic talent yet observed. The psychics' very presence makes even reliable psychic talents weaken or fail. Sensitives, before their powers fail them, describe the anti-psychic as generating a "static" in the mental plane. An anti-psychic cannot purchase additional psychic powers. Due to the subtle nature of their powers, most anti-psychics remain unaware of their talent until approached or even attacked by other psychics. Anti-Psychic is useful against all psychic abilities, as well as the Mind Sphere (though it provides only a single level of defense against the latter, regardless of the anti-psychic's power).

The stronger the anti-psychic, the larger the radius affected. Anti-Psychic isn't "activated" in the fashion of other powers; rather, it always clouds those around the anti-psychic, adding its level to the difficulty of all psychic powers in the area. (As usual, pushing a difficulty past 9 generates a threshold for successes.) With a roll of Intelligence + Meditation (difficulty 7) an anti-psychic may dampen this aura down one level per success rolled; this allows







the anti-psyhic some attempt at controlling the power. At the Storyteller's discretion, the expenditure of a point of Willpower may allow the anti-psyhic to suppress his power completely for a turn or let him focus it against a single opponent instead of a large area. Of course, the anti-psyhic must first learn of his power, what it is, how to channel it and how to meditate upon its use before any such attempts are even possible, but that's par for the course with psychic phenomena.

- 5-yard radius.
- 10-yard radius.
- 15-yard radius.
- 20-yard radius.
- 25-yard radius.

## ASTRAL PROJECTION

*In the back seat of the car, Karla's body twitched as her spirit reunited with her body. She wiped her mouth and stretched. John handed her a can of soda and quietly asked, "So, was the tip for real?" Karla gulped hungrily for the liquid and nodded. "Yuppers. Mister Vice-President for Marketing is doing more than dictation with his secretary. His wife can call her lawyers. The hotel receipts should give us all the proof they need."*

The power of Astral Projection allows the psychic to split his spirit off from his body. The discarnate spirit can travel very quickly in this form. The spirit intangibly travels across planes of thought while still able to look in on the physical world. While in astral form, the psychic cannot physically affect the real world, though he may use other

psychic abilities (the difficulty numbers for doing so are increased by two). However, while away from his body, he cannot perceive what is happening to it. Many out-of-body travelers have nightmares about someone moving or harming their physical self while their spirit is roaming free.

Two astrally projecting characters may affect each other, though for purposes of astral combat, they substitute their Wits for Dexterity, their Intelligence for Strength and their Perception for Stamina. Some astrally projecting psychics could once perceive ghosts and certain spirits, but most such spirits now appear as blurry forms, barely in the realm of perception. In general, an astral spirit can see the material world or other abstract spirits in the realm of thought; ghosts of the dead and the like usually remain imperceptible except to those psychics who also have some mediumship abilities.

To release the astral form, the player spends one point of Willpower and rolls for the power. Should the player botch while attempting to have his characters step outside his body, the psychic is unable to leave his body for 24 hours. Psychics who frequent the astral plane whisper that other entities sometimes intrude there, human or otherwise, and on some occasions find their souls drawn to strange spirit worlds far removed from the mortal plane. A few never find their way back. Caution is the rule when exploring planes unknown to humans.

**Roll:** Perception + Meditation (difficulty 8)

- With only rudimentary awareness of astral existence, the psychic can shift her senses to feel the astral realm but

cannot quite enter it. The psychic sees the astral realm overlaid upon the normal physical world. Some psychics prefer to close their eyes and visualize the astral plane, while others have no difficulty watching both. A psychic may view the astral realm for so long as she maintains her concentration upon it.

- The character can leave her body for one minute per point of Stamina. While in astral form, she can only perceive by sight. She is also limited to traveling approximately one mile away from her body.

- The character can leave her body for up to 10 minutes per point of Stamina. She gains the ability to hear in astral form and can travel up to 100 miles from her body.

- The psychic can now leave her body for up to an hour per point of Stamina and travel up to 1,000 miles away. Each additional hour out of her body after the first requires the expenditure of a point of Willpower. If the player succeeds on a Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty 8), the psychic can manifest visually to observers as a translucent, ghostly apparition, though the projector cannot communicate verbally with observers.

- The psychic may astrally travel anywhere in the world, so long as her body remains healthy, and she may use all of her senses normally. The psychic's form (should she choose to manifest, using the same roll previously noted) appears as a blurry and translucent version of her usual physical appearance, somewhat idealized. While manifest, the projector can speak, though only in a soft whisper. Like her visual appearance, her speech does not appear on recordings.

## BIOCONTROL

The dollar bills piled up on the bar. Five sorely drunken men, one only acting somewhat tipsy, stood in a loose circle. "Last one to drop it gets the kitty," confirmed the sober one. "One... two... three!" Six matches flickered to life, pinched between clenched fingers. As the flame traveled down the cheap paper, one by one, the matches dropped. At the last, one drunken man and one sober one held flickering flames between their fingers. Gasping in pain, the last drunk dropped his match.

"Sumbitch hurts!" His eyes widened. "How you doing that, Phil?"

The sober Phil watched the match flicker out between his thumb and forefinger. "Practice."

Most psychics turn their paranormal abilities outward, sensing things beyond normal perceptions or controlling them with their wills. Other psychics turn their powers inward. Psychics with Biocontrol regulate their autonomic nervous systems with the ease that others tie their shoes. Proper use of Biocontrol allows a psychic to shut down pain, regulate his internal organs or even direct the flow of blood and glandular secretions at will. While some otherwise normal people learn basic techniques of biofeedback, the truly talented psychic can perform marvels beyond all but the most dedicated meditative disciple.

**Roll:** Stamina + Meditation

- Self-Control: The psychic has power over his body to a basic degree. By entering a self-induced hypnotic state, he controls basic functions. He can stop a small cut from bleeding, ignore small amounts of pain or hold his breath longer than he would be able to under normal circumstances. Roll at difficulty 6 for the effect to succeed. While in this self-imposed trance, the psychic can do nothing else but focus on his body. He remains peripherally aware of their surroundings but can bring himself out of the trance at will.

- Self-Healing: By maintaining his internal focus over a long period of time, the psychic accelerates the healing process. Psychics with self-healing recover at a vastly accelerated rate, as their bodily controls allow them to more efficiently reknit flesh and fight off infections. Roll at difficulty 7, though the current wound penalty *does* apply to the dice pool. Every success reduces the time for the wound to heal by one stage on the healing chart (see page 247 of *Mage: The Ascension*). The character must spend his time resting comfortably (preferably under some sort of medical care) for the power to work. For instance, if Raymond was Mauled, he would roll his Stamina + Meditation minus two dice. If he scored 3 successes, he would heal from Mauled to Wounded in three days. He could then roll again to heal from Wounded to Injured.

- Hysterical Strength: The psychic gains control of his adrenal glands, allowing brief periods of hysterical strength and speed. The player rolls at difficulty 8. Every two successes on the roll gives the character one additional point to Strength, Dexterity or Stamina up, to a maximum of five dots in any characteristic. The effect lasts one scene, after which the player must roll again at difficulty 6 to "soak" these successes in bashing damage — as the psychic "comes down" from the hysterical episode, his body responds to the excessive stress and pain. (Some psychics see this more as a form of channeled energy than as a scientific methodology and might well have Hysterical Strength without any glandular response. The results are the same.)

- Ignore Pain Response: The psychic has the ability to shut off his pain centers for a brief period of time. This does not heal any damage, though it does let him function while injured. Roll against difficulty 7. Every success allows the psychic to ignore one die of wound penalties for one scene. At the end of the scene, the wound modifiers return, and the character cannot deflect away the pain again until he has healed at least one wound level.

- Mind Over Matter: The character's control of his body is complete. At will, he can stop his own heart, suspend the need for oxygen, regulate digestive functions, control the immune system and accelerate or suppress cell growth, regeneration or processing. In effect, the psychic can direct her body consciously to perform feats of biology almost as if her cells responded individually to her mind. The psychic can nullify most toxins with a difficulty 8 roll, though sufficiently large doses (like a quart of mercury) would overwhelm his system. He can fight off just about any



mundane disease, allergen or irritant and can even try to counteract severe diseases like HIV or cancer (again, at difficulty 8). With pain control (previous), he can flex and contort his body into unnatural positions and slip out of bonds or into tight spaces. He can hold his breath for minutes at a time while remaining active and, if necessary, can actively redirect toxins to other parts of the body — so he might be able to keep his mind and hands working by shunting the effects of poison gas all into his legs. The psychic can, if he prepares his body against trauma, gain a normal Stamina soak against any sort of damage, even aggravated (difficulty 8; successes determine the maximum number of dice that the psychic can use to soak lethal or aggravated damage for the scene, not counting armor or other external modifiers).

## CHANNELING

*Mrs. Jefferson slowly walked from the grocery store to the bus stop. The bags were heavy and, once again, the bag boys pointedly didn't offer to help her carry them. "Kids today," she thought. "Momma, you must be laughing at me up in Heaven. I deserve it, I do." A screech of breaks and a wet, meaty thump pulled her from her reverie. The SUV and the pedestrian met, and the SUV won. On the street, a young boy bled from multiple injuries. His skateboard lay in the bushes nearby. Mrs. Jefferson prayed to herself, "Doctor West, that boy needs your help." She felt Dr. West's hands move her arthritic fingers as she/he walked purposefully toward the scene. She snatched the telephone from the driver of SUV and hung up on his lawyer. Grimacing at the pains shooting through her knees, she knelt down by the boy and dialed 911. With a deeper voice, she spoke into the phone. "Hello. I'm at the corner of Murphy and Highway 6. We have a pedestrian versus auto. Trauma to the head, chest and left arm. Pulse is weak. Stomach feels rigid. The EMTs should be ready with a lavage kit. "Mrs. Jefferson let Dr. West help the boy, though in the back of her head, she fretted about her groceries.*

Some psychics have the ability to draw upon the knowledge of those who have passed on. Channelers tap the knowledge and experience of the dead, briefly obtaining skills that they personally lack. Some psychics have a repertoire of spirits they can call on for help and assistance. Others claim that they tap the collective unconscious.

While the source of knowledge varies, the effects remain the same. The player rolls the Channeling pool (difficulty 7); every success gives the character one dot of the Talent, Skill or Knowledge desired for the remainder of the scene. On a botch, the channeler has opened herself up too widely to the spirit planes; she may summon a malevolent entity that tries to control her actions, lose some of her usual Abilities as her personality is lost in the influx or simply find herself unable to reach her usual channeling talents for a day, sometimes more.

Note that only one personality may be channeled at a time. Thus, a channeler cannot "stack" additional dots by channeling multiple personalities at a time.

**Roll:** Perception + Awareness

- The character can channel once per day. She has a vague sense of other personalities floating about and of the existence of some sort of consciousness beyond the body, but that's about all.

- The character can channel two times per day. She also can, against a difficulty equal to the Gauntlet, see briefly into the Shadowlands where ghosts live. She can communicate with ghosts for one minute per success rolled.

- The character can channel three times per day. She can also see into the Shadowlands for an entire scene by rolling against a difficulty of the Gauntlet.

- At this level and beyond there's no limit to how often the character can channel, though the difficulty increases by one for each time after the third until the character sleeps. She also can let ghosts skilled in the arts of possession (called "Puppetry" by wraiths) easily enter her body to use all of her skills. The medium retains full awareness of the wraith's actions. She can also eject a possessing wraith by winning a contest of Willpower against the ghost in question; each attempt costs one Willpower point and takes a full turn of struggling.

- The psychic can channel two disparate personalities at once (and thus the player can roll Channeling twice and add to determine Ability dots gained). As before, there's no effective limit to how often the character can channel at this point, though successive attempts become more difficult until the psychic has a full sleep cycle. When possessed by a ghost, the channeler often gains some memories from the ghost, beyond what the possessor might do or tell — while a weaker channeler might hope that the ghost says or does something significant, the master channeler can access some of the ghost's own memories and passions (in game terms, the channeler gains a sense of the ghost's Nature, Demeanor and driving concerns).

## CLAIRVOYANCE

*"Six... seven... hard to tell. Something just on the edge, there, can't quite make it out..." Paul squeezed his already-shut eyes harder, sweat beading on his forehead. "The tall one... he's there. He's motioning with something. Saying something. It's... looks like money, but it's colored strangely... no, it's some kind of diagram. A plan! A blueprint!"*

*Paul looked exhausted as he opened his eyes. "Valent's got the plans. We have to move tonight!"*

A clairvoyant has the ability to cast his senses away, allowing him to perceive people, places or things at great distances. Though technically Clairvoyance refers specifically to remote sight, some psychics can also cast forth their hearing or other senses as well. Unlike astral projection, the clairsentient does not separate his consciousness from his body; he remains aware of what's going on around him (though this can be very confusing if the psychic tries to concentrate upon two locations at once). Similarly, the clairvoyant does not travel through the intervening space — he simply perceives whatever happens at the target site as if he stood there.

The degree of familiarity the psychic has with the target may raise or lower the difficulty (by plus or minus one or two). Once the clairvoyant "locks on" to a target, he can then "pan" his view around, allowing him to see just about anything in the immediate area. The limits of their perceptions are the immediate area in question. If the character wishes to see beyond that area, he must refocus, and the player must make a new roll. For example, a character looking into a room in another house could see anything in that room. However, to switch perceptions into the hall outside would require a second roll. The clairvoyant cannot perceive anything he could not perceive with his normal senses. Thus, if the target area is completely darkened, remote sight does no good.

**Roll: Perception + Awareness (difficulty 8)**

- The character can see things, though the images are hazy and dreamlike. The character can extend his senses into just the immediate area, approximately a mile from his body.

- The character can see clearly through remote sight and can faintly hear. The range of perception is now anywhere in the immediate five to 10 miles, depending on the number of successes (1 success = 5 miles, 2 successes = 6 miles, etc.).

- The character can see and hear clearly at a distance. He can also "touch" things at the remote site, though his sense of touch is vague, as if he were wearing heavy gloves. (He cannot move things, naturally.) The character's range expands to 10 miles per success rolled.

- The character can clearly see, hear and touch at range. Additionally, he can detect strong odors. The range is 100 miles per success.

- The character can use all five senses clearly and can perceive things up to 1,000 miles away per success rolled.

## CYBERKINESIS

*"Okay gentlemen, new perp to keep your eyes peeled for. Someone's been hitting the ATM machines downtown. He's clipped about \$17,000 so far. Nobody's seen anything, and the internal recorders are blanking out. We're thinking he's dressed as a repairman so nobody notices him cracking the things open. Folks in robbery are looking into the bank services people to see if one of them has a grudge, or some disgruntled employee."*

*"All right, that's it. Let's be careful out there."*

A relatively new talent, Cyberkinesis is the ability to control electronic machinery with one's mind. Paranormal researchers believe that Cyberkinesis is a specialized application of telekinesis. The cyberkinetic generates small-scale electromagnetic fields that alter the operating systems of computers and other electronic equipment (stereo systems, burglar alarms, etc.). However, while the psychic can control the machine, he cannot "read its mind." That is a separate power: Cyberpathy. For all powers above Level One, he must be able to see what he is doing, generally through a monitor or display readout. In effect, a cyberkinetic can send information to a machine but must read it back normally (or with Cyberpathy).

**Roll: Manipulation + Computer**

- Switch: The cyberkinetic possesses the ability to switch computers or easily operated electronic equipment off and on. Roll at difficulty 6 for machines switched by electronic relays, difficulty 8 for switches that rely on physical relays.

- Link: The psychic may operate the electronic equipment without touching it, as if by remote control. This does not give him any override codes or passwords. He could enter a password without typing it at the keyboard, but he could not login to the machine without a valid password. Roll against difficulty 4 or 5 for simple acts like programming a VCR or entering data into a word processor. Very complex actions require higher difficulty numbers, such as 7 for driving a car with power steering or 9 for a computer controlled factory.

- Scramble: The character possesses the ability to send microscale power surges through computers, giving them the equivalent of an epileptic seizure. Computers lock up. Video equipment displays snow, and recording equipment picks up nothing but static. The scrambling effect lasts as long as the cyberkinetic concentrates upon it. When the effect lapses, the machines return to normal operation, though some less robust operating systems will crash. Roll against difficulty 7, though complex systems may require an 8 or 9.

- Password: The cyberkinetic overrides the operating system of computers, essentially giving himself any password or code he desires. He can force the computer to do anything the normal operating system is capable of performing. He could, for instance, create administrator access for himself, erase data or forge e-mail from anyone with an account on the system. Roll against difficulty 7 for ordinary desktop machines, difficulty 8 or 9 for machines with high degrees of security or other intrusion countermeasures.

- Run Hot: The psychic has such control of electronics that he can effectively "reprogram" the computer to exceed its normal abilities. A computer calculates faster, a robot arm lifts more, a laser burns hotter. Roll against difficulty 8. Every success gives the psychic an extra success to apply to his next use of the machine. However, every success also does one "health level" of damage to the machine. Apply the wound penalties to the device's subsequent functions until it is repaired.

## CYBERPATHY

*"You're one of our best programmers, Sridhar, but your work habits are inexcusable. You come in late. You sneer at the dress codes. You don't follow the company style guides for your code. You've been caught spending company time at that chat-room. And you play your music too loud. What have you got to say for yourself?"*

*"At least I don't spend company time e-mailing my mistress. Wouldn't your wife like to know about Vanessa?"*

*"What? How did you—?"*



Sridhar shrugged. He leaned back in his chair and kicked his feet up on his boss' desk, right on top of the laptop. "Let's talk about my raise instead."

While a cyberkinetic possesses the ability to control electronic equipment, the cyberpath can read the data stored on the computer. Researchers believe that the method for reading magnetic patterns in a computer's memory or on a hard drive resembles the way telepaths read the electrical impulses of the human brain.

All uses of Cyberpathy require the psychic to be within sight of the computer. Characters using Remote Access do not have to be able to see the remote computers they are linking to, but they must be able to see the machine they're using as an entry point. In all cases, the difficulty depends upon the system complexity: difficulty 6 for standard desktop computers to difficulty 9 for heavily encrypted systems. This ability can also be used to read the data stored on diskettes, tapes or other digital media. Difficulty is 6 for ordinary storage media, 8 for encrypted data. Generally speaking, these powers take 10 to 15 minutes to use, though the cyberpath can use successes from the roll to reduce the time by a minute per success.

#### **Roll: Perception + Computer**

- **Analyze Structure:** At this level, the cyberpath possesses the ability to examine the directory structure of the computer. He can see what files are stored on the hard drive but cannot access them. This can be useful to cyberpath hackers looking for a specific piece of data.

- **Read-Only Mode:** The cyberpath not only can travel the directory structure but can read the files. Simple text and graphics files are easy to comprehend. Additionally, he can grasp the functions of executable programs. Unscrambling encrypted files remains beyond him at this level.

- **Download:** The psychic can "copy" a file from a computer to his mind, writing the data in unused sections of his brain. While he can read text files, observe graphics or sound files and understand the nature of an executable program, he cannot "run" the program in his brain. With the Level Two Cyberkinesis power Link, the cyberpath can upload the data back onto another computer. The cyberpath can download one program or file into his mind for every dot in Mental Attributes he possesses. (Example: Sridhar has Perception 3, Intelligence 4 and Wits 3. He can keep up to 10 files in his head.) The Storyteller should decide how much data constitutes a single file. Some large files such as operating system kernels, large software packages or large movie files may take up more than one "file" in the cyberpath's head.

- **Remote Access:** With this power, the cyberpath connects to any computer that his local computer connects to. The cyberpath has no additional powers beyond the ability to treat a remote computer as if it were sitting on his desktop. For every "hop" between computers, the cyberpath loses 1 die off his pools.

- **Decrypt:** The cyberpath's understanding of computers progresses to the point where he can decrypt encrypted

data. The data can be on a computer (either locally or one connected to via Remote Access) or Downloaded into the psychic's mind.

## **ECTOPLASMIC GENERATION**

The teenagers ran out of the house, screaming for someone, anyone, to help them. From her hiding place in the attic, Barbara chuckled to herself. Her "Freaky Phantoms," as the skinny kid called them, worked like a charm. She let her concentration lapse, and throughout the house, fearsome creatures of smoke and shadow dissolved, leaving only a thick, oily residue to show where they had been. Barbara flipped open her cell phone. "Barb here. Yeah, those meddling kids won't be coming back for some time."

Among the more freakish psychic phenomena, Ectoplasmic Generation coalesces the stuff of spirits — plasm — into a tangible form. Through force of will and personality, the psychic tugs on ghostly energies and makes them solid. Most often, this manifests as a mucousy gel, though skilled psychics can disperse it or concentrate it to make oddly glistening webs, sticky vapors and the like. Such creations are rather disturbing and correspond to no known physical chemistry; indeed, ectoplasm tends to "dissolve" into the nothingness of the Underworld after a short time and defies scientific analysis.

For wraiths, all ectoplasmic creations are solid. They cannot pass through ectoplasmic mists. Psychics who attack wraiths with ectoplasmic entities do full damage to the ghosts, although they would need some way of perceiving the dead in their "Shadowlands."

#### **Roll: Charisma + Occult**

- **The Big Sneeze:** The psychic can summon up some strands of snotty material. The ectoplasm created by this power wells out of the psychic's orifices or follows in the wake of her touch, leaving slimy, glistening trails. Each success scored causes the psychic to leave a slime trail that lasts for one turn. This goo is disturbing and nasty but has no deleterious effects. Summoning up this goo only has a difficulty of 5. The psychic can also vaguely summon ectoplasmic fog. The thick white mist boils out of the psychic's eyes, nose and mouth. This cloud generated is vaguely spherical and has a diameter of about five feet, plus one foot in diameter per success rolled in generating it. The cloud hangs in midair in front of the psychic and does not move. The cloud slowly dissolves, leaving oily, viscous goo behind. In still air, the cloud lasts two turns, plus one turn per success rolled. A stiff wind will disperse the cloud in half the time. The difficulty to raise such a cloud is only 6.

- **The Mists:** The psychic's control of the ectoplasmic cloud coalesces and the cloud begins to obey the commands of the summoner. The cloud no longer disperses in wind and lasts as long as the summoner concentrates on it. If kept in a sphere, the fog would have a radius of five feet, plus one foot per success rolled in generating it. However, the psychic has rudimentary control over the shape of the fog, though it is merely basic control. No complex shapes can be formed, yet. The cloud initially appears in front of the psychic, though



the cloud can move five feet per round, if the summoner desires. Once the psychic's concentration lapses, the cloud dissolves in five rounds. Difficulty is 7.

••• "A Fog So Thick...": By investing a greater portion of her will in the ectoplasmic cloud, it becomes solid to the touch. The cloud itself feels like cotton candy and requires a Strength roll (difficulty 6) to pass through. If the roll succeeds, the character travels at one-quarter of normal speed. Attacking the fog with normal weapons rarely does any good. Bullets, blades and fists may shift the solid ectoplasm, but cannot break it down. To generate the fog, the player rolls against difficulty 8. The fog appears in front of the summoner and does not move. The psychic shapes the ectoplasmic wall at the time of creation, though the total volume of ectoplasm would be a sphere with a radius of five feet plus one foot for every two successes rolled. The cloud remains solid so long as the psychic concentrates upon it. When concentration lapses, the cloud remains (though no longer solid) for three rounds.

•••• Dream Shaper: The psychic's greater control of her ectoplasm allows her to mold it into complex shapes. The ectoplasmic creation may look like anything the psychic wishes, though the ectoplasm remains a dull white color. The summoner creates the shape near her. Roll against difficulty 8. Once created, the shape moves at 10 yards per turn. During creation, the psychic gets one point for every success rolled to divide among the creation's physical characteristics.

(Example: Matthew gets 4 successes to generate the ectoplasmic creature. He has four points to divide among the three physical characteristics. Because he wants the creation to pick up and carry his groceries, he gives it two points of Strength and two of Dexterity. It has a Stamina of zero, so any damage, even bashing damage, causes the creation to dissipate.)

The dense ectoplasm takes bashing damage from bullets and cutting weapons and lethal damage from impacts and fire (or other environmental effects). Its bashing soak is determined by its Stamina, and it has no lethal soak. It has three bashing health levels. If the creation takes any lethal damage (including lethal damage from bashing overflow), it disappears. The creation is a puppet, controlled by the will of the psychic. It cannot travel outside of the psychic's perceptions or perceive anything the psychic does not perceive. If the psychic's concentration lapses, the creation vanishes in a puff of smoke.

••••• Tulpa: By a powerful investment of mental energy, the psychic creates an ectoplasmic extension of his will. Unlike the Dream Shape, the Tulpa possesses rudimentary intelligence. The psychic spends a point of Willpower and rolls Charisma + Meditation (difficulty 7). The psychic can spend additional points of Willpower and create the Tulpa as an extended action. Every success generates 3 points. The points can be spent as:



|                                                                                                                                     |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Dot of Physical Attribute                                                                                                           | 1 point        |
| Dot of Mental Attribute<br>(cannot exceed the creator's<br>Mental Attributes)                                                       | 2 points       |
| Health level                                                                                                                        | 1 point        |
| Extra senses<br>(the creation gets one sense<br>at creation if given any Mental<br>characteristics)                                 | 1 point        |
| Extra movement<br>(the creation flies as fast as<br>a person can run, based<br>on its Dexterity without an<br>investment of points) | 1 point / yard |

## PSYCHIC HYPNOSIS

*"Look into my eyes, Mr. Reed. Now relax. And... sleep."* Jane looked at her watch, glad that Mr. Reed was the last client of the day. *"You don't want to smoke anymore. Smoking is bad for you. When you think of smoking, you will feel ill."* Jane picked up her book and let her client sit there, still in a trance. The clients didn't believe she had done anything if she took five minutes to help them, no matter what the results were. She started to read her novel but looked up after only a paragraph. *"Oh, and Mr. Reed. Pay your bill on time."*

Many hypnotists promise results. Some even produce them. Psychics with hypnotic powers dwarf the abilities of the best carnival hucksters. Though their abilities lack the speed of a vampire's mental commands or the effects of the Mind Sphere, hypnotic psychics achieve many of the same results, with enough time and effort.

### Roll: Manipulation + Expression

- **Trance State:** The hypnotist can place a willing subject into a hypnotic trance. While in the trance, the subject's memories become clearer. He may also exhibit greater control of his physiology. Though the hypnotist cannot command the subject, the person in the trance automatically becomes relaxed and restful. He may (at the Storyteller's discretion) regain one point of Willpower for every two successes the hypnotist achieves. The psychic may, if she chooses, hypnotize herself. Roll against difficulty 6 in either case. Placing the subject in a trance takes five turns. The subject will come out of the trance if shaken or disturbed.

- **Sideshow Suggestion:** After placing the subject in a deep trance (which takes the usual five turns), the hypnotist may command the subject to perform actions while in the trance state, each command taking a round. In the trance state, the subject will perform any action he would not be opposed to doing. Additionally, the entranced subject has far greater control of his autonomic responses. A hypnotized person could walk on hot coals, require less oxygen to breathe or even ignore wound penalties. The hypnotist could also cause the subject to forget previous actions that happened in the trance state. Roll difficulty 6 for simple commands, difficulty 7 for embarrassing commands and to



forget actions that happen while hypnotized, difficulty 8 for controlling pain response. The subject will not come out of the trance until the hypnotist commands.

••• Delayed Action: The subject of the hypnotist's powers now performs actions commanded once the trance has been broken. The psychic implants any command or improved memory recall from the lower levels of hypnosis, but this time, it is programmed to happen at a certain time. The commands are implanted as with Sideshow Suggestion, but the difficulty is raised by one. Every success on the roll gives the hypnotist one command to implant. Each extra condition requires a success as well. It takes five turns to hypnotize the subject, plus one turn per command to program them. The hypnotist can make one of the commands to be to instantly fall into a trance state at a later time.

Example: The Amazing Steve hypnotizes Denise, a member of the audience. He rolls three successes on his attempt to hypnotize Denise. He then orders her that, when someone says the word "rabbit," she will jump on one foot (the first success), say the word "duck" (the second one) and then fall back into a trance (the third one). He could also have told her to jump on one foot when someone says "rabbit" (the initial success) and then when someone says the word "carrot" (a second condition, requiring a success) to spin in place (the third success).

•••• Fast Trance: At this stage, the hypnotist has become so adept at inducing trances, that he, by a powerful act of will, may do so with a glance. This costs one Willpower, and the player must make the normal roll at a difficulty of the subject's Willpower. If the effect succeeds, the subject is entranced for one round per success. While the target is in a trance, the hypnotist can then use any of the other lesser hypnotic powers on the subject.

••••• Manchurian Candidate: With this ability, the psychic can perform major amounts of brainwashing on the target. With this level of deep programming, the subject will do anything the hypnotist commands, even to the point of death. The target must be placed in a trance, which takes 10 minutes (and may not be done with a Fast Trance). After that, the hypnotist spends an hour per command implanted programming the subject. Spend two Willpower and roll Manipulation + Leadership (difficulty 7 for commands that are simply against the target's morals, difficulty 9 for commands that lead to the subject's death). As in the Delayed Action power, the number of commands and the number of conditions attached to them depend on the number of successes.

## MIND SHIELDS

*In the dark alley, the pale man leaned over, looked Grace in the eyes and said, "Don't resist."*

*With glassy eyes she returned his gaze. "I don't think so," she answered, the slack look disappearing from her face. The pale man's eyes widened for just an instant, then froze in horror. With a meaty "slurp" the stake slid into his chest. Grace snickered at the transfixed vampire. "Haven't you heard? It's 'Take Back The Night' night." With one finger, she poked the vampire, who*

*topped over. She reached into her pocket for a lighter. "Wait 'til you see my candle."*

Some psychics' possess shields that protect their minds from mental attacks, be they psychic assaults, vampiric Domination, magic spells or other ensorcelment. The discipline of the psychic's mind, the confusion of his thoughts or just some innate talent makes him resistant to outside influence.

This resistance only affects assaults on the psychic's mind. It would not, for instance, keep a telekinetic from lifting her or a pyrokinetic from burning her. The psychic can lower these defenses, though opening them to a friendly psychic leaves her just as open to a simultaneous mental attack. At Level Three and above, the psychic may differentiate between "friendly" and "hostile" contacts and use the shields against some while allowing others to penetrate.

When someone mentally attacks a psychic with Mind Shields, the target gets to roll a number of dice (difficulty 6) as a counter-roll. These successes subtract from the effect. If the defender gets more successes than the attacker, the attack fails. If a psychic assault normally gets a defense roll (such as attacks using the Mind Sphere), the psychic adds the dice in Mind Shields to her defense pool instead.

| Level | Versus Psychic Powers | Versus Other Mental Attacks |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| •     | 2 dice                | 1 die                       |
| ••    | 4 dice                | 2 dice                      |
| •••   | 6 dice                | 3 dice                      |
| ••••  | 8 dice                | 4 dice                      |
| ••••• | 10 dice               | 5 dice                      |

## PRECOGNITION

*In an opulent corner office, the Vice-President for Acquisitions spoke on the speakerphone with his broker. "You must be mad, Chase. Magadon's climbing like King Kong. We can't sell now."*

*The tired voice on the speaker answered, "And the bubble is going to burst, Mr. Vice-President. Late today, early tomorrow at the latest. You're going to take a bath on this. I'm trying to tell you, but you're not going to listen."*

*The Vice-President smiled, "Chase, you and the folks at Insight always steered me straight, but I have an MBA from Harvard Business School. I know what I'm doing. I'll talk to you tomorrow." He hung up the phone.*

*In his Insight Investments office, Chase sighed again. "I knew he was going to say that."*

One of the rarer psychic talents is that of precognition, and only the singular talent approaches the clarity of vision for accurate prediction. Seeing the future is difficult, as the probabilities shift with each action. The best psychics travel the most accurate probability tracks, but no seer (except for the fabled Cassandra) has seen the future with 100 percent accuracy.

**Roll:** Perception + Awareness

• Intuition: The psychic has yet to develop a clear view of future events. However, his perception of what is yet to come begins to take shape. Generally speaking, the power gives him a bit more luck than the average person, making him a good guesser. Predictions for random events (lotto



numbers, roulette numbers) can be quite accurate. Additionally, guesses in other situations can be equally accurate. He could choose the shortest route to a place or know that one person is "right" for another. Roll Perception + Awareness (difficulty 7). The more successes, the better his guesses will be. Predictions will rarely be 100 percent accurate, even with five or more successes on the roll.

•• Insight: The psychic possesses the ability to induce precognitive dreamlike visions. These visions are never literal interpretations of the future but metaphoric impressions of what is to come. An enemy might be revealed as a black knight or an evil gunslinger. A new friend might appear as a guide dog. The form of the dream generally depends on the mindset of the psychic. A New Age crystal reader's visions would differ from those of a Wall Street financier. The detail of the vision depends on the number of successes the player rolls on a Perception + Awareness (difficulty 7) roll. The more successes rolled, the more accurate the vision is, though it remains a metaphor.

*Example: Chase, a financial counselor for Insight Investments attempts to see if a certain tech stock is going to do well in the upcoming quarter. He rolls 3 successes on his Perception + Awareness roll. That's a "complete success" so the vision should be accurate. The Storyteller decides to tell him that he sees a robot with the company logo climbing a silicon mountain. The robot loses its grip at one point but then continues up the mountain. The stock is going to dip in value in the future but will rally back and continue to increase in value.*

••• Danger Sense: The psychic's perceptions of the future give her a psychic early warning system. This manifests as raised hackles, tingling sensations, flashes of violence or some other system, but it's usually consistent for a given psychic — one might have flashes while another has cramps, but they both always have the same sign.

This ability remains up all the time, though Anti-Psychic (or certain Time and Mind magics) can suppress or subvert the talent. If the character is about to be in danger (perhaps someone is laying in ambush or a weak link holding an overhead chandelier is about to snap), the Storyteller rolls Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6) and consults the table below.

#### Number of Successes Effect

|       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Botch | The character remains unaware of the danger and is distracted by a hunch or feeling that places the character in an inconvenient situation — perhaps hesitating right in the perfect line of fire for an ambusher or the like. |
| None  | The character's danger sense simply fails. No special intuition warns the character this time.                                                                                                                                 |
| One   | The character knows she is in danger, but none of the details of the specific danger.                                                                                                                                          |
| Two   | The character knows she is in danger and what she should do to avoid it. (Duck,                                                                                                                                                |

dive for cover, etc.) This allows the character a dodge even against an ambush.

Three

The character knows she is in danger, how to avoid it and the exact source of the danger. This allows a dodge with a one-point bonus on the difficulty and gives the psychic a "feeling" of the direction of the trap or attacker for a moment.

Four

The character knows the details of the danger and has an extra turn of warning. In effect, the danger actually happens one turn later. This gives the psychic a turn to act, prepare, fall back, whatever.

Five

The character also gets a psychic impression of the person responsible for the danger, if any. She would recognize the person should she see him.

•••• Show Me the Cards: Though accurate predictions of the far future remain out of the character's grasp, she does have an almost perfect view of the immediate future. Roll the usual Precognitive ability (difficulty 8), every success allows her to see one turn into the future. All other players and the Storyteller must announce their general future plans and goals for as many turns as the precog rolled. If, by knowing the future, the precog changes her plans, then the future is changed, and thus, the character would have to try again to see what new plans would be made. For instance, in the middle of a firefight, the precog ducks behind cover, no longer making herself a target to a sniper. The sniper had announced his intent to shoot at the psychic, but since she is no longer a target, the sniper does not have to keep shooting at an impossible target — the future diverges to a different possibility due to the psychic's interference.

••••• Clear Vision: Few precognitives progress this far in their ability to see the future. With Clear Vision, the psychic can accurately predict the most probable one. The player rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 8). The future as seen is likely to happen but can be changed by the actions of the precog. The character can elect to see her own future, the future of the immediate surroundings or the future of a person or object touched. The distance into the future perceived is:

| Successes | Time span                       |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| One       | The next 12 hours               |
| Two       | The next day                    |
| Three     | The next week                   |
| Four      | The next month                  |
| Five      | The next year                   |
| Six+      | One additional year per success |

Obviously, giving concrete information about the future can be difficult for the Storyteller. Instead of giving vague information about the story, it may work better if the precog's player instead gains some additional chances to reroll tasks — one reroll for the story for each success scored on the Precognition roll. This represents the psychic foresee-

ing the future and preparing appropriately. Naturally, this power is usable only once per story.

## PSYCHIC HEALING

*The trauma room echoed with shouting. A seven-car pileup on the expressway proved an inevitable law of physics. Cars versus people: People lose. In the midst of the chaos, Sanitary Engineer Irma Perez, invisible in her tan uniform, wiped the brow of a crying six-year-old. "Sera toda la adecuada, pequena muchacha." She looked around and, since nobody was paying attention, laid her hand on the girl's brow and prayed to the Blessed Virgin. The girl's raspy breathing eased. "Vaya a dormir." The little girl smiled and fell into a healing sleep. County General's ER had a remarkable recovery rate, though only one person knew the reason why.*

Psychic healers are a rare breed, even among the gifted. The ability to heal is both a blessing and a curse. These powers can become a problem for the psychic, though, as she becomes a target to people seeking her miraculous aid or becomes hunted by the medical establishment for practicing medicine without a license. Still, psychic healing does accomplish incredible feats; with contact, the psychic banishes pain and directs the body to speed its natural recovery or even to fight off infections or diseases with intelligent direction.

Many psychics with this talent have a great deal of medical skill, though rarely via formal training. Most also have a strong empathy with other humans and a tendency to feel the pain and suffering of others.

Should the player botch while the psychic heals someone, the character may heal the wound improperly (fusing bones out of alignment, requiring that they be re-broken) or may inadvertently transfer the injury or disease to himself. The victim might even suffer a worse condition brought on by the psychic misdirecting the body's healing properties and causing cancerous or poisonous results.

### Roll: Perception + Empathy

- **Diagnosis:** Though unable to heal at this talent, psychics with this power possess the ability to instantly diagnose disease and injury in a person. This ability to sense what is wrong does not give him the ability to cure the problem, but it does allow psychics with medical training (formal or otherwise) to suggest the most efficient cures. A psychic healer without medical training finds it difficult to explain to doctors what the problem is; for instance, he might see AIDS as "the body does not want to fight the sickness anymore." Roll Perception + Empathy (difficulty 6). The number of successes determines the accuracy of the diagnosis. If the psychic has medical training, the player may add any Diagnosis successes to the dice pool of a subsequent Medical roll.

- **A Good Night's Sleep:** The psychic has the ability to accelerate the body's natural healing processes with a touch. This takes approximately a minute, and the psychic generally lays hands on the subject, "aligning chakras" or simply massaging the injured area. At the end of the minute,





the player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7). If the player succeeds, the subject is considered to be treated by a "highly skilled physician (4 + dots in Medicine)" for the purposes of healing times. (see page 247, **Mage Revised**). If the player scores more than 3 successes, the subject also recovers a point of Willpower.

••• Basic Healing: The psychic's ability to knit wounds and cure disease has expanded. The healer can heal bashing damage and cure simple diseases or poisonings (Level Three toxins or less, see page 248, **Mage Revised**). Roll Perception + Medicine (difficulty 7). Each success cures one level of bashing damage. Every two successes reduce the effects of a toxin by one level. It takes a turn per wound level for the healing to take effect.

•••• Triage: At this level, the psychic can knit broken bones, close serious wounds and cure potent diseases. Roll Perception + Medicine (difficulty 7) and spend 1 point of Willpower. This is spent before the roll. Each success heals one lethal wound level or reduces any disease or poison of toxin rating 4 or less by one level. This takes 10 minutes per wound level; such recovery is noticeably swift and unusual, though in the case of a seriously injured patient, it might simply stabilize a critical wound and prevent death.

••••• Psychic Surgery: The psychic empathically reaches his hands into the body of a person, allowing him to remove cancers or infections from the body. The psychic can cure diseases up to toxin rating 6. Roll Perception + Medicine (difficulty 8). The process takes 10 minutes times the toxin rating of the disease. The healer can also use this talent to harm as well as heal. This power cannot be used in combat as it takes too long, but the psychic can reach into a healthy body and remove healthy tissue. Roll Perception + Medicine (difficulty 7). Each success causes a level of unsoakable aggravated damage. The psychic simply places his hands against the subject's flesh and concentrates; in some cases, blood may well out of the flesh or the psychic's fingers may appear to dig into the body itself. At the end, the psychic is typically left with a handful of bloody tissue.

## PSYCHIC INVISIBILITY

*"Let me get this straight, Fred, and remember that we have it all on tape. This guy, dressed in a ski mask and trench coat, walks in, goes right past the security desk, comes back with over 10,000 dollars in company property, sticks you the finger and walks out the door, and you didn't see a thing?"*

*"I swear to God, chief. I didn't see him."*

*"Right, Fred. Come on. What's your partner's name? Give him up, and things will go easier for you."*

*"I don't know him. I didn't see anyone that night. I swear."*

Psychic Invisibility could be considered a form of mass hypnosis. The psychic broadcasts to everyone nearby the simple subconscious command "don't notice me." This effect does not apply to electronic or other recording media, though people in the area but observing through electronic means (like a TV cameraman looking through the viewfinder

of the camera or someone wearing night-vision goggles) will not see the invisible psychic.

This is not true invisibility. If an invisible psychic stands in front of something, people in the area will not be able to see what is behind the psychic. Those who expect to see something in a specific area but discover that they can't might start to notice that something is wrong — or their minds may give up completely and change their attention to a different subject!

Animals, whose minds work on a different level than humans, are unaffected by the invisibility effect unless the character also has Animal Psychics. Beings with heightened perceptions actively searching for the psychic may attempt a contested roll to perceive the psychic with their talents.

Typically, the player's roll for this talent determines the strength of the concealment. With only one success, the character is still noticeable but people tend to avert their eyes or have trouble focusing on him. With three or more successes, the psychic is completely unnoticed by most onlookers. Note that Mind Shields *do* protect against this very specific form of mental control.

**Roll:** Wits + Stealth

• Hide: The psychic's "don't notice me" broadcast keeps him from being seen so long as he remains completely still. Under normal circumstances, no roll is required. However, if someone is searching the area where the psychic is hiding, he rolls Perception + Stealth (difficulty 6). If he succeeds and the target has no special senses, the psychic remains invisible. If the psychic moves, speaks or does anything to give away his position, the effect is broken.

•• Slow Movement: The psychic has enough control of his growing talent to attempt to move while maintaining the invisibility effect. Maintaining the effect counts as an action in terms of splitting dice pools (see page 215, **Mage Revised**). He also cannot do things that would draw attention to him without losing the effects of the power. The psychic could walk across a room, but he couldn't punch someone. The act of interacting with the rest of the world cancels the effect. To avoid the notice of people searching the area, the psychic's player rolls a contested roll Wits + Stealth (difficulty 6) versus the targets' Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6). Ties go in favor of the invisible psychic. If the targets accumulate more successes than the psychic's player, they know vaguely where the psychic is by noticing the absence of perception in that area ("something's funny in that corner"), but they still cannot directly see the psychic.

••• Invisibility: At this level, the psychic's ability to walk about unnoticed is such that he can walk around and behave normally. He can even perform actions that would normally draw attention to him. The only limitation to the power is that he cannot vanish from view while being observed. However, he could create some sort of distraction that would draw another's eyes away momentarily, giving him that split second needed to vanish. People with mundane perceptions searching for the invisible psychic must

roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 9), opposed by a Wits + Stealth (difficulty 6) roll on behalf of the psychic. Those with supernatural perceptions (the Auxpex Discipline, the Heightened Senses Gift, etc.) can attempt to use them, though the power is again resisted by a Wits + Stealth (difficulty 8) roll.

•••• Selective Invisibility: The psychic now has enough control of his talent to allow select others to see him while invisible. The character is invisible as in the previous level of the power. However, if the player succeeds on a Wits + Empathy roll (difficulty 7), the psychic can selectively allow one person per success rolled to perceive him while the rest of the world ignores his presence.

••••• Forget You Ever Saw Me: The psychic's talent for going unnoticed is powerful enough to not only "vanish" while in plain sight, but those who did see him forget the psychic was there in the first place. The psychic rolls Wits + Stealth (difficulty 7) opposed by the highest Perception + Alertness (difficulty 7) total in the group. A tie goes to the observers, who continue to see the psychic. If the psychic scores a single net success, he vanishes from view. (This should certainly unnerve the observers.) If he scores 3 or more successes, he vanishes from view, and people who had seen him forget his presence for one previous turn for every two successes scored, in effect losing track of the psychic's location completely.

*Example: Bruce is surprised by a security guard while exploring a secure Magadon complex. He immediately attempts to disappear and scores 4 net successes on his opposed roll with the guard. Since this was more than 3 net successes, he not only vanishes from sight but the guard forgets the past two turns of Bruce's presence. Since Bruce had just met him, the guard forgets the whole encounter.*

## PSYCHIC VAMPIRISM

*Carol sat in the staff meeting, counting the seconds as they crawled by. She looked down at her coffee cup despondently. Nothing was left in the mug. She bit down a yawn, let the air hiss through her nose and hoped nobody else noticed. Looking around the table, she felt a brief surge of satisfaction knowing that everyone else looked as bad as she felt. Maybe it's one of those bugs that goes around the office and hits everyone, she thought. Everyone except for Tommy, the "efficiency expert" who clicked the remote control and went to the next page of his interminable presentation. He smiled a plastic smile and continued. God, thought Carol, it's like he sucks the life right out of you.*

Most psychic talents are tools. They can be used for the benefit of others or to harm, depending on the moral character of the psychic. Psychic vampirism is the exception to the rule. Whether the talent shapes the psychic or the psychic shapes the talent is the subject of many a late-night discussion among the gifted, but psychic vampirism tends to bring out the worst in people. In addition to the debilitating effects it has on the target, it produces a euphoria in the psychic, a mental rush that nothing else compares to. The

psychic literally drains away emotion from his victims, or in some cases, actual living energies, converting them into energy for himself. The psychic vampire often becomes addicted to the sensation — feeling a rush from the draw and desiring the extra energy, vibrance and emotion granted.

### Roll: Manipulation + Empathy

• Rush: The psychic vampire feeds off strong emotion. The emotions can be positive (joy, happiness, love) or negative (fear, hatred, greed), though the vampire tends to find it easier to generate negative emotions. The vampire rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 6) to "feed" off the emotions. This provides no concrete benefit to the vampire, though it provides a rush of power. Depending on the Nature of the character, this may allow him to recover lost Willpower, though it is recommended that the player score at least 3 successes on the roll for that to occur. The psychic must be close to the target (within 10 yards) and able to sense her to feed. The target may feel unsettled by the process, as the effect tends to mute her emotions. However, it does not remove the emotion itself and could not be used, for instance, to calm down an angry person. The vampire can use this ability to monitor the emotions of the subject, though he doesn't have an accurate gauge of the subject's emotions until he starts the drain.

•• Sapping the Will: The drain effect sharpens here. The vampire's leeching of life energy saps the will of the target while invigorating his own will. The psychic rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty is the target's current Willpower), and the target rolls a reflexive Willpower roll (difficulty 6). If the psychic succeeds, he drains one point of temporary Willpower from the target and adds it to his own store of temporary Willpower. The extra Willpower can exceed the psychic's normal maximum Willpower (up to 10 total temporary Willpower). While the character has more than normal Willpower, he feels invigorated, akin to a drug high. The excess Willpower fades at one point per hour. This talent can be used at a range of up to 10 yards.

••• Energy Transference: The vampire's ability to leech life energy now allows him to invigorate himself and to heal minor injuries with stolen life force. This requires the vampire to touch the subject for a turn. The psychic's player then rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 7). Each success causes a level of bashing damage to the target and heals a level of bashing damage that the psychic has taken. If the psychic is fully healed when this occurs, each bashing level absorbed restores 2 points of Willpower. The subject does get a soak roll, and soaked levels of damage do not benefit the psychic.

•••• Life Leech: This dangerous talent allows the psychic to leech away vital life energies from the target, healing any damage the psychic may have taken and giving an emotional high without compare. The psychic must maintain physical contact with the target for one turn per damage level absorbed and then rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 8). Each success does one level of lethal damage to the subject. This will heal one level of damage





## VAMPIRES VS. VAMPIRES

Psychic vampires find actual vampires (the blood-sucking creatures of the night) tasty treats. The strong emotions and hungers of the vampire provide a sharp, almost hallucinatory experience. The difficulty to use any Psychic Vampirism effect on an actual vampire is reduced by two. However, vampires are a dangerous form of prey, and only the most powerful (or foolish) psychic vampires hunt the blood-drinkers. Many vampires have their own supernatural awareness and won't hesitate to feed very literally on someone who assaults them psychically.

(bashing or lethal) or turn one level of aggravated damage into lethal damage. If the character is fully healed when he leeches life energy, each damage level absorbed provides the character with 3 points of Willpower.

..... Emotional Vortex: The psychic's ability to absorb energy has progressed to the point where he can affect multiple targets at once. The psychic must have used one of the lesser powers (or a form of Empathy or Telepathy) on the target once to make the link to the target's emotional template. After that, the psychic can use the Level One or Level Two powers on the target at will. The range at which the psychic can drain the target depends on number of successes the player scores on the power roll (see below).

| Successes | Range                                                               |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| One       | Line of sight                                                       |
| Two       | A one block radius, and the psychic does not have to see the target |
| Three     | In the immediate neighborhood                                       |
| Four      | Anywhere in the city                                                |
| Five      | Anywhere in the county                                              |

## PSYCHOKINESIS

Danny ran into the house, tears streaming down his cheeks. His mother stooped over and scooped up her child. "What's the matter, honey?"

"The other kids hate me," he wailed.

"They don't hate you," she replied soothingly.

"Yes they do! They say I don't play X-men the way they do."

"Oh, now that's just silly. It's okay, sweetie." Danny's mother continued to soothe her crying son. Danny just didn't understand why they wanted to move the super-hero toys with their hands. How was Archangel supposed to fly if you were holding him?

Psychokinesis (also called "telekinesis") is a powerful and potent psychic ability. The ability to move things without touching them has endless possible uses. Though few psychokinetics possess the strength to do more than manipulate small objects, a skilled psychic can remotely exert terrific force or delicately perform various operations.

(Unskilled psychics, like those with certain Flaws, may not be so lucky...).

If she has sufficient strength to lift a living creature, the target can (if it's aware of the psychic's intent to lift it) hold onto something sturdy to anchor itself and then roll Strength versus mental strength. If the target has nothing to grab, it cannot resist.

A psychokinetic must be able to see the object she wishes to manipulate and must use a modicum of concentration to manipulate an object. However, she can split her attention and lift multiple objects, so long as she dedicates an action for each object lifted (see multiple-action penalties on page 215 of *Mage Revised*). The total weight lifted cannot exceed the psychic's usual lifting capacity.

If the psychokinetic attempts to wrest an object from someone's grasp, make a contested roll pitting psychokinetic Strength versus the target's physical Strength (difficulty 6). On a tie, both hold onto the object but neither has control enough to wrest it away from the other. If the psychic attempts to manipulate the object in a specific way, use Wits for purposes of accuracy or fine manipulation. Thus, a psychokinetic who remotely fires a gun uses Wits + Empathy to pick up and manipulate the gun, then Wits + Firearms to fire it.

**Roll: Wits + Empathy**

- The psychic has an effective mental Strength of 0. She can lift only a few pounds. She can move the object 5 + Wits yards/round.

- The psychic's mental Strength is now 1, and she can move the object at a velocity of 7+ Wits yards/round.

- The psychic has a mental Strength of 2, and she can move objects at a velocity of 9 + Wits yards/round

- The psychic's mental Strength is 3, and she can move a levitated object at 11 + Wits yards/round. At this level, the psychic can levitate herself, regardless of weight. Due to the concentration required to fly in this fashion, she may only move at walking speed (7 yards/round).

- The psychic has a mental Strength of 4 and can move objects at 13 + Wits yards/round. At this level, she also gains a free "extra" object that she can move without splitting her concentration.

## PSYCHOMETRY

Ashley picked up the case file and flipped through the pages. Ariel Handler, age 8. Missing since July 17th of last year. Jacket found three days later, wadded up in a nearby field. In the box at her feet was the jacket, sealed in a plastic bag. Ashley pulled more than a few strings to borrow the case file and the jacket from the evidence locker. Mrs. Handler's church was picking up the tab, since a single mother working two waitress jobs couldn't afford the psychic. The case file told her what she already knew. No leads. No suspects. No real hope. Ashley looked down at the jacket in the evidence bag. This was the part of her gift she hated. She opened the bag and rubbed her hands on the fabric. The images flowed into her.

*Sobbing, Ashley put the jacket back into the bag. At least she had a face. And the man with that face was going to pay.*

Psychometry is the ability to pick up psychic residue left on objects, places or people. Things exposed to strong emotional signatures hold flashes of information that a psychometric can "read" by touch. Particularly strong or violent emotions, like murder, may even cause sympathetic reactions in the psychic—a feeling of rage, dread or other emotion imposed by the incredibly strong psychic Resonance.

When using Psychometry, the player's successes indicate the level of detail achieved. With many successes, a character will have longer, more vivid impressions and emotions. On a botch, a psychic may become lost in a dreamlike reverie or even become overwhelmed by emotional Resonance, suffering injury or temporarily losing her personality and repeating the actions surrounding the object or place touched.

**Roll: Perception + Empathy**

- The character gets vague, dreamlike impressions of recent activities involving the object or more distant activities that involved strong emotions. In many cases, the reading gives just the feelings involved with the incident, instead of actual imagery. When imagery does appear (generally with 3 or more successes), it is figurative and dreamlike.

- In addition to the previous information gathered, the psychic gets an accurate mental image of the person most closely associated with the object.

- The psychic receives impressions of the strongest emotional incident involving that object. With 3 successes, she receives a dreamlike image of the incident, including the number of people involved and a description of the area. If concentrating on the object's owner, she can determine the person's approximate age, emotional state, hints of personality, and exactly what the individual felt at the time.

- The psychic can clearly visualize the event in question, as well as gathering general impressions of what happened to the object's owner during the day the incident occurred. As an alternative, the psychic can simply replay the past day of the object, even if there were no strong emotional events concerning the object that day.

- In addition to a clear picture of the event, the psychic receives clear emotional impressions of the other people at the event, and gains insight into what they were feeling. She receives clear images of the people present. She also can use the object as a psychic link to owner, allowing her to gain a general impression of where the owner is currently.

## PSYCHOPORTATION

Jack smirked as he looked at the display case. A hundred and one sensors, sound detectors and more lasers than the new *Star Wars* movie. "It's impossible to get into the case," the security consultant said. "The royal jewelry of Pharaoh Khufu is safe," he said. Jack smashed the glass with a hammer. The alarm noises would have deafened him, except for the earplugs he wore. He reached in, grabbed the headpiece of the Staff of Khufu and



vanished. The security company was going to have a hard time explaining this one.

**Note:** Psychoportation is an extremely potent psychic power. While there are certainly examples of teleporting psychics in fiction, it may be more suited to a cinematic game over a more low-key World of Darkness horror game. Storytellers should consider all of the implications of having a teleporting character in the troupe before allowing this power into their games.

Psychoportation is the ability to teleport oneself and one's immediate possessions over short distances without physically crossing the intervening space. The psychic simply "disappears" from one place and "reappears" in another. Whether the psychic disassembles and reassembles, warps space, travels astrally or finds some other form of motion, nobody knows — but here one moment, gone the next, the psychic can often leap without a care for the laws of physics.

The teleporter can carry himself and a small amount of personal possessions. No psychic has yet been able to jump with more than about 100 pounds of carried material — those trying to carry more tend to suffer some sort of psychic feedback (as a general rule, inflict six levels of bashing damage and go from there).

A botch during teleportation means that the psychic has landed inside a solid object. This does 8 dice of aggravated damage to the psychic and the object he accidentally teleported into. Alternately, the psychic may poof away into a more dangerous location, somewhere completely unknown or even without his clothes!

**Roll:** Perception + Alertness

- **Short Hop:** The teleporter can teleport 12 + Intelligence yards in a turn. He must be able to see (with his own eyes or mystical senses) the destination.

- **Simple Jump:** The psychic's range for teleportation increases to 20 + (3 x Intelligence) yards.

- **Long Jump:** The teleporter can "jump" 40 + (6 x Intelligence) yards in a turn. He can double this distance by spending the previous turn concentrating and succeeding on a Perception + Meditation roll, difficulty 7.

- **Very Long Jump:** The teleporter's range has increased to 80 + (12 x Intelligence) yards. He can double this distance by spending the previous turn in concentration, as described previously.

- **Blind Jump:** Though the jumper's distance does not increase at this level, he no longer needs to see the destination. He can teleport to a place he's familiar with. To memorize a location, the teleporter spends one scene in the place, and the player expends a point of Willpower. The location must be a stationary one. One cannot memorize a location in moving train, for instance.

## PYROKINESIS

*The young man sat in the cold room. He looked at the wall-length mirror, knowing there were people on the other side of it.*

*Watching. Waiting. "Screw you. I ain't doin' squat for you until I see a lawyer."*

*A tiny voice answered him. "You don't get a lawyer. You don't get your mommy. You don't get anything." The voice paused. "Not until we get what we want, 'Zippo.' The block, if you please." The temperature in the room dropped again, to echo the point.*

*Zippo scowled. "Fine." He snapped his fingers, and a spark jumped between them. Over on the other side of the room, a wooden block started to smolder. The spark he always felt when something burned danced in his stomach, and he forgot about the cold and imprisonment. He smiled for the first time since they had brought him in.*

*On the other side of the mirror, a man spoke into a cellular phone. "Yes, he'll be perfect. With the right controller, that is. Tell Marsh to start the ball rolling on this one."*

Pyrokinesis is, quite simply, the ability to start fires with one's mind. The talent may well be an extension of psychokinesis — some ability to finely accelerate huge masses of molecules — or perhaps some sort of energy-transfer power. The pyrokinetic simply concentrates, and the temperature goes up... and up... and up... until the object melts or bursts into flames.

Pyrokinetics are not immune to their own flames and burn as easily as anyone else. Botches with Pyrokinesis tend to be singularly spectacular, as the psychic self-immolates or sends flame shooting wildly about.

**Roll:** Manipulation + Meditation

- **Matches:** The psychic can produce tiny sparks of flame, generally only enough to light highly flammable items (paper, dry wood, gasoline, etc.). These sparks of flame tend to come from the psychic's fingers, though some pyros create the sparks in different manners. The sparks light anything the psychic could physically reach, though the psychic does not have to actually touch the flammable material. The sparks are not hot enough to seriously burn people, though having a spark of flame appear can startle people. If a pyrokinetic wishes to startle someone with a spark, the player rolls Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) to fling the sparks at the target. The target must be in hand-to-hand combat range. This effect can be dodged by a Dexterity + Dodge (difficulty 6) roll. If the pyro hits the target, the target's player rolls Willpower (difficulty 6) or else the victim loses his next action from the surprise. The target can spend a Willpower point to avoid this reflexive aversion to being burned.

- **Ignite:** By concentrating, the pyrokinetic causes flammable materials to burst into flame. The psychic can affect anything within a short range (less than 10 yards), though some materials are easier to ignite than others. The difficulty is:

- |   |                                                                                    |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | Very easily lit materials (paper, gasoline, vampires)                              |
| 6 | Flammable objects that normally require minor assistance to light (wood, charcoal) |

8 Objects that do burn with the aid of accelerants (clothing)

9 Materials that do burn, eventually (people)

Once ignited, items continue to burn naturally. The fire created is as big as a torch, though it could easily spread with the proper materials around. See page 249 of *Mage Revised* for fire damage and the difficulty of soaking fires. If the psychic tries to light a person on fire, the target may dodge the effect by rolling Dexterity + Dodge (difficulty 6).

••• Fireworks: The pyrokinetic's control of flames has expanded. Now he can create small bursts of flame out of thin air. Psychic researchers believe that these bursts are made up of super-excited air molecules. Tiny amounts of the air molecules become plasma, which will ignite just about anything that can burn, and create bonfire-sized fires. The psychic can create these plasma bursts at a range up to Willpower x 10 yards away. To create the plasma, roll Manipulation + Meditation (difficulty 8). Targets roll Dexterity + Dodge (difficulty 7) to dodge the fire bursts. The bursts do two health levels of aggravated damage per turn (difficulty 8 to soak, for those with some sort of supernatural resilience). To extinguish himself, the target must first roll Willpower (difficulty 5) to avoid panic and then Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 5) to put himself out. Highly-trained operatives or supernatural creatures can usually avoid panicking automatically (barring a fear of fire — Röttschreck, for instance), at the Storyteller's discretion.

•••• Pyrotechnics: At this level, the pyrokinetic can not only generate fire, but can control the path and shape of the fire. The difficulty depends on the size of the flame (4 for a torch, 6 for a bonfire, 8 for an inferno), modified by the complexity of the action attempted (0 to shift the direction, +1 to create gaps in the fire or to spread an existing fire, +3 to diminish the flames). Roll Manipulation + Meditation. This can also be used to create shapes in the flames (difficulty 5 for simple forms, up to 9 for very complex shapes).

••••• Inferno: The pyrokinetic has immense and exacting control over all forms of flame. He can create large fires at a distance. The fires appear up to Willpower x 15 yards away. The player rolls Manipulation + Meditation (difficulty 8). With one success he creates a small fire in the target area. With two successes, the fire is the size of a bonfire, and with three successes, the fire fills up a large room. Everything in the area must soak the damage. People on the edge of the effect can dive out of the fire. Roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) to escape the flames. The fire starts out as hot as a "Bunsen Burner" (see page XX, *Mage Revised*), though every additional success after the third increases the heat of the fire by one category. The Inferno spreads rapidly, consuming as much as it can before being extinguished.

## SYNERGY

*The four people sat in a circle on comfortable pillows. The blond woman inhaled deeply and slowly exhaled. "Okay, let's do this." The four took each other's hands and followed the woman's*

*example. In the center of the four rested an unlit candle. "One," she whispered. To her right, she felt her brother's will surge, and the candle flickered into life. "Two." Across from her, the burly man levitated the candle. It started to flutter with his unpracticed mental grasp, but her husband felt the candle slip and caught it with his mind. "Three," she continued. They combined their wills. The four started to rise off the floor. The candle remained in place as the four slowly circled it. Then, as gently as they started, they lowered to the ground. The blond woman smiled. "We did it." Her husband replied, "That was fantastic."*

One of the rarest psychic abilities is the talent of psychic Synergy. Two or more psychics combine their abilities, giving the combined psychic gestalt more power than the psychics using their talents individually. The synergist can link together twice as many psychics in a mental metaconcert as he has dots in Synergy. The combined psychics must be touching each other to form the link.

Successes on a Synergy roll determine how many additional people may be linked in a psychic task. Botches tend to cause psychic feedback — headaches, capillary bursting and the like. Sometimes psychic powers may activate uncontrollably in such situations (imagine a reflexive blast of Pyrokinesis as the psychic's subconscious defends against a botched Synergy!).

### Roll: Perception + Awareness

• Psychic Sense: The psychic has the ability to sense other psychics. This sense triggers automatically when the psychic touches another psychic, or she can concentrate and use it to sense other psychics in her line of sight. Roll Perception + Awareness (difficulty 6). With more than 3 successes, the psychic also has a sense of the strength of the psychic and the natural of his powers. This does not detect mages with the Mind Sphere or other supernatural creatures who possess mental powers.

•• Share Will: At this level, the psychic can form basic psychic links. By acting together, a group can use any psychic power of any participant. The player with the Synergy psychic character rolls the other psychic ability as normal. However, the other members of the gestalt can each spend a point of their Willpower to boost the effectiveness of the talent. The gestalt can only generate one shared effect at a time. If the gestalt is using some sensory power (Telepathy, Clairvoyance, etc.), the entire group receives the results of the power.

••• Group Effect: The psychic network has grown such that, in addition to sharing Willpower, they can more effectively combine their wills, so that when the effect is rolled, the highest Attribute and Ability are used, even if the contributing member lacks the power itself. Additionally, as before, each member can contribute a point of Willpower to add extra successes.

*Example: Bruce (who has Precognition 2, Perception 3 and Awareness 2), Deirdre (who has Telepathy 3, Perception 2 and Awareness 3) and Andrew (who has Synergy 4, Perception 4 and Awareness 2) combine their abilities to use Bruce's precognitive*



abilities. The group will use Bruce's Precognition, Deirdre's Awareness and Andrew's Perception. One of the group rolls the 7 dice, and each of them may contribute Willpower for extra successes.

•••• Share Powers: The psychic gestalt now allows the group mind to use multiple powers at once. Each member of the group can donate any two of the following to the effects: A power, an Attribute and Ability. Each member of the group can spend one point of Willpower for an extra success, though they can only spend one point of Willpower a round.

*Example: Andrew (from the previous example, who also has Meditation 4) is traveling with Michael (who has Meditation 3 and Mind Shields 4) and Mira (who has Psychokinesis 3 and Wits 4). They are attacked by a vampire who attempts to entrance the group. Andrew forms the gestalt. Michael donates his Mind Shields to the group. Mira donates her Psychokinesis ability and her Wits. Andrew adds his Meditation to the group. Now all of them have the Mind Shields of 4 protecting them and can resist the vampire with a Wits + Meditation pool of 8 dice.*

••••• Power Gestalt: Not only may the group use multiple powers at once, they can combine powers. Each member combines powers as before, but they can now combine two or more powers into a single, shared power. For example, a clairvoyant and telepath could conjoin their powers, allowing them to view a person by clairvoyance and read the subject's mind at the same time.

## TELEPATHY

*Hanzo sat in the bar, sipping his drink. He wasn't too handsome or too well dressed. He didn't have a lot of money, either. The guys from work always wondered what his secret was. He sat at the bar for a while, looking over the noisy happy-hour crowd. Eventually, he'd get up and start talking to some beautiful woman. He knew what to say to make her laugh or how to cheer her up. The guys called him "the magic man" because once he started talking, the woman always went home with him.*

*"It's simple," he once confided in a friend. "You have to know what she wants and give it to her. Same as sales. I sell to the people who are going to buy and leave the window shoppers to the other guys."*

*"But how do you know?" asked his friend.*

*Hanzo just smiled and said, "Call it a knack."*

In simplest form, Telepathy is the ability to read minds. The telepath must be able to sense the target to read the target's mind. The power is rarely so simple as reading text from a book, though — rather, a telepath senses impressions and, with experience, learns to pick out subtexts, streams of consciousness, motives and eventually the sort of inner monologue or impulse that often drives a subject.

Some skilled telepaths can not only read minds, but can plant suggestions or speak with a "mental voice" in the mind of a target.

Successes scored on Telepathy generally determine the duration and accuracy. With one success, a psychic might grab a few words or impressions that relate in some way to an interesting topic. With three successes, the character can

easily read a good several turns of useful information, and at five or more successes, the character could cast about for specific thoughts or memories. The difficulty typically equals the subject's Willpower, and Mind Shields offer defense, as one might expect. A victim can generally spend a point of Willpower to resist a telepathic compulsion.

**Roll:** Intelligence + Empathy

• At this level the telegraph can feel basic emotions and sense the current mood of the target. The telepath may be able to send a simple impulse or rudimentary thought to the target. A target could be induced to twitch or make a simple or habitual gesture.

•• The character can now read the surface thoughts of people, generally what they're thinking about at that moment. The telepath can project a single word or simple idea to a person or cause the subject to make one short motion.

••• The character can read recent memories or plans for the near future from people's minds. At this level, the telepath

## TELEPATHIC CONTROL, PROJECTION AND SENSING

For most World of Darkness games, Telepathy's powers may seem too broadly applicable. In such a case, the Storyteller should divide the power into multiple categories and have psychics buy each category separately. The power is simply listed as a unified one for convenience. In practice, it's often best to divide Telepathy up as follows...

**Telepathic Sensing:** The basic ability to sense emotions or thoughts. (You could split this between Empathic and Telepathic Sensing, if you like, to divide senses of emotions versus senses of thoughts.)

**Telepathic Projection:** The power to send ideas, emotions or thoughts into another person's mind. (You could also split this between Empathic and Telepathic Projection, if you like.)

**Telepathic Control:** Directly taking control of a subject's mind and forcing him to perform an action. (You could split this into Telepathic Control, allowing the character to dominate a victim's physical actions, versus Sensory Control, allowing the psychic to totally falsify the sensory input of the victim.)

Note that for some games, you might want to allow some of these powers, but not all. Experiment with combinations! For instance, you might decide in your chronicle that characters simply take Telepathy as one power, and receive the abilities of Telepathic Sensing and Telepathic Projection, but that there is no Telepathic Control. Or you might have a game with Telepathic Control as a separate power and Telepathic Sensing as well, but no Telepathic Projection ability. You can also have some fun by allowing some sorcerers to study variant Paths based on this: a Path of Command, for instance, that duplicates Telepathic Control. Customize to your heart's content.

can send full sentences, strong, complex emotions or even streams of memory; with enough successes, a telepath might be able to implant false memory. The subject might be forced to believe false input from his senses or caused to take one unusual action in a turn (like dropping a weapon or ducking for cover instead of running away).

•••• The character can read deep thoughts and distant future plans. The amount of information he gets depends on the number of successes. Similarly, the psychic can send several

sentences of information, implant memories, cover up a memory or even temporarily seize control of the subject's body for a turn.

••••• The character can discover the deepest secrets of people, even things unknown to the target or repressed by him. So long as the telepath can somehow sense the target, he can send his thoughts with complete clarity. With enough successes, the telepath can seize control of the victim, completely dominating his senses or his physical actions, rewriting memories, altering personality and the like.

## PSYCHIC ⊕ ORGANIZATIONS



Unlike sorcerous societies, which often stem from some mystic impulse or drive to create a unified understanding of magical principles, psychics rarely gather into groups. Without any unifying practices, they have little need to share their techniques — there are few “rituals” that a psychic could teach or study, few tomes of erudite knowledge and few scientists or financiers who would bother. As a result, psychic organizations often lack the signature tools, styles or hierarchies of sorcerous groups. Rather, they tend to focus upon a specific psychic phenomenon, a small group of acquaintances or a single authority figure who promotes study.

### THE FRIENDS ⊕ FOSTER

State magician Randy “The Fabulous” Foster is well known for his sideline habit: debunking sideshow psychics and exposing frauds. A select group know him as something else, a friend to the real psychics. Seven years ago, Foster went to Lafayette, LA to investigate claims of a young boy, Richard Herbert (pronounced “hey-bare”) who could see the future. The boy seemed troubled and withdrawn, but his powers appeared to pass the standard tests Foster used to expose charlatans. He was on the verge of giving the boy's parents the \$250,000 check he carried for the first “real” psychic he met. Then he discovered the boy's parents were not just pushing him to use his gift more than he was physically able to, but that they abused Richard when he “let them down.”

Foster went to the police and made sure the parents were put away for a long time. He adopted Richard, and the two of them began looking for more real psychics, ones in trouble. Ones they could help. In the years that followed, Randy and Richard have put together an “Underground Railroad” for psychics in trouble. Randy has publicly given up his search for real psychics, claiming he had spent enough time with frauds and con men and wanted to get back into show business. Richard now appears in the act as Randy's assistant. The two of them do an excellent mind-reading act. It is an act, as Randy wants to protect Richard from people who would exploit his gift.

### INSIGHT INVESTMENTS

Insight Investments is a fast-growing investment house in Chicago. Investors seeking higher risk and higher reward

in the stock market flock to Insight. The Wall Street Journal once referred to their ability to pay high-yield stocks “as something akin to magic.” President Chase Nixon keeps the article framed on his desk. People would be surprised at how close to the truth the article is. Nixon possesses pre cognitive abilities, which he uses on the stock market. After encountering Jacob Anderson, a clairvoyant investor, the two decided to pool their powers and resources to make even more money together. The firm's success came to the attention of the Securities and Exchange Commission, which led to it adopting a policy of losing money every once in awhile just to lower its profile. The firm still makes obscene amounts of profits. Anderson now spends his time recruiting new psychic talents for the firm instead of acquiring insider information. A brush with the IRS convinced the firm to scale back its illegal activities, though it still occasionally bends the rules. There are no laws against seeing the future, after all. There are now six “gifted” members of Insight.

### THE MARSH INSTITUTE

Telepath and financier Howard Jennings Marsh made his millions in real estate in the 1920s. A competitor of his (and precognitive) William Jefferson Smith came to him in 1928 with dire news. He had foreseen the impending stock market crash and needed assistance moving his millions into protected stocks. The two pooled their powers as well as their mundane talents. As time progressed, other psychics who used their powers to further their economic and political goals joined the cabal. After Marsh's death in 1959, his (also-psychic) heirs established the Marsh Institute, a conservative think-tank. Officially, the Institute is a research organization dedicated to studying social, medical and economic problems and marketing the results to Congress, the news media and key policy advisors. In truth, the Institute's research offerings serve the interests of “the cabal,” the aging group of psychics who use the Institute to further their needs. The medical branch of the Marsh Institute, in addition to searching for cures for cancer, searches for other psychics. They recruit the psychics to work for the cabal, doing its dirty work. Psychic agents of the Marsh Institute receive large paychecks, incredible benefits and the protection of a powerful patron. Agents also tend to be incredibly loyal, either out of greed, blackmail or outright psychic coercion.





# CHAPTER SIX: STORYTELLING

## THE SORCEROUS CHRONICLE



Running an all-sorcerer chronicle is a little different than your average World of Darkness chronicle. Most notable is the fact that the power level is much lower. The ability to vanish into thin air or make people do whatever you say is no longer ubiquitous, nor even reasonably available. Sorcerers work hard for what powers they do have, and their powers tend to be much less earth shattering than those of vampires, werewolves and mages.

This requires something of a change in perspective on the Storyteller's part. Even if you're accustomed to running World of Darkness games, you'll want to put some thought into your first *Sorcerer* game. Your Storyteller characters shouldn't be as powerful as they would be in a regular *Mage* game. Your plots shouldn't require access to high-level magical abilities in order to be solved. You'll need to focus on

the human much more — on the use of Talents, Skills, Knowledges, Backgrounds and player abilities to solve things, rather than Spheres and Disciplines.

Making your Storyteller characters less powerful takes more than the erasure of a few dots on a sheet. You may wish to use more humans and not-quite-humans as foils for the cabal, rather than ancient vampires and archmages. On a simplistic level, you can substitute kinfolk for werebeasts, acolytes and other sorcerers for mages, ghouls for vampires and humans with changeling blood (called kinain) for actual changelings. Or perhaps not — maybe your group would fit in with some fledgling vampires who aren't yet more human than human or some changelings who've just recognized their potential.

You may find that personal plots take more of a front seat, and epic plots become occasional high points rather than the focus of things. The power level has been ratcheted



down a notch or two, but this isn't a bad thing. The World of Darkness can be made once again amazing and new to players who may have become jaded to its wonders. You have the chance to reveal things slowly, to make even the lowliest newly Awakened mage a wonder to behold. The trick is in the revelation: Never show everything at once. When women used to wear only the longest of skirts, the briefest glimpse of an ankle was considered incredibly sexy. Conceal the wonders of your world similarly, occasionally showing an ankle, and they will become correspondingly amazing.

## THE CHARACTERS

You should consider what sort of characters you wish to work with. Are your players' characters a group of random sorcerers who've come together through chance and circumstance? Are they a cabal that has worked together for years? Are they a mentor and her students? Talk with your players. Any of these may be made to work, but they require different approaches. Random sorcerers need outside reasons to work together — does the plot force them together? Do some of them have background ties to each other, perhaps childhood friendships or mutual acquaintances? Will their styles of magic clash and cause a problem, or can they draw interesting personal conflict from their differences? If they're a single cabal, they need to agree on a magical style, and there's probably a heavy overlap in magical skills. If they are a mentor and her students, then one player is going to play top dog — is it someone who can handle that without irritating other players? How will the other players handle being the lessers to another player's character?

One of the merits of a **Sorcerer** chronicle can be the inherently lower power level. You might take advantage of this to allow a player to play the not-quite-human he's been wanting to play — after all, a ghoul, acolyte or kinfolk won't be nearly so out-of-place in the power games now. You might even allow a purely human character without any sorcery at all to be played (although he should have some useful abilities to allow him to keep up). A **Sorcerer** chronicle allows you to explore the less powerful and, thus, less power-centric creatures that populate the World of Darkness.

Try to draw on the specific characteristics of **Sorcerer** for your chronicle, those things that make it special: the slow search for knowledge; the sheer mystery, magic and enchantment of the World of Darkness; the sorcerer's unique vantage point smack in the middle of the food-chain. Allow your chronicle to be a true **Sorcerer** chronicle, not just another World of Darkness run.

## THE MOOD OF SORCERY

The mood of a **Sorcerer** chronicle may feel like anything you want it to feel like. Some of the moods you may find yourself returning to over and over, however, are terror and excitement. Excitement is the mood often engendered by the search for knowledge and the discovery of magic. Fear

and horror emerge when the sorcerer discovers the other things that live in the shadows of the World of Darkness or perhaps finds his own powers growing beyond what he expected.

Remember to alter the mood of your chronicle sometimes. Unrelenting horror is tiresome and loses its effect after a while. The same is true of unrelenting angst or unrelenting anything. Even the darkest tragedies have moments of beauty and characters that make jokes. By bringing in a moment of an "opposite" mood, you make the prevailing one seem all the stronger, and you make it more effective.

You might choose a new mood for each story, or you might change the mood depending on the scene. You might decide "tonight's game is going to be horrific," or you might say, "this story is all about loss and sadness." It's often a good idea to consider the mood before the night of roleplaying begins, so that you can be consistent about it. It also helps you to think of ways to increase the mood. Most of the things you do to hold a mood should happen in game, but there are a few out-of-game things you can do. If you've chosen horror, you might decide to light the room you're playing in by candlelight to keep it dark and throw shadows on the walls. If sadness, you might keep the score from a sad movie playing quietly in the background.

If you aren't sure how to hold a certain mood, pick a movie that exemplifies that mood, and watch it. Examine where in the horror movie you feel fear, and figure out why. Note which scenes in the sad movie make you tear up, and again, figure out why. Then use that. You can do the same thing with books, television and anything else that causes you to feel a distinct emotion. Different things affect people differently; make lists of the tricks that movies and books use and slip them one-by-one into your games until you find the ones that work on your players. Then try something else — if you overuse a trick, it may lose its effectiveness.

A strong mood is what gets players' hearts pumping and makes their hands sweat. It's what grips them and causes an entire night of roleplaying to go by in the blink of an eye. A strong mood can make the difference between a fun story and one that captivates your players and makes them clamor for more.

## THEME

Mood is often a part of theme, but a theme is larger than just a mood. A theme is usually captured in a few words, a phrase or a sentence. It might be "love at the cost of life" or "conflict destroys happiness." If you're having trouble grasping the concept of a theme, then think of it as "the moral of the story" — except that it doesn't have to be a shiny-happy moralistic message. You might concentrate on a single theme for a story, or you might weave themes together just as you might allow various plots to go on side by side. Certainly, a chronicle or story does not have to have a theme; some are just damn good stories with no message. And sometimes your players won't notice your themes. This is just fine; don't get tempted to hit them over the

head with the message. Themes are still useful to you, whether or not your players notice them. They help you to come up with new types of plots. They help you to relate plots to each other in unusual ways. They help you to keep a handle on mood and tone. And they also help you to teach the characters, to help them grow as "people."

Dangerous knowledge is one strong **Sorcerer** theme. Sorcerers, by their nature, seek knowledge — it's exceedingly rare to find a sorcerer whose ability is entirely thrust upon him and who has no desire whatsoever to develop it. But magical knowledge may be dangerous. The cabal may learn a new ritual, only to find that this ritual's power comes from a dark entity that wants something from the characters. Or in their desire for new and greater power, they may deliberately contact some foul creature. Or someone who seems genuinely helpful, perhaps an older sorcerer, turns out to be leading them down the wrong path.

Self-discovery is another major theme in **Sorcerer**. Sorcerers may believe they study magic alone, but they may also learn a great deal about themselves along the way. When someone threatens the people they care about, they may discover they have the stuff of heroes, or they may discover that they are cowards who would rather save their own skins. You might set up a story in which each sorcerer, through his magic, is lead to realize something important which he did not know about himself. When the ritual a sorcerer learns requires her to do something she finds repugnant, she may discover the strength of will to do it anyway — or the strength of will to say no. A ritual may require a sorcerer to face his greatest fear and overcome it.

Protection of the innocent is a possible theme. Sorcerers aren't particularly powerful at low levels, but they're much more than normal mortals. They may choose to protect those mortals around them. Do they protect people physically? Do they protect innocence itself — trying to keep mortals unaware of the dangers that lie around them? Do they protect humans from the supernatural or from other humans? Do they protect people from the simple ravages of life and luck? If they're protecting humans from each other, then how do they decide who is in the right? If they protect people from the bad parts of life, then what do they do when their actions indirectly cause someone else harm? And if they're trying to make everyone happy, they should swiftly realize that they don't have the time or energy to help everyone. With a little subtlety, you could lead your party down that path by having people ask them for help now and then, until they find that's all they spend their time doing. How do they choose which people they should help and which they shouldn't?

The danger and the value of religion are both valid themes and may even be mixed in the same story. Religious zealots are dangerous and may do terrible things with the best of intentions. And yet, other religious zealots may truly help people. How do you choose? How do you determine which

religions and their followers are dangerous and which are not? Especially when the good and the bad follow the same god? Religion and sorcerous magic are, in some ways, similar topics — you might use this theme to show the sorcerers that, in a certain way, they are zealots as well, following their own personal religion.

Revenge is another theme. Someone wants revenge against a person who hurt her, and a sorcerer is forced to decide to protect the offender. Why? The offender is a nice man and didn't intend to hurt anyone. Bring up this plot at the same time that the sorcerer seeks revenge against someone who hurt him, who did not do so intentionally, and let the sorcerer see the parallels.

Curiosity and meddling make up another common set of **Sorcerer** themes. Most sorcerers are by nature curious folks, or they wouldn't have gotten mixed up in all of this magical stuff. Let their curiosity involve them in all sorts of plots. There are innumerable variations on the curiosity theme. Curiosity is dangerous; curiosity leads to adventure and excitement; meddling can get people killed; if you don't meddle, then you're as guilty as the criminals you didn't stop from murdering someone; and so on.

There are other themes to play with as well: the touch of magic; the vastness of the universe; the results of peer pressure (for good or ill); conflict with others, conflict with the self, conflict with authority (and so on); the feeling of belonging; recruitment; responsibility; etc. I'm sure you can come up with many more.

There is one thing you should think about, however, with each theme you entertain. No matter what the theme, you are teaching your characters a lesson. If they learn that lesson, will they still be viable characters? If you put a character through a harrowing experience designed to show him that meddling in other people's business can be deadly, then you may end up with a character so traumatized that he'll never meddle again. This can be a problem if one of the ways your characters get into plots is by meddling. Now, you and your players may decide that an experience is interesting or entertaining enough for a character to go through that it's worth removing the character from the game and bringing in a new one. But this is still something that you must consider, and it may well be something you should clear with the player first. After all, you're in this to have fun — and so are your players.

## A FEW CHARACTERS

The types of characters that may appear in a **Sorcerer** chronicle, as players' characters or as Storyteller characters, are many and varied. As with other games, almost any character concept may be made to work with a little effort.

Before the first session of your chronicle, you should sit down with your players. If they haven't already found a way to link their characters together and if you haven't done it for



them (by specifying, for example, that they must all be members of the same cabal), then you need to make sure that the characters will work together. It's frustrating when the characters discover partway into the chronicle that they really have no reason to be hanging out together.

To a certain extent, you can solve this by Storyteller fiat. Point out that it's a game and that you're all here to have fun. You're not asking them to do things their characters wouldn't do, but you are asking them to *slant* their actions. This simply means that when they have a choice between actions (or non-actions), where one action allows them to involve the others and another doesn't, and neither action particularly violates their character concepts, they take the one that will involve the group. For example, if they have a choice between taking the others with them to meet with someone and going off alone, if they have no strong reason why they should go alone, then they take the others.

You shouldn't rely on this too heavily though, or eventually, you will ask someone to do something his character just wouldn't do, and some players have a hard time with that (why come up with a character, after all, if you aren't going to stick to it?). So, you need to talk to the players ahead of time and make sure that their characters have reason to work together. Did someone's mentor tell him to show someone else around and treat him as one of the cabal? Was one cabal member a good friend of yet another member in childhood, so that now they can renew that friendship? Does the plot itself force the party together, by insuring that they all need to be involved in order to solve it? Do multiple members of the cabal have common interests that will bring them together? Or perhaps personalities that will mesh well?

If you do this and you still run into problems, you can solve some of them in-game. This is where themes come in handy. If someone refuses to share information with the others and always keeps it to himself, then play with a theme in which the lack of information dissemination becomes clearly bad. In other words, teach him a lesson. Worst case, if that doesn't work, you may need to speak to the player. If you had the talk ahead of time about how the characters need to work together, then the player can't claim that he didn't know it would be a problem.

This isn't to say that all conflict between players' characters is bad. Indeed, it can make for very interesting plots sometimes. But you need a cohesive enough group to be able to run a game for them.

Here are some rough suggestions for Sorcerer characters, enough for you to get a handle on, with notes about how they might be played with to encourage cohesive play. They may be used as Storyteller characters or as the basis for players' characters. They are not meant to be whole-cloth characters, ready to go from the box, but they will hopefully provide you with plenty of ideas. Some should be relatively obvious; hopefully others will be more surprising. After all, sorcerers can be anything.

## THE SEEKER OF FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

This sorcerer has a thirst for knowledge that cannot be slaked. She wasn't satisfied with hours of copying arcane symbols under the tutelage of her mentor. Her mentor said she'd learn more later, that she needed patience, but she had none to spare. Whenever her mentor went out of town, she'd sneak into his library and read the really old books, the ones with tattered leather covers and writing that looked suspiciously crusty and reddish-brown. When she supposedly went on vacation with her family, she really took trips to archaeological digs in arcane places or to secret libraries she'd discovered the location of.

Most of her magic is low level, but she has one or two Path ratings that would surprise her mentor if he knew of them. She keeps her studies secret from him, and he's enough of an academic, with sight only for studies and collegiate discourse, that it never occurs to him that she might have gone beyond his curriculum.

She's learned some shadier magic, probably involving the summoning and binding of spirits. After all, isn't that the quick way to get new knowledge — to find spirits to impart it to you? Too bad it's also the quick way to get hurt or killed. Some day her quest for knowledge will destroy her or maybe those around her. She may summon something she can't abjure, awaken and free something long bound and asleep or go mad at the sheer influx of forbidden knowledge.

Obviously this character is not destined to be long-lived. She is best suited to a short chronicle or an end-of-the-world plot — something where the characters are not expected to live long. She stands a good chance of getting her compatriots killed as well, which is another reason to only allow her where the death rate is not expected to be low. As a Storyteller character, she would make a fantastic plot device. She might set free an ancient enemy that the players' characters must put to rest. She might work with them for a time, only to betray them to gain some knowledge that she wants. She might use them to uncover some old tomb or ancient library. She might also be their competition — they must get to the treasure first, before she takes it and unleashes its horrors.

## THE PROTECTOR OF THE INNOCENT

This sorcerer feels an obligation to protect the innocent and the helpless — normally, this means ordinary mortals who have no magic with which to combat life's tragedies. He does everything he can without actually revealing to people what he can do; secrecy is paramount in his line of work. He uses his status as a non-supernatural to get close to people, to find out what troubles them, what their problems are; he's a good listener after all. In particular, he likes to figure out when a person's troubles are actually the result of the supernatural and put a stop to them. He finds the interference of the supernatural in the lives of mortals a terrible thing and fights it all the way.

The innocence of those mortals deserves protecting as much as their lives, however, so he does his best to make sure they never realize what it is that haunts them. He uses his status as a learned member of the community, perhaps a teacher or scientist, to debunk their fears of witches and ghosts, while going behind the citizens backs to stop those same witches and ghosts.

This character can make for fantastic fun — he could be pulled into almost any plot as long as the safety or innocence of a mortal was at stake. Under the influence of other characters, he might even be convinced to widen the scope of his concerns. As a “learned member of the community,” he would have useful skills other than his magic, which is always important to a well-rounded character. This kind of character is often a loner, however, so he would need to be tied in well with the other characters — are they his cabal? Do they all work as a team? He might work well with a member of the police who is aware of the supernatural or with other academics that believe it is their duty to do more than watch and learn. He might also work well with a group of his students, whom he instructs in both magic and the art of caring about their fellow man.

He wouldn't make nearly as good a Storyteller character, unless he was only around for a short time. You probably don't want your group to have competition for solving their problems, at least not often. If you made him a mortal instead of a sorcerer, however, he might find problems for the players to solve. Or you might turn him into a bit of a madman, who believes he is helping people but, actually, causes more problems than he solves.

### THE SELF-MADE SORCERER

This sorcerer never had a cabal or mentor to explain things to her. She learned everything the old-fashioned way — through intuition, study and hard work. Maybe she got some of her sources from unlikely or even misleading places, such as New Age bookshops and the local public library, but somehow, she's distilled some real knowledge out of it all. Her keen intuition allows her to discern the thread of truth behind the hyperbole and to make it work for her. Her rituals are homemade, with symbols taken from pamphlets on home witchcraft and phrases cobbled together out of Latin-to-English dictionaries (the grammar is atrocious). But it works. She always knew there was something out there, that magic had to be real, and eventually, she proved herself right.

Again, this is another character who is traditionally a loner, but it's very easy to work her into a group. Give her what she's always wanted — the chance to learn “real” magic, from people who won't laugh at her. Perhaps the rest of the group is a cabal, and they just recruited her pre-game. Her style may clash with theirs for a while, but she's eager to learn and hard working, and eventually, she'll fit in. She certainly never fit in anywhere else, so she's probably a bit starved for approval and affection, and hopefully, she'll find both with the cabal.

As a Storyteller character, she could be almost anything: a possible recruit for either side or a student for one of the players' sorcerers to pick up and then, perhaps, lose when a powerful enemy kills her. She might follow the cabal and blackmail them into teaching her. She could, in her desperation to learn, turn to dark magics. Or in her studies, she might have learned exactly what the cabal needs to know in order to solve their plot, and they need to convince her to help.

### THE HELPFUL WAITER

This sorcerer knows a few little charms designed to help people out. He might cure someone's illness or fashion a love charm for some nice lonely soul. He's never sought to use his power for personal gain but only to help others in little ways. He's a waiter at a cheap local restaurant where the lost and the lonely always seem to hang out; he's good enough to get a job somewhere better, but there wouldn't be as many people to help there. Here, he can help in all sorts of little ways. Sometimes, he slips herbal mixtures into people's food — the food here is bad enough that the herbs probably improve the taste.

The trick for this character would be to get him to take on a wider worldview. He would need some ties to the group, so he'd have reason to listen when they tried to convince him to do something greater with his life. Perhaps they can convince him that he could do even more good with their help. Certainly, he has the basic wish to help people, which can get him into all sorts of plots. Maybe one of his regular customers has been killed by something, and the other characters want his help to investigate the murder. She was a sweet woman who wouldn't have hurt a fly, and he feels a need to find out who would have done such a thing to her.

He would also make an interesting Storyteller character, especially if the characters have a tendency to sit around and chat in restaurants. They might suddenly find little good things happening for them and, eventually, discover that it's the work of the lowly waiter who's always so happy to take their orders. He could be a low-level helper for the characters, always ready to make a healing potion in their service but unwilling to leave his beloved customers in order to do more.

### THE TOUR GUIDE

She works the tourist stops, showing people the sites for a fee. Sometimes she runs tours at local universities. During the summer, she's been known to drive a trolley around the streets. She watches people and uses her post as a tour guide as an excuse to go to all sorts of places. She covers up her agenda by being brash and loud, as obnoxious as the tourists she guides. Thus, few ever suspect that she's anything other than the pest she appears to be.

In fact, she is a sorcerer. She uses her job to go into places and spy, to gather information on people and places. She ferrets out suspicious activities and passes them on to her friends, who do something about it. Because she never



actually shows up at the confrontation, sabotage or shoot out, she is never associated with these events.

If the tour guide is a player's character, she might pass her information on to other sorcerers — namely the rest of the group. She might get involved in the action after all, but in disguise or with her shape changed, so that no one will suspect her. As a Storyteller character, she might work for the cabal or for their opponents in one plot or another. Or she might work for a group of hunters, who could gradually introduce the cabal to some of the other supernaturals in the World of Darkness. She might even be a mortal, with no sorcerous abilities whatsoever.

## THE CHEMISTRY STUDENT

This character loved chemistry so much that he convinced one of his professors to hire him for a research project, and eventually, he became an accepted part of her research group. Because of this, he received access to her labs and equipment. He came in and played with things in his off time and became quite adept at creating whatever drugs he wanted to. He started out making recreational drugs — he found it got him invitations to all of the best campus parties, especially the private ones — but eventually, he moved on. Working from a textbook he found in his professor's desk (he'd never heard of the author before, but he was sure she wouldn't have the book if it weren't good), he put together a powder that put him out for a night and a day with visions. He thought it was just a powerful hallucinogen until some of the things he'd seen in the vision came true.

Then the professor confronted him about his use of the book. He thought he'd put it back exactly the way it had been, but she knew anyway. He thought she was going to fire him, but instead, she initiated him into her little cabal. Suddenly, some of the odd comments he'd heard around the lab made a lot more sense. It turned out that the research group was into a lot more than simple chemistry — they worked with magical alchemy.

The entire collegiate research group might make for an interesting group of characters, but you'd need to find ways to drag them out of the laboratory. Alternatively, the student himself could be made a character. Perhaps the professor asked him to help the group because one of them asked her for a hand. Or she might have noticed that he had an affinity for some other sort of magic and decided that he needed someone else to teach him the things that she couldn't.

As a Storyteller character, the student would be quite versatile — the possibilities are almost endless. What if his teacher is in search of some dangerous (or at least abusable) elixir — an anti-aging drug, a drug to put people under her power or some other such thing? Her student might eventually feel it necessary to betray her in order to protect people, or he might be used against her even if he won't betray her. Alternatively, he could stand steadfastly by his teacher,



forcing the cabal to go through an innocent student in order to stop the professor.

## THE BARTENDER

The character tends bar in a good part of town, one where yuppies come to look cool. She almost got fired once for telling a patron not to use his cell phone in the bar. She hates her customers, but she learned a long time ago to keep her mouth shut and smile. She's had to endure all sorts of sexual advances from people who thought that their money and their status would make her swoon. Here she learned to look down on the wealthy and the successful. She sees their lives as empty and meaningless.

She uses her psychic abilities to help some of the people her customers have hurt. She listens closely for stories of layoffs and bad business deals. She uses her charm and her pretty face to get the beautiful people to tell her all about their latest triumphs, most of which involve hurting other people. When helping the yuppies' victims means hurting the bastards, she's even happier about it. She has some skill

at mind-reading, which helps her to divine which business deals will do the most damage and to find those who most need her help.

She's basically a nice person, but she's seen too much of the bad side of the idle rich. She doesn't even see them as human any more. As a player's character, she might use the bar to find problems and plots for the characters to solve. She can certainly use it to get close to people the cabal needs to talk to. She might drug people's drinks when necessary, although that's a dangerous path to take. Of course, a night job for a character could stand in the way of a number of plots. Perhaps she takes care of the lunchtime and just post-work crowd, giving her plenty of time to work with the cabal.

As a Storyteller character, she could help the characters to get information they need, only to get killed by a patron who figures out what she's up to. Her mind-reading abilities could allow her to warn the cabal of someone who intends to harm them. She could accidentally learn something through her mind-reading abilities that someone would kill her for and might require the protection of the cabal.

# SORCERERS IN THE WORLD OF DARKNESS



Although sorcerers often do not know much about the mysterious and dangerous things going on around them, neither do they live in a vacuum. While humans are probably more likely than other creatures to become sorcerers, simply because they do not have other powers to fall back on, they are not the only sorcerers out there. Neither are they the only ones with psychic powers. And while they will only rarely get a good look at the things they share the World of Darkness with, it does sometimes happen. Some sorcerers even work hand-in-hand with other supernaturals.

This section will give you some ideas and guidelines for dealing with the many ways in which sorcerers and psychics may interact with the World of Darkness. You might wish to allow vampires, werewolves or other creatures to use sorcery as well. You might wish to use such creatures as helpers, antagonists or plot twists in your **Sorcerer** chronicle. Or you might allow sorcerers to fight side-by-side with mages or changelings.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all of these plans. Hopefully, the information that follows will help you to choose your path and to make that path work for you.

## WHAT ARE THE STAKES?

What are the stakes in a **Sorcerer** chronicle? Sorcerers are not as powerful as the other supernatural creatures that surround them. You cannot expect to send them directly up against vampires, werewolves, mages, etc. and have them survive for very long. To this end, here are a few suggestions.

Combat should not be a commonplace occurrence — especially combat with supernaturals. Don't send your sorcerers up against a whole sept of werewolves if you want to keep the cabal around for any length of time. If there is combat, it should usually be against normal humans or almost-humans. The cabal might occasionally run directly up against the heavy-duty supernatural, but this should be limited to brief moments of terror and confusion.

Instead, a cabal of sorcerers needs other ways to solve its problems, and death should not be the only consequence of a failed mission. Sorcery is obviously one resource, but you can't solve every problem with a well-placed ritual. Besides, it would get boring. Politics are useful, as are other types of relationships and manipulation. Research is always fun, as well as investigation of mysteries and puzzles. Sorcerers, more so than other supernaturals, need to have more in the way of abilities other than just their sorcery. You never know what will prove useful in solving a plot. Try to play to the characters' (and players') strengths. And if you're accustomed to playing World of Darkness games, just remember that sorcerers are squishier than the things you're used to Storytelling about.

## KEEP IT LOW-KEY

There's another reason to be careful in your use of the supernatural around sorcerers. One of the major themes of **Sorcerer** is the mystery and wonder of the supernatural world. If your sorcerers learn to categorize and recognize on sight all the types of vampires, werewolves and mages, then these creatures lose their wonder.



Bring the big guns in only rarely. Instead, let the supernaturals manipulate things behind the scenes, giving only hints to the cabal about what's really going on around them. Tease the cabal with glimpses of the supernatural rather than putting it right out in front of them. You might bring a vampire or a mage in once in a long while for the climax of a plot, or you might bring in characters that seem almost normal but are secretly werewolves or changelings, but don't do it all the time. You might find it necessary to trim your usual notions of a city's supernatural population — too many vampires and it becomes difficult to justify why the cabal never notices them.

If your players are familiar with the workings of the World of Darkness, then turn it all upside-down. If you want to do this in small ways then you might alter the way a few powers work here and there. It will confuse people and help to cut down on instances of "oh, that's a Toreador," when the characters shouldn't even recognize a vampire in the first place. If you're serious about confusing the cabal and you have a little time, you might turn everything upside down. Vampires never sleep, even if they can't go out in sunlight. There are only four clans, and there's a third faction along with the Sabbat and Camarilla. The clan names are unfamiliar, and the Disciplines they wield don't match any known configuration. Or just shuck the entire system of Disciplines and clans out the window — who says that vampires in your Sorcerer game have to have any but the most passing resemblance to vampires in some other game? The sorcerers are the center of attention here!

You can do similar things with werewolves, perhaps changing a few details of the tribe structure. Or you could go so far as to add extra forms they can take or to declare that, when in lupus, a wolf has trouble remembering anything of its human life and, thus, may not recognize foes or allies. Perhaps werewolves really do only change during the full moon, or they're the only ones who can't be controlled by the moon.

You don't have to color within the lines. If you want to bring the mystery back into the World of Darkness for players who've been involved in it for too long, then change the very world itself.

## SORCERY VS....

You'll need to take into account how sorcery and psychic abilities will affect supernaturals. For instance, are alchemical poisons, tranquilizers and anesthetics effective against vampires? After all, alchemical substances don't work the way medications do; they work mystically (especially for sorcerers with particularly mystical paradigms). Therefore, they might work against someone whose body no longer functions in the normal way. But do you want a Level One Alchemy preparation to be able to sedate a vampire? This might be too powerful. You could allow the vampire some sort of resisted roll against the number of successes the sorcerer achieved on the effect. Perhaps a Willpower roll at

a difficulty of three plus the sorcerer's Path or ability rating would do. You would then determine the success of the effect by counting the number of *net* successes the sorcerer achieved. Instead of a resisted roll, you might simply increase the sorcerer's difficulty level.

You might choose a different roll, if that seems more appropriate to you. For example, consider the following. How do psychic powers and Auspex (the vampiric Discipline that involves use of "psychic" abilities) interact? Can a psychic block a vampire's attempt to establish telepathic contact? Instead of using Willpower, you might allow a vampire with the Auspex Telepathy Discipline to attempt to block a human telepath directly, or vice versa. The two characters could make contested rolls — the human psychic uses his Telepathy roll, and the vampire uses the roll for Auspex Telepathy: Perception + Empathy. Again, the character attempting to perform the original action would succeed or fail based on his net successes.

An alchemical potion of weakness might "counteract" Potence-born Strength. A preparation that strengthens the mind or the will might help to counteract Dominate. A preparation to grant "clear sight" might be used against Obfuscate. Again, these are things you should decide upon ahead of time. Just how effective is a sorcerer's work against a vampire's abilities? In other words, do you want the supernaturals in your game to be rare, powerful, nigh-unstoppable creatures that the cabal has to out-think, or are you planning on more direct confrontations? If the latter, you'll want to give your sorcerers an edge.

You might decide that a sorcerer's Paths aren't effective when used directly against supernaturals until the sorcerer reaches Level Two, or even Level Three, in the Path he wishes to use. You could instead increase the difficulty of any roll involving effects upon supernatural beings. Or you might go effect by effect, deciding on an individual basis

what seems reasonable and right. The Path of Shadows might allow minor insight into the workings of Obtenebration. Fascination might allow insight into Presence. (As always, study and research are *de rigueur*.)

But vampires aren't the only supernaturals sorcerers stand a chance of encountering. What about the truly dead? You might decide that only the spiritual may counteract spirits, and thus, in order for a sorcerer to protect against wraiths, she must have some understanding of Ephemera. It is unlikely that abilities such as Telepathy would work on the dead, but you might allow it anyway. The Path of Fortune might or might not work on wraiths. Again, you might require the sorcerer to have a certain rating in the Path, or you might increase the difficulty of the roll. You might rule that certain preparations or a mystical Talisman are necessary before sorcery that wasn't designed to operate on wraiths may do so.

How do Paths and psychic abilities interact with the Gifts and Rites of werewolves? Garou Rites and Gifts are highly

individualized; they don't come in convenient categories the way vampiric Disciplines do. This will require a higher level of judgment on the fly. You can still make some decisions ahead of time, however. First, you might say that the only protection sorcerers have against Gifts and Rites are Path effects that obviously and directly counter the effect of a Gift or Rite. For example, there is a Level Two Gift called Halt the Coward's Flight that slows the werewolf's opponents as they flee. However, the whole point of the Path of Conveyance is swift movement, so you might allow the sorcerer to use it to counter the effect of the Gift. Again, though, this is just speculative — your werewolves might not use Gifts at all; see if your players gather a new respect for them should the werewolves turn out to be berserk, slaving monsters hungry to rend the sorcerers limb from limb, all magic and spirituality be damned!

Or you might use a slightly more fluid way of looking at things — by area of relevance rather than direct effect. You might allow a sorcerer to use the Path of Ephemera to attempt to interfere with a Gift or Rite that has to do with spirits. This is hardly a perfect solution; it requires much more judgment on the fly and makes sorcerers more powerful than they should be. You might, however, allow a sorcerer with a Path that is related to a Gift or Rite (again, there is the above example of spirit-related magic) to spend time researching a ritual to counteract said Gift or Rite. The sorcerer should have a fairly detailed knowledge of the Gift or Rite, or at least its effects, before she can research a way to oppose it. You might temper

this ruling by requiring a great deal of research, making the resulting ritual very difficult, increasing the difficulty of the roll or only allowing this when the sorcerer has a high rating in the relevant Path.

Mages, by nature, can do anything a sorcerer can do, provided they have the relevant Sphere levels. Some of them don't even need all of the ritualistic trappings in order to do it. Again, specific effects may counter specific effects. If you wish, as stated before, you might allow sorcerers to research ways to counteract magical effects that they otherwise have no protections against. Also again, this requires research, experience with the effect and/or a high Path rating or a higher difficulty. It should certainly be more difficult for a sorcerer to learn to countermagic than it is for a mage to. After all, Spheres are more flexible than Paths.

The Path of Conveyance and the Sphere of Correspondence might easily be used against one another. The Sphere of Time could be used to ward against the Path of Fortune. Alchemy might be used to mimic, undo or counter Matter effects. Alchemy, Shapechanging and Healing might counter or mimic Life effects. Entropy and Fortune might be used against one another. As always, the sorcerer will have a harder time of it than the mage will, but she certainly is not powerless.

Changelings — or kithain — are, by nature, tricky and elusive creatures. The effects that they work may be subtle and difficult to counter. Sorcery should easily affect the human shell that the changeling wears. But the changeling





herself? That is another matter. An enchanted sorcerer should be able to work sorcery against changelings and chimerical creatures that she sees, just as the enchanted may physically interact with such things. Perhaps a sorcerer *must* be enchanted in order to affect the changeling herself. It's entirely possible that the sorcery of an enchanted person might take on something of a life of its own, having effects the sorcerer did not expect. Kithain and the enchanted might see visual effects accompanying sorcery, at the least.

Sorcery that clears the mind might work against Chicanery; perhaps psychic abilities may be used to block the effects as well. Healing may be used to repair the effects of Holly Strike upon a person. Use common sense. As always, you might require a higher difficulty to affect changelings with sorcery. Changelings are the embodiment of the unexpected, however — rules are antithetical to their very nature. So try to be spontaneous; try to surprise. You might even roll a die to see if the effect works on the changeling — even, it does, odd, it doesn't.

## SORCERY AMONG THE SUPERNATURAL

Almost anyone can study sorcery — in theory. After all, why not? Sorcery is generally a learned skill, and werewolves are just as capable of study as humans are. Or at least, some of them must be. What about vampires, who have centuries in which to study odd things? Surely some of them have picked up the arts of sorcery. And changelings, who reflect the dreams of man — many humans dream of mystical power, so why shouldn't that be reflected in the fair folk? And what about mages? Perhaps sorcery doesn't seem strictly necessary for them, since Sphere magic should be able to duplicate any sorcerous effect. But it's entirely possible that someone who doesn't know any Life magic somehow picked up some Shapechanging from a sorcerer. Even some ghosts might well be able to wield the arts of sorcery, although some ritual items might be difficult for them to obtain in their state.

What about psychic powers? It probably depends on how you justify them. If they're odd mystical powers that some people just happen to have and others don't, then why shouldn't supernaturals have them? If a psychic is Embraced by a vampire, is there any good reason why that ability should die? If he goes through Chrysalis and becomes a changeling, why should he lose his telepathy?

Actually, there are plenty of potential reasons if you decide that giving supernaturals psychic abilities would make them too powerful. Perhaps the shock of the change is enough to destroy the fragile ability. Maybe the physical alterations that go with such a change render the psychic abilities useless. Death is probably the most damaging of changes with respect to psychic abilities — unless these abilities are mystical in nature, then they probably died with the brain.

But that's the point. Whether such creatures are capable of sorcery or other unusual abilities is entirely up to you as the Storyteller. The question at hand is not whether it's reasonable for supernaturals to be able to do sorcery or use psychic powers. It's whether that's what you want in your game.

## THE MEASURE OF POWER

Full supernaturals — Changelings, werewolves, vampires, mages and wraiths — are powerful. They have Arts, Gifts and Rites, Disciplines, Spheres and Arcanoi. As with many other things, you should think carefully before allowing them even more power. You might decide to allow them to use sorcery and such things just like anyone else — after all, points spent on sorcery aren't spent on Disciplines or other powers, so hopefully, they'll balance. You might give them penalties — perhaps sorcery has a higher cost in freebie and experience points. You could even justify this by saying that these creatures have other, more innate abilities to concentrate on, so sorcery doesn't come naturally. Or you could say that these creatures simply can't learn sorcery — perhaps it's an inherently mortal and human thing, by mystical fiat.

If you allow supernaturals to use sorcery or to have psychic ability, you'll need to think about how sorcery will interact with a character's other abilities. Can a werewolf use the Level One Gift Speed of Thought to double his land speed and then add in a Conveyance effect to boost his speed even more, or are these abilities entirely separate? May a wraith use both the Fatalism Arcanos and the Path of Divination together to get an even more powerful effect than she could do with either one separately?

There are three basic ways of approaching it. One, Paths are entirely separate from other supernatural abilities and may not be used in conjunction with them. This does not include cases where the *effects* of magics would interact, as opposed to the magics themselves. For example, a sorcerer-mage uses a Conjunction effect (magic) to move a bomb toward an enemy and a Forces effect (magic) to set it off. This doesn't involve the effect of one ability directly upon another; it is simply the use of two different abilities, one right after the other. However, the Speed of Thought Gift and the Conveyance effect wouldn't allow the werewolf-sorcerer to go faster than he could go using either the Gift or the Path alone, because they would need to interact directly.

Two, specific effects may act together to allow the sorcerer to do things he normally could not do by using either effect alone. This would allow the example above of the Speed of Thought Gift and the Conveyance effect to work.

Three, effects may mix in even stranger ways; the sorcerer isn't limited to the obvious, direct interactions. Perhaps a sorcerer-mage could work a little Forces magic while making an alchemical preparation in order to obtain an explosive substance (or a substance that gives off or magnifies heat) that he couldn't have made with his level of

Alchemy alone. This is the most permissive of the ways of handling ability interaction and, as such, involves the most quick-witted judgment and advance thought. Don't do it unless you feel very comfortable with your players and very confident of your ability to keep them in check and make snap judgments.

## HALFWAY THERE

Although the addition of sorcery might make mages, vampires and werewolves overly powerful, it could make the perfect finishing touch to a kinfolk, kinain, ghoul, acolyte, medium or other mortal character. Certainly, it could make such characters more likely to live through a chronicle in which other players are playing full vampires, werewolves, mages or changelings. This is perhaps where sorcery shines best — when it is in the hands of the less powerful denizens of the World of Darkness. It can go a long way toward leveling the playing field.

As always, make your decisions based on what is right for *your* chronicle. But keep in mind the issues involved, so your

decisions will make for a good time for all, rather than frustration and confusion.

## CROSSOVER CHRONICLES

Crossover chronicles are tricky things. They can be very rewarding when done well and very frustrating when done poorly. It takes a great deal of advance thought and careful judgment to handle a crossover chronicle, especially when mortal sorcerers are involved; it isn't recommended for the new Storyteller.

First of all, sorcerers are usually much more easily damaged than most other World of Darkness critters. What endangers a werewolf may destroy a sorcerer in seconds; what terrifies a sorcerer is little more than a flea to a werewolf. This means that group combats are almost entirely out. It's virtually impossible to run a combat in which everyone is afraid for his life and yet everyone has a reasonable chance to come out of it alive.

Be sure to refer to the earlier section on adjusting the stakes in a **Sorcerer** chronicle. You'll need to bring in hurdles other than combat. Politics, investigation, puzzles, contests and personal plots are just some of the substitutions you might make. You might also initiate combat when the group has been split up. Or you might work on combats in which it's possible for the "weaker" members of the group to hang back out of the worst of the danger but still have an impact on things. Long range weapons and offensive sorcery can be marvelous equalizers, but try not to let the concept of combat-Sorcery get out of hand. If your sorcerers are all thinking about which Paths let them kill things fastest, then they're missing a lot of the more amazing aspects of playing a sorcerer.

Involve everyone in each other's plots. This is one of the largest problems in a crossover chronicle. Unless you're working with very high epic plots in which the group is dragged into something much larger than they are, you need to make sure they all have reasons to work with each other. Make sure they have need of each other's abilities. Give them background ties. If possible, make sure the characters care about one another.

You might address the issue of relative power mechanically. One way for sorcerers to be useful in a crossover chronicle is for them to have Skills, Talents, Knowledges and Backgrounds that are needed for the plot. Make sure that not all of your plots may be solved by the application of supernatural ability; take normal abilities into account. Then you could give sorcerers a few extra freebies to start with, perhaps on the condition that they be used for non-supernatural resources. If their lack of supernatural power turns out to be a problem in your chronicle, fix it one (or both) of two ways: Adjust the ways in which your plots may be solved, or lower the cost of sorcery and Numina for sorcerers.

## EXCUSES, EXCUSES

What's that, you say? You're going to stack a little sorcery on top of your already über-twinked-out character? Well, sure, so long as your Storyteller says it's kosher. But for the completist Storyteller, there are plenty of ways out of the bag.

With vampires, werewolves, wraiths and changelings, these characters just aren't human. They don't tap into mystic energy the same way. They have their own power sources: Everything a vampire does is fueled with blood, for example. Thus, if they want to do sorcerous-like effects, they must learn versions that cater to their strengths. Vampires in their game have Thaumaturgy, after all.

As for mages... that's a bit tougher. We know that Order of Hermes mages often undergo an apprenticeship studying sorcery; they don't just mystically "forget" it when they Awaken. So what gives? Well, you could rule that, since the Awakening, the Avatar stirs to all of the mage's mystical ties. When the mage tugs on mythic threads (read: uses magic), the Avatar intervenes and reshapes the Tapestry. What was once sorcery is now an Effect of the Spheres.

Or maybe not. You *could* let your mages use sorcery. Why not? It's not inherently any more potent than Sphere magic. Sometimes it's even more useful. And besides, as pointed out before, a mage spending points on sorcery isn't spending points on Spheres and Arete. It's a static path, one that doesn't lead to enlightenment.

So go wild. Put in the stuff you want to use to flavor *your* chronicle.





You might also insist that any sorcerers in your crossover chronicle be quasi-supernatural. This should give them an extra edge, as well as ties among more powerful supernaturals. It also starts them out with more knowledge about some aspect of the World of Darkness, which may help them to hold their own.

Crossover chronicles can be wonderful, but you do need to take the relative power-level of the characters into account when you plan things. It's more work than you may be used to, but it may also be well worth it.

## GAMING BALANCE AND THE LIMITATIONS OF NUTTINA



In which you will be given ways to expand or limit sorcery, suggestions for the creation of new Paths, an example of the creation of a new Path between player and Storyteller and suggestions for keeping players from abusing the creation of Paths.

### THE LIMITATIONS OF NUTTINA

So you've read the chapters on how sorcery works, and maybe you have concerns. You think the characters will be too powerful for the plots you have planned. Or maybe you wanted to run a high-epic adventure and worry that the characters won't be powerful enough. Luckily, **Sorcerer** is easy to customize for the power level you desire. Here you will find a few suggestions for changes you might make, one way or the other.

In the "default" setting, a sorcerer who tries to cause anything to happen that results in disbelief sees his spell fizzle. This keeps the sorcerer human — he may be able to sway reality to his side, but he can't make it do cartwheels the way Awakened mages can. Of course, he also doesn't suffer the Paradox that mages suffer.

### TONING DOWN THE POWER LEVEL

First, let's assume that you want your players' characters to be less powerful than the average **Sorcerer** character. You might require a ritual for every single effect. Keep in mind that this means sorcerers aren't going to be knocking off spells during combat or other such tense situations. Either the characters must be built to handle these without sorcery, or you'll have to resist the urge to send anything too dangerous directly after them.

You could introduce a price tag for use of sorcery or psychic powers. Perhaps psychic powers result in debilitating

headaches, especially for anything too strenuous. sorcery might cost extra Willpower or require both Willpower and something else in order to cast — magical energy, perhaps. Maybe the casting of sorcery tires the sorcerer out for the next few hours. It could also harm the sorcerer in some way.

Or perhaps sorcery causes similar, uncontrollable events to happen nearby — a sort of synchronicity. As an example, a sorcerer might start a small fire, and somewhere nearby another fire might start — in someone's home. Or instead, a nearby furnace, stove or fireplace would be extinguished. Summoning a spirit of one kind might cause other spirits — either similar ones or ones in opposition to the spirit called — to be drawn to the same area. Enchanting an object might cause other objects within a mile or two to temporarily take on similar or opposing effects. If a sorcerer enchants a jacket to stop bullets, then perhaps a police officer's bulletproof vest develops a temporary flaw. The use of sorcery would have echoes and unpredictable consequences.

Sorcery might also leave a distinctive “smell” (or aura or anything else you wish — a residue of some kind) upon the sorcerer for a day or three. Thus, other supernaturals may realize that the sorcerer is more than just an ordinary mortal or has at least in some way been involved with the supernatural recently. It may attract the attention of things the sorcerer doesn't want to deal with — mages, vampires or the Inquisition. Or perhaps the use of sorcery is very noticeable and irritating to any animals nearby, who bark repeatedly, scratch or bite people or act even more strangely (such as a puppy that turns around and around in its bed without stopping).

Sorcerers and psychics might be preternaturally sensitive to odd things. Perhaps telepaths get dizzy for a day before an earthquake. One sorcerer's workings might vary in predictability with the weather — when it's warm and sunny, his effects are right on track; the closer the weather is to storm weather, the stranger the results (or vice versa). If a sorcerer summons a spirit in a place where someone was murdered, the spirit he summons may be darker than the one he sought.

There are a number of traditional costs from movies and literature for the use of psychic powers. A telepath might pick up thoughts he didn't intend to listen in on. This can result in all sorts of unfortunate situations. Someone might notice and go after the telepath, believing that he knows something he shouldn't. The telepath might overhear something out of context and jump to a conclusion that is incorrect. A telekinetic might try to lift an object, only to have other objects nearby be affected by his power (they might move as well or crumple or heat up or be attracted or repelled by the objects he actually intended to affect). Someone who opens herself up to impressions from objects (Psychometry) might pick up pieces of impressions from other things nearby (the chair that she sits on, the necklace that she wears) that cloud the issue.

The default setting for sorcerous powers is that disbelief causes magic to fizzle. If a character attempts to throw energy bolts in a mall during shopping hours, it just won't work. You might, however, be even more restrictive. Perhaps throwing energy bolts even in wild areas with no one around for miles won't work. This is one of those things you should think carefully about before implementing — does this castrate too many of the sorcerous Paths? Your players won't be happy if they base their characters' abilities on what they read of the Paths, only to find out that half of those abilities won't work.

Mechanically, you might attach a higher experience or freebie point cost to sorcerous abilities and psychic powers. Or you could cut the number of starting freebie points, or hand out experience points at a slower rate. You could make new rituals very difficult to learn, requiring experienced teachers, large amounts of research time, a boon from a powerful spirit or other supernatural or even a quest. This may even be a source of plots, sending your characters to archaeological digs, spiritual planes or ancient and forgotten libraries.

You might restrict what a sorcerer can do with each level of each Path she has. For example, the first level of Shapeshifting gives a character the ability to change one minor physical feature of her choice — eye color, skin color, hair length, etc. You might instead say that it gives the sorcerer the ability to change only one physical feature, which must be chosen in advance — say, just eye color. The sorcerer would need to learn several features, spending an extra experience point or two for each beyond the first, before she could generalize this to the normal Level One effect. Beware, however, for this road may result in an inordinate amount of gameplay being spent on the learning and acquisition of sorcery, which could get tiresome after a while. You could, if you want to, restrict sorcerous ability at first but allow the characters to become more powerful later; only follow this route for the Level One abilities of each Path.

You might make the scope of the Paths narrower. Instead of “the Path of Shapeshifting,” you might have “the Path of Feline Form.” At Level One, changing small features would only work if they were changed in catlike ways — slitted eyes, for example, or one of the colors found in cats (primarily yellow, but sometimes blue, green, etc.). (See also the Telepathy psychic phenomenon, on p. 108, for an example of making Paths narrower.)

If you decide to make sorcery less powerful, you should probably choose only one or two of the methods delineated above. Otherwise, sorcery may become entirely unwieldy.

## MAKING SORCERY MORE POWERFUL

Then there are ways to make sorcerers more powerful instead of less. You might allow more effects to be cast quickly, without the use of rituals. You might allow rituals to be cast in advance and then triggered at the correct time.

Perhaps sorcerers push the envelope of reality in your game; they might be able to slip small impossibilities under reality's nose.



You'll need to decide ahead of time just how far they can push it, however; this line can be difficult to judge and even more difficult to explain adequately to players so that they understand what they can and cannot do. Perhaps nature-related spells work in "natural" areas, even if they are vulgar. Or perhaps death- and destruction-related spells work in places where people live without hope. Device-related sorcery might have the edge in a physics lab or right after a major science-fiction movie arrives in theaters. In other words, reality might be a little more flexible as long as the sorcerer's magic is matched up with his surroundings and the imaginations of the people around him. Thus, the imaginations of individuals, or at least small groups of people, has an effect on reality, rather than the usual default in which reality listens only to the masses as a whole.

Alternatively, you could allow witnessed violations in places where they don't match the setting, provided the sorcerer goes through certain preparations or wields a certain Talisman. Be very careful before you allow this — it is an extremely powerful thing. You should probably set things up such that you can remove the means to violate reality from the game should it ever prove too powerful.

You might expand the scope of the Paths. For instance, Conjunction might allow some small chance of achieving Conveyance as well. The problem with this route is that Paths come to resemble Spheres, and then the uniqueness of sorcery is lost. Perhaps the best way to implement this might be something like the following: A sorcerer with knowledge of Conjunction might be able to attempt feats of Conveyance at a Path level of three less than his Path level in Conjunction, at a higher-than-normal difficulty. The same might work between other seemingly related Paths.

You might start with mechanics again. You could reduce the cost of Paths in either experience or freebie points. You could award a higher starting pool of freebie points or a greater number of experience points per session. You could alter the Path effects themselves so that greater abilities rest at lower levels. (Perhaps Levels One and Two would become Level One; Level Three would become Level Two, and so on.)

Rituals might be easier to learn or to develop on one's own. Perhaps rituals must simply be intuited, rather than researched, and thus, any ritual that "feels" right stands a chance of working. This sort of play requires a Storyteller who knows her players well and players who can be trusted. Otherwise, it may be too easily abused, even unintentionally.

At any rate, whether you want your sorcerers to be more or less powerful, you would do well to fine-tune the number of experience points you hand out as you go along, rather than following someone else's guidelines. Anything from one to five points a session can be made to work, depending on your style of play. If characters outstrip your plots in power levels, cut the number of points you hand out. If they advance too slowly, increase it. You can do the same with all of the above suggestions.

While you don't want to change the rules all the time — it tends to confuse players — you can certainly fine tune

things as you go along. If you're into high-epic plots you could even work the changing effects into the story line. Something might happen in game to make reality more or less malleable. Or a supernatural catastrophe might leave echoes that affect how sorcery works. A justification can be created for almost anything, and a change that occurs as part of a plot is likely to be quite memorable. Don't be afraid to change things if you think it would make the game more fun for you and your players.

## THE CREATION OF A NEW PATH

The creation of a new Path is not a small matter. Sorcerers have a tendency to follow well-documented lines of magic — hence the name "Paths" — and they do not often strike out entirely on their own. The creation of a new Path is something ordinarily done by very experienced sorcerers, after decades of research (probably finishing up on even more research by their cabal). Said research is usually followed up with even more years of experimentation before any real "field work" is permitted. However, you may occasionally wish to allow your players to create new Paths, or you may wish to do so yourself. After all, it's just possible that there are interesting magical possibilities not set forth in this book, and that should hardly keep you from playing with them.

Ordinarily, you should consider the following guidelines when allowing the creation of a new Path:

- The sorcerer must have one Path rating of at least five before he may design new Paths.
- The initial dot in the newly created path costs 10 experience points; each level thereafter costs (new level x five).
- The sorcerer must do a great deal of research, experimentation and practice in order to create a new Path. It does not just appear full-fledged in his head. The creation of a Path may well take *years* of game time before consistent results may be achieved.
- All Path elements must, obviously, be tied to a certain theme. This is why there is "the Path of Shapeshifting" instead of "the Path of Doing Sorcerous Things." First, the sorcerer must restrict her researches to a common area before she can even begin to sift through the information out there and make sense of it. Again, sorcerers have Paths, mages have Spheres — allow a Path to become too broad and the distinction between Awakened magic and linear magic is lost.
- Sorcery is subtle and slow. No new Path will allow a sorcerer to blow up buildings with a wink and a nod or turn people into toxic sludge by spraying black paint in their faces.

Obviously, all of this is subject to what you believe is best. You may, as in the example below, allow someone to start out with a new Path. You could even allow a character to develop a Path intuitively rather than by research — at least at first. The only two rules that you should think very

carefully before breaking — in fact, that you really shouldn't break unless you're running a Monty Haul game — are the last two. The narrow scope and purview of a Path are what makes it a Path and not a Sphere. The subtlety of a Path is what makes it sorcery and not Awakened magic. If you take those away, you might as well play regular **Mage** and toss out the sorcery altogether.

If you do not have much experience as a Storyteller or with **Sorcerer** or with your players, do not start out by breaking the rules. Get a feel for the game and what you'll be unbalancing (or not) before you change things. In particular, get a feel for your players before you let them do things for which you may not know all of the ramifications. If you feel comfortable giving them free rein, that's wonderful. If you have any reservations, however, consider things carefully before allowing your players to create new Paths. If you have reservations, don't break the above set of rules.

## THE ARGUMENT AT HAND

"It's called the Path of Manifest Nature."

"The what?" Andrew leaned over the living room table and stared at the scribbled notes.

Steven pointed at the pad of paper. "The Path of—"

"I heard you. What does it mean?"

"Joshua — my character — uses it to bring people's nature to the surface and affect them physically. It's colored by his perceptions of them, though. So he can use it to punish someone who screws him over and reward someone who does something nice for him."

"Let me guess. He doesn't have enough physical dots to get back at them that way, and he isn't particularly powerful in a temporal sense, so...."

"Right!" Steven grinned.

"Why doesn't he just use Hellfire?" Andrew looked skeptical.

"It doesn't let him reward nice people."

"Fortune?"

"It doesn't suit his paradigm. He doesn't see it as something he does to them — it comes from within."

"Herbalism? You can do some nice physical things to people with that."

"He thinks Herbalism is for housewives and midwives."

"What about dealing with spirits?"

"He doesn't think they exist."

Andrew sighed. "Okay, okay. I'll let you make the Path of Manifest Nature. There's a lot of nitty-gritty detail to work out, though. For instance, what does each level do?"

Steven's face brightened. "I have it all drawn out! See, at lower levels it just gives little hints; someone who's basically nice might find that their asthma gets a little better for a short time. Someone who's an asshole gets hives or something."

"Hives? At lower levels? You've never had hives, have you?"

"Well, no, but—"

"We'll get back to that when we detail the levels. So, at higher levels it does... what?"

"Uh, well, it lasts longer, for one."

"I kind of guessed."

"And of course there are bigger effects. Things that might even affect Attributes or things that take serious medication or even surgery."

Andrew nodded. "Okay. I can live with that. This isn't going to be an instant Smite Thy Enemy and Make Thy Teammates Spiffy Path, you know. Those are bad. Those unbalance games in big ways."

"Oh, I know! Honestly, it's more of a character thing than something that's supposed to have a huge effect on plots or anything."

Andrew actually smiled. "Okay, now we're getting somewhere. Character things, I like. They're less likely to be abused, too. And since it's you, I know you actually mean it when you say 'it's more of a character thing'; I wouldn't let Evan do this for the life of me. I still want to see the level-by-level breakdown, though. Convince me."

Steven flipped to the next page of the pad. "Well, there's Level One. It's for things that last no more than three or four days, at most. Sometimes, they last only one or two. It could be an easement of allergy symptoms, like sneezing or runny nose, for good people. Someone nasty might get a rash on their arm or something. Minor annoyances."

"Got it. That sounds reasonable. Two?"

"Two lasts no more than two weeks. See? It's easy to remember. Two, two weeks."

"I got it, I got it."

"At two, mild acne might give way to perfectly smooth skin. Hands get slight tendonitis pains. And, uh, there's hives...."

"You really haven't had hives, have you? Anything systemic that requires prescription medication and has the potential to affect Attributes does not go at Level Two!"

"Attributes? How?"

"You ever seen someone with hives all over their face and hands?"

"Oh. No. But prescription medication? I mean, it just itches, right?"

"Itches. Burns. I'd say it makes your skin sting, but that makes it sound nice. And that's just the start. Antihistamines, corticosteroid creams, maybe adrenaline shots if your throat starts to close off and you're lucky enough to be close to a hospital."

Steven just stared at Andrew.

Andrew continued. "So, Level Three."

"Yeah, three. Duration would be no more than one month. Arthritis pain eases. And, uh, how about mild hives? No, listen. I was thinking that at this level you get stuff that requires prescription medication, but doesn't affect Attributes. So you could give someone mild hives that aren't on the face and hands."



"Oh, okay. Fine. You can have your hives. What is it with you and giving people hives anyway? Never mind, I don't want to know. Level four?"

"Duration no more than six months. Uh, that isn't too long, is it?"

Andrew looked thoughtful. "I think I see the curve you're taking, so no, it isn't. Go on."

"Here come things that potentially affect Attributes. So, systemic hives that show up on the face and hands go here. Full-blown tendonitis in both arms, because that cuts Strength and Dexterity. On the good side, intensive clumsiness might give way to grace; birth marks on the face could fade away."

"I'll think about the tendonitis; I might move that to Level Five. And if the hives are going to close off someone's throat and kill them, then it gets moved up to six. The rest is fine. Next?"

"Level Five has a duration of no more than one year. A beautiful face might get acne-scarred. Near-sightedness becomes 20/20 vision. The sorts of things you might affect by surgery, perhaps."

"Oh, what I wouldn't give for a little supernatural LASIK. Less chance of side effects. Go on: six?"

"Six is for permanent effects, sometimes affecting terminal conditions. A morbidly obese man finds his weight slowly dropping to doctor-prescribed perfection. Someone gets cancer of the mouth or skin or finds his leukemia mysteriously cured. Really cool 'miracles' like that."

"Hmm. Permanent, eh?"

"Uh, five years then?"

Andrew sighed. "No, permanent's reasonable at Level Six. After all, who's to say Joshua will live long enough to reach Level Six?" He snickered.

Steven paled. "We're doomed! Again! And the game hasn't even started yet!"

"You're always doomed. But right now we need to talk about method."

"I thought about that too!"

"Good. Now tell me your thoughts."

"Well, it seems like he's just facilitating a reaction within someone else. So I was thinking Empathy would be involved."

Andrew nodded approvingly. "I'd buy that. I'd probably pair it with Charisma— No, wait. That makes sense for people you're helping, but not in the case of people you're harming. So Charisma + Empathy for people you like, and Manipulation + Empathy for people you hate. When you do it to get revenge for something you'll have to spend Willpower, because presumably the reaction isn't happening with the cooperation of any part of the person. Umm, that isn't a magical explanation for why, just something that sort of makes sense to me — it should be harder to do bad things to someone than to do good things."

"I can live with that. So I was thinking that Joshua does it by going home and doing a tarot spread for the person. Not some dinky, five-minute, ten-card thing, but this all-out, several-hour, 35-card thing I found in some book. It involves incense, meditation, low lighting, cleansing the ritual space, you know — getting into the mood, the right frame of mind. If anything happens to disrupt the mood he has to do it all over."

"Ooh, I like that. It has style, and it's easy to screw up."

Steven's eyes widened, but Andrew continued without even noticing. "So is the spread just a vehicle?"

"Pretty much. See, I gave him a little Divination, so I think he sort of pairs the Paths. It helps him gain insight into what the person is like when he sees where the right cards fall. Then he chooses the cards that fall for the future, cards he thinks reflect that person's nature and how it would manifest physically."

Andrew frowned. "Hmm. That's more specific and detailed than the effects seem to suggest. How about he does the spread more as a meditation and ritual in and of itself? If he has enough Divination, he might also be able to figure out what it means about the person's life, but mostly, it's just a focus for directing the effect at the person."

Steven sat back for a moment. "Okay, I think that's close enough to what I wanted. I can see that."

"I don't see him as choosing what effect happens to the person. I see him sort of as a catalyst for the manifestation of a person's nature, more like what you described earlier."

"I guess that's a bit less powerful than what I wanted."

"Well, I think it would be too powerful for you to just be able to do a tarot spread and choose to negate any bad physical stuff that's happened to your cabal, don't you?"

"Oh. I hadn't thought of it that way."

"So what level of the Path of Manifest Nature does Joshua start with?"

"Just Level One, for now. I think it's something he picked up recently."

"How did he learn it?"

"Well, since the effects are so small at Level One and could possibly go unnoticed, I think he sort of just picked it up. I think he doesn't even really realize what it is he's doing, in fact. He just does these tarot spreads for people he likes or got pissed at to see if they're likely to get what's coming to them, and wonder of wonders, they do. Maybe he thinks that just focusing his anger or gratitude could have some effect, but I'm not sure he realizes what he's doing beyond that."

"That's okay for Level One, but I'd say that, in order to progress any further, he'll have to get a real teacher. Or he'll have to do some serious research, at least. But we can worry about that when he starts to realize what it is he's doing. Okay?"

"Okay. That sounds reasonable."

"Well, that's it for now, I guess." Andrew ripped the pages of notes out of the notebook, folded them and put them



on top of a pile of books. "I'll see you on Sunday for the game. I'll write up the Path as I see it and e-mail it on to you. If I think of anything else, I'll let you know."

"Okay." Steven, looking mildly crestfallen, grabbed his coat and headed out onto the porch.

Andrew didn't even notice as he scribbled more notes. Joshua only had the first level, after all. He didn't have enough experience with the Path yet to have noticed what Andrew had planned for it. It was way too black-and-white to just say that someone was "good" or "bad" and give him a nice or nasty effect to go with. It would be much more interesting if the effect was tied in with what the person was like, on a more complex level. Yeah, that was the ticket. It would require a little judgment on the fly; he couldn't just write up in advance what effects would be appropriate for what sorts of people. But it would be worth the time and effort. Just wait till Steven figured it out; the revelation would be fantastic!

It would also restore a little of the spiffiness that Andrew had taken out of the Path by giving the cabal a chance to get a little information about someone based on what happened after the ritual was performed. But it would do it without making the Path arbitrarily powerful and without giving the cabal any totally clear answers. Andrew had always been a fan of confusion.

## RESTRICTING NEW PATHS

The lesson to take away from this example is the following: The creation of a new Path is a cooperative venture between player and Storyteller. The Storyteller should take into account what a player is trying to achieve, and it helps to ask about the background behind the choices the player has made. In this way, even if you feel it necessary to make changes due to power level issues, you may be able to work some of the perks back into the Path in less destructive ways.

In some cases, you may be better off telling your players and working the further details out with them, especially if they're feeling unhappy because you've had to curtail the scope of the Path in other ways. In other cases, you may decide to save the details as a surprise.

You should try to keep the wishes of the players in mind — after all, they're here to have fun. This shouldn't keep you from overriding things when necessary, however. You need to keep the balance of the game in mind. You need to make sure that one character doesn't become too powerful just because he created his own Path. After all — *all* of your players are here to have fun, not just one of them, and you don't want to give one his toy to the detriment of everyone else. Ask as many questions as you can: How does the Path work; under what circumstances will the character use it? What rituals does the character perform; are there any fast effects; how has the character used the Path in the past? Who or where did he learn the Path from; how much does that person know; what has that person done with the Path in the past?



If you're concerned about the viability of a Path, you might approach a solution on any of several levels. One, what does the character do to activate the ability? If a Path seems too powerful, this is one place you might restrict it. Perhaps rituals take hours to perform or must be performed in special places that can be hard to gain access to. Or maybe they require unusual and hard-to-obtain items — the blood of a vampire, for example, should be a rare, precious and dangerous thing. Perhaps they depend upon an uncertain ability — for example, the ritual depends upon absolute meditation and concentration and, thus, upon an additional Meditation roll, which has a possibility of failing or botching. Also, the character might need to learn separate rituals for multiple effects from the same level of the Path, thus slowing down the acquisition of power.

Two, what are the effects of the Path at each level? You might shift effects up the scale if the Path is too powerful at low levels. It helps to categorize and put qualifiers on the levels. For example, in the Path of Manifest Nature, the qualifier on Level Three is "things that require prescription medicine." So anything below Level Three really shouldn't be severe enough to *require* prescription medicine (they might be things you would choose to use prescription medicine for — it just isn't particularly necessary). At Level Four, the qualifier is "things that affect Attributes." That doesn't limit Level Four to things that affect Attributes, but it does specify that anything below Level Four will not affect an Attribute.

The Level Five qualifier is "things that require surgery." Again, qualifiers do not need to be used to artificially restrict the number of things you can do at a level. You might cause an effect at Level Five that doesn't have anything to do with surgery. However, it does mean that your characters won't be doing anything like that at lower levels. The qualifier for Level Six is "terminal conditions." This is an easy way to keep anyone from trying to slip a cure for leukemia in at Level Four.

You don't need to use these qualifiers, and you might easily decide that they're too permissive or too restrictive for your game. But they're a good example of how you might restrict the power of a Path without necessarily having to think of everything a Path is capable of ahead of time. If you think in categories, you shouldn't have to think of every individual case. This doesn't mean you shouldn't ask all the questions, though — nothing heads off problems ahead of time like a good grilling.

Three, how does the character learn the various levels of the Path? You might restrict his source. Perhaps his mentor isn't as powerful as the character thought. Or his mentor only knows rituals for very specific effects at each level, and it will require significant research to learn more. If the player insists on finding ways to abuse the Path during game play and refuses to stop when you ask him to, you might take away his mentor or his source of research material or at least curtail it (perhaps a fire destroys several key books).

Four, how narrow is the scope of the Path? If it's too broad, you might narrow it. The Path of Manifest Nature is a relatively narrow one. If someone suggests the Path of Doing Things to People's Bodies (or something like that), you might want to suggest breaking it down into the Path of Healing, the Path of Shapechanging and the Path of Sickness and Injury.

Five, is the Path inherently too powerful? No one, but no one, should be allowed to create the Path of Nuclear Weaponry unless you intend to blow up the cabal in the first five minutes of gameplay and start over. Yes, it's a properly narrow Path, but that just doesn't help in this case. And there simply isn't a good way to muck with the individual levels to bring the powers down to size. The Path of Adhesives, on the other hand, with glue sticks at the bottom and epoxy at the top, would probably be fine, if a little ridiculous.

Six, will the Path break the mood of your game? Something like the Path of Adhesives from the previous paragraph is likely to cause gales of laughter whenever it gets used, which might well break the tension of any creepy and frightening plot you have going.

Seven, is the Path necessary? The Path of Adhesives is not only silly but could be easily taken care of within the scope of the Path of Alchemy. You'd probably be better off giving the character the Path of Alchemy and saying that his tutoring was a little narrow than allowing him to create his own Path.

But the point is that there are as many ways to muck with a Path as there are to muck with sorcery and psychic powers in general. Put a little thought into the mood, feel and power level your game should have, and let issues such as Path creation and game balance flow from that. Hopefully, the issues, suggestions and questions above will give you a place to start from — but they're far from the be-all and end-all of sorcery. Remember: it's your game, and anything can happen — if you allow it.

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