

WORLD OF DARKNESS:
SORCERER



THE HEDGE WIZARD'S HANDBOOK

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THE HEDGE WIZARD'S HANDBOOK

That which gives light must endure burning.
— Viktor Frankel



BY JAMES ESTES LOOKING EAGLE AND PHIL BRUCATO

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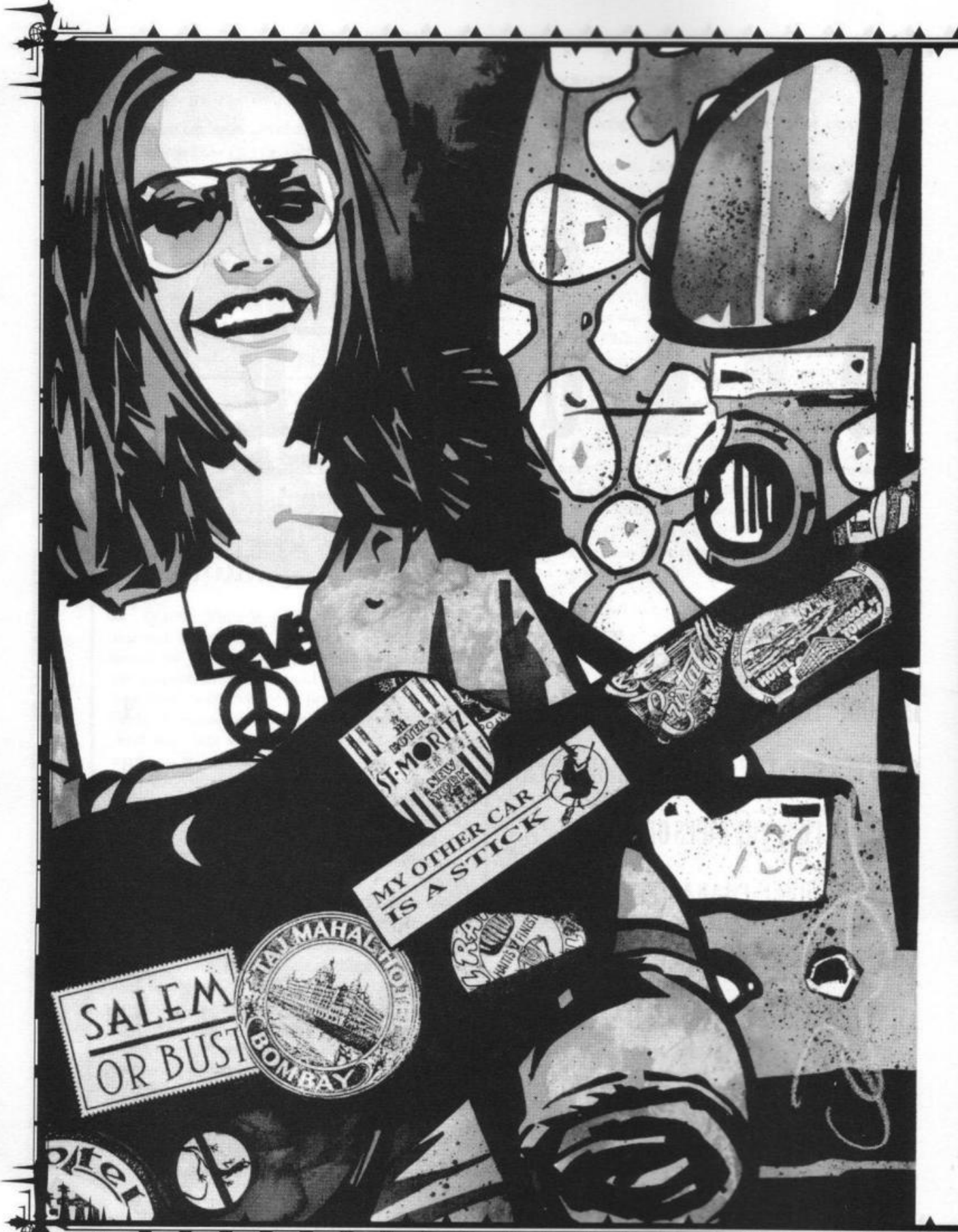
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER ONE: THE WAY OF THE SORCERER	8
CHAPTER TWO: THE FACES OF SORCERY	18
CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTER CREATION	50
CHAPTER FOUR: THE PATHS	76
CHAPTER FIVE: SOLITARY TEMPLATES	114
APPENDIX	126



SALEM
OR BUST

MAHALE
BOMBAY

MY OTHER CAR
IS A STICK

ST-MORITZ
SWISS
CONDENSED
MILK

LOVE
☰

Hotel



INTRODUCTION

He became a guide, at peace and occupied with classrooms. He came forward and uttered the word as a teacher. The self-appointed wise people came up to him, testing him, but he refuted them, for they were empty; and they despised him, for they were not truly intelligent.

— *The Gospel of Truth, II.17*

You may have heard this phrase before: *hedge magicians*. Admit it; if you play **Mage**, you have probably spit that phrase out before: *hedge magicians*.

Perhaps you overlook them as the “willworkers” do. Perhaps you consider them “lesser talents,” purveyors of parlor tricks enraptured with their own petty goals and completely oblivious to the Ascension War and its consequences. What good’s a hedge magician when you could be a True Mage with all reality at your fingertips?

True, hedge magicians don’t battle for Ascension, and their concepts of enlightenment and Awakening may be provincial compared to the concepts bandied about by

mysticks and mages. Mythology isn’t their ammunition; reality isn’t their playground. Most sorcerers have never even heard of the Ascension War or the Traditions or the Technocracy (isn’t that a band?). They’re less concerned with metaphysics than with personal growth and achievement. Unlike the Crafts, they did not decline membership in the Traditions or the Order of Reason: They were simply overlooked.

Even now, they remain overlooked. You could say they’re screwed from both ends, stuck with reality as it has been defined by the consensus, but without the willworking powers of True Mages. Does this stop them? No.

Though un-Awakened in the metaphysical sense, these talented folks are freer for their lack of “enlightenment.” While they might belong to magical societies (as opposed to the *magickal* factions of **Mage**), these sorcerers walk a personal Path. Paradox is no threat to them because they offer no threat to the “established order.” The static arts they pursue lightly stir reality’s surface; they don’t slap reality around like a red-headed stepchild or lure it like a whore using false promises or tricks to disguise her true intentions. So-called hedge wizards (who do not ever refer to themselves with such flippant titles) treat reality like a temperamental lover, like a partner with wonderful gifts to give to the paramour with enough wisdom and common sense. The key to such arts is knowledge, and hedge magicians love to learn.

MAGE, MAGICIAN, WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Sorcerers, shamans, magicians, witches, call them what you will. Workers of magic — and *magick* — go by a thousand titles, none of which reflect the difference between an Awakened mage and a “static” magician. The words themselves offer no real distinction because, in story terms, there are no real differences.

There’s a vital roleplaying point to be made here: The denizens of the World of Darkness do not walk around with signs on their chests. They do not announce “Hey! I’m a True Mage!” or “Hey! I’m a hedge wizard!” To the characters in our imaginary world, magic is magic. The Awakened Ones may quibble over the line between magic and magick, but most folks don’t know the difference and couldn’t care less.

The only real lines between the two are one: metaphysical and two: mechanical. The first line reflects the phenomenal change that comes with Awakening, a change that allows a person to rework reality at its base level to create a new reality. Some people can; some people can’t. The second line reflects the game systems involved. Awakened *magick* allows a character to employ the Spheres, while un-Awakened *magic* limits her to the more conventional Paths. The first flows through a transformation. The second comes through study and mastery. The first option is more powerful, but carries the weight of Paradox and epic conflict; the second requires more determination and discipline, but grants a freer road.

For clarity’s sake, we’ll call mages True Mages when we mention them at all. Let’s use “magician,” “wizard,” or “sorcerer” as general terms and simply realize that all magic(k) workers go by similar names.

(Granted the word *sorcerer* — one who employs black magic and evil spirits — carries more sinister overtones than either *magician* — one who purports to control events by evoking the supernatural — or *wizard* — a skillful, wise or clever person. Given the practices some magicians follow

and the dark mystique attached to magic as a whole, however, any of those terms is appropriate.) So, call hedge wizards what you will.

Who are they and what can they do? What’s the difference between a magician and a mage?

- Hedge magic is limited. Magicians cannot use the Spheres of magick, but follow the more limited and defined magical Paths — Paths created by millennia of use. Such arts follow defined laws, but conform to ancient folklore and work in more “believable” ways than the wild, unpredictable Arts of magick. Consider such Paths “loopholes” in reality. A skilled magician can exploit them, but cannot reweave reality to suit his tastes.

- These Paths are not subject to Paradox. While the greater levels of magical achievement allow sorcerers to perform miracles, those miracles are firmly based in a system of rituals. Like vampire Disciplines or werewolf Gifts, these powers function in one way, achieve one goal and achieve it in a set pattern. Since the sorcerer’s actions “fit in” with established reality, they don’t “splatter” the way True Magicks do.

- Magicians do not participate in the Ascension War. They have their own interests, ideologies and goals, and couldn’t care less about a bunch of psychopaths claiming to speak for Creation. Battles for reality are too abstract for sorcerers; they *live* in reality, thank-you very much, and prefer to keep their own backyards clean. Most magicians haven’t even heard of this “Ascension War”; the True Mages, for their part, consider magicians as deluded peasants in the line of fire (if and when they notice them at all).

- Most sorcerers have a cultural identity. Magicians do not exist in a vacuum; they spring from within some mortal society and embody certain beliefs and principles from their home cultures. Their magic is a reflection of the local beliefs, and their ideologies focus on the people they know.

- Like most human beings, sorcerers often form societies of their own, and these societies have unique stories, agendas and beliefs. Initiation, teaching and control are important aspects of a magician’s life. Few people study or perfect a Path on their own.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Mage is not about power gaming; ironically, though, its characters can become arguably the most powerful beings in existence. Compared to the Creation-twisting Sphere masters, hedge wizards look like kittens in a den of lions.

So why bother playing one?

For one thing, magicians are simpler to use, especially in a crossover chronicle, than Awakened mages. Unlike the complex Sphere variations, a sorcerer’s Path rituals are more

predictable, more in line with Thaumaturgy powers, Gifts or cantrips. A hedge magician won't stomp her lupine and vampiric comrades into the dirt — not easily, anyway.

The magician also walks a more challenging road. Without the grand powers at a True Mage's disposal, a magician must compensate with her own cleverness, wit and common sense. The sorcerer's world is a shadowed room, filled with half-finished poetry, ancient riddles and devastating traps. Navigating this minefield is more hazardous — but more rewarding — when you don't have the awesome resources that a True Mage commands.

Some Ascension factions (especially the Hermetic Order) groom their perspective recruits by teaching them hedge magic first (see **Order of Hermes**, page 58). Other mages collect their consors from among "fellow travelers" in the mysterious occult world (see **Ascension's Right Hand**). These people occasionally advance to another level. A hedge magician needs not remain un-Awakened; she could, with the right choices, "graduate" to the higher levels of mystic achievement — the Arts of the True Mage.

Then there's **Mage: The Ascension's** sheer power level. While the game's metaphysics, concepts and ideals come from real magic theory, some of the upper-level Sphere powers get pretty outrageous. Path magic is more "realistic" than the fantastic Arts employed by True Mages. In an "easy to swallow" chronicle (especially a "hunters" game like the ones portrayed in **The Hunters Hunted**, **Inquisition**, **Halls of the Arcanum**, **The Quick and the Dead** and **Project Twilight**), a hedge magician makes a more appropriate player character than an Awakened mage.

And let's be honest: Sometimes you just don't want to battle for reality. Sometimes it's fun just to have a character who understands some of the mysteries of the cosmos but walks without the baggage of the larger Ascension factions. Sometimes it's nice to return to the days when Creation was a mystery, a fascinating puzzle, not a battleground.

World of Darkness: Sorcerer isn't really a **Mage** book; rather, it's a general-purpose look at those magic-workers who stand "between" the True Mage and the Sleepers around him. This book provides source material, rules systems, secret societies and character options for these elusive hedge magicians. With a few minor adjustments, however, it can also be an ideal resource for Awakened Orphans and solitary practitioners (see **Mage**, pages 55-56). After all, any mystical group (see this book's Chapter Two) can have Awakened members, and when you get right down to it, the challenges of the mystic road are pretty much the same whether you're Awakened or not.

So what can you expect from this book?

- **Chapter One: The Way of the Sorcerer** begins a discussion of the philosophy of magic as viewed by sorcerers themselves. You'll note some parallels between the ways of hedge wizards and their Awakened counterparts — their

roads are not dissimilar. This is not a discussion of hedge magic vs. True Magick — it's a look down any sorcerer's road.

- **Chapter Two: The Faces of Sorcery** offers an introduction to five major societies and a handful of less-prominent groups. "Major" is relative — just because they're important today doesn't mean they'll remain so. These societies offer jumping-off places for dozens of new stories and potential origins and affiliations for hundreds of new characters.

- **Chapter Three: Character Creation** shows you how to create magician player characters. While some main rulebook — **Mage**, **Vampire**, whatever — is still essential to the process, this chapter includes appropriate Merits, Flaws, Backgrounds, crossover notes and a few special talents.

- **Chapter Four: The Paths** presents hedge magic itself. It covers the various magical Paths, the things they do and the forms they take. While some of this material comes from **Ascension's Right Hand**, several new Paths have been added and the systems have been slightly updated.

- **Chapter Five: Solitary Templates** presents a variety of lone magicians. With some slight adjustment, these characters work equally well as templates for Awakened Orphans.

- Finally, the **Appendix** offers several "Sorcerers of Repute," a handful of magical relics and a bibliography of inspirational works.

Enjoy!

LEGAL DISCLAIMER NECESSITATED BY STUPID PEOPLE

Take a deep breath and repeat after me:

"I am not a wizard. I am not a vampire. I do not drink blood, worship Satan, or kill animals or people."

Is that all clear, clear as in "crystal"? As in "Of course not!"? As in "Do Not Pass Go, Do Not Collect \$200, do not go on Rikki Lake and brag about drinking blood?" Cool. Let's proceed as if this kind of nonsense was unnecessary.

If it's not clear, throw this book and all others like it in the nearest garbage can and go seek mental help. Don't make your illness other peoples' problem.

Thank you.



CHAPTER ONE: THE WAY OF THE SORCERER

*Behold, a sacred voice is calling you;
All over the sky, a sacred voice is calling you.
— Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks*

The whip's first strike takes me by surprise. On the second stroke, the pain sets in, quick and burning. The third strike makes me mad. Knock it off! I want to scream, but desire keeps me silent. By the eighth hard crack, the ecstasy begins. The world blurs in my tears and the pain becomes a rapture.

Candlelight broken by tear mist warms the chill room. The floor seems to shake with each trembling breath I gather. The thundercrack of twisted cords becomes a one-note symphony beneath the rattle of my breathing. The latticework of stars across my back sings to me, sings of praisepassion and the fires of initiation.

Their priestess and her sisters say nothing. To me, they're as faint as shadows on the wall.

I close my eyes and press the pain inside. Open into a whirling waltz of endless night and capering colors. On my bare back, welts shine bloody. Stripes of Christ. Blood of witches. Pain of lovers who've never learned another way to touch. Mortification of the flesh that forms one piece of a large eternity.

Funny the things you think about at the end of a whiplash.

Finally it stops. Cool water burns across my back. Scented water, ripe with herbs. Soft fingers trace my marks. Lips press to the sacred stains. The cords across my wrists are loosened and the blood flows freely back to my cramped fingers.

Heady scent of wine, held near my face in a silver chalice. Fleetshadow's voice: "What is the pact?"

My voice is deeper, husky as I reply: "Perfect love and perfect trust."

She kisses me, smiles. "Welcome to the family."



Editor's Note: The following piece has been excerpted from "The Road of the Black Arts," an article by Sandeep D'Souza. Presented in *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXXVI, the article generated protest from the Arcanum's more "progressive" members who felt the author presented too "conservative" a viewpoint of magical practices. Nevertheless, D'Souza is a recognized authority on his subjects. His words may bear their author's prejudices, but they still ring with informed truth, and (some would say personal) experience.

It is worth noting that many of Mr. D'Souza's observations apply to *all* practitioners of the mystic arts, Awakened and otherwise. Searching is searching, regardless of the treasure uncovered in the process.

Magus, Goetist, Theurge, they go by many names. For convenience, we'll call them sorcerers. It's among the kinder names they go by.

To cynics and modernists, sorcerers are relics, superstitious reminders of a bygone age. But to those who know better, sorcerers are real. They are men and women who command untold powers, who live in the twilight world of the supernatural. In the places where the word "technology" still sounds strange on the tongue, the common folk speak in whispers of magicians and witches and the unearthly powers they command.

Magic is still a very real thing. Millions of people across the world ward themselves against the Evil Eye, bless their families with potent signs and scutter off to the dark house on the outskirts of town, searching for the lottery number or love potion that will (they hope) make life a little more bearable. For good and for ill, the magician understands the power of this belief. He traffics in it, turns it to a trade. He gathers his bones, watches the portent and occasionally makes a brief appearance among the common folk. Such dramatic (and often menacing) impressions reinforce the sorcerer's reputation; his reputation, in turn, cements his power, at least, within that town or village.

According to folklore, the magician has bargained his soul to the darker powers. Even if that were a myth, his lifestyle reinforces it as he undoubtedly locks himself away from humanity, surrounded by a thousand eldritch tomes and breathing the smoke of sulfur and corpse-dust. Why does he do it? What power or knowledge could be worth the price?

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

Magick is a faculty of wonderful virtue, full of most high mysteries, containing the most profound contemplation of most secret things.... This is the most perfect, the chief science, that sacred, and sublimer kind of philosophy, and lastly the most absolute perfection of all most excellent philosophy.

— Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*

What is this “magic” that sorcerers practice? We could attempt a common usage of the word:

Magic is the ability to affect change in the universe through invoking the supernatural (Otherworldly beings, cosmic powers, etc.) and forcing the will of the magician upon the forces of nature.

This is useful, but facile. Magic is more than simply a technique for affecting change. It is a way of life, a means of thought often rooted in, and inseparable from, a host culture. It is a world view, not just a mode of controlling the world, but a mode of actually perceiving it and participating in it.

Magic is universal; look to almost every culture and you will find it. For some people, magic and religion are inseparable — priests are sorcerers and sorcerers are priests. Sometimes, it is a *verboten* art, practiced only in secrecy for fear of condemnation. Occasionally it is fashionable, a method of rebellion against authority, the church, family or all of the above. At times, it even takes on the mantle of savior, offering power and status to disenfranchised groups and individuals (Negroes, women, Oriental immigrants, refugees, etc.). At its heart, magic is all this and more. To define a thing is to limit it, and true sorcerers care less about the definition of magic than the operation of it.

The Black Art is a way of life. It is a new way of living in the world, of seeing the unseen, of hearing the unheard. It is a means of controlling what was never before even understood. Magic is a means of learning the secret laws of creation, of tapping into the hidden potentialities of the universe.

A WARNING

Make no mistake: Sorcery is in many ways a Black Art. To share in its communion, a person might perform the most abominable debasements, arrange the most hideous sacrifices (of himself and of others) and seclude himself away from prying eyes to perfect his art and mystique. A talented devotee may find her way even in darkness, but many outstretched hands — from evil spirits to mental instability — await the would-be magician. Most human societies abhor the sorcerer, too. Witch burnings have occurred as recently as this century, and religious authorities and police “cult-busters” squads investigate the all-too-often bloody results of sorcery. He who would follow the magical path must govern himself, his fellows and his practices, and shield them from public eyes and private corruption.

Traditionally, women tend more toward the Black Art than do their male counterparts. While folklore attributes male magicians with complex esoterica, alchemy, theurgy and other forms of god-service, the infamous portrait of the witch, governance of intuitive magics, occurs too often to be ignored. More primitive cultures distribute their shamanistic practices more evenly between the sexes, but among complex societies, High Ritual Magic seems inextricably bound to the man, while “common arts” — mediumship, fertility, brewing, herbalism and weathercraft — are clearly attuned to feminine talents.

Suspensions rooted in this tendency have clearly led to many unfortunate prejudices against the Fairer Sex; in all objectivity, however, one might understand how such fears, on a man's side, might be justified. The witch is not a maid to be trifled with!

At the basest level of magical questing, the Infernalist sits, impatient and remorseless. While most magical practices emphasize the search for personal perfection, the Infernalist — call him warlock, diabolist, witch doctor — shuns this arduous road. Satisfied with the “quick fix” of instant gratification, this undisciplined sorcerer is the Black Art incarnate. While all practices have their darker sides (too numerous to detail here), the Infernalist shortcuts his way to power *via* a bargain with outside forces. To placate them, he often indulges himself in vile acts, torturous sacrifices and careless magics. While all sorcery might understandably be considered suspect, the Infernalist epitomizes its worst aspects: mortal spite and selfishness bound to immortal power. Such men and women propagated — and still propagate! — the evil reputation that defines the Black Art in the minds of the scholar, the commoner and the clergyman.

THE CALL

So, what is it that draws men and women to the study of magic? Why do some individuals seek to enter that mysterious world from which there is no return?

Many are the reasons that compel magicians to traverse the path of hidden wisdom. These motivations, often acquired early in life, set the pathstones for a sorcerer's career. Though the cobblestones may wax and wane throughout his life, they glow clearly by the light of the Hermit's Lamp (see “Images and Archetypes of the Tarot,” Vol. LXXIII). The road may appear haphazard to outsiders, but to the magician, it remains plainly in view.

Not that the sorcerer is an inflexible beast. He might change his path, his ways, his praxis, sometimes for the better, often for the worse. A man who begins a study of the Black Art might start out with all the noblest intentions; soon, however, he finds himself lured from his path by power and pride. The opposite is also true, though less likely: A witch who begins her study with darkness in mind might warm toward her gentler nature given time and practice. Magic is, above all, a transformative art. Those who seek the summits may find the Abyss, while those who pursue magic to fulfill base instincts may one day seek higher things.

THE BECKONING SPIRIT

At the basis of any sorcerer's call to magic is the *Yearning* — the inexorable feeling that something, somewhere, is calling to the magus. That “something” is the Otherworld, and the Yearning is the innate human desire to connect with something greater than our human senses and abilities normally perceive.

Those who seek the magician's road see glimmers of the Otherworld in many things: philosophy, poetry, the arts. The average initiate of the Mysteries explores all of these avenues and others. (Psychoactive drugs, religious meditations, alternative lifestyles and self-mortification are common "symptoms" of a greater quest.) All of these avenues are explored and examined, but ultimately fail to quench the Yearning. Glimmers of the Otherworld are not enough; the potential magician hungers for something more intense — something imagined, never truly felt, but innately understood.

The Otherworld is universal, even omniversal, but the sorcerer tends to see it through the lenses of his culture and beliefs. The Otherworld perceived by the Nephite Priesthood (who set their roots in 19th-century Mormonism) is the same Otherworld perceived by the Fenian of Ireland and the Mesoamerican Balamob shamans. Each group perceives it differently, however, and each one clings to the idea that his vision is the only true one.

Thus, all sorcerers are drawn to the Otherworld, to different roads leading to the same destination. That road itself is vital to the sorcerer who hopes to survive his initiation. Each road might cross different terrain, but it still provides the traveler some measure of safety. Straying from the road is dangerous. Remember the fairy tales that instruct you never to step off the path? That warning rings especially true to the followers of the mystic arts.

MAGICIANS AND THE SACRED

Many magicians in ancient cultures were priests; the term *magus* comes from a Persian word for a priestly caste that excelled in astronomy. The relationship between magic and the sacred is, however, a subject of great debate.

Cynics and atheists lump magic and religion in the same category, and dismiss the whole thing as superstition. The pious believe religion is greater than magic, something that transcends it — particularly if they come from a religious tradition that looks down on mere magicians. As far as the sorcerous — well, some see magic as far greater than mere piety, while more religious magical traditions might see the two operating hand in hand.

For most sorcerers, their magic is their religion. It is as much a religious vocation as anything else. Indeed, such "sacred magicians" are often drawn to magical paths more often than secular "thrillseekers," if only because their faiths lead them to greater devotions. These "pious magicians" believe (perhaps correctly) that the miracles performed by their brothers and sisters in faith are confirmations of the religion's spiritual truth.

More secular magicians can feel the Otherworld just out of reach, denied by the mundane cynicism and technology that surrounds them. To remove the blindfold across their vision, these seekers often embrace any so-called "truth" beckoning from a bookstore shelf. Many of these so-called "baby witches" soon outgrow their fascinations, or consume themselves in catastrophes; the dedicated and talented ones find roads every bit as legitimate as their pious predecessors, and often acquire a faith of their own in the process.



THE HUNGRY MIND

Now that we understand the Yearning for the Otherworld, we turn our attention to the would-be magician's mind. What cognitive processes lead him along the Black Art's path? What secrets turn him from the modern library to the candlelit vault?

To begin with, magic feeds the mind as well as the spirit. Those who follow the arts share a hunger for "bygone lore" and an overwhelming suspicion that modern "science" conceals more than it reveals. Magic is not a sport for the slow-witted; it requires — no, it *demand*s — an intellectual steadfastness, dedication and discipline beyond the simple "education" of the masses. To learn magic is to test one's self, and to tax the powers of the hungry mind.

THE ANCIENT

In the Middle Ages, it was common to cite an "ancient authority" to prove your point, when in fact no such authority existed. What mattered was the weight of antiquity.

So it is with magic. There is a strong tendency to look back to the past, to say that the Ancients lived in a greater harmony with nature, with God, with the Universe, with each other, etc. Many sorcerers are drawn to magic through their romance with the past, which they idolize as a Golden Age, lured by stories of lost civilizations such as Atlantis, Mu and Lemuria, forgotten sages and prophets, or ancient texts

Consider it an "Eden complex." According to religious texts, we were originally created in a state of perfection; the human condition has slowly deteriorated ever since. From the Eden of the Abrahamic traditions to the First Yuga of South Asian traditions, the past is seen as a time of perfection.

The study of magic offers the promise of a return to that state. Many sorcerers would say that we have forgotten the ancient ways and primordial truths — but the sorcerers remember and protect these keystones to the Grand Myth. In doing so, they become myths themselves. Most sorcerers dress in archaic fashions, speak significantly of "the Old Ways" and surround themselves in the trappings of antiquity not only to link themselves to the bygone past but to *become* the romantic figures they revere. Magic speaks of the literal glamour of the past.

THE HIDDEN

If something is hidden, it must be valuable.

Magicians are philosophical treasure-hunters, driven by a compulsion to divine the secrets of the universe. The tools to the magical will are not obvious — at least to the untrained eye. Such instruments are *occulted*, hidden in codes, wrapped in arcane scripts, buried in allegories and metaphors, confounded in riddles. The magician loves to solve such puzzles, to unravel the conundrums, to crack the nut of secrecy and consume the fruit inside.

Though they seek many secrets, sorcerers rarely share the things they find. Magicians learned long ago to hide from open society, and for many reasons: fear of reprisal from a superstitious public, fear of attack from enemies who desire the magician's secrets, fear of other magicians and familiar spirits, fear of the shadow-predators draped in their own secrecy — the Vampyr, the Loup-Garou, the Kindly Folk, etc. Some magicians believe that skepticism and disbelief rob magic of its power, and do not care to test the theory by holding their sacred arts up to ridicule. At the very least, secrecy allows the magician to pursue her studies undisturbed by curious "houseguests." (It is easy to see how a sorcerer's life could be compromised by domestic obligations, *a la* the old television show *Bewitched*.) This understandable secrecy often causes a single magician's discoveries to "disappear" upon her death; perhaps future seekers will uncover her hidden lore, perhaps not. This "lost wisdom" factor adds to the appeal of occult knowledge. Every searcher wants to discover something other parties have overlooked.

One day the magicians' secrets will be made plain; until then, sorcerers remain the guardians of secret things, and that which is hidden is often simply lost.

THE POWER

But he was, in any case, as vain as a peacock; that was why he had become a Magician.

— C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*

Let's not forget the obvious.

Some people simply learn the Black Art because they want power. Perhaps the seekers desire *empowerment*, a sense of fulfillment in a hostile world. Perhaps they crave vindication, redress or justified revenge. Maybe they seek some heart's desire that eludes "normal" means. And sometimes — quite frequently — they seek power over others for its own sake.

Sometimes, this isn't a bad thing. A magician may study the art because he feels compelled to right some wrong. Might may not *make* right, but it can give "right" more stability. Some people take up sorcery for the same reasons that lead more mundane seekers to work on the police force: to serve and to protect.

The sad fact, however, is that many would-be sorcerers are weak, petty creatures, bent on proving themselves to the rest of the world. Love potions, divinations, curses — these are the acts of self-centered people. The stereotype of a pimply-faced "heavy-metal" teenager worshipping Satan in his parents' basement to avenge a beating from the class jock is an overused image, but it has roots in reality nonetheless.

Ideally, a sense of responsibility comes with great power. As we all know, however, power corrupts, too. Responsibility or corruption — the choice belongs to the sorcerer. The ominous title “Black Art” comes from the choices so many magicians make.

STEPS ALONG THE WAY

Only that knowledge that issues from the lips of the guru is alive; other forms are barren, powerless, and the cause of suffering.

— *Shiva Samhita*, III. 11

Thus we understand the factors that compel a magician to follow his arcane study, and the motivations that guide him throughout his life. Once the sorcerer has chosen his vocation, we must now ask which steps will he take? Becoming a magician is not as simple as taking a class or reading a book. *Sorcery for Idiots* does not exist (yet), and should such a book be written, it would truly exist for the fool naive enough to think all the secrets of the universe can be found in 150 pages.

THE STARVING STUDENT

The potential magus feels alienated from his society at an early age. As he recognizes the Yearning and moves to fulfill it, he begins a lifelong search for the Otherworld.

The mundane arts provide a common draw: poetry, painting, sculpture, music — anything that affords the hungry child an opportunity to sate his Yearning becomes a treat for the seeker. Creativity is the soul of the Universe, and few people truly connect with it, magician or not. Still, the budding theurge often turns to art as the first step of his journey.

The sensations of the flesh — drugs, sex, alcohol, self-mortification — offer another fleeting lure as the hungry magus tries again and again to either open his senses to the world, or to close them completely. For some searchers, delirium is only a tool, a means of ecstasy that is later abandoned. For others, it becomes an addiction or obsession, trapping the student in his own self-absorption.

Finally, esoteric philosophies offer their guiding light. Sadly, the world is so overrun with “self-help” primers and “new-age” canticles that a budding student faces a bewildering array of nonsense. The mystic paths that once truly ushered a man or woman to new states of consciousness have been diluted with profiteering half-truths. A questing student often passes from philosophy to philosophy, keenly drawing authentic esotericism from mindless drivel. Most seekers are content to dance naked in the moonlight, bantering about different planes of existence and the power of crystals without ever truly realizing their quest.

Thus, the first step along the path is often the last. Magically inclined searchers satisfy their Yearnings through any number of means, spurious or genuine. Few of them truly reach the Otherworld they seek; they might brush against it

now and then, but fail to grasp the prize when they find it. Fewer still recognize the Yearning for what it is: a genuine numinous experience, a spiritual revelation.

Few are lucky enough to find the true path, obscured among the bramble and thorns of modern esotericism. There, a searcher finds some font of truth and immerses himself in its cold, mysterious water.

THE MENTOR

Thus he discovers the next portion of the magician's road — instruction in the magical arts. Rare is the magician who is self-initiated, who has traveled the path without a mentor. For most initiates, this segment must be undertaken with a spiritual mentor, if only for sanity and survival.

The student-mentor relationship varies from tradition to tradition. Always, however, it falls to the mentor to take responsibility for the bond, to prepare her student for his new role. Some masters may be kind, others abusive; each mentor's duty is sacred, though, and difficult. The untrained student is a pile of clay that, in time, must mold itself. The mentor must teach his student how to transform from clay to a vessel of knowledge. Through this transmission, magic survives.

The first step often involves physical, menial labor. Humility and discipline — both of which are particularly hard to develop in the modern age — are essential tools for the aspiring magician. Through the mentor's direction, the pupil learns these qualities, often at the end of a broom! Some traditions — particularly shamanic societies and religious orders — believe that gods or spirits instruct the student. Mediations, fasts and ordeals open the channel for the spirits' arrival. Even then, a mortal teacher must show the initiate the way. A Hermit (again, see the Tarot symbology) must guide her student down the road she has walked herself.

This is a period of learning and unlearning. The student must dissolve many misconceptions he once held — concepts that are enough to sustain people blind to the Otherworld, but that prove too thin for initiates of the magical arts. Notions of cosmology, of the spirit, of man's destiny and his relationship to the Maker must be questioned, overturned, reilluminated and ultimately reinstated. Most initiates take a new name to reflect their mystical rebirth. During this period of breaking and remaking, a mentor is essential. A center must be provided for the magician's reference and return, and some force must drive him. By compelling the student to solve seemingly unsolvable puzzles, the mentor breaks her student's mental constructs, then reshapes them again.

In many magical traditions, these new notions still have some cultural basis: Magic does not develop in a vacuum. A Catholic magus of the Brotherhood of St. Hermes may learn new dimensions to the concept of original sin, of the meaning of Christ's crucifixion, and of salvation, but these guideposts still come from within the context of Christianity. Even though many sorcerers develop heterodox ideas, their practices often remain rooted in their home culture.

Thus, it is that some magicians develop skewed ethics. When “right” and “wrong” seem to become meaningless concepts, the sorcerer decides they must be abandoned, along with old notions of guilt, responsibility and taboo. Indeed, there is some truth in that abandonment; even so, just as old concepts must be unlearned, new and greater notions of responsibility must be learned as well. In the iconoclastic rush, many students forget this step.

Pity the initiate who never progresses beyond this stage — and pity the magicians who fall back for any number of reasons, from a lack of discipline to an inability to discern the truth. For they have seen now the world of magic, and they are a part of it, but they exercise no control over the Black Art, and they are powerless before it.

THE ADEPT

Where the hungry yearns for the Otherworld, and the student learns its ways, the adept now interacts with it. But just like the student, the adept still has much to discover. Straddling this world and the Otherworld, the adept demonstrates the ability to move the world around him. He has learned the language of the spirits, and understands how to look into the future. The elements are his to command, and the dreamscape opens before him.

The wise magician realizes that this is not the end of his journey as much as it is the beginning of a new one. There is always some other magical talent to master, a new insight to learn; the road goes ever onward.

A sorcerer’s travels become lonelier here; he must leave the spiritual mentor’s company and stride out on his own. On the road, he will doubtlessly find others like him, men and women who straddle two worlds. And in time, the adept will have learned enough so that he can teach someone else, ensuring the survival of his magical tradition.

THE MASTER

How few reach this state!

The Master achieves the summit of his path, and the many years of turmoil and struggle reach an end. The powers of magic wait upon his whim, but chances are, he no longer needs them. Should some emergency occur, those powers are close at hand; by the time he reaches such a peak, however, the magician realizes that magic is but a shadow of the truth it represents.

Many students consider themselves masters, but they are vain creatures and foolish travelers. In general, the greater the master, the more humble he appears. As with any other skill requiring work and discipline, the Black Art often teaches a master control and forbearance. The road to magical mastery includes not just secrets and hidden things, but wisdom and introspection.



True, everything has exceptions. Some master sorcerers are horrid egotists, hell-bent on subsuming everyone and everything to their will. This is especially true of accomplished Infernalists who deck themselves in the trappings of power while avoiding the work that leads to true mastery. Such rashness does, of course, beg an important question: Are such wizards truly masters or simply immensely powerful (but ultimately spoiled) brats?

Such creatures are not, I hasten to add, to be regarded lightly, especially not by investigators of our august Arcanum. These sorcerers have knowledge without wisdom, and power without mercy. Torments may wait at the end of their Infernal road, but in the meantime such warlocks may bid others to share those tortures with them.

THE RULES OF THE ROAD

The road that the novice sorcerer undertakes is long and uneasy, fraught with danger. For those who have not yet begun the path, it looks exciting, daring, and filled with possibilities. But this road also has its own set of rules, many of which are learned too late. You cannot attend a few classes, pass a test, and then become a practicing sorcerer.

The Black Art is radical, powerful stuff, not mail-order ministry. It is a long and arduous path, one that can take years to master — assuming mastery is ever reached. The path of the sorcerer is not for the weakling. The bones of students and magicians alike can attest to its perils.

Magic does not come without a cost. One cannot simply grasp a new vision of the universe without paying a price. This cost is not measured in money, either; a sorcerer pays the price in blood, toil, sweat and tears.

Magic is not easy to learn. If it were, more people would learn it. Many are called but few are chosen, as the saying goes. The road of the sorcerer is fraught with difficulty — sometimes even agony. This art demands a toll of loneliness, sacrifice (figurative and often literal), conflict and temptation. Divorce, joblessness, addiction, terror, even death follow the sorcerer like rats after a plague-wagon. Perhaps this is only coincidence. Or maybe, as some masters teach, the universe tests — or punishes — those who would master it.

ONE WAY

The Black Art is a one-way journey, too. Stepping on the road to sorcery cannot be undone. Learning the arts of magic is not like going to a vocational school. The student cannot simply drop out and forget he ever tried. You see, magical opening is a two-way process: Just as you learn more about the universe, the universe is learning more about you. You have announced yourself to the spirits, to the angels, to the demons — to whatever concept your path is teaching you.

And you cannot turn around. They know you're there.

Once a magician has set out to find the darkness (or the light, if he can), there can be no running away, no forgetting or ignoring, no money-back guarantees. He has changed his perceptions forever.

This presents one of the paradoxes of magic. You can play with magic your whole life and never truly step on the path. And you can just as easily tread the path without realizing it.

In many ways, the Black Art is a destiny, not a choice. You don't choose magic — it chooses you.

A TREATISE ON HEDGE WIZARDS

Success is for all who make themselves worthy of it.

— R. Swinburne Clymer, *A Compendium of Occult Laws*

Editor's Note: The following observations come from Andrew Taylor, a member of the Awakened Order of Hermes, and a student of the so-called "Orphans" his kind often dismisses. Published in volume MLXXIII of the *Pax Hermeticum* journal, his article "The Mortal Magus" roused the same kind of controversy for its militant tone that Mr. D'Souza's article elicited with its conservative one.

How is it in our arrogant pride and presumption that we so often and so easily overlook those workers of magic whom we dismiss as lesser artists, as hedge magicians? We talk of magick and of our own grand history — and at times it would seem we do not know when to stop. "We are the shapers of reality," we assert boldly. Beset by the Technocracy at our left and the Nephandi at our right, with the Marauders nipping at our heels, we hold aloft our sacred Arts and talk about the un-Awakened whom we are to shepherd to Ascension.

How insufferably arrogant of us!

Our shadowy world has its share of occult secret societies, fellowships that act independently of the Traditions, the Crafts, or the multitude of other supernatural factions so familiar to our kind. For every such society known, there is probably another yet unknown, and for each society in its twilight years, there's another fledgling society just around the corner.

Don't let our Awakened pride overwhelm you. Don't let the vampires with their assertions of "We did all" delude you. We're not the only ones washing our fingers in mortal society's mirror pool. Mortals have their own role to play in our grand pageant, and some of them do so with fire in their eyes and an edge to their teeth. I speak of hunters, true. But more to the point, I speak of our un-Awakened cousins, the sorcerers we dismiss as hedge magicians. Without understanding the forces they move, without remembering the roads that led us to our own oh-so-Awakened state, we contemptuously wave our collective hand at these "cultists and crystal wavers," or consider them mere apprentices to our own Great Art.

A dangerous conceit at best; a suicidal one at worst. Take my word for it, the so-called "hedgies" (what a nickname!) can pack quite a punch in their own un-Awakened way. Without the Queensbury Codes of Paradox, these tortoises may, with luck, trip our hares. A proud magus might find himself surprised by a hedge magician with a few tricks up her sleeve — and no small amount of resources at her behest, either!

If there is one point to remember when considering a magical society, it is this: Sorcerers and their fellowships must follow jungle law — survival of the fittest. A magical society that became extinct five centuries ago may have been a significant, thriving force, until, for some reason or another, it could no longer survive. Maybe it was unable to keep up with the times, or maybe it was simply taken down by some basic sorcerous warfare. This does not necessarily mean that the society was unimportant or that it did not hold certain keys to the truth in its grasp. This fact is no-less true of the hedge wizards' groups than it is of our Traditions. Considering how dangerous their foes are. It may be that in their own ways, those societies are *stronger* than our own!

But what do we truly know of our cousins, these lesser sorcerers? Some of our own began as hedge magicians. Some True Mages respect the insular societies outside our own sphere of influence (no pun intended), but many of us simply see these sorcerers as children playing with fire — marveling at the match in their hands but oblivious to the pillar of fire behind them. And so we casually dismiss them, at times using them if they serve our benefit.

Should you have congress with such sorcerers, I would urge you to consider a few things:

- **They are Not Crafts**

These groups should not be confused with the more familiar Crafts. Such societies typically contain only minor magicians, and their paradigms are so constricting that few Awakened could hold to their vision for very long. They could never truly join us as equals, for their vision is rather narrow and their abilities, to be blunt, quite limited. Still, such societies have their own truths, and as we know, truth is subjective.

- **They are Not Our Hunters**

Hedge magicians have no intrinsic reason to seek our enmity or conspire toward our downfall. Should a wizard plot against us, he does so for personal reasons; as a whole, their societies offer us no harm. Do not let your own power beguile you — these are effective, dedicated men and women who with no doubt could harm us if they chose to; while they hardly pose the threat of the Technocracy or the Nephandi, they could gnaw at us until we fell to a major foe.

Indeed, many of them face the same hunters we do; from the persistent scholars and investigators of the Arcanum to the zealots of the Society of Leopold, sorcerers have learned from history to watch over their collective shoulder for fear of discovery. We magicians — Awakened and otherwise — share a common door when the Inquisitor comes knocking.

- **They Sometimes Become Our Allies**

Speak to these wizards of the Ascension Wars, and they might think you were mad. Many of them are driven by the same purposes as we; deconstruct their worldviews and beliefs, and you will often find men and women who seek enlightenment as we do. Given the opportunity, some magicians choose to side with us. The Technocrats mean relatively little to them — indeed, the Technocracy is quite unknown to most sorcerers — but again they may develop personal reasons to rage against the machine. Those sorcerers driven by ethics and religions make remarkable allies against the Nephandi; the Fallen, I might add, use un-Awakened diabolist cults for the same reason, and do so to great effect.

- **They are Not Our Servitors**

Do not deign to seek their service, for they are their own masters. We can preach to them about the virtues of True Magick, and of how their arts are inferior to ours, and of how our noble cause is so much more compelling than whatever private or communal ideologies they pursue — but these men and women are strong-willed and not easily swayed. They would rather walk alone and continue down the path they have begun than simply act as our foot soldiers. On occasion, a sorcerer can be convinced to follow in our retinue, but he's not likely to stay for long.

- **Their Magics are Constrained by Reality**

Make no mistake; these minor mages *are* Awakened — after a fashion. Their Avatars have been opened to a magical path, but sadly they rarely advance beyond it. Like an apprentice who has grown so full of herself that she cannot make the leap from student to adept, the average hedge mage sees only what is put in front of him, not what surrounds him on all sides. Because of this, he may master a few limited magics, but cannot truly suborn nature to his will in the same way we can. He learns rituals and rites and spells and talismans — all valid means of affecting change in the world around him — but his magics lack the malleability and potency that our magick, True Magick, allows.

- **Their Magics *are* Reality**

This does not necessarily make him weak. Although the hedge magician performs arts constrained by reality, this means that by definition *reality allows him to perform magic*. Paradox is simply not a fear for the hedge magician — at worse, skepticism and disbelief may prevent his magic from succeeding; those elements will not coil and strike the way Paradox does. Like vampires and shapechangers, our un-Awakened cousins exist in a reality where their magics and the static mundane world have reached some sort of truce — and in this regard they are more powerful than we!

If nothing else, let us use these sorcerers as a gauge of our success against the Technocracy. For as long as the hedge wizard can effectively perform his hidden arts, then magic still exists, and our cause is not yet lost.



CHAPTER TWO: THE FACES OF SORCERY

For my part, I have told you all things, so that you might write them down and transmit them secretly to those who are like you in spirit. For this is the mystery of the immovable race.

— The Secret Book According to John, V: 28

It was a delightful dinner, to be sure. I found my companion charming, educated, and a pleasant conversationalist. Our talk ranged from subject to subject — ancient history during appetizers, current affairs during *primi piatti*, and philosophy during *secondi piatti*. Finally, our succulent deserts aside and coffee in hand, we turned to the conversation that we held annually.

We debated the philosophy of magick — or *ashé* as he so colloquially referred to it — and argued metaphysics. I found him no less stubborn than the last time. He was fully unable to discuss the art of magick without reference to his own particular tradition. This Uzoma bambalawo, transplanted years ago from Nigeria to Chicago, still spoke of the orishas and his priestly duties and initiations (or at least what secrets he felt comfortable divulging to me), and my talk of Umbral spirits, the Technocracy and the Ascension War fell again and again on deaf ears.

He was by now a most accomplished hedge magician (a phrase I've never used around him, of course), much wiser and more powerful than the young Uzoma initiate I met in Africa those many years ago. And though he had been educated at the finest Western universities and now worked in international business, he still could not break free from his utterly provincial worldview.

I knew, again, that he would not join our cause. Fate might make us allies on occasion, as it did those many years ago, and we can be friends, but my war is not his, and his world is not mine. Though I may hope for his true enlightenment one day, I fear he may never Awaken, and his Avatar shall be locked in this imperfect state, semi-aware but crippled.

ΩΩΩΩΩ

I met him once more, as he asked, though I no longer take any pleasure in our meetings. The food was pleasant enough, but the talk was completely artificial. My host jumped from topic to topic in an attempt to be cosmopolitan and urbane, but all throughout the conversation I could not help but feel like I was being tested. This was nothing new; in fact, I'm quite used to it from Westerners who like to see how "westernized" I've become thanks to my college education.

According to habit, after dinner we turned once again to more philosophical discussions. He wished to discuss *ashé*, to argue about its properties and qualities, just as he does every year. Discuss it? As though I would care to discuss breathing, or eating or drinking! No, I would gladly share my knowledge of the orishas with those who wish to learn, but not those who would dissect my faith and then talk about the superiority of their own beliefs.

This man, a "Hermetic magus of the ancient House Bonisagus" — no doubt a compatriot of those vain and foolish Aeon Rite wizards — spoke at length. He talked of ascension wars, and of the reign of disbelief, and tried to classify the orishas according to some silly scheme that made no sense to me. For all his knowledge, he so lacked wisdom!

I would have nothing of his talk. He has spouted such gibberish since I came to his aid in Nigeria — fool that he was, he attempted to summon dark orishas to do his bidding! — and every year he attempts to convert me to his war. I have little wish to aid wizards battling each other for greater honor and glory. Children! I serve the orishas and the orishas alone — not human pride and vanity.

As we departed, he said that he had not lost hope that my "avatar" would still awaken. And I said I would pray that he saw the light and used his powers for a less self-serving purpose.

ON THE FRINGE

The World of Darkness teems with clandestine societies, each with its own unique perception. Everyone seems to have his or her own answers to the questions in the dark, and as any student of the mysteries knows, one answer rarely fits all queries. Indeed, the studied mystic knows how to reach beyond simple truths to find the symbols of a greater Truth behind them — a Truth all know but few understand.

This chapter explores several societies within the greater realm of magical study. Unlike the Traditions or clans, these groups don't belong to any grand confederation. Few of them share any contact with each other whatsoever; oh, sure, the Uzoma wise man might have heard tales of the wandering Dust Prophets, but such travelers rarely cross that wise man's borders, so why should he care what they do? Each society has its own perspective, its own practices, its own prejudices. Compared to the larger, more organized Traditions and Conventions, these independent fellowships are pretty small. Most of the groups mentioned below have less than 100 members, and several have less than 50 (not counting their various servants and allies). Still, each society plays its part in the larger drama of the magical quest — a play that may be all the more significant for its secrecy.

Every society, magical or otherwise, has its own mythology, its own tales and symbols through which it views the world. Some of these myths may leave a Storyteller puzzled. Did Nephite Priests, refugees of lost Zion, actually wander the American wilderness hundreds of years ago? Are the Thal'hun deluded New Age magicians, or do their powers really come from some forgotten alien race? To the sorcerers described here, those truths are absolute. It falls to the Storyteller to decide which, if any, of such myths are true, which ones are folklore, and which ones represent some greater Truth. Magic, like politics, is never as simple as it first appears to be.

FORMAT

- **Testament:** This section details the history of the group as it is told within that society. It isn't History 101, and you won't be told what "really" happened. Instead, you'll see the group through its own eyes, see what makes them tick, what keeps them running and what draws their fire.

THE SOCIETY

Within a more objective look at the society, we explore three aspects of its activities:

- **Magic:** What's the group's philosophy of magic? What does it believe magic to be, and how does it put those mystic arts to use?

- **Initiates:** How are new members of the society recruited? What's the group looking for? How does it train these initiates to full membership, and what form does the initiation ceremony assume?

- **Organization:** How is the group organized? How do the members function together, and who do they look to for leadership?

RELATIONS

No one is alone in the dark. Not everyone realizes that fact, however, and in the shadows, certain things become vague. This section explores the fellowship's relations with other Hidden Folk:

- **Hunters:** Other nightbound mortals occasionally cross paths with magicians. Which groups, if any, take a special interest in this society's affairs?

- **Other Magicians:** Many of these groups exist in separate worlds. Many others meet their counterparts on a regular basis. What sparks fly between which societies, and why?

- **Mages:** The Awakened have their own quests and battles; even so, many of them encounter their "lesser" cousins on a regular basis. How do the magicians regard the mages, and vice versa?

- **Others:** The night is alive. How do the supernatural creatures on the fringes of the world regard this particular group? Are they friends, rivals or bitter enemies? And why?

CHARACTERS

This section deals with the group in pure game-system terms. A player or Storyteller who wants to run a character from this society should know:

- **Concepts:** No sorcerer spends her entire life slinging spells around. What kinds of people join this society? Which character concepts are most common among them?

- **Traits:** The character Traits a typical magician from this group might have.

- **Preferred Paths:** The Paths this society considers important. Most magicians from this group will begin their training in one or more such disciplines.

- **Magical Style:** The form that magic takes, and the things these sorcerers do to make it happen.

ANCIENT ORDER OF THE AEON RITES

VISIONS OF A BETTER WAY

We hold the very secrets of Creation.

Although our Order was founded in the latter years of the 19th century, we are a spiritual society whose origins go back millennia, to the very beginning of time immemorial, and the foundation of the sacred wisdom. For it was then that the great Divinity, whose name is I AM, first unveiled to the worthy, the secrets of enlightenment. Over the years, His sacred revelation grew and was manifest to those who could perceive the mysteries. Like a river flowing through many lands, slowly polluted through time, this sacred wisdom likewise changed with each passing generation until it finally became a thing unrecognizable across the world, hidden in the ancient traditions of many nations. But it was in 1872 that our founder, Magister Johannes Agrippa, first gathered together these disparate strands of sacred wisdom and wove them together into the sacred unity that we now perceive as the most true and perfect path to perfection.

Magister Agrippa was born in 1843 with the terrestrial name of Jan van Rensselaer. He received his first vision of the divine at age five. On that day, in a profound revelation, he learned he would be the next Messiah, and was shown the Invisible Worlds and their many inhabitants good and evil and neutral alike. He had

many such visions, and his wisdom grew. But Master Agrippa did not lead an easy life; the lives of those such as we, men and women destined to perfection and enlightenment, are fraught with difficulty. Master Agrippa was shunned and chastised by his peers and family when he spoke of his visions and insights. His father was a Lutheran minister who beat young Jan regularly for his idolatrous talk. Thus did the Master learn the ignorant blindness of man.

Jan floated from job to job, unable to hold any occupation for long. Still, he became a prodigious student of arts and letters. His Greek and Latin were superb; to those languages, he added the study of Hebrew and Aramaic, Arabic, Sanskrit, and, of course, French and English. His visions still came regularly, but he had learned never to divulge them. Instead, he recorded them in his personal journals. These visions typically came at night when he slept, or sometimes in the early evening as he meditated according to ancient Chaldean precepts. Thus did the Master learn discretion and the art of secrets.

In 1865, the spiritual world stood in clear revelation. The Master cried with fear and delight as his spiritual third eye was fully opened. Sadly, enlightenment came at a most inopportune time by mundane standards. He was, at this time, a clerk in a bank—a bank whose manager did not appreciate employees falling to the ground in ecstasy. Thus the Master was dismissed from his position and sent home seemingly without a future.

But without this event, Master Agrippa's wisdom would have been lost to us, lost without communication or refinement. Alone, Jan would have remained a silent mystic, laboring in obscurity and dying



without heirs. By grand fortune, one of the bank's customers that day belonged to a secret mystic order (even the wisest magicians must occasionally tend to Earthly matters!). Understanding what he had seen, the visitor — Sir Adamson Tinsdale — followed young Jan home. The next evening, he offered to teach the future Master many secret things, and accepted Jan as his new apprentice.

Thus began Jan's tutelage. He studied the Hermetic corpus, ancient texts of Sumerian astrology, Indian alchemy and Chinese geomancy. But he did far more than study this esoteric lore; in the secrecy of Tinsdale's sanctuary, Jan learned Enochian — the angelic tongue — and rites to summon and bind Otherworldly spirits. Talented beyond his years, Jan soon surpassed his mentor. In time, he found new masters — the Secret Watchers, spiritual entities who claimed that they too had once been mortal and frail. The Secret Watchers contacted Jan in dreams and trances, initiating him into the hieratic mysteries. Thus did the Master reach beyond.

In 1872, Jan's tutelage under the Secret Watchers led him to the discovery of the Aeon Rites, a series of rituals recorded in Enochian. These magical rites were of supernatural origin, recorded by the first and most powerful mystics of Earth's ancient past — rites that, if followed, would lead humans away from animal ignorance to the sublime glory of the I AM.

As he studied the Rites, Jan learned more about his spiritual masters. Indeed, the Secret Watchers had personally authored the Aeon Rites. The first mystics knew that humans would not comprehend or master these teachings for millennia, and so they dispersed the Rites in lesser forms. In time, these rituals (now diluted) worked themselves into every mystic practice. The authors themselves passed through the veil of mortality, settling on the spiritual plane. From their new home, they sent visions into the mortal world, visions that would guide humanity to spiritual perfection. The Watchers believed that humanity was ready to learn a pure form of magical and spiritual teachings, and that Jan was the most worthy candidate to receive them. Thus was young Jan selected to receive the Aeon Rites, and to use them to usher in a new humanity. Jan chose to take the name Johannes Agrippa, in honor of two mystics who were themselves now part of the Secret Watchers, and pledged himself to the task of spreading the Aeon Rites.

This was the time of Darwin and the Industrial Age, but also a time spiritual awareness and occult experimentation. As Johannes spread word of his revelations, the arcane community burned with excitement. Some occultists supported the Master's claims, others vilified them, but occult societies are like that. The thrill seekers lost their interest in the Aeon Rites as sensation followed sensation. As the careless ones departed, the steadfast stayed behind.

And so it was that by 1873, the Master had gathered a circle of men and women who wanted to learn from him. Pledging his most sacred Order to personal perfection and enlightenment, he initiated his followers according to the Aeon Rites. Within five years, Master Agrippa had developed a divine hierarchy based upon the Aeon Rites, which prevented the unworthy from ascending to ranks they were not yet qualified to have. To progress in the

Order, a magician must prove himself worthy enough to do so. Such worthiness extended past mere occult accomplishment; to truly progress, one must share his bounty with other less-fortunate people.

For 15 years Johannes maintained our Order — an Order that was both new and ancient. As the Order grew and flourished, troubles began. Such things are to be expected; seekers like ourselves are rarely meek and trusting. When Master Tinsdale, Master Johannes's wife, and a counselor who had threatened to reveal Aeon secrets all passed away suddenly, their deaths cast suspicion across our Order. Still, Magister Johannes stood as a beacon of clarity and wisdom, and the Fratres and Sorores of the Ancient Order followed him with utter devotion and faith. During this time, the Master's visions persisted. The Watchers still communed with him, and he recorded their impressions in his journals. In time, his transcribed visions became our texts of magical instruction and the foundations of our Order.

When Master Johannes died, we were equally sad and joyful. Though we had suffered a great loss, we knew that our Master had finally been called to the other side, where he would continue to guide us, freed from all mortal concerns. Sadly, few of his successors possessed his charisma and vitality. The Ancient Order's membership withered until the 1960s, when only a handful of members remained.

In the 1960s and 1970s, men and women once more followed the call of the Otherworld. Amid the wreckage of dark cults and dead-end covens, our own Order prospered once again. Nestled among the false fellowships of witch, fakir and Satanist, we still promote our sacred gospel. Quietly, carefully, we spread the vision of the Watchers and prepare the world for a new and more spiritual era.

The Aeon Rites endure!

THE SOCIETY

"A new and better way is just out of reach." How many times have we heard such promises in the modern world? Yet to the Order of Aeon Rites, the better way has been hidden in plain sight for many years. All we humans have to do is set aside our ignorance and embrace the deeper wisdoms revealed in *The Book of Aeon*. It all seems far too simple, but simplicity amid commotion is what the Order is all about. Fittingly enough, this fellowship traces its origins to a hallucinating bank clerk. As ancient as its practices may seem, the Order's foundation sits plainly in the modern age — an age deeply in need of spiritual refuge.

On the surface, these magicians seem selfless and altruistic. To hear them talk, a new era of prosperity is around the corner, and they, of course, are holding the door open wide for everyone else. There's no doubting the sincerity of Master Agrippa's devotees — advancement within the Order is hard-earned. Still, Aeon magicians are insufferably smug as a rule. No one could be as wise, temperate and visionary as they claim to be. Are these wizards simply self-righteous nuisances, or do they know something that

more-pessimistic magicians miss? Could it be that contentment is as easy to grasp as they would have you believe, or is their message simply one more arcane drone in the halls of magic?

One never knows, does one?

MAGIC

The Ancient Order of the Aeon Rites is the inheritor of a melange of esoteric and metaphysical belief systems from both the East and West. The bulk of its magical systems resemble those found in other societies from the same era (such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn), and are derived from older Greco-Egyptian texts, particularly the *Corpus Hermeticum*. AOAR magic is not for the dabbler; it relies strongly upon book learning, esoteric knowledge, ritual practices and meditation.

In addition to the various magical practices common among occult societies, the Order practices a series of its own secret rituals: the Aeon Rites. These rituals provide a path of initiation peppered with metaphysical ideas. Although AOAR magicians incorporate magical techniques from disparate sources, they employ them with the Order's own refinements. According to Master Agrippa, all other occult studies and cults are corruptions of the truths known to the Secret Watchers. To employ the purest form of magic, one must understand the Aeon way.

Magister Johannes authored his own commentaries on the Aeon Rites and penned the visions he received. Their compilation, called *The Book of Aeon*, offers a complete cosmological treatise about the metaphysics of the universe, the history of the Secret Watchers, the spiritual nature of humanity, the secret history of the world, and glimpses of its future.

Everything is symbolic to members of the Order. Spirits, planets and numbers all have unique correspondences, often linked to the Hebrew alphabet, and lessons are imparted through arcane, multi-layered allegories. AOAR spells rely upon magical sigils (which draw upon the power of numbers arranged in a square grid) and the magical properties of geometric symbols and uncanny designs. To work her arts, an Aeon Rite magician employs sacred mathematics — Pythagorean theories that ascribe potentials to different polygons. The most significant polygons are the triangle, square, pentagram and hexagram. By tracing these shapes in the air or on the



ground and reciting the proper verses from *The Book of Aeon*, a magician might draw spirits to the mortal world for communion.

Astrology (real study, not supermarket horoscopes) plays an important magical role, too. Conjunctions between different celestial bodies produce different spiritual harmonies. A magician versed in astrological magic uses her skills for more than simple divination; by working with the energies of certain planets, the Aeon sorcerer may enhance her spells. Aggressive martial magic, for instance, would draw upon the properties of Mars, while amorous magic channels the power of Venus.

Most AOAR magicians also utilize Enochian, the legendary "tongue of the angels." While the Order of Hermes claims sole proprietorship over this mystical language, various versions of the tongue have circulated across the occult world; even cheap paperback "magic tomes" boast a few scraps of true Enochian letters. The AOAR employs a variant credited to Master Agrippa, who received Rites in English, Latin and Enochian before translating the whole batch into "true Enochian" for *The Book of Aeon*. All AOAR magics rely upon symbolic paraphernalia, too — wands, cups, swords, branches, ashes and dust. A Magister's tools are specially made, often from expensive materials, and dedicated to aid that magician and no other. From his ritual robe and swords to the magical lumen and circler, each sorcerer's instrument holds its own purpose and meaning in ritual work.

The AOAR's rituals are elaborate events performed in specially consecrated tabernacles. Everything has a purpose in an AOAR tabernacle, and all elements must be exact. From the number of columns in a room to the size of sacred polygons etched on the floor to the colors of the cubic altar's cloth coverings, everything has a sacred resonance to the Otherworld.

INITIATES

AOAR magicians prowl the occult communities in search of potential recruits. Notorious "poachers," they've gained a reputation for luring potential recruits away from other organizations and into their own. This stigma is offset somewhat by the good deeds they do. In the fractious world of occult politics, magicians from this Order display an unusually cool temperament, keen etiquette and generosity. Perhaps they're onto something after all.

Only the brightest individuals are chosen for the AOAR; candidates must be well-read, mannered and eloquent. Since the Aeon Rites have supposedly been dispersed throughout a variety of occult sciences, most AOAR sorcerers prefer to initiate practicing occultists and other students of the mysteries. Aeon Rite mentors encourage magicians who have become discouraged by the dark tone of most occult groups to "walk in light" — to throw away the black robes and pursue the sacred Rites.

Potential initiates learn the basic precepts and history of the AOAR, including the career of Magister Johannes, the truth about the Secret Watchers, and the existence of the Aeon Rites (many of which are already partially known to occultists and scholars of the arcane). None of the AOAR's greater secrets are revealed until after a candidate's initiation into the first Degree (Apprentice); each

additional Degree reveals more secrets of the Aeon Rites. As the initiate advances through the Degrees, he learns to discard the watered-down rituals of other systems and relies almost solely upon magics revealed through the Aeon Rites themselves. Study, meditation, acts of charity and leadership mark the path of Degrees. A selfish, hardhearted sorcerer has no place in the AOAR, and the Order lets such magicians know this straightway.

ORGANIZATION

The Ancient Order of the Aeon Rite observes a strict hierarchy with nine initiatory levels grouped into three categories:

- **Outer Level — the Pupils:** The First to Third Degrees; gathered into Lodges, these magicians do most of the "mundane" work while learning the initial secrets.
- **Inner Level — the Fratres and Sorores:** The Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Degrees, who supervise the Lodges, take care of the Order's common matters and spend their time pursuing great truths.
- **Supreme Level — the Magisters:** Degrees Seven through Nine, who send occasional advice and commands to the lesser ranks, but spend most of their lives in contemplation and deep study.

Advancement through the ranks is only possible by initiation through the Aeon Rites and prodigious good works. A Lodge's elders will determine whether an individual is worthy of promotion or not.

The Aeon Tabernacle forms the ruling body of the AOAR; it sponsors high-level initiation, monitors the AOAR's coffers (which, thanks to initiation and membership tithes, investments and other contributions, are quite rich), and funds charities, scholarships and hardship grants. The Aeon Tabernacle's office, meeting space and temple are located in Johannes Agrippa's Amsterdam canal-house, the home of the Order's main library and archives. Here, the original transcripts of the Aeon Rites are stored and studied. They are never moved, and have been securely guarded and warded.

The ultimate rank (Tenth Degree) cannot be achieved by a living human being; this is the level of supreme spiritual master, the level of the Secret Watchers — now including Magister Johannes himself — who still guide AOAR sorcerers through their dreams. Only the Secret Watchers themselves may accept a deceased Magister into their fellowship.

All Aeon Rite magicians seek visions from the Watchers; sadly, the Watchers aren't always quick to respond. In the last few years, only Master Agrippa has appeared; this silence dims the Order's light. Secretly, some Order members have begun to wonder whether their fellowship is actually guided by ascended masters, mischievous spirits, demons, angels or even a megalomaniac magician — Master Agrippa himself — who only *appears* to be dead. This suspicion, added to the Order's earlier schisms and murders, causes tensions within the AOAR. Desperate as they are to believe in a healing truth, some Aeon Rite sorcerers assume a rather militant stance — "This is the truth! We *do* have the Great

Answer!" — and refuse to hear otherwise. Dissidents have a way of disappearing — or turning up dead — if they question the origin of the Masters' advice. Is the Order a bastion of hope, or is it a cult of personality led by a mad bank clerk with an unhealthy skill for magic?

Like we said, one never knows....

RELATIONS

• **Hunters:** Although the Arcanum has extensive files on the AOAR, those files are somewhat out of date. The Society of Leopold watches the group from afar; although they suspect sinister motivations behind the Order's generous facade, the AOAR does too much good to warrant an immediate purge. When, in 1948, an Eighth Degree Aeon devotee joined the Sons of Tertullain (see **The Quick and the Dead**), he ignited a war that lasted for years and reduced the Order's already fragile membership to 10 magicians — its lowest point since its inception. The AOAR dropped out of sight until the 1960s and still hides from the fanatical ghost-hunters; if the Order bears a grudge against anyone, it is the Sons.

• **Other Magicians:** While all magical societies consider themselves the bearers of the One Truth, the Ancient Order seems to be a bit more obnoxious about it than most. While they've been known to help other magicians, the cost of that help often includes a convert or two. This "proselytizing" has not made the AOAR any real friends.

• **Mages:** Hermetic House Ex Miscellanea keeps close ties to the AOAR, and uses the "lesser mages" as a charity society and recruiting ground. Some Hermetics believe it is a shame to see such dedicated seekers so determined to be blind. As far as the mages are concerned, the Aeon Rites magicians focus so intently on external acts and symbols that they miss the internal journey of transformation. In doing so, they walk straight past what they try so hard to achieve. Still, claim the Hermetics, the wizards' hearts are in the right place. Perhaps their Secret Watchers are clever mages, guiding a particularly clever band of consors on a mission to spread the mystic gospel....

• **Others:** Unbeknownst to the Aeon magicians, a pack of Bone Gnawer werewolves has taken it upon themselves to protect the Order's Boston temple — a renowned center of charity called Saint Simon's Rest. Aside from a few minor encounters, other beings overlook the AOAR. At best, this group of progressive Samaritans resembles a Golden Dawn offshoot that refuses to acknowledge that its day has past. It's too small to play any major role in arcane politics.

ANCIENT ORDER OF THE AEON RITE CHARACTERS

• **Concepts:** Antiquarian, linguist, occult scholar, professor, dilettante, social worker.

• **Traits:** As educated men and women, all AOAR sorcerers have high Mental Traits, plenty of Knowledges (Cosmology, Linguistics, Lore, Occult Sciences) and wealthy Backgrounds (Influence, Resources, Sanctuary). As a rule, they tend to be kindly magicians with open hands and keen minds.

• **Preferred Paths:** Enchantment, Ephemera, Summoning (Daimonic).

• **Magical Style:** The Order advocates a deeply symbolic ritual craft. Each item, each word, each minute of the ritual is chosen for its significance. The phrase, "High Ritual Magic" doesn't do these magicians justice — everything must be meticulous or the spell cannot succeed.

When roused, the Order's powers are subtle but strong, and carry a vivid magical "taste" of antiquity, hope and emotion. If the Storyteller wants to add a bit of extra flavor, she might lower the difficulty of certain workings (one or two) or add to their Dice Pool if the AOAR player chooses a planet to direct his spells and invokes that planet during the ritual.

WHY DABBLE WITH A BASTARD FRAGMENT OF WISDOM WHEN YOU MIGHT BASK IN THE LIGHT OF THE UNDILUTED TRUTH OF ALL THINGS? IF YOU'RE WILLING TO TURN AWAY FROM LESSER DISTRACTIONS, COME JOIN US. WE COULD PUT YOUR SKILLS TO GOOD USE.

BALAMOB

BLOOD OF THE NIGHT-CAT

The blood of kings runs through us, my son. Though you see us as nothing more than farmers and peasants, remember this: Ours is a lineage that stretches back hundreds, even thousands of years, before the coming of the Europeans and the Church of Rome. Centuries ago, a great empire spread across this land. Mayan warrior-kings fought with each other, using powerful magics as taught by the spirits. This empire is nothing but crumbling stone now, scavenged by historians and collectors of antiques like ants at a picnic, but we still remember the old ways. We were priests then, and we were kings. We are the Balamob, the Jaguar Champions, and ours is the way of the spirits. Ours is an ancient memory, for the Balamob go back to the distant past even before the rise of our kingdoms. Those years are as clouded memories to many; it was in the years after the great Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque had gone to the Underworld and were sacrificed to the Lords of Xibalba. In the land beyond death, they learned many secret things, including the arts of renewal and transformation. Upon their return, the twins taught these secret things to their chosen cousins, the Balamob, those who would protect the world from the harmful spirits of Xibalba. In time, the Balamob were seen as gods as well.

The first Balamob learned of *ch'ulel*, the stuff of the soul, and *itz*, the magical sap of the World Tree — the sacred axis that we see represented in the natural world by the Ceiba and the Copal trees. They learned of the *wayob*, the companion spirit animals who would guide the *itzamna* in their vision trances. The first Balamob used these abilities to fight the dark spirits who preyed on the edges of mankind: vicious, blood-frenzied monsters who sometimes wore the skin of men and culled our peoples for many years.

Eventually these battle-beasts disappeared — although they still can be found in the dark woods, I assure you! — but other spirits sought to harm our people. Who knows why? Some, no doubt, envied us for our flesh (something the spirits can never have), while others followed the dictates of Ah Puch, the Lord of Death. Even then, we did not fight these creatures alone. Our forefathers and old grandmothers knew the jaguar-folk, creatures neither fully man nor jaguar. With them, our ancestors fought the demons and death spirits who ravaged the land. Under our protection, the people prospered. Kingdom after kingdom grew in our lands, and in the lands north and south of us.

In time, the Balamob came to lead our people; with spirit power and spirit wisdom, our forebears guided the Maya through prosperity and adversity alike. We sacrificed blood as propitiation, and we kept the people to the ways of the gods. It was not then as it is now; now we must hide from accusations of devil-worship and witchcraft. In those days, the people revered us. Not all kings were

Balamob, nor were all Balamob kings, it is true. But king and queen and Balamob worked together for our people's benefits, and the people grew strong.

But, of course, we were people, and people do not change. Greed, hatred and lust took their places in the hearts of men, and the gods were forgotten. Oh, the gods were spoken of and honored in sacrifices — or else our magics could not work — but they were not truly held in the hearts of the people. The kings fought one another, and the Balamob battled each other, and war and strife took their toll on our people. Once we were gods, and then kings, and then we simply became enemies and the magic was forgotten.

When the conquistadors arrived, the Maya were a pale shadow of our former glory. The Spaniards had conquered our cousins to our north and they came for us next. Our great cities had fallen and were empty for many years. We eked a living off the land; still the horse-men sought to despoil us. The Balamob were still there, but had weakened greatly. Where once the jaguar-kin ran common as the spots on a great cat's hide, they had shrunk to a handful by the time the horse-men came with their dying god. With the torch, the sword, the gun and the cross, these new men finished what our foolish pride had begun.

There was little we could do, but we tried. Our people were still our people, and we were sworn to protect them. In one battle, our *itzamna* took the forms of the eagle, the snake, and the jaguar, and we fought against the Christians. But their own *itzamna* called upon his *wayob*, and a single dove defended the Europeans and slew our *itzamna*. Was it the Balamob who had weakened? Perhaps it was not our *itzamna* who had weakened, or their magic, but our people's faith in us. I cannot say for sure. All I can say is that we became a captive people.

For centuries the Europeans tried to destroy our ways. They both failed and won. Look around you! Everywhere you see the Christ-god and his cross! But not entirely, for is not the cross the very same World Tree that we must ascend? Our native traditions cannot be totally driven out. We may wear new clothes and take new names, but our traditions are ancient and enduring, and the new cannot totally devour the old. Our ancient legacy is still mistrusted, though; how often is a Balamob h' men confused for an *obeah* or *hechisero*, the witches and black magicians who use the spirits for their own dark ends?

No, no — I do not despise the Christians. No, I merely mourn the demise of our people and our faith. The gods are hungry and a few peasants sacrificing corn is not enough to sustain them. Should those gods abandon us, who then shall we turn to for strength when the monsters of Xibalba break free once more? With the Balamob powerless, who would fight the dark spirits? Thus do we continue the old ways, to keep the horrors from Xibalba at bay. Perhaps one day in the future a new empire shall rise and cast off our oppressors. Who can say?

We have suffered much in the past centuries. How long has it been since our leaders remembered the gods instead of their own vanity and purses? From the Catholic conquistadors and colonials who usurped our authority and used us as slaves, to the corrupt

governments that followed, bringing drugs and blood and war in their wake — there is no refuge for us. Where once we stood atop temples as gods, now we must hide in alleys and in the shadows of the jungle.

But the Balamob are strong, and we grow stronger. For the faith of the Christians today is not like the faith of the Christians hundreds of years ago; it is dry and brittle, like an empty wineskin. And our people have begun to hunger for the ways of the itzamna more and more. A thousand years ago, I would have been revered. Five hundred years ago, I would have been admired. Two hundred years ago, I would have been tortured and burned. Now — are we not coming to a full circle? Look around you — are you not proof of that? Do not other boys and girls your age seek to learn my secrets? Some of you shall, no doubt, and others shall not. But even they have a task to perform as they spread the word of the Balamob. They may become but simple h'men, healers and doctors, but they shall remember the spirits and propitiate our ways.

Your people's protectors have not forgotten you, for we love you too much. The dark creatures of Xibalba are straining for release, for dark times are coming. Too many people have forgotten the rituals for too long. And when the portals to Xibalba burst open, aided by the deeds of the hechisero and other black magicians, we shall be there, calling upon the wayob, the good spirits, to drive off the evil spirits and the humans that worship them. We shall use all our magics, and we shall take the form of our wayobs if necessary, to fight with tooth and claw. We shall endure, for the Balamob are strong.

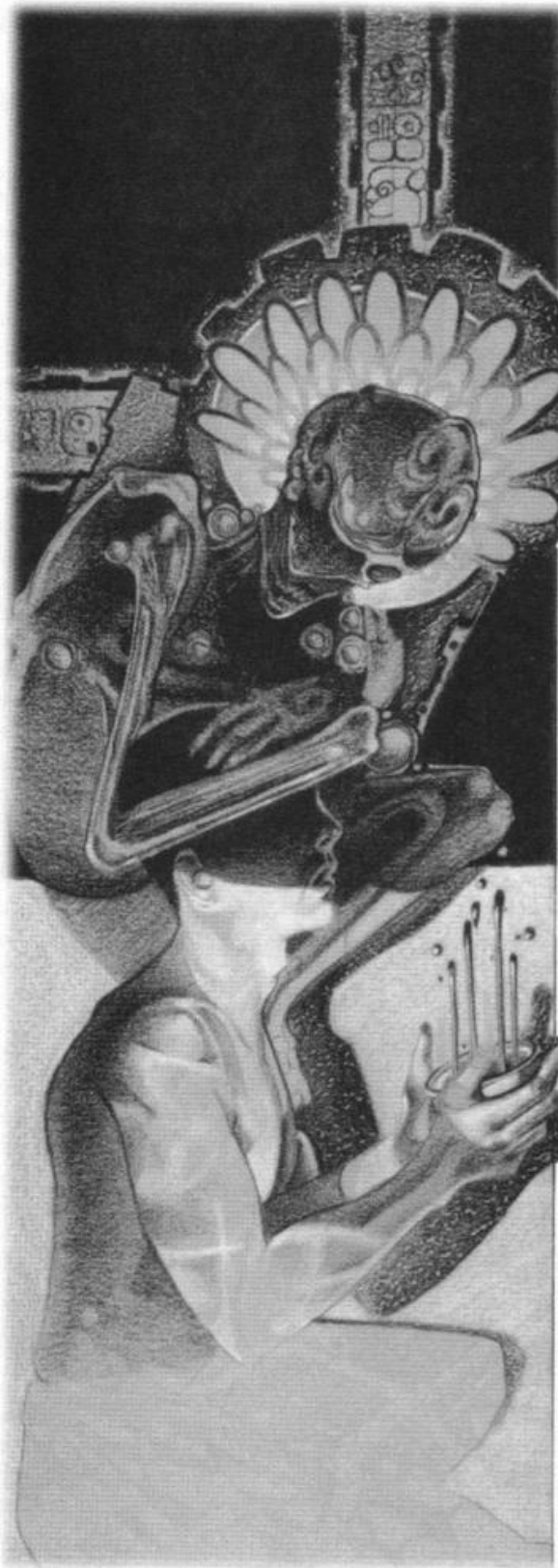
THE SOCIETY

A secret collection of animal-shamans, this ancient society tends the embers of the Mayan culture. Scattered throughout their ancestral lands, the Balamob play a triple role: In their neighbors' eyes, they are simple folk with a reverence for the old ways; at night, they become the People of the Jaguar, magicians with fierce insight and bloody practices; in their hearts, they embody the union of flesh and spirit, animal and human. Like the cats they revere, these sorcerers walk solitary roads. Patron spirits guide the journey, but for the most part, the Balamob stand alone.

MAGIC

Fundamental to the practice of Balamob magic is the concept of Xibalba (pronounced "Sheebalbah"), the Otherworld, a supernatural landscape both beneath and above our own mortal terrain. This Otherworld is the home of countless myriad spirits of myriad intentions, and it was through the actions of the Hero Twins in Xibalba that mortals learned the magic arts. Xibalba — a.k.a., the Umbra — is the source of Balamob magic. Though these magicians often speak of the dark spirits of death who inhabit Xibalba, it is the spirits, not the place, that carry evil.





Each itzamna (soul-carrier) receives a spirit-patron (the wayob; see below). Although truly accomplished Balamob may assume a variety of shapes, all itzamna favor one particular animal — the shape of their patron spirit. When he learns how to transform into animal form, the Balamob prefers this beast shape to all others; to him, it is a sacred thing to become one with the wayob and to share in its essence.

Most Balamob magic takes place in vision trances when the sorcerer enters Xibalba in pursuit of magical wisdom or power. The very first spirit a Balamob sorcerer ever contacts on his own is his wayob, or companion spirit — a familiar animal of sorts who accompanies the Balamob, protecting him and assisting in his magical invocations.

The axis mundi of Balamob philosophy is the World Tree, the *Wakah-Chan*. Raised by the gods at the beginning of Creation, this sacred tree separates the sky and earth but unites our world with Xibalba. The *Wakah-Chan* is more than a single, Earthly tree, of course — it is the essence of all trees. Balamob sorcerers recreate this World Tree in their rituals, building altar-effigies from rope and wood. In a greater sense, the Balamob himself becomes a living World Tree, the union of Heaven and Earth.

The magic sap, or itz, of the World Tree, flows through our world as the sap of terrestrial trees (such as the Copal, whose sap is a resin burned as sacred incense), and as the liquid secretions of the human body — blood, sweat, semen and tears. As vessels of itz — also known as *ch'ulel*, or stuff of the soul — these fluids are offered to sacrificial fires during Balamob rites. As they become smoke or steam, such offerings become food for the gods.

Bloodletting — the dance of *ch'ulel* — is a sacred act. Blood is holy; to give it to the gods is a grand act of piety, especially if that blood is your own. Lesser magics require a few drops; urgent, large-scale spells demand copious amounts of blood, often shed in spectacular mutilations. Any part of the body is appropriate, but the most sacred parts include the tongue (for men and women) and the phallus (for men). The Balamob still practice the ancient art of piercing their sacred parts with thick coils of rope, then dancing around madly, surrounded by whirling, bloodstained streamers.

The dance itself forms another aspect of the Balamob art. During wild festivals, the sorcerers and their companions reenact the creation of the cosmos as grand ecstatic pageants. Dressed in clothing that recalls their sacred wayob spirits — a follower of a jaguar-spirit, for instance, would wear a specially prepared pelt — the Balamob become their patrons, first in spirit, then in flesh. Gifted magicians assume animal form and rush off into the night at the festival's end.

Balamob magics aren't tied to specific locations, but seem especially potent when they're enacted at sacred ancestral sites. The spirits work best in places they know well. As

modern tourists and settlers stumble across these sacred places, however, the spirits flee to quieter homes. In their absence, darker spirits — embodiments of greed, lust and treachery — ride in on the night winds, settling down to a feast of human weakness. Where the “harvest” is good, these spirits remain and grow more numerous and powerful.

INITIATES

Balamob initiates come almost exclusively from the local folk of Mesoamerica. Over the past few decades, however, other groups have filtered into the cult: Anthropologists, archeologists even tourists from around the world come to the sacred regions to study Mayan civilization and culture. For some of them, an objective view transforms into belief — sometimes even fanaticism. Balamob elders occasionally select promising converts and offer them initiation.

The initiate faces a complex study period; Mayan cosmology is subtle and symbolic, and many nuances survive only in the hidden teachings of the Balamob. Outsiders must also learn the Mestizo dialect — the Spanish/Mayan hybrid that forms the local vernacular — spoken by the elders who rarely understand much English. Unlike many magical groups, the Balamob don't view language itself as sacred (although some claim the spirits speak only in Mayan!); still, many of their concepts get lost in translations to other tongues. Only by learning the language can the initiate understand the magic.

After learning the rites and concepts of the Balamob, the new initiate undergoes his first vision trance. During this ritual, he pierces his tongue, runs bark or paper through it, and offers his blood to the gods, riding his pain until he enters the ecstatic state that opens the gateways to Xibalba. Assuming a dream-form, he leaves his body behind and rides into the spirit world. There the great Vision Serpent greets the traveler and initiates him into the secret rites. The new *itzam* meets his wayob, his companion spirit, and forms a bond with it. Although wayobs usually appear as jaguars, snakes, or eagles, other animals — even mythological ones — sometimes take shape as well. From that point on, the wayob accompanies the *itzam* for the course of his life, aiding him in his magics and protecting him in his dreams.

Once this ritual ends and the trace fades away, the initiate becomes a full *itzam* and the Balamob welcome a new warrior-priest into their ranks. Study, from that point on, is a combination of life experience, dream travels and loreseeking. The lost culture has many hidden secrets; even elder Balamob do not know them all.

ORGANIZATION

The Balamob don't *have* any real organization. A cult in the loosest form of the word, these *itzamna* keep to themselves, establish local “territories” and watch over the local

people and spirits. Some elders form alliances or rivalries, but these relationships are personal, not political. Each *itzam* maintains his own beliefs, interpretations and understandings of the world and the ancient rites. Some Balamob even incorporate Christianity into their beliefs, but these “progressives” remain among the minority.

Balamob remain almost exclusively in their traditional homelands: the Yucatan peninsula, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras. Some venture further north or south to follow work — after all, an *itzam* must still earn a living — but most stay in the places the spirits know best. Foreigners who join the society often return home for a few years, but they always return to the lands of the Maya. Many *itzamna* insist that Xibalba lies very close to the material world in Mesoamerica. While most of the world chokes on its own industrial wreckage, they say, the spirits remain close at hand in the Mayan country.

Not that all Balamob practice purity and serenity; spirits come in all shades, and some *itzamna* bond with the darker varieties. Greed and power make strong temptations for a sorcerer, and the spirits are only too glad to show a lusty Balamob to the shadowy roots of the World Tree. While many magicians protect their “flocks,” some prey upon them like a jaguar among sheep. Others turn their rage at outsiders and profiteers into murderous raids and devastating curses. These last have found allies among the Garou who venture into Central and South America for the Amazon War, among the Zapatista revolutionaries in Mexico, or among the displaced werewolves who lash out at all comers. It's all too easy to regard talk of “becoming one with the spirits” as happy hogwash when one lives among New Age stardusters; in the thick forests and mountain retreats of the Balamob, however, people recall the gorier side of shamanism — and of the Mayans who shed their blood for the gods.

RELATIONS

- **Hunters:** Hidden among the shadows of a deeply Christian culture, some *itzamna* clash with Catholic Inquisitors and Protestant missionaries. The Society of Leopold keeps a thick file on the “jaguar-men of Mesoamerica,” whom they (sometimes correctly) accuse of poaching, drug running, infanticide and human sacrifice. Like the Spanish priests who helped “settle” the New World, these churchmen are appalled by the “demon worship” they see among the native peoples. Many of those natives also avoid the magicians in their midst. Thus, wise Balamob keep a very low profile. Angry voices, blades and shotgun blasts are only a misstep away.

- **Other Magicians:** The wandering Nephite Priests annoy the Balamob. It's bad enough that Spanish missionaries soured the land in the name of their god; these fanatics

claim the land was theirs all along! Clashes are rare, but they do occur. As for the other societies, they cross into Balamob ground so rarely that no one really cares on either side.

- **Mages:** Since few Balamob play power politics, they remain largely out of view. Still, some South American Dreamspeakers know their ways. A handful of Awakened Balamob actually belong to that Tradition or to the Verbena, who understand the powerful link between life fluids and mystical energies. Long ago, a collection of Mayan sorcerers joined the Euthanatos; although that faction is history, some death mages remember the old ties fondly.

- **Others:** As heirs of the jaguar-spirit, many Balamob revere the Balam, Mesoamerican werejaguars who share an old bond with the land (see **Bastet** for details). Some itzamna actually worship the werecats, while others regard them as cousins, partners or comrades in arms. Since neither the cats nor the sorcerers maintain an active hierarchy, no "official alliance" exists between them — they simply act in concert as the occasion demands.

Balamob Characters

- **Concepts:** Environmentalist, activist, drug smuggler, farmer, anthropologist, village wise worker, revolutionary.

- **Traits:** Balamob favor Physical Attributes and Traits like Awareness, Brawl, Dream Interpretation, Intimidation and Stealth. By being rural magicians, they often lack "book knowledge," but master oral lore (Culture, Hearth Wisdom). Many Western recruits are often more academically inclined. Most accomplished Balamob are shapeshifters, and take the form of their companion spirit.

- **Preferred Paths:** Divination, Ephemera, Herbalism/Brewing, Shapeshifting.

- **Magical Style:** Offerings of blood, tears and other fluids often combined with chants, hallucinogenic drinks and celestial correspondences. The strongest magics can take place only at the proper times; the Storyteller may decide that certain Paths, like Shapeshifting and Divination, are limited to certain phases of the moon.

Strip away our customs, clothes and manners and we stand revealed as what we truly are: animals with the minds of gods, spirits with the flesh of men.

THE NEPHITE PRIESTHOOD

PROPHETS OF THE DUST

We know this to be the truth: As God is now, so shall we be one day, and as we are now, God was one day. We, God, the angels and the spirits of the world are all of the same race, and shall share the same destiny. Ours is the task of protecting our brothers and sisters that they might persevere on the road to godhood, and preparing New Jerusalem for the Second Coming.

We are an ancient order, one that goes with surety to the prophet Nephi himself. For it was Nephi who wandered with Lehi, his father and their family in the wilderness in the seventh century before Christ; there they sought the land of promise, fleeing Jerusalem as the Lord so commanded Lehi. Both Lehi and Nephi were great visionaries, and the Lord spoke unto them in dreams and in visions, yet often they were reviled and spat upon; but they walked in the ways of the Lord.

And it came to pass that Nephi led the family of Lehi across the great seas of Irreantum to the New World, where they were a strong and industrious people — but there the children of Laman, the brother of Nephi, committed great iniquity, for they had hardened their hearts to Nephi and the words of the Lord, and for their great rebelliousness they were cursed and a people set apart.

For many centuries did the children of Nephi and Laman live and prosper on these shores, sometimes living in righteousness and other times in sinfulness. It came to pass that Jesus the Christ did appear unto us and preach His gospel to us, as had been foretold by the prophet Nephi. But many rejected His words and His works. In a great battle at hill Cumorah, in the fifth century after Christ walked the Earth, the wicked Lamanites slew all the peoples of Nephi until finally only the prophet Moroni was left to complete the sacred writings of his father Mormon — a testament written in the Reformed Egyptian language of the Nephites — teaching the history of the tribes of Israel, and the visitation of Christ. And so Moroni sealed up these books until a later time as he could reveal them to the prophet Joseph Smith.

The history of our Church of Latter-Day Saints is well-known from there: how Moroni, now an angelic being, appeared unto Joseph Smith and showed him the golden tablets of Mormon, and taught him a means of translating the golden tablets through a magical seerstone — and the complete Testament of Jesus Christ was revealed to all mankind.

John the Baptist did appear unto Joseph Smith and ordain him to the priesthood of Aaron — a Levitical priesthood in which all male believers participate. Side by side with the Aaronic Priesthood is the Priesthood of Melchizedec, from which our church elders are drawn. Thus, the hierarchy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was established, and grew and



LEIF JONES 1997

prospered. The Prophet died a martyr in 1847, slain by a hostile crowd of unbelievers, yet the faith he established lived on and prospered. His successor, Brigham Young, led the newly restored church to the great Salt Lake Basin, where the Saints — those whom outsiders called "Mormons" — founded the nation of Deseret, a new Zion, a separate territory that would eventually become the state of Utah. Our fathers and brothers worked hard to till the land, and to defend it from the gentiles who hated us and would see our lands taken from us.

There is a secret history of Nephi, one that Joseph Smith revealed not, for it was a great and terrible secret. The Lord God revealed many private and hidden things to Nephi in visions and in dreams: the powers to command the elements and speak with the dead, to learn the language of dreams and the healing arts, to touch the weather and to summon spirits. Nephi taught these secrets to very few people of his kingdom, who in turn passed on their knowledge to other disciples, and onward through the history of the kingdom of Nephi.

Some etched symbolic representations

of their knowledge in stone, plain as day to the initiated, but meaningless to the ignorant — markings that even now are misunderstood by those who refuse to see the blinding truth of our ancient testament.

The priests were sworn to secrecy, and their burdens were heavy; for only those who walked the straight and narrow path could practice these arts without risk of damnation. Those few who strayed from this path became corrupt and vain men, which the Priests of Nephi had to slay in the name of righteousness. The Lamanite Corrupt were a testament to the evil that threatens all men: the vanity and vice that great men fall into, turning from the ways of God. Equally, the Nephite Priests were the epitome of Saintliness; travelers and prophets, they wandered the deserts and forests of the kingdom of Nephi, seeking to hear the voice of the Lord in the winds and the rustling of trees. Sadly, the Nephite Priesthood fell with the peoples of Nephi at the battle of Cumorah, and their ways were lost to mankind for over a millennium.

And thus it was in 1849 that Nephi appeared as a celestial being, revealing himself in the desert to Uriah Spence, a settler of Deseret. Though he lived a simple life, his intellect was keen. Uriah was a man of piety and great moral fiber, and Nephi laid hands upon him, restoring the ancient Nephite Priesthood to the land. In dreams and in visions, Nephi instructed Uriah in the



Nephite arts of sigils and prophecy, that Uriah and people like him might once more wander new Zion and safeguard Mormondom against the attacks of its disbelievers.

And so it came to pass that Uriah himself, after having mastered the secret Nephite arts, instructed others in these same methods, and these disciples in turn passed on the arts. The advent of the Nephites was propitious. Deseret faced an unsympathetic government that marched troops against our peoples, recalling the early hostilities of Missouri and Illinois, the same hostilities that brought about Joseph Smith's death. It was a rallying call for our people, who took up arms against the foreign invaders. Brigham Young preached the doctrine of blood atonement, reminding us that some men's sins were so great that only in their death could they achieve penance, and Mormons were ready to fight and die for their land and faith. The Nephites fought alongside their Mormon brothers, aiding them with their supernal powers in ways unseen and unknown — and though the great Mormon Utah War of the 1850s did not erupt in the cataclysm of blood and fire that had been foreseen, it was a visible reminder of how the faithful ever face oppression.

Thus, it is that we come to the present day. It is clear that our Church is on the eve of Greatness; though we must contend with many Apostate Churches, ours is the One True Church. And while we now are reconciled with the United States and their federal government, we still recall the day when we were martyred and abused for our differences. Indeed, we accept the offices of the United States as Divinely appointed and the Constitution as Divinely inspired, but forget not the blood and tears that nurtured our lands in New Zion's youth.

Now we wait, in secret, until the Second Coming and what we call the Gathering: when the descendants of the Lamanites (those now called Native Americans, or Indians) and the Jews shall come to the new Zion and repent their apostasy, and Jesus the Christ shall come again unto the world. We stand strong, ready to defend our Mormon brothers and sisters from future oppression by unbelievers. Ours is the task of aiding the Church, to fight the deeds of the Satan and to protect the nation of Saints. We act without desire for glory or recognition, knowing that we must live secret lives until the final battle. And we stand apart from our Mormon brothers and sisters, for such is the duty of vigilance. Let the harsh desert wind remind us of the wages of sin and the burning fires of the coming Apocalypse in which all shall be called to serve the Lord or perish.

THE SOCIETY

From the crucible of subjugation, the Nephite Priest strides with burning hands and Divine powers. To call him a sorcerer would be to blaspheme the Holy Name of God. Servant of the Father and defender of the faith, a Nephite Priest is the heir to a sacred and essential tradition. Let the hell-bound tinker with their petty devil-games. The Priesthood paves the way for a final showdown with darkness and the unbelievers. From the portents revealed each passing day, that showdown is just around the corner....

MAGIC

A Nephite's faithcraft rests upon the principles of his religion. Chief among these principles is the idea of *apotheosis* — as God is now, so man shall be one day, and as man is now, so God was one day. Humans are spiritual beings who will one day be like God Himself, and Nephite "sorcery" is little more than the cultivation and development of the inner powers available to all spiritual entities. Indeed, God created the world of flesh so that all the spirit-beings (which he likewise created) might have a home — so that in the flesh, these spiritual beings would have the chance to grow to perfection.

In the Nephite doctrine, everything, even spirit, is matter. The Priests do not accept the concept of creation *ex nihilo*, "from nothing," that other Christian churches contend. Everything is matter. Even God Himself has a form of flesh — glorified and perfect to be sure, but a thing of matter nonetheless. A suitably elevated master can command that matter with good or evil intentions. Most, regrettably, choose evil. The Dust Prophets, on the other hand, stand bathed in heavenly light — or so they steadfastly believe. Nephite Priests consider their magic the restoration of the "primitive gifts" described in the *Bible* and the *Book of Mormon*. The gifts of tongues, prophecy and exorcism are natural abilities for those who commune directly with the Divine, and greater powers await those who perform God's will for God's chosen.

Nephite gifts work through several channels. Most "spells" invoke celestial beings whose names are often known only to the Nephite Priesthood, entities who were once virtuous members of the kingdom of Nephite before its destruction by the Lamanites. Powerful miracles come through invocations of the Holy Spirit — a spiritual entity without corporeal form. In no circumstance does a Nephite Priest call upon the names of Jesus Christ or God; he might pray to them or ask for some intercession, but he would never presume to demand their aid.

Although Nephite gifts work anywhere, each Priest consecrates a temple in his own home. Wandering Nephites keep simple, portable temples (often little more than an altar and a veil), while established Prophets construct grand sanctuaries. Each temple should be a tribute to God, a place for prayer, security, initiation or faithcraft. Unbelievers are never allowed near these holy structures. Even good Mormons are best kept at a distance.

INITIATES

New Nephite Priests typically come from Mormon families with a long tradition of church membership. Rarely are Gentiles (those outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) considered for membership, and these few individuals must join the LDS long before being considered for Priesthood.

Nephite initiatory rites are deeply ceremonial, held in special temples and hidden from causal view. A new initiate — called a Deacon — must fast for three days prior to his initiation; afterward, he goes to the Nephite Temple at

sunrise and spends the morning in prayer. The new Initiate is unclothed, for he must be reborn, and is anointed and consecrated with oil at various times throughout the ceremony. After a period of private prayer, the initiate is garbed in white and the consecrating priest prays with him. Throughout this entire portion of the ceremony, a veil separates the Nephite altar and the initiate; toward the end of the ritual, the initiate parts the veil and walks to the altar. Thus does he enter the celestial kingdom.

The Deacon undertakes a period of study typically lasting one or two years. In that time, he learns the fundamentals of Nephite theurgy and the hidden history of the Nephite Priests. He also studies Reformed Egyptian — a language descended from demotic Egyptian, transformed through the centuries, and spoken only on the American continent during the period of the *Book of Mormon*. A holy tongue, this language opens the pathways to the Divine consciousness, priming the priest for greater and more-powerful gifts.

Progress through each subsequent level of Priesthood is marked by grand and elaborate rituals, each one greater and more solemn than the last. Every new initiation demands a full day of meditation, prayer and a renewed commitment to the cause. High Priest-Prophets are a rare and dedicated breed.

ORGANIZATION

The Nephite Priesthood is a scattered collection of Mormon wise men with marginal authority. Although a High Priest-Prophet exists, his title conveys more respect than command. Unlike the church itself, Nephite Priests shun a central organization. Flexibility is vital to their duty, and Prophets in the field must act at their own discretion. Who has time to consult an Elder when the wolf runs among the flock? Even so, a vague hierarchy can still be found within the Priesthood's ranks:

- **Deacon:** A newly initiated Nephite, still studying under his mentor. This instruction period may last for years.
- **Priest:** An ordained Priest, now free to operate on his own authority. Newly consecrated Priests must wander for a period of two years, spreading the faith and learning all they can about the world outside Zion.
- **Elder:** An older, more settled Priest, often sought for advice.
- **High Priest-Prophet:** The senior-ranking Elder, selected by popular vote among all his peers.

Nephite Priests roam across New Zion — the United States — but concentrate in Utah, Oregon, Wyoming, Colorado and Arizona. The majority of the Priesthood con-

gregates near Salt Lake City, the headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Still, the wilderness calls to these holy messengers. Utah's deserts and mountain ranges hold a strange fascination for the Nephite Priests. Most Dust Prophets journey in the "wilderness of Zion," as far from human habitation as possible, for 40 days and 40 nights. On such quests, a Priest fasts and prays. Some Nephites do this once a year, to remind themselves of the sufferings of their forefathers and the deprivations that may yet occur. A small but vocal segment of the Priesthood advocates a militant separatism that harkens to the days of "Deseret's occupation by hostile troops." To them, New Zion will be built on the ashes of the United States — a nation as corrupt as it is grand.

Some Nephite Priests travel to Mexico and Central America, where they search for archeological evidence of the Nephite cultures described in the *Book of Mormon*. Like many Mormons, these searchers believe that the ancient cultures and civilizations of Mesoamerica are, in fact, traces of the Kingdom of Nephi. In their quests, some Priests have uncovered mysterious remains that cannot be easily explained or identified. Sure in their faith, they declare the ruins sacred ground and defend them against all "trespassers" — even ones whose families have lived in the area for centuries.

RELATIONS

• **Hunters:** The FBI keeps an extensive file on the fanatic Desert Prophets. Several acts of anti-government terrorism have been laid — rightly and otherwise — at the Nephite doorstep. Given the close secrecy and unto-death dedication within the Priesthood, government agents have very little to go on. Few Mormons know about these apocalyptic holy men, and fewer still speak openly about them if given the chance. Mormon refugees warred with the United States government slightly over a century ago, and the old wounds linger on both sides.

The Society of Leopold considers the Priesthood a dangerous heretic sect — one with supernatural powers, to boot! Given the popularity the Mormon Church enjoys in modern America, the Inquisitors are hesitant to confront the Nephites on their home ground. Such a confrontation could only make things worse for the Society, and the group's cooler members realize that fact.

• **Other Magicians:** Nephite Priests venturing into Mesoamerica have run afoul of the Balamob. Although the jaguar-folk tend to leave "visitors" alone, the presumptuous Prophets irritate the native sorcerers. For their part, the Nephites consider any and all magical societies to be "of the Devil." Friendly congress with a sorcerer is foolish at best, but is more often treasonous.

• **Mages:** That prohibition goes double for the darker mysticks — the Verbena, Dreamspeakers and *especially* the Ecstatics. The Priesthood remains ignorant of the Traditions or Ascension War; to the Prophets, the popularity of magic and the occult is simply another indication of the coming end.

As for the Technocracy, their spies have uncovered a small but disturbing sect of political dissidents who seem to command magical powers. NWO agents in the field have reported mad holy men without any affiliations beyond the Mormon Church. Although the Technocratic Union has bigger flies to swat, a small unit has been formed to keep track of these mysterious vagabonds.

• **Others:** Aside from a few brief skirmishes with werewolf septs, the Priesthood has escaped the notice of other supernatural groups... so far.

Nephite Priest Characters

• **Concepts:** Evangelist, survivalist, missionary, archeologist, separatist, drifter (males only — women are excluded from this fraternity).

• **Traits:** The rigors of their initiations and lifestyles promote Physical and Mental refinement among the Priests. A Dust Prophet character must take Lore: Nephite to represent his mastery of Mormon beliefs, and will probably have the following Abilities: Expression, Research, Hunting and Survival.

• **Preferred Paths:** Divination, Enchantment, Healing, Hellfire, Summoning, Binding and Warding (Daimonic), Weathercraft.

• **Magical Style:** Fervent prayers unleash great powers, from healing miracles to sudden storms.

I come unto you on the Holy Spirit's
breath. Listen to my words before the
final darkness swallows you forever.

THAL'HUN

THE SONG OF THE CELESTIAL SPHERES

Look around you. See how much we've progressed in 50 years, in a century, over the past thousand years? Consider the technological advancements in Europe between the birth of Jesus and the end of that millennium; think how few they truly are, how they pale in comparison to the intellectual and technological growth over the past century. Truly tremendous, eh?

It is nothing.

We live in a barbaric, backward civilization, one that prides itself on glory after glory but does not understand the greatness that is still so far out of reach. Look up to the heavens — the heavens that we have barely penetrated. Civilizations have existed in those heavens, vast ancient panoplies of culture and learning that were old when humanity was just picking itself out of the primal ooze.

You want to think I'm mad, but you've seen my power. Learn now the source of that power. If you want magic, then go away — there is no magic. There is only advanced science, science following rules and principles yet undreamt of by human scientists and philosophers. This science is our inheritance, but

humanity is not yet ready for it. With our help, though, one day the planet Earth will be the home of the greatest star-faring civilization ever!

Let me begin in the ancient days, the last days of the fading people called the Hui:xa. They were humanoid, like us, only taller, more slender, and with blue skin. Their race was millions of years old, and their civilization was hundreds of thousands of years old. Chief among their many accomplishments was the perfection of thal — the power of harmonics. The Thal'hun, the manipulators of thal, were among the Hui:xa's most respected figures. We humans would regard them as mystics and sorcerers, but among their own people they were scientists and philosophers. It took many years of study to become a Thal'hun, and with good reason — only those with the proper intellectual mind-set could use thal without risking the lives and sanities of those about them. For thal is much greater than any who would use it, and it carries the vibration of the cosmos in its hum.

What are these words I use, thal and Thal'hun? They are expressions in Luz'at, the dialect of the Hui:xa — words that you too shall learn if you expect to learn thal — for Luz'at is a language resonant in thal, and the most effective vehicle for wielding it.

But the Hui:xa were a dying people. Though students of many sciences, they were rarely the masters. One of their experiments had gone horribly wrong, and a massive virus was released.



Completely unstoppable, it began to eat away at all life on their planet, Bars'hm. Their homeworld's biosphere soon decayed, and all for foolish pride.

A few Hui:xa were spared. They were somehow immune to the virus. Those survivors faced another problem: The virus continued to replicate, and continued to deteriorate all the other life forms of their homeworld. The Hui:xa saw the extinction of their race approaching, and with it, the destruction of their planet.

Finally the priest-scientists of the Hui:xa conceived of a solution: A portion of their greatest city, Zoraster, would be phased to a different continuum outside of time and space. With it would go the greatest works of Hui:xa art, literature, science and philosophy. The living inhabitants of Bar'shm had a future destiny, too: They were to be the ambassadors of Hui:xa culture to other races. When a suitable world was found, and its inhabitants deemed worthy of receiving Hui:xa civilization, the remaining Hui:xa would converge at that world and bring New Zoraster back to this plane.

This necessitated a major transformation for the Hui:xa, however — they were to be changed into creatures of pure energy, capable of interstellar travel and near-eternal life spans. Over 300 Hui:xa were selected for this duty, and became the Jeva, or Lightbearers — and they set out across space to find a new home for their people.

No one knows the fate of those Hui:xa who remained on Bars'hm. Some survivors had to stay behind to work the great thal machines that transported New Zoraster to safety and transformed the Hui:xa into the Jeva. Presumably, those custodians died as their planet's very life force ebbed away beneath them. We who know the Hui:xa ways salute their sacrifice. Now alone, the Jeva sojourned through space, brushing against worlds, lonely travelers in an empty expanse. Some Jeva were destroyed by malevolent creatures; others wearied after a seemingly endless search, and took to their own motives. Still others found worlds worth watching. Settling into mortal shells, they observed millennia of activity.

One such Jeva, named Khuvon, came to our world as Mesopotamia was rising to power. Interested, Khuvon remained behind to observe, hoping that one day our world would be ready to host New Zoraster and the reborn Hui:xa. For years, he watched humanity's rise, sometimes even taking on a mortal form and living among us. But this soon tired him, and he would slumber for decades before he could act again. On occasion, Khuvon taught humans the art of thal — and these new Thal'hun became the basis of Earth's legendary magicians and sorcerers. This was the way of things for millennia: Khuvon watched and waited, planting the seeds of thal and the Hui:xa in countless societies and people.

In those days, he did not teach thal as a pure science; he knew that people were not yet ready for the truth. So he dressed it in stories and myths, changing the appearance of thal so that it resembled simple magic. This, he thought at first, was the best course of action. Centuries later, though, he came to regret his

deeds. He saw how thal had become warped and twisted, undistinguished from the petty religions of the world, until finally it became a tool for vain and greedy men. At times, discovering a renegade Thal'hun, he took action himself. Many of these he punished, as would a stern father whose son has played with fire. Some sons were irredeemable; these he tore asunder.

Finally, in 1961, seeing humanity ascend spaceward, Khuvon chose to act once more.

We had embraced the stars. Khuvon, who came from those stars, chose once more to teach the science of thal to a select few, that they might guide humanity to a better future and prepare the way for the return of the Hui:xa. Now he taught pure thal, free of cultural detritus and superstition. This was science as science, not magic! Our mentor incarnated for five years, and tutored a new circle of Thal'hun — the standard-bearers for a new humanity.

Seeing them ready after years of study, Khuvon initiated the mental summons to his alien kin, announcing that a world would soon be ready for the reborn Hui:xa. His seven disciples then traveled the Earth, each seeking more followers, and teaching the ancient alien science of thal to those who seemed worthy.

Now, once again, Khuvon rests. Freed from his mortal shell, he slumbers deep in the Earth, a being of pure energy. One day soon, he will rise again and join us when his fellow Jeva arrive and the world is ready for the return of Zoraster and the Hui:xa. Who can say when this will be? Even Khuvon did not know, for his brothers and sisters had scattered across the stars, and it had been thousands of years since he had heard from any of them.

Until their return, it is our duty to guide humanity to artistic and philosophical perfection, to enhance human consciousness, to welcome the arrival of the other Jeva, and to master thal — for we are the scientists of a new age!

THE SOCIETY

Crackpot inventors or visionary saviors? Good question. More metaphysicians than magicians, the Thal'hun nevertheless manage to cross traditional miracle-working with bizarre science. The result: A psycho-sonic craft that supposedly redirects energy flows through brainwave-soundwave activity. Are these people onto something, or is their "lost art" another mask on the eternal face of magic?

The truth may be resting beneath the ground.

MAGIC

The Thal'hun do not consider themselves sorcerers; to them, magic is the legacy of thal, the primal sound and vibration. Naturally, other mystics tap into that vital science, even if their understanding is (by Thal'hun reckoning) flawed. The future, however, belongs to thal in its purest form — and to the scientists who understand it best.

Thal science draws from two primary principles: the power of sound and the power of the trained mind. Sound has power, as mundane scientists have only recently discovered. The mind has the flexibility to harness that power, to direct it through the most efficient channels and refine it through the intricate language of *Luz'at*, the ancient Hui-xa tongue. To practice thal, therefore, a person must master *Luz'at* — an undertaking in itself!

Luz'at is in many ways a secret language. The most-essential thal components — 1000 words of power — have been uncovered and perfected, but the remaining words are a vast enigma. Noting the ties between so-called “magic” and the true properties of thal, Thal'hun researchers decipher the cadence of chants and charms, piecing together the “magic words” that so obviously channel thal. One Thal'hun, a linguist by trade, was unable to draw any relationships between *Lu'zat* and any known Terran language; after years of analysis, however, he determined that all *Luz'at* words and sentences fit into a solid structure — verifying that *Lu'zat* is a working language and not a simple compilation of sounds. It's not an easy language to learn, however; an understanding of *Luz'at* demands a radical change in understanding. Sentences, words, even thoughts are expressed differently in *Luz'at* than in any human tongue.

The necessary mental adjustments refine the second component of Thal'hun: attaining the proper mind-set. It's not enough to simply master the sounds of *Luz'at* — you have to master the *concepts* behind those sounds, tap the ambient energies within both, and cognitively grasp the relations between words and effects. Meditation, personal reflection and philosophical exercises all form cornerstones in Thal'hun training. By perfecting herself in body and mind, a Master of Thal becomes a conduit for the powers of thal.

When channeled properly, this energy current produces miracles. A Thal'hun master can shift the weather, heal injuries, call up the elements and invert space and gravity.

Such works do not come easily; “setting a resonance” (that is, casting a spell) requires an intricate performance — a combination of chants, percussion beats and special, thal-filled sounds. The translations of these sounds are simple and unpo-



etic — they're merely commands or instructions — but it's the *nature of the sound*, not the translated meaning of the phrase, that counts. With the proper mind and the proper harmony, great things are possible.

Really significant resonances demand group participation. Gathered together, a collection of Thal'hun create "diadems" — metal and crystal rods, staves, tripods and other antennae that channel, purify and magnify thal harmonics. The upper levels of the sonic cult dream of monumental thal machines, generators that could conceivably power whole cities by sound alone. According to the accounts of Khuvon, such machines swept Zoraster out of this continuum, and will be necessary to draw the city back out and into our world. Some adventurous "vibroneers" have tried to capture the resulting sounds on advanced recording equipment, but such experiments have, to this date, failed. (Perhaps the inherent impurities of Terran minerals are to blame.)

Although the concept of "mystic spirits" seems childish to the rational Thal'hun, many of them recognize the existence of the Otherworld and its denizens. With focused bursts of thal, experienced vibroneers conjure and bind these "spirit beings" — obviously Jeva who have lost their way. In general, however, Thal'hun prefer to rework the material world, preparing it for the wonders to come.

INITIATES

Potential Thal'hun come from various fringe communities; New Age fellowships, alternative science groups, UFO-watchers and mad inventors make the best recruits. Occultists and religious devotees tend to be too dogmatic to make good vibroneers — the beliefs they cling to obstruct their vision of the truth. For some reason, the idea that ancient sorcerers or saviors might have been extraterrestrials rubs such people the wrong way. Better, the Thal'hun believe, to let the deluded stay deluded while true searchers take up tomorrow's torch.

The Thal'hun initiation is a two-stage process: The initial stage is educational. The recruit — called *a:xa*, or child — learns how to write and pronounce Luz'at characters. This period alone can take up to five years. At the same time, he begins studying meditation techniques and learns the history of the Thal'hun — or more properly, the history of Khuvon's activities on Earth — until his mind is prepared to accept the new language.

The next stage is more advanced. The *a:xa* begins to learn how to manipulate thal through harmonics and mental attunement; he practices the construction of diadems and assists others with their experiments. In addition, he begins

learning about Hui:xa culture and lore, astronomy and other sciences, studying transcripts of classic texts, poems and histories narrated by Khuvon to his human "children."

In the final stage, the new recruit rests in a sensory deprivation booth for up to a week; after an initial period of silence, the elder scientists deliver a series of frequencies into the booth, frequencies designed to restructure the recruit's mind and awaken his potential (a process that has, on occasion Awakened True Magickal powers). Floating in a trace state, the *a:xa* meets the spirit of Khuvon. Consecrating the recruit with waves of warm, crackling energy, Khuvon accepts the new disciple. As the lights and sounds fade away, the *a:xa* is left in silence for another hour to contemplate his experience. When he rises from the chamber, he is one of the Thal'hun.

ORGANIZATION

The Thal'hun consider Khuvon their leader. Since the immortal energy-being is usually "unavailable," a governing body called the Star Council of Zoraster makes policy for this strange fellowship. Of the seven men and women who administer the Thal'hun, four claim to have been Khuvon's original disciples in the 1960's; the remaining three disciples also served on the Council, but died and were replaced with others chosen by the leaders.

Fifty-five visionary people make up the Thal'hun society; their goal is to increase membership to 100 by the turn of the millennium. Given their location, this isn't an unrealistic goal. Most Thal'hun operate and practice out of the United States, although a few have moved to England, France and Japan. Through a "goodwill exchange of light," the group hopes to expand into Russia and China. An "ambassador mission" to the Middle East was a disaster; five Thal'hun were killed, their diadems smashed and their lodgings demolished by "parties unknown." Given the West Coast's tolerance for eccentric cults, the Star Council has located their headquarters in San Francisco, CA. In a mansion not far from Golden Gate Park, a large contingent of vibroneers studies celestial transmissions, natural sounds and man-made noises in an effort to create the perfect harmony — the sound that will bring new Zoraster into our world.

Although the Thal'hun do not practice their arts openly, they frequently publish their theories of extraterrestrial origin. Their newsletter, *Earth: The Final Frontier*, details cases of alien influence on the development of Terran history. Despite their apparent interest, the vibroneers don't go for conspiracy theories or UFO-chasing. The truth, to them, is not in the sky or in Hanger 18 — it's in the sounds all around us, and in the ground where Khuvon sleeps... for now.

RELATIONS

• **Hunters:** The Arcanum keeps a slender file on these "eccentric UFOlogists from San Francisco." Although the scholars don't take the vibroneers very seriously, the file notes "incidents of paranormal character" in their vicinities from time to time. One vault holds bits of a diadem smashed in Boston; no Arcanum expert has been able to fit the pieces back together successfully — some force scoured the fragments smooth after the impact.

The FBI maintains closer surveillance on these "separatist cultists"; given the multitude of Bay Area fringe groups and the peaceful activities of the Thal'hun, the government file on the fellowship is pretty slim. Still, every issue of the newsletter has been compiled, catalogued and perused, sifted for anti-government rants or apocalyptic announcements.

• **Other Magicians:** Although the Thal'hun study magical incantations from a multitude of sources, the group as a whole has avoided any really hostile contact (or friendly contact, for that matter) with the magicians of other orders. To the vibroneers, magic is a necessary cloak for wisdom; to the sorcerers who've encountered these odd little weirdoes, the Thal'hun are just one of a long line of examples that the world is going to hell.

• **Mages:** Thal'hun theories provide obvious delight for the mad Ether Scientists. Both "sides" happily correspond in the pages of various paranormal journals; some Etherites follow the teaching of Khuvon, experimenting with mind/sound vibrations and drawing parallels between their personal theories and the Thal'hun craft. Naturally, few Thal'hun have any idea who their "partners in wonder" might be; the Star Council is aware of the Sons of Ether, but most of the rank-and-file remains clueless.

Technocratic files on the Thal'hun mistake them for a sect of Etherities. It's an obvious mistake, one that led to the Boston incident. A series of Syndicate strikes recently undermined the Thal'hun's finances; only a wild fund-raising drive (aided secretly by some Sons of Ether who felt sorry about the mess) saved the vibroneers' main laboratory from bankruptcy.

• **Others:** The Middle East expedition annoyed *something* in the Sahara desert. It continues to follow the Thal'hun, studying their workings from a distance. Is this hidden rival a lost Jeva, a disgruntled spirit, a vampire elder, or Khuvon himself?

This "savior of the future" remains a mystery, even to his disciples. Is he just another vampire lord or a magus with a personal cult? Is the legend of Zoraster for real, and if it is, would its arrival be a good thing, or a really *bad* thing? Is Khuvon mortal, energy, alien or something else altogether? Is "he" the only one of "his" kind, or are there others singing among the darkened stars...? And what do they *really* want from Earth?

The question remains unanswered — for now.

Thal'hun Characters

• **Concepts:** Sound engineer, linguist, cutting-edge physicist, New Ager, astronomer, inventor, idealist.

• **Traits:** Thal'hun are lovers and thinkers, not fighters; Mental and Social Traits dominate this fellowship. Every recruit must understand a bit of Luz'at (a Secret Code Language, bought either with Linguistics or with the Knowledge of that name), know her way around a computer, practice a form of meditation and possess some familiarity with extraterrestrial metaphysics. Science Knowledges are a very good idea, but social graces (Bureaucracy, Etiquette, Leadership and Seduction) often come in handy. Though many Thal'hun know how to sing, play music or both (Expression, Artistic Expression or Singing Abilities), a handful of them do not.

• **Preferred Paths:** Conjunction, Healing, Hellfire, Summoning, Binding and Warding (both), Weathercraft.

• **Magical Style:** Complex vibrational "rituals" set the stage for Thal'hun workings. As the focused sound permeates the local molecular structures, the air seems to vibrate and thicken. Soon, odd phenomena — clocks running backward, magnetic shifts, power surges, etc. — reveal the science of the Hui:xa at work. Depending on the pitch and timbre of the sounds and the discipline of the vibroneer, the phenomena might either settle down, cause minor damage or affect the desired change.

*Laugh if you want, but I'm building a new
and better world!*

THE UZOMA

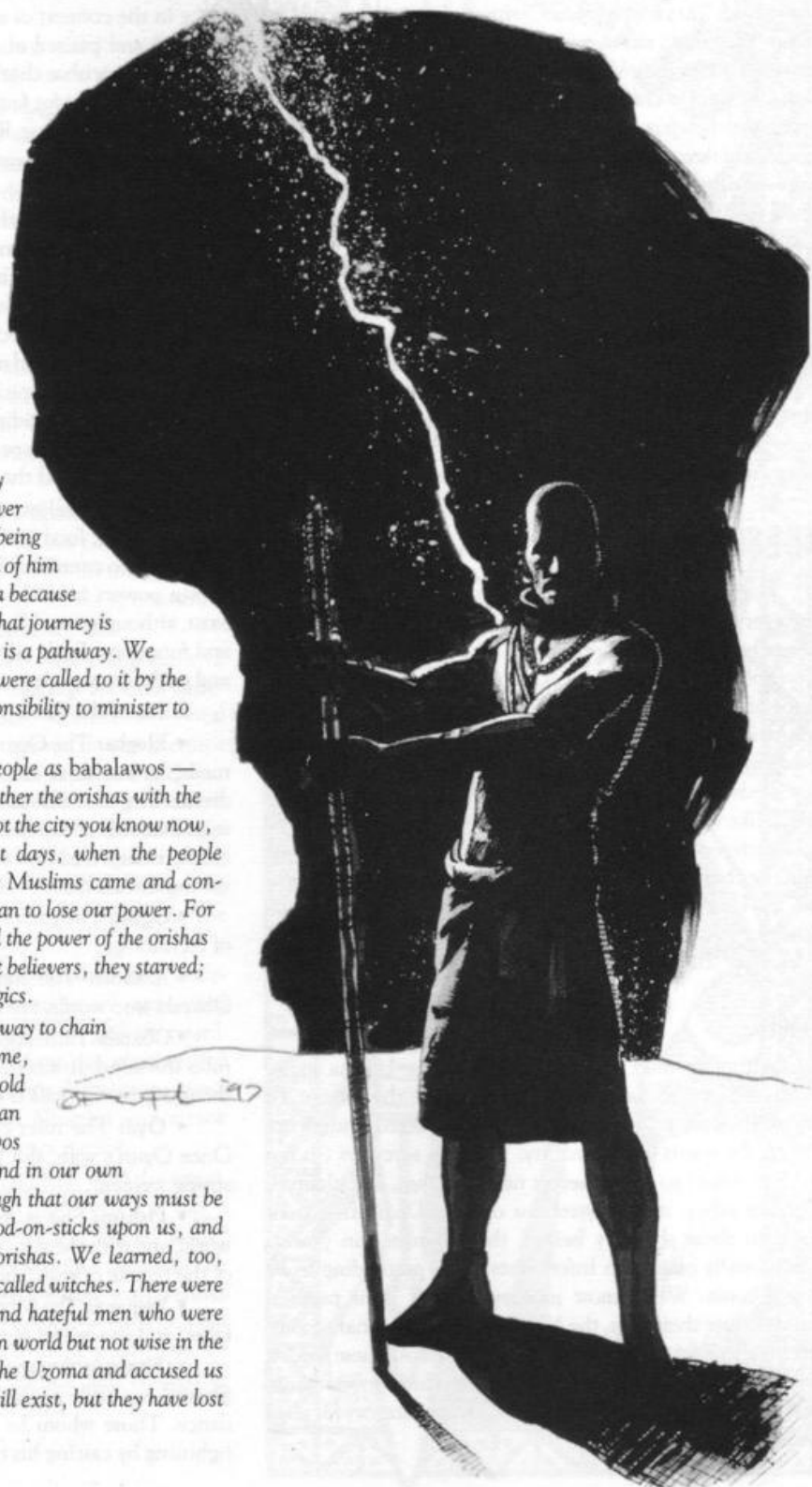
JOURNEYMEN, SPIRIT QUEENS AND FATHERS OF SECRETS

Agoya, child — enter! Again you come to pester me for an old man's secrets, eh? Well have a seat then. I will teach you of our people's past. I know you've heard the story before, but it will grow with the telling and one day it will become your story as well, and you shall pass it on as I tell the tale to you. Now hush, child, and listen.

We are the Uzoma, and have been one with the Yoruba from the beginning of time. So it was decreed by the orishas, the many gods who rule over Creation; perhaps it was even set into being by Olorun, the Owner of Heaven, but of him we do not speak. We are called Uzoma because we were born during a journey — but that journey is life, child. The wise will see that all life is a pathway. We did not seek the power we have — we were called to it by the orishas, and given power with the responsibility to minister to our people.

For many years we served our people as babalawos — priests and sorcerers, who brought together the orishas with the people. We served the chiefs of Ife — not the city you know now, but the holy city-state of the ancient days, when the people remembered the orishas. But then the Muslims came and converted many of us, and the Uzoma began to lose our power. For our powers come from the orishas, and the power of the orishas comes from their believers. As they lost believers, they starved; and we, in turn, lost many of our magics.

The desert-men took many of us away to chain and to sell; when the white invaders came, they took even more of our people and sold them across the seas. When the Yoruban peoples went to America, our babalawos went with them. In the New World and in our own homeland alike, we learned soon enough that our ways must be hidden. The Europeans forced their god-on-sticks upon us, and punished those who remembered the orishas. We learned, too, what happened to those the Christians called witches. There were special Christians then — the mean and hateful men who were knowledgeable in the ways of the hidden world but not wise in the ways of the spirit — and they hunted the Uzoma and accused us of dark and evil things. These people still exist, but they have lost their hold over us.



Our babalawos in the Americas saw the faith of the people change, as the way of the orishas became one with the way of the hanged god. They learned of the Christian saints, and saw in them our orishas. From this marriage, new faiths were born and new names: Candomblé, Vodoun, Macumba and more. Even at home, we were forced to hide as the English, French and Germans spread their beliefs among our people. Though not all of our people abandoned their original faith, we were forced to go underground with our magics. We now count our years according to the birth of the Christian god, and western ways have become our ways. First the Portuguese lorded over us, and then the British. We knew that for the Uzoma to survive, we must hide.

And so we did, knowing that one day the people would seek the orishas again. And is this day not coming? In the past decades, we have seen our people throw off the yoke of colonialism. Over the waters, we have seen in our brothers and sisters in the Americas return to the old ways. And the Uzoma slowly emerge from hiding, reuniting the people with the orishas once more and slowly restoring ashé — magic — to the life of the peoples.

THE SOCIETY

Gathered into artificial families called *ile*, the Uzoma sorcerer-priests watch over their mortal charges. Providing access between the Otherworld and the material plane, these wise folk keep to themselves unless forced into action by some outside force. Such interference is a common fact of life in Africa, where slavery, disease, starvation, supernatural predation and spiritual corruption have wracked the land for hundreds of years. Hence, these so-called “journeymen” perch like watchful leopards over their villages. Accustomed to interference, Uzoma elders take a dim view of strangers and the changes they bring. So long as things remain peaceful, the Uzoma are content. If anyone threatens the *ile* or its community... well, there are many reasons why parts of rural Africa are still dangerous to cross.

MAGIC

Although most outsiders consider the Uzoma magicians, the people themselves would dispute that claim. To them, they are priests and holy women, sacred bridges between the spirits and humanity. The true sorcerers (in the sinister sense) go by the secret name *Nhanga*, and claim to worship other, more mysterious orishas. Dedicating their souls to these shadowy beings, the *Nhanga* gain powers traditionally offered to Infernalists while pretending to be true Uzoma. While most journeymen put their peoples' needs before their own, the *Nhanga* pursue personal accomplishment over spiritual service. The Uzoma call these hidden witches “the flies in the rotting dung,” and lump most foreign magicians, mages and sorcerers in the same category for good measure.

Spells and magic, or *ashé* (which, interestingly enough, also means “so be it”), of the Uzoma tradition always take place in the context of a religious ritual. Though Olorun is invoked and praised at the beginning of each ritual, it is through the orishas that Uzoma gain their magical abilities — as both a favor for faithful service and a necessary tool to do the orishas' bidding. Rituals involve singing, dancing and drumming, all as a means of praising and communicating with the orishas.

Orishas hover at the heart of Uzoma magic. Yoruba stories teach that Olorun was once a single entity a time long ago, but He was struck by a stone and shattered into many beings. Thus, this primordial being became a multiplicity of beings, found in the rocks, rivers and other objects of the world, both natural and man-made, as well as in the invisible personalities of the spirit world. Every person — not just sorcerers — has a guiding orisha that helps determine his personality. Common people often seek out Uzoma in order to better understand their guiding orishas.

The Uzoma believe that each orisha has a corresponding number, color, food and dance; understanding each aspect allows one to communicate with the respective orishas, and to win powers from them all. Over 400 orishas are said to exist, although most Uzoma disagree about the spirits' names and functions. Each village or town has its patron orishas, and each Uzoma selects those who suit him best.

Some of the more popular orishas include:

- **Elegba:** The Opener of the Way and the guardian of roads, he stands at the crossroads of the human and the divine. Elegba — also called *Eshu* — is a trickster figure who tests the faith of the believers. European missionaries commonly interpreted him as Satan, misunderstanding his role among the orishas.
- **Ogún:** The god of iron, war and labor, and the master of technology.
- **Oshosi:** The hunter and scout, Oshosi translates Obatalá into words, tales and visions for the Uzoma.
- **Obatalá:** Father of orishas and of all humanity, Obatalá rules the mind. It was through Obatalá that Olorun created the universe. Obatalá is both wisdom and justice incarnate.
- **Oyá:** The ruler of winds, cemeteries and the dead. Once Ogun's wife, she is a fierce warrior and a patron of strong women.
- **Oshún:** She is the ruler of the sweet waters of the world, and with them love and fertility. Though the youngest of the female orishas, she is *Iyalode*, the queen.
- **Yemayá:** The Mother of All, the ruler of the seas and lakes, and the queen of witches.
- **Shangó:** Among the most popular of the orishas, Shangó is a virile warrior who rules over lightning, fire and dance. Those whom he favors are gifted seers. He strikes lightning by casting his thunderstones to Earth; the Uzoma

revere these items when the stones can be found, for they are potent objects credited with many magical powers (see Appendix).

• **Orunmila:** The master of wisdom and divination, he stands as the witness to Creation and human destiny.

Bembe forms the heart of Uzoma magical ritual: through singing, dancing and drumming, the sorcerer-priests entreat the orishas to join the Uzoma community. Certain kinds of drumming and dance are specific to different rituals, and are never performed outside a magical context. The entire *bembe* is designed to call down the orishas from heaven, from the rhythms played to the specific dances to the colors used. Such performances are equal parts party, religious invocation and magical rite.

The culmination of an Uzoma ritual includes possession by an orisha — when the spirit “mounts” the head of the *babalawo* and speaks through him. The Uzoma do not typically try to force this phenomenon: The orishas speak when they will.

The greatest recorded source of wisdom for the Uzoma is the *Ifa* — a collection of over 250 *patakis* (sayings, myths and stories) that are consulted with a shell divination. The *Ifa* contains the entirety of knowledge within it; mastering the nuances of the *Ifa* can take a lifetime.

Ebo, or sacrifice, forms another vital component of Uzoma magic. The orishas demand offerings for their sustenance, and the Uzoma believe that sacrifice is a vital component of Creation. As a rule, Uzoma do not sacrifice humans — the orishas are satisfied with the blood of chickens, goats, or other small animals. Provided the animal has not been used in some healing ceremony, the Uzoma cooks and eats the meat of the slain beast afterward. On occasion, an orisha requests that the animal be spared, and that it be raised by the person who has been healed or helped by the ritual.

(*Nhanga* are another matter; they favor human offerings, often eating the sacrificial flesh straight off a screaming victim and adorning themselves with his bones afterward. Their orishas demand blood in great quantities, often spilled by the most painful means possible. For this reason, many Uzoma equate *Verbena* mages with *Nhanga*, and attack them whenever the opportunity presents itself.)

Some Uzoma (and many *Nhanga*) deal with the *eggun*, the dead. Uzoma sorcerers believe that everyone has a personal *eggun* — a family of deceased spirits who look after the living. The nature of the dead follow the nature of the living; some *eggun* are dark, twisted spirits with vicious agendas and harmful powers. These demon-wraiths corrupt Uzoma unlucky or unwise enough to treat with them, or follow sorcerers whose personal deeds are foul enough to attract their attention.



INITIATES

Historically, the travelers hail from Yoruban or Nigerian descent. Most Uzoma who followed the African Diaspora were absorbed into the disparate traditions that grew out of the Diaspora — Candomblé, Obeah, Santeria, Lucumi, and so on — so most members of this society remain in Africa. Handfuls of transplanted Uzoma remained true to their ancestral tradition and secretly passed on the old ways in their new world. Small cells of these ile thrive in hidden parts of Jamaica, Columbia and the United States.

Whites are not actually forbidden from joining the Uzoma, but few of them are ever initiated. This has less to do with race than with acculturation — most whites are simply raised with a different mind-set and worldview — and mystic ancestral ties. A European might be able to *intellectually* accept the idea of the orishas, but they do not speak to him through the chains of blood; thus, he remains outside their blessings.

Initiation into Uzoma begins with a consultation of the Ifa and a discernment of the initiate's guiding orisha. The Uzoma congregate in different houses (ile), arranged around different orishas; the initiate's orisha determines which house he should be initiated in. The initiate is crowned with his orisha, and receives his *elekes* — a special set of necklaces that are blessed by the house babalawo and that tie the initiate to that house.

During the initiate's first year, he is considered a child who must follow strict guidelines. He must dress in white, follow dietary guidelines, and he cannot be touched. The new child of the orishas serves the priests in whatever capacity required, as he studies the patakis of the orishas and learns to cast the Ifa.

After this year passes, the initiate becomes a babalawo himself. The babalawo has the duty to help his people and perform the will of the orishas — the Uzoma are not a self-serving society. Babalawo means literally the "father of secrets"; among most Yoruban followers of the faith, only men may become babalawos. Some Uzoma, however, admit women to their ranks, understanding the ties between female orishas and mortal women.

ORGANIZATION

Uzoma sorcerers follow a simple hierarchy, and reveal the secrets of their society through progressive levels of initiation. Various houses are built around different orishas. A senior babalawo presides over each house. There is often some disagreement between different regions and houses over the nature of the orishas and details of magical rituals, but under most circumstances the various houses cooperate. A small handful of ile have been exiled from the Uzoma community, however; truthfully or not, these pariahs have been accused of Nhang practices and are avoided by any sensible person.

The majority of the Uzoma society resides in the Yoruban homelands: primarily Nigeria, but also Benin and Togo. A few Uzoma sorcerers may be found outside of Africa however — those who preserved their ancestral ways, or who seek out

the older truths by returning to their ancestral lands. After an apprenticeship in Africa, many of these new journeymen return to their homelands in America and Europe. These new Uzoma have begun training new generations of shamans and sorcerers in the Yoruban tradition.

RELATIONS

- **Hunters:** Although the Arcanum has sent research teams down into Africa to explore the native sorcerers' ways, they've learned very little. The scholars' basic prejudices, combined with their incorrigible whiteness, have provided the Uzoma some amusement, but very little respect. The Inquisition, however, has earned a name among the journeymen, and that name isn't good. White "missionaries" who seem a bit too zealous are asked to leave three times. If the warnings aren't heeded, the local ile takes more-permanent actions.

- **Other Magicians:** Since the Uzoma tend to keep to themselves, they have very few opinions about other magical societies.

- **Mages:** In a perfect world, the Uzoma would get along well with members of the Bata'a Craft (see **Book of Crafts**). In the World of Darkness, however, the Bata'a are surprisingly territorial, and would include the Uzoma under their eclectic umbrella if they could — in spite of the fact that the Uzoma practice the original beliefs from which the Bata'a traditions have descended! The siege mentality that both groups have cultivated, mixed with a distaste for the darker aspects of Bata'a magick, keep these brothers at arm's length.

The Uzoma suspicions about black magic extend to all other mystical societies. Although the Dreamspeakers and African tribal Choristers admire the Uzoma for the tenacity of their belief, the babalawos look askance at those Traditions' allies. How can one speak truly for the spirits when he walks beside a blood-witch? Although the journeymen respect all workers of ashé, they keep a healthy distance from those who evoke the more sinister orisha.

While the Nhang appear Nephandic to outsiders, these sorcerers practice their own personal evils. The occasional tempter might lead a Uzoma to the Cauls, but for the most part, the shunned babalawos listen to the orishas and the orishas alone.

The Technocratic Union has an extensive file on African wonder-workers, but many of its facts are wrong. According to NWO information, the Uzoma form an offshoot of the Dreamspeakers. This simplistic view underscores the traditional dismissal of many things African; "Well, gee, they all look alike, so they must belong to the same club!"

- **Others:** For centuries, the journeymen kept truces with the werecats who dominate the African continent. In recent years, however, the werelion called Black Claw (see **Bastet**) has ravaged the towns and villages the Uzoma call home. So far, no spirit appeal has stopped the tyrant cat.

While the elders regard Black Claw as but the latest in a long string of oppressors, the younger babalawos wonder if he's a sign of more dangerous things. Putting aside their traditional ways, these priest-magicians have taken up modern weapons in an effort to curb this werelion's Endless Storm pride. Surely the evil spirits are laughing.

Transplanted vampire clans consider the babalawos to be ignorant children playing with ancient toys. The few Tremere who actually take the time to explore Nhangá ways find insights into the Spirit Path of their Thaumaturgy, but they have a hard time getting close to true Uzoma. The fathers of secrets seem to have a knack for discovering vampires, and they shun these polluted creatures when they can. That avoidance does not extend to the eshu fae, who carry an old connection to the orisha whose name they bear.

Uzoma Characters

- **Concepts:** Tribal healer, human rights activist, militant, farmer, anthropologist, teacher, soldier.
- **Traits:** The long and disciplined training an initiate undergoes encourages Social and Mental Attributes and Abilities. Linguistics, Etiquette, Cosmology, Hearth Wisdom, Craft, Expression and Dancing are important skills to a journeyman. While poor by modern standards, most Uzoma have extensive Influence within their communities and gain many Allies.
- **Preferred Paths:** Divination, Ephemera, Fascination, Healing, Herbalism/Brewing, Weathercraft.
- **Magical Style:** By invoking spirit aid and possession, a Uzoma can produce many sudden, startling effects — storms, ghostly manifestations, great healings and powerful charms.

*I am not impressed by fine words or
bright deeds. Show me the strength of
your spirit and we shall talk like
brothers. Otherwise, pass on by.*

OTHER GROUPS

*Chains of oppression shackles of fear
Forever broken for those who draw near
From storm to shelter from darkness to light
Wings cast a shadow a haven from falling light*
— Circle of Dust, "Night Fall"

The night is full of seers and would-be wizards. To list them all would be impossible — each passing moon brings a new society into being, or watches the final ebbing of an established order. In a world supposedly purged of magic, these sorcerers tend the embers of ancient flames. Although few have "Awakened" in the grander sense, their gifts are as undeniable as the moon.

The following groups, while few in numbers, illuminate the magical pathways. As with the other, larger societies mentioned, these fellowships are equally appropriate for player or non-player magicians. While some members of these societies have achieved the power of the Spheres, most are simple "hedge wizards." They don't understand the distinction and don't care. Use them as you will, and remember that they're just branches of a much larger tree — or a much longer road.

ASATRU FUTHARK

Founded in the 1970s, this fractured group recalls the gods and runes of old Norse sorcery. Proud and virile, the Asatru challenge themselves to the old tests and hold most other orders in contempt. Unlike their *vitkar* ancestors who understood the importance of strength but also the wisdom of grace, the modern Asatru favor neo-Nazi roots and practice dark, Satanic magics in an effort to drive the Christians from their lands.

A messy mangle of Norse practices, infernal pacts and heavy metal, most Asatru give pagans a bad name. Their rituals emphasize self-mutilation, strong beer, loud music and live sacrifice. Calling their religion "a return to the old and powerful gods of conquest," these young sorcerers burn churches, dig up graveyards, beat bystanders and curse even their own kind. The original founders of the society, Ivar the Blood-Red (now deceased), Lady Freyja (his lover, now head of the cult), Gunnaar Brext (a rival, also dead) and Kveldulf Störrn (Lady Freyja's new lover) acted like cartoon Vikings with Satanic tendencies. Their followers emulate their example, and the resulting cult would be humorous if it didn't spill so much blood. Although some of its newer "converts" favor Gothic and Industrial bands, most Asatru revel in Black Metal and skinhead groups. The bands' hyper-adrenalized stormtrooper imagery fuels a fire stoked in racism and nurtured by a savage contempt for the "weakness" of civilization. With blood magic and mundane violence, the "new vanguard of the old gods" spreads a gospel of hate from the Old Country to the New World.

Most sorcerers (and mages) consider the Futhark a joke. Serious magicians who practice the old ways are deeply offended by the cult's pseudo-barbarian activities. Still, the Asatru have their devotees, especially in Germany and Holland, where a combination of immigration, unemployment and Christian fundamentalism have provided ample kindling for the Futhark's fires. The group boasts over 1000 members worldwide; it's probably far smaller, and has less-internal discipline than it would like to believe. Hatred makes a powerful motivation, however, and backed up by a handful of demonic patrons, this small but fanatical group is gathering steam for a final, bloody rampage. Assuming they survive, Lady Freyja and her cult may soon carve a gory hunk from the occult underworld.

Paths: Divination, Enchantment, Hellfire, Shadows

THE DOZEN PRIESTS OF THE PYTHIAN ORDER

In the centuries before Christ, the Pythian Order was a thriving order of Greek and Hellenic sorcerers. Oracles for the gods and masters of divination, pythians found magic in the form of poetry; surely Polyhymnia's meter held sacred resonance — how else could it bring grown men to tears? Pythian poetry was an art, science and mystery in one; unlike the rampant verse that passes for "poetry" in the modern world, the Pythian art combined numerology, music, astrology and mathematics. Poetic meter was intrinsically tied into the power of numbers and the music of the spheres; the texts that captured that meter were said to have great mystical power.

Rare from the beginning, Pythian sorcerers grew rarer still as the Dark Ages enveloped Europe. When the Renaissance brightened the sky somewhat, classical scholars sought the handful of Pythian texts and queried the so-called Dozen Priests who understood the texts' significance. The Romantic period brought a new interest in Greek literature to the Dozen Priests' doorsteps. Lord George Byron had several Pythian poems in his collection, and is said to have worked his whole life to capture their magnificence.

Despite these brief flashes of "popularity," the deeply esoteric nature of Pythian magic has kept it from catching on, even among the most dedicated magicians. Bits and pieces have sifted down from various compilations of Pythian verse, but only the true texts have the powers attributed to them by the legends. The Daughters of Cacophony, an obscure vampiric bloodline, are said to have sprung from a Toreador with an unhealthy fixation upon Pythian poetry, but the sorcerers themselves faded even as Byron and his kind sought them out. Although generally believed to be extinct, this venerable order still maintains a temple on Mílos, a tiny island off the coast of Greece, where the sacred verses have been preserved. The Dozen Priests have dwindled to a half-dozen at best, but their power — reinforced by centuries of life and study — may have grown to godlike proportions.

Paths: Divination, Fascination, Summoning, Binding and Warding (Daimonic)

THE FENIAN

A handful of ancestral Irish shapeshifters, the Fenian brag of an unbroken lineage to the Tuatha Du Daanan. Naturally, *everyone* would like to claim such a heritage; the Fenian, however, can back up their boast with magical powers, unearthly talents, soul-binding oaths and inhuman allies.

A fixture in the distant times, these half-fae adventurers forsook family and clan to wander among the groves, hills and coasts. Some became enchanted, joining the faeries in their Freeholds; others became the greatest of bards, celebrated with feasts and songs; those who favored the sea became like selkies, sloughing off their human forms to join the seal-folk; the strongest — and most foolhardy — became warriors whose fame eclipsed their exceedingly short lives. Legends tell of the powers of such folk. In their prime, they changed into animals at will, possessed the faerie sight, fought with the ferocity of wild

boars and sung with the grace of gods.

Less magicians than innately magical beings, the Fenian became a clan unto themselves, a loose family of unbroken Celtic blood that remains undiluted to this day. That in itself makes them a rare breed — only the luckiest and most-remote folk survived the trinity of invasion, assimilation and inbreeding without faltering. Strong taboos — the *gesa* (see Chapter Three) — kept the heritage strong when they were heeded, and destroyed whole bloodlines when they were not. In the modern day, less than 30 people can truly say “I share the old changing blood” and prove it, too. Although their folk are not in any way members of the Changing Breeds, all possess the gift of skin-shifting. It is an old talent, one lovingly preserved, that crosses whole generations before it manifests again. Although it requires practice to master, this talent is innate. Like the faerie sight and the gift of music, the magic of forms is the mark of a Fenian born.

Each Fenian bears a *gesa*. To break that ban is to break your powers, and to dishonor the bloodline which carries



them. Nearly all of them speak the Celtic tongue, though some distant relatives have never learned it. All beast-folk possess a sweet singing voice, great strength and a bear's stamina; the temper of the bear comes with the package, too — Fenian have no tolerance for fools or foes!

The ancient gift carries the favor of werewolf, fae and ancestral ghosts. A known Fenian has allies among the Fianna tribe, Old World kith and the spirits of their departed kin. On the balance side, the corrupt half-spirits called fomori can sense their ancient rivals; it was the Fenians' old duty to protect mortals from the Wyrmspawn, and the evil spirits remember that even if their human hosts do not. A fomor can sense the changing blood, and it incites him to a murder-frenzy. Thus, the old folk grow rarer still.

A Fenian couldn't care less. She's a wild lass, a witch and a rover with dancing feet and an Irish temper, the heart of a beast and the soul of a poet. So long as she preserves her vow, the changing blood will carry to another generation. With the recent reverence for all things Irish, the fading clan may rise again in the coming years....

Paths: Fascination, Shapeshifting (required affinity), Weathercraft

MOGEN HA CHAV

The name *Mogen Ha Chav* (The Shield of the 36) refers to a loose conglomeration of Kabbalistic scholars who banded together centuries ago to discover and protect the 36 upright human beings whom some myths say protect the world through their essential goodness.

Descended from a cabal of students at the legendary Kabbalistic academy at Genoa, the members of Mogen Ha Chav spend their days attempting to divine the identities and locations of members of the 36; from there, they work through agents across the world, diverting any threat that might imperil one of these righteous folk. It's an open question whether or not these scholars have actually succeeded in their mission, but seeing as the world hasn't ended yet, they may well be onto something.

The members of Mogen Ha Chav are uniformly male and over 40 years of age; to study the Kabbalah when one is younger and not properly "grounded" in life invites fearful risks. The oldest scholar among the Mogen, the group's *Baal Shem Tov* (Master of the Good Name) is almost a hundred years of age, while the other members of the cabal range in years from 45 to 97. Most are at least 60, and all have the traditional *tsitsis*, beard and *yarmulke* that Orthodox Jewish tradition mandates.

These days the Shield is centered in New York, on the fringes of the Lubavitcher community in Brooklyn. Operating out of a brownstone house that also houses a *yeshiva*, Mogen Ha Chav concentrates primarily on divinatory work. While much of that labor is dedicated toward locating and protecting the actual 36, the *gematria* and horoscopes these scholars cast can

turn up useful and startling bits of information. The Shield also possesses an astonishing library of occult (primarily Kabbalistic) texts, a vast fortune that provides for the Shield's eternal work, and a network of informants, doctors, guardians that protect the worthy ones from harm — and assures that these important people remain on a righteous path. Earth is too great a prize to leave without protectors; so long as this fellowship endures, so too (hopefully) shall the world.

Paths: Divination, Healing, Summoning, Binding and Warding (both types), Weathercraft

THE SEVEN THUNDERS

Despite its Oriental ring, these anti-magical prophets of Armageddon draw their name from a Christian source: The Revelations of Saint John, seer of the Apocalypse, author of the Last Book and beholder of the Seven Trumps of Judgment. As the bearers of those Trumps (so they believe), the Seven Thunders have risen from the past to preach the gospel of the End Times. Now, as before, they have a large and willing audience.

The original Seven Thunders were a group of Renaissance clerics gifted with awesome visitations and overpowering True Faith. Summoned together by what seemed like Divine intervention, these seven men shared a conviction that the Apocalypse was at hand. The year 1500 would herald the rearrival of Christ, and it fell to these men, His servants, to prepare the way. To that end, they raised a huge fellowship and invested it with their own holy vision. Their converts (often lay people confused by the corruption of the church) displayed amazing powers: healing gifts, exorcism talents and the blazing Faith that enabled them to drive unholy things from sight. Convinced that science, magic and even scholarship were affronts to God, the Seven Thunders began a purge; across Europe, universities burned, sanctuaries fell and witchfires rose into the sky. No one but the meek were worthy of salvation, so everyone, from king to pope to magician to priest, was condemned to burn. By God's hands if necessary, by the Thunders' if possible.

The Seven Thunders enjoyed a short but violent rampage; from 1490 to 1501, their fellowship challenged mages, mortal lords and supernatural beasts. By the end of the last year, however, the Trumps had faded; four Thunders lay dead, another two had been corrupted. The last holy man tried to rally his army, but the people, sensing their defeat, withdrew ordied. Antonio Castrovinci, the last prophet, sealed his testament in a mountain retreat before perishing in his personal Armageddon.

In 1992, that testament was rediscovered.

The reborn Thunders have risen quickly. Once again, seven people — this time, two of the prophets are women — have come together, bathed in devastating Faith and driven by undeniable visions. Using modern technology, they have assembled a formidable millennialist army of common people who believe that the world can't possibly grow any more corrupt.

Unlike the Society of Leopold, the Seven Thunders move in secret, undermining their targets through manipulation and sudden terror. As before, these holy commandos wield swords of True Faith. It may be that the God they hear in the clouds has sounded His Trumps. Magicians across the world can already hear its echoes in the darkness at their backs.

Paths: Healing, Hellfire and the True Faith Merit (at very high levels).

ZOLONDRODERE: THE DREAMERS OF THE SILVER PORTAL

A recent revival of an ancient group, the Dreamers of the Silver Star are oneiromancers — magicians whose powers lie in dreams and dreaming. This fellowship of seven sorcerers base their magics on the *Covenant of the Silver Portal*, an 18th century English translation of a 14th-century Byzantine Greek manuscript which in turn was translated from a 5th-century Persian scroll that may in fact have been translated from yet another ancient work. This single tome (which has undergone so many revisions and translations that the most recent work bears little resemblance to the original piece) purports to reveal the secrets of oneiromancy and the hidden terrain of the dream worlds — the Dream Realms called Maya, from which, it is said, all magics come.

The Dreamers of the Silver Portal gather together in dreamform and traverse the byways of the dreaming, in search of the fabled City of Syrrannon — a city that, if found, grants the dreamer life eternal. Many dreamers have gone mad on such a quest, discovering instead Otherworldly horrors and the nightmares of dying gods. Some few have returned from their slumbered enriched by savage insights and possessed of unearthly gifts.

Who can question the nature of dreams?

Paths: Conveyance, Ephemera, Fascination, Healing.





CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTER CREATION

Good men spiritualize their bodies: bad men incarnate their souls.

— Benjamin Whichcote, Cambridge Platonist

"Pronounce carefully, Lisa — Khat:zhas."

"Katzas," she struggled. "What is it?"

"It is the 452nd ideogram and fundamental to the practice of harmonics. Try again: Khat:zhas. Aspirate. Sound it out very carefully; I realize there are sounds here you cannot hear at first." Her guide was patient, sitting across from her in the bare, white room.

"Look, we've been sitting here for two hours. When am I going to start learning something important?"

A look of surprise crossed her instructor's face. "You are learning something important. You are learning the fundamentals of harmonics. Try again. Khat:zhas."

Lisa leapt up from her chair. "Cat's ass! Cat's ass! I'm sick of this shit. Harmonics! Alien planets! I came here for truth and enlightenment, not some Heaven's Gate-Eckanckar reject!"

The door slammed loudly behind her.

Her guide stared at the door and finally shrugged. Many are called and few are chosen.

GROUND ZERO

Sorcerers in the World of Darkness are not fully Awakened beings, but neither are they simply "magic users." They are people drawn to the mysteries of the Otherworld, attempting to divine the secrets of Creation. They are teachers and students equally, and many view their pursuits with the fervor and devotion of religious fanatics.

A sorcerer character begins with a vision—a vision of who she is and why she seeks the great mysteries. Very often, this vision comes through some cultural tradition—either one that fits in with how the magician was raised, or one that goes against everything she was taught to believe. Once the student locks onto a teaching that seems "just right," the proverbial bells go off in her head and she reaches for that philosophy with both hands.

It's probably worth repeating that a person doesn't just say, "Cool! I'm gonna be a magic-user!" and throw her life into the sea. Some experience, trauma or revelation, shakes her foundations, causing her to go off on a quest. This insight may not be

a full-fledged Awakening (see **Mage: The Ascension**, page 33), but it's pretty close. A magician needs motivation, and the vision provides a good kick in the ass for any potential sorcerer.

Begin with a vision, and the rest will follow.

THE CREATION PROCESS

Come to life my second skin

To protect the madness locked within

— Faith and the Muse, "The Silver Circle"

(See also the **Character Creation spread on pages 74-75.**)

Sorcerer characters are "built" like mages, vampires, Garou and other supernatural entities (see the respective rulebooks for details). They do, however, start with fewer points and choose from a slightly different set of skills. Like most mortal characters, magicians balance their lower Attribute and Ability totals (6/4/3 and 11/7/4, respectively) with 21 starting freebie points. Flaws (pages 65-66) allow such characters to raise the total slightly higher at the cost of a little self-preservation. Though sorcerers begin their "lives" in a slightly weaker position than their supernatural counterparts, they are, after all, normal human beings. A Storyteller who wants to allow a magician who can literally run with the wolves into the game can, of course, begin her player at the usual beginning point totals if she so desires.

Remember that the following rules are guidelines and Storytelling aids, only — not character definitions. A good concept is always more important than the numbers attached to various scores. So if a particular character really calls out for numbers somewhat different than what the rules allow, the Storyteller should grant the player a bit of leeway. Players, of course, need to return this flexible attitude with some responsibility of their own. Don't try to get away with a super-sorcerer and claim that your vision is Merlin's great-grandson!

QUESTIONS

Perhaps the most important question a would-be magician must ask himself is *why*. Why did I study magic? What kind of magic did I study, and why did I choose it? What experiences have I had as a result of that particular discipline? Remember, magic is a discipline. Your character will have waded through fire and storm to get where he is by the time your chronicle begins, and he'll need a good reason to have done so. Ask yourself *why*, and you'll answer a host of other questions.

Consider the following issues:

- **Appearance:** What does your sorcerer look like? How old is he, and what fashions does he follow?
- **Culture:** Where does he come from? How was he raised? Does he revere his traditional upbringing or is he rebelling against it? And who does he hang around with now?

- **Allies:** Who are they? Why are they friends? Do they owe him, respect him or love him? And how does he feel about *them*?

- **Specialties:** What makes your sorcerer's practices distinct from other fields of inquiry? How are his abilities unique, or at least more personal, from other magicians' talents?

- **Society:** Does your magician belong to a mystical order, or has he chosen a solitary road? Did he leave an organization, and if so, why? (And are they after him for doing so?) Has he switched allegiances, and what do others think of him if he has?

- **Equipment:** What does your character have close at hand? And where did he get it?

- **Magic:** How did he first encounter magic? Why does he study it? Where does he think it comes from, and what does he believe about its laws?

- **Mundane Identity:** Your character can't always be studying magic. How does he earn money? Where does he live? Who does he associate with, and do they know about his "hobbies"?

- **Motivations:** What drives your character to study magic? What attracted him to sorcery in the first place? What has that pursuit cost him, and why does he continue?

- **Values:** What does he hold sacred? What will he do — or not do — to make something happen? Where does he draw the line, and what happens if something crosses it?

MY DAD IS BIGGER THAN YOUR DAD

Magic is what makes a sorcerer a sorcerer. Without it, he simply dabbles in esoteric studies. The magic that sorcerers use is a lesser form of the art — not "true" magick, but a learned and perfected skill.

These magical arts are divided into a number of Paths, each dealing with various areas of concern. Some magical societies stress different Paths, and each sorcerous tradition has its own interpretations of how the Path should be studied and practiced. In game terms, they all work the same way, but your character will know differently. Naturally, he's proud of his chosen techniques and defends their truth against all heresies.

So which sorcerous method is better? Is nature-magic better than church-magic? Is High Ritual superior to Low Ritual? Those inquiries aren't unlike the question "Which is better, karate or kung fu?" and the answers are quite similar.

The power is in the practitioner, not the practice.

If, in the process of creating a sorcerer character, you're trying to decide which group kicks the most ass, you've missed the point of this book. Magical belief and practices don't exist inside a vacuum — they're part of a cultural continuum. No one group in this book has a clear advantage over the other. If you want to play a member of a certain society, do so because you're attracted to that culture and history, not because you think these sorcerers are "better" than the rest. Naturally, your *character* will believe that his society and its practices are the be-all and end-all of magical enlightenment; that, however, is a character distinction, not a systems one.

Don't let yourself be fooled by stereotypes, either; just because the Fenian are more physically inclined, and the Nephite Priesthood is more intellectually oriented doesn't mean that the Fenian are stupid and the Nephites are just a bunch of wimps!

If you're playing a sorcerer, chances are you're not into power gaming anyway. Face it, they're not among the most powerful residents of the World of Darkness. Remember that the magician's road is more about belief and dedication to a cause than about kick-ass magic, and you'll have that much more fun.

SORCERERS AND THEIR FELLOW BEINGS

So what's missing? Why do the True Mages and the magicians practice similar arts but achieve different results? Why can't a sorcerer employ Sphere magick while a mystick performs hedge magic? Where does this leave the other Shadow Folk and their obviously paranormal powers?

Let's skip metaphysics and make things simple: Think of the mystic arts as paintings. Limited by what she is, a vampire, werewolf or other such creature uses a paint-by-numbers set — a very *powerful* paint-by-numbers set, but a set just the same. She's bound to a certain pattern, certain colors and certain results. No matter how powerful the vampire, Auspex will not make a person's head explode from across the room. Auspex always follows a set pattern.

A sorcerer uses a similar paint-by-numbers set. The colors are a little brighter, the brushes slightly more flexible, but the end result is more or less the same. She may get very good at what she does, but the design was created long ago and nothing the magician can do, short of throwing the whole set away, will change the painting much.

Awakened mages pitch the paint set out the window and begin with clean canvases. They use similar mixtures and brushes — the Spheres — and begin their careers with similar templates — rites, magick styles and foci. In time, however, a True Mage realizes that the designs and tools are unimportant. She begins to finger-paint with reality, to splatter the canvas and let the paint drip and do all kinds of Jackson Pollack stuff. Like Pollack, she makes a mess — Paradox — but in the end, her paintings are her own. If she's *really* talented, she might eventually learn that the paint itself — the *canvas* itself — is unimportant. She transcends the painting and becomes art. In short, she Ascends.

(For folks who want the *complicated* answer to the question, see **Mage: The Ascension's** second edition, Chapter Four.)

For the record, a magician cannot soak aggravated damage, but is immune to the Delirium and does not count as a Sleeper in the presence of True Magick. Counterspells can absorb a certain amount of mystical punishment, but a hedge wizard who wants to go head-to-head with a vampire had better wear armor or have good medical coverage... and funeral arrangements.





"CHANGE OF LIFE" SYSTEMS (OPTIONAL)

As stated before, a sorcerer is a normal human being with some extraordinary skills. Her fellow supernaturals, on the other hand, are fundamentally different. The Changing Breeds are separate species, crossbreeds of humans and something *other*. Changelings only *appear* to be human, while Kindred, mummies and ghosts were once human but became something else. Awakened mages are metahumans, people who have reached another level of existence. Thus, a magician cannot become another supernatural creature and remain what she is.

Not that she can't change; a magician may be Embraced or Awakened. If either of those things occurs, she substitutes some new magical talent for the skill she once understood. A vampiric sorcerer's hedge magic becomes Thaumaturgy or another appropriate Discipline; an Awakened one loses her original arts, but learns, in time, to weave the greater Spheres in familiar ways. (See sidebar for suggested "starting points.")

In either case, the "reborn" character takes a bit of time to relearn what she had known. Her Paths and Rituals (see Chapter Four) can either be swapped for dots in the appropriate magical Advantages, or turned into a pool of freebie points. Each Path dot is worth seven points; each Ritual is worth three. These points can be spent on new Advantages or Traits that reflect the character's "change of life." Once "reborn," the former wizard receives whatever "starting powers" come with her new form; she does not, however, acquire a new character's beginning freebie points or Backgrounds. All other Traits remain as they were when the change occurred.

Example: Basel plays Chula, a Balamob sorcerer versed in the Paths of Shapeshifting, Conjunction and Ephemera. All told, his Paths equal out to six dots, and he knows four Rituals to go with them. When a charming woman consumes the magician's blood and replaces a bit of it with her own, he falls into a horrible fit, dies and rises again. Try as he might, Chula cannot get his old skills to work; refusing to give in, he prays to the gods, chants the ageless rhymes and wills himself to change.

Over a period of weeks, he masters his new form; although his sire was a Toreador vampire, the Disciplines Chula learns are quite at odds with the traditional powers of her clan. In game terms, Chula gets the usual three dots in *Auspex*, *Celerity* and *Presence* from his sire's blood. His magical knowledge manifests itself as three dots in *Protean*, one in *Thaumaturgy* (Path of Conjunction) and two in *Necromancy*. To his dismay, Chula finds himself unable to speak to any spirits except ghosts. Such is the curse of his new state. Chula "lives," after a fashion, but his magic has been tainted by his damnation. Like a beginning vampire, Chula gets his seven Virtues; he does not receive any additional Background points, though, so Basel spends 12 points from his Rituals to purchase *Mentor*, *Herd* and *Generation*.

Some Awakened societies, notably the Order of Hermes, instruct aspiring members in hedge magic to prepare them for greater possibilities. This cannot be done with people who

have already Awakened, only with Sleepers who are ready for better things. At a critical point, however, the aspirant must throw her learning into the sea and start anew.

Sphere magick, being more complex and powerful than hedge magic, makes that transition a bit more expensive than the transition between magician and vampire. In game terms, the player trades in the Paths for a pool of freebie points, points she later uses to buy Spheres, Arete and other Traits she picks up during her training (see above). The new mage begins without an Arete, Spheres or Avatar rating; her player will have to buy these Traits with the freebie points that came from the old Path dots.

This transition is not instantaneous; in story terms, the former magician adapts to a new way of thinking, feeling and working. This takes time — typically six months or more. She'll probably adopt the style and foci that resemble her old practice. She will, however, need to learn a greater perspective. We suggest that a magician-cum-mage begin her "new" life with an Arete no higher than three. Skill does not translate to enlightenment.

Example: *When Louise's character, a member of the Order of the Aeon Rites, realizes the real truth behind Hermetic theory, the shock shatters her old preconceptions. Her faith in ruins, she finds the old ways no longer work; fortunately, Hermetic mage Robin Herod is nearby. He takes the former sorcerer under his wing and teaches her how to apply her old theories.*

In game terms, Louise liquidates her character's various Paths. A pool of eight dots and six Rituals becomes a larger pool of 74 freebie points. As her character learns the mysteries, she acquires an Arete of 3 (12 points), six new Spheres (42 points), several Backgrounds (Avatar 4, Chantry 2 and Mentor 4 — a total of 10 points), and other skills (totaling 10 freebie points). Her style and foci will, of course, follow standard Hermetic practices.

Sorcerers cannot become werebeasts or changelings. A magician could be related to such creatures, though, (see the Fae Blood and Shapeshifter Kin Merits) and learn a few of their mystical powers in addition to her own. Likewise, the sorcerer might imbibe Kindred vitae and assume a sort of kinship to the undead (see the Ghoul Merit) without losing her arts. Such kinship has its price, of course, often measured in new enemies, odd alliances and virtual slavery.

A magician who dies but becomes a ghost begins as an *Enfant* without any of her previous Advantages. Like any other ghost, she starts out at square one with the usual Traits, although her mortal Abilities remain. At the Storyteller's option, the magician's mystical savvy might influence the Arcanoi she eventually masters (see sidebar); the points, however, are lost. Death is a new beginning.

"STARTING POINTS" FOR SORCERERS LEARNING NEW POWERS

Paths

Suggested New Powers

- **Alchemy:** Matter or Prime (Sphere); Thaumaturgy — Blood Path or new Path (Discipline); Flux or Lifeweb (Arcanoi)
- **Conjuration:** Correspondence (Sphere); Thaumaturgy — Path of Conjuring or Movement of the Mind (Discipline); Flux or Outrage (Arcanoi)
- **Conveyance:** Correspondence (Sphere); Thaumaturgy — new Path (Discipline); Argos or Embody (Arcanoi)
- **Cursing:** Entropy, Life or Mind (Sphere); Thanatosis or Thaumaturgy — Path of Corruption (Discipline); Pandemonium or Outrage (Arcanoi)
- **Divination:** Correspondence or Time (Sphere); Auspex or Thaumaturgy — new Path (Discipline); Fatalism (Arcanoi)
- **Enchantment:** Matter or Prime (Sphere); Thaumaturgy — new Path (Discipline); Flux, Inhabit or Usury (Arcanoi)
- **Ephemera:** Spirit (Sphere); Necromancy or Thaumaturgy — Spirit Path (Discipline); Argos, Embody or Pandemonium (Arcanoi)
- **Fascination:** Mind (Sphere); Presence (Discipline); Intimation or Keening (Arcanoi)
- **Healing:** Life (Sphere); Obeah (Discipline); Castigate, Embody, Moliate or Usury (Arcanoi)
- **Hellfire:** Forces (Sphere); Thaumaturgy — Lure of Flames or Elemental Mastery (Discipline); Outrage (Arcanoi)
- **Herbalism/Brewing:** Life or Prime (Sphere); Thaumaturgy — new Path (Discipline); Inhabit or Lifeweb (Arcanoi)
- **Shadows:** Forces (Sphere); Obtenebration (Discipline); Outrage or Pandemonium (Arcanoi)
- **Shapeshifting:** Life (Sphere); Protean (Discipline); Moliate or Lifeweb (Arcanoi)
- **Summoning, Binding and Warding (Material):** Correspondence or Life (Sphere); Thaumaturgy — new Path (Discipline); Lifeweb or Outrage (Arcanoi)
- **Summoning, Binding and Warding (Daimonic):** Spirit (Sphere); Daimoinon or Thaumaturgy — Spirit (Discipline); Argos or Embody (Arcanoi)
- **Weathercraft:** Forces (Sphere); Thaumaturgy — Neptune's Might (Discipline); Outrage (Arcanos)

FRINGE CHARACTERS

Some people can never leave well enough alone. Hence the following notes:

- **Mummies:** The Rite of Rebirth that allows a person to join the ranks of the Reborn is so obscure that a new magician-mummy is unlikely. Should a sorcerer rediscover the Rite, her arts would shift to Hekau Paths (see **World of Darkness: Mummy**, second edition) as if she were Embraced.

- **Risen:** From time to time, a magician may return from the dead to settle one last score. Like ghosts, these rare creatures employ Arcanoi, not hedge magic, though they retain their occult skills and memories.

- **Skin Dancers:** The Wyrm-ridden Rite of Sacred Rebirth that creates the forsaken Skin Dancer werewolves is even more obscure and continues to carry the stigma of its proponent, Samuel Haight. As a Kinfolk with stolen powers, a Skin Dancer *could* begin her "career" as a sorcerer. The corrupt influence of the Rite and its aftereffects, however, will probably turn her magic in a darker direction.

- **Other Shadow Folk:** Technically, Gypsies, fomori, certain Bastet tribes (the Bubasti, Ceilican and Qualmi) and some other shapeshifters *can* learn hedge magic in addition to their usual powers. Beings with such mixed talents are *extraordinarily* rare, however, and would be expensive to create. Other mortal hunters can learn magic as easily as any magician; some Arcanists and Inquisitors are quite good at it....

We hereby grant the Storyteller the right to refuse sorcerer-mummies, sorcerer-Risen, sorcerer-Skin Dancers, sorcerer-Gypsies, sorcerer-fomori or sorcerer-werecats as player characters, or to make such characters (and their players) pay dearly for their additional powers. Such characters should have really interesting origins and probably carry a lot of baggage!

NEW TRAITS

Congress is congressing

Carnival of clowns

Enters the magician

With playful saws of sound...

Let's bring on the fire

— Sky Cries Mary, "Circus Church"

As we know, the catch-all term "Traits" covers a variety of quirks, talents, physical attributes and other character specifics. The Natures and Demeanors, Abilities, Attributes and Backgrounds open to sorcerer characters are discussed at length in the general rulebooks. Anything that isn't readily available is covered below.

Several Traits are not appropriate for magicians; unless your character changes somehow, she won't be able to purchase any of the following:

- **Abilities:** Cosmology (above the second level, unless taught by a mage or Garou), Do (unless taught by an Akashic mage), Kenning or Mythlore (unless befriended by a changeling; see "Merits," below)

- **Backgrounds:** Artifact, Avatar, Chantry, Chimera, Companion, Den-Realm, Destiny, Dreamers, Eidolon, Familiar (greater; see pages 62-63), Generation, Greymayre, Haunt, Herd, Holdings, Jamak, Kinfolk, Legacy, Memoriam, Node, Old Soul, Relic, Past Life, Pure Breed, Retinue, Title

Anything else is fair game unless it's specifically limited to a certain type of character (an elder vampire or centuries-old mage, for instance). Even then, a case could be made for allowing the Trait if the sorcerer in question has achieved a sort of immortality (see "Merits"). For clarity's sake, we'll use "you" to refer to both your character and to you, the player. Trying to keep the two straight — "To buy your sorcerer the following Traits, you, the player, will have to *blah blah blah*..." — is more trouble than it's worth.

General-access Traits can be found on the character sheet at the back of the book. Several lines have been left open for customization, and a number of new and appropriate Traits have been offered below. Since this is a general-purpose World of Darkness supplement, some of the following Traits have been carried over from certain rulebooks. The Arcane Background, for example, can be found in **Mage: The Ascension**, but not in the other rulebooks.

NEW ARCHETYPES

Like the personality Traits described in the main rulebooks, these characteristics help you get a handle on your fictional counterpart and figure out what makes him tick. The following Archetypes can apply to magicians, True Mages, or any other character type you might desire.

CRACKERJACK

Damn, you're good! You're so good at whatever it is you do that people can't help but be impressed. Flamboyant and extroverted, you're the center of attention. It's important, of course, that you live up to your reputation. So polish up those skills and smile! In the chandelier of life, you're a halogen bulb. Make sure everyone can see your light!

— Regain Willpower whenever you make an especially successful die roll (four successes or more against difficulty 7 or higher) or pull off some impressive stunt in spite of devastating odds.

RENUNCIATE

For whatever reason, you left behind someone or something that was very important to you. Was it a family? An arcane order? A religious fellowship? A lifestyle you could no

longer stomach? Whatever it may have been, you no longer want any part of it — even when it comes back to haunt you (which it often does).

You've got reasons for leaving; you've also got some nagging tie to that old life that just won't go away. Denounce anything that reminds you of your past, but be ready for a backlash. Whatever you might like to believe, that forsaken lifestyle still shapes your values, reactions and desires. Before the chronicle begins, hash out the details of your prior association, the reasons you left and the nagging items that won't go away. Someone you abandoned might be just around the corner....

— Regain a point of Willpower when you shake aside something or someone who reminds you of your former life, and do so without consequences.

SAGE

You're a very wise and learned person. Although the name implies age and experience, it could be that you're just extraordinarily precocious. Either way, you know a great deal and give the impression of solid common sense. People come to you for advice, and it often pleases you to give it.

Learning is a great tool — it's what separates us from the lower animals. Hungry for knowledge, you pore through books, scrolls and videos on an eternal quest for trivia. If you choose this Archetype, be ready to spend plenty of points on Knowledge Abilities; to you, life is a school and class is always in session.

— Regain Willpower when you counsel a needy person, help someone through your vast reserves of knowledge, or uncover some obscure bit of lore.

SENSUALIST

Sensation is a drug for you. Nothing in the world is better than a life drunk like whiskey and savored like a lover's caress. You revel in everything you do and everything you feel. Careering from experience to experience, you take just enough time to soak in each tiny sensation before sweeping off to find another thrill. The world is full of intoxicating pleasures and entrancing impressions, but nothing lasts forever, so get 'em while they're hot and sort 'em out later! Other people call you "irresponsible," "fickle," "childish" and "reckless," but at least you're not dead to the world like *they* are! Life is a ride; love is a gamble and common sense is an excuse to stay at home. There'll be plenty of time to sleep when you're dead.

— Regain a point of Willpower each time you discover, experience and savor some new, exciting sensation and live to tell about it. (Note: The more you do, the harder it becomes to find something novel.)



SUPPLICANT

In the service of some other entity — a god, angel, spirit or demon — you ply your trade. Perhaps you worship the being to which you're pledged; more likely, you have either entered into a bargain with it or plan to do so at some point in the future. Whatever the circumstances, you're a loyal follower of your Otherworldly patron. His will be done, as it were.

Your duty may be a secret one; perhaps you follow some forbidden deity, or serve an angel from amidst a darker flock. You and your Storyteller should define exactly which entity you serve (or at least what you *believe* the patron to be), your reasons for doing so, the cost of *not* doing so, and the eventual reward you hope to get out of the bargain.

— Regain a Willpower point or two when you advance the aims of your chosen benefactor without endangering yourself in the process.

THEORIST

No one can explain everything, but you *try*, gods know. Each enigma is a challenge for you, a chance to prove some new or beloved theory. Perhaps you have some great insight focused through dozens of interconnected ideas; maybe you have a single grand theory that, if it could only be proven, would rock the foundations of the world. Perhaps you've *already* proven your theory, and the magic you possess springs from the answer. Whatever concept you might embrace, never miss a chance to either espouse your theory, or to concoct a new one that fits in with your existing ideas.

Naturally, you should formulate your grand idea, establish its parameters and describe it to your Storyteller before the tale begins. This Archetype assumes a character with some wild, esoteric philosophy and the means to prove it, if only in his own mind.

— Regain a point of Willpower whenever some observation you had based on your theory comes to pass. Note that this should involve an exotic yet coherent set of ideas that lead to a conclusion; a simple "See! My theory is that vampires feed on blood and he just proved it! Gimmie my Willpower!" will not be sufficient.

NEW TALENTS

DREAMCRAFT

You are the master of your own dreams and visions. At lower levels, you can exercise a bit of dream recall and initiation; at greater levels, you can attempt to gain conscious awareness during a dream (Manipulation + Dreaming, difficulty 6), consciously control your own actions within the dream (difficulty 7), and even try to alter your surroundings (difficulty 8).

Example: *Mayra Derin falls asleep and finds herself in a blazing temple. A crowd of children weeps on the other side of a fiery gulf. Most dreamers would be helplessly caught in a subconscious tide — not Mayra. Willing herself into action, she raises her hands and chants to Tlaloc, Aztec god of rain — who just happens to have sanctified this temple. Achieving power over her dream-place (possibly after a successful Manipulation + Dreamcraft roll), Mayra dampens the flames enough for her to cross over and save the children.*

Used during trances or meditations, this Talent can be a useful tool for puzzling through riddles, or understanding visions. A successful Wits + Dreamcraft roll might help you reduce the difficulty of Enigmas or Occult contests. Some magical traditions teach Dreamcraft techniques, and consider it an almost magical talent. Contemporary dream researchers and psychotherapists call this ability "lucid dreaming," and study it as if they could really *learn* something by quantifying dreams.

- Novice: You can remember a previous dream in some degree of detail.
- Practiced: You can "will" yourself into a specific kind of dream (a nightmare, a reoccurring vision, a memory-recall, etc.).
- Competent: You have limited control over your own dreams.
- Expert: Dreams are familiar territory; you journey there to gather hints from your inner self.
- Master: Dreams sometimes seem more real than the waking world.

Possessed by: Shamans, Dream Researchers, Idiot Savants, Artists, Latent Psychics

Specialties: Dream Control, Waking from Nightmares, Vision Questing, Dream Combat

FORTUNE-TELLING

You've got a knack for divination and know the skills associated with its various forms. This isn't so much a psychic ability as it is a natural hunch that comes through in grand style when focused through Tarot cards, thrown lots, astrology charts or other divinatory tools.

While this Talent is not magical in and of itself, it may confer a bit of extra potency to spells from the Divination Path. For each two successes you win with a Perception + Fortune-Telling roll, you may lower your casting difficulties by one.

- Novice: Divination is a pastime to you. One form (Tarot, astrology, etc.) works adequately well, but you're no Psychic Friend yet.
- Practiced: You're pretty good with your chosen style and can make a few accurate observations about the average client.

- Competent: You understand a few different forms and can dredge up some surprising revelations.
- Expert: You're familiar with all of the major forms of divination and understand a few obscure styles, too. With the right tools, you can make fairly clear pronouncements and observations.
- Master: Gypsies take lessons from you.

Possessed by: Psychics, Gypsies, Scam Artists, New Agers

Specialties: Tarot, Prophecy, Crime-solving, Astrology, Romance, Telephone Psychic, Shells, Joss Sticks, Elemental Portents, Palmistry, Entrails

INTUITION

You've got an innate connection to people. Hunches come easily to you, and they're usually pretty accurate. It's not your place to explain how or why you know the things you do — this Talent's a kind of "sixth sense" that grants insights, gut feelings and a powerful empathy for other people (and occasionally animals as well). You can tell when someone's hurt, when they're lying, when they're hiding something important. This isn't mind-reading by any stretch — the information does not pop into your head — but it keeps you attuned to your surroundings.

- Novice: You've got good instincts.
- Practiced: Follow your nose — it's often right.
- Competent: The game's afoot, and you know where.
- Expert: You know something's wrong, and can often figure out where and why.
- Master: It's frightening the things you know without asking.

Possessed by: Gamblers, Cops, Fortune Tellers, Seducers, Healers, Reporters, Mothers

Specialties: Flashes of Inspiration, Gambling, Insightful, Nose for Trouble, Animal Instinct

NEW SKILL

RESEARCH

You know where and how to dig up information. Libraries, newspaper morgues, Internet databases — child's play. It's remarkable what you can find when you know how. A successful Intelligence + Research roll might not tell you exactly what you need to know, but it *will* tell you where to keep digging.

- Novice: You know how to use the local library.
- Practiced: With web access, you can tap extensive reference services.



- Competent: You can access many private collections and privileged archives.
- Expert: Given time, you can locate whatever information you need.
- Master: If it's written, encoded or spoken, you know where to look for it.

Possessed by: Writers, Reporters, Librarians, Scholars, Sages

Specialties: Arcane Collections, On-line Data, Oral Tradition, Folklore

NEW KNOWLEDGES

HEARTH WISDOM

Yours is the common wisdom, frequently overlooked in today's high-tech world. Such knowledge involves tales and lore filled with forgotten insights, simple cures and home-spun good sense.

While this Trait is not magical in any way, it can teach you the weaknesses of various supernatural creatures. A successful *Hearth Wisdom* roll should offer helpful insights into supernatural threats and give you some idea about how

to deal with them. The effectiveness of the insights are up to the Storyteller, but in general, the more successes, the better the information.

Hearth Wisdom can also be used for simple medical remedies. It isn't as potent as either the *Herbalism* or the *Medicine* skills, but the cure should have some nominal effect.

This Knowledge does not confer a database of facts and figures. It is a collection — often oral in nature, never written down — of tales and maxims, anecdotes and advice that shed light on a number of subjects. It can frustrate the hell out of people who come to you searching for advice. Still, as you know well, good things come to those who wait.

- Insightful: You've learned a few bits of lore here and there.
- Clever: You recognize traces of the supernatural where others don't.
- Knowledgeable: People come to you for advice and minor cures. Your body of knowledge now includes a few gleanings from other cultures.
- Learned: You are a fountain of lore from your own culture and others as well. You can spot a supernatural being with a successful *Perception* + *Alertness* roll (difficulty 7) if you get close enough, and you know its weaknesses.



- Wise: You are well-versed in folklore from across the world, and have many insights on lore from your own culture. People from across the world make pilgrimages to meet with you for counsel.

Possessed by: Village Elders, Supernatural Hunters, Medicine Men, Witches, Folklore Researchers, Arcanum Investigators, Hermits, Herbalists

Specialties: Northern European, Native American, Appalachian, Central African, Amazon Native, Caribbean, Eastern European, Gypsy, South Asian, East Asian, Outback, Pacific Island, Mediterranean

MYTHOLOGY

You know the tales of heroes and gods. Myths, like legends and fairy tales, are stories that lie at the cornerstones of any society. They carry great truths wrapped in metaphor, and you know how to strip the wrappings away. In this sense, “mythology” simply means that you understand common lore and can unravel the symbolism behind it.

- Student: You’ve read a myth here and there.
- College: You understand the meaning behind a few common myths.
- Masters: You’re well-versed in the content and symbolism of many mythologies.
- Doctorate: You understand oft-unseen patterns.
- Scholar: Joseph Campbell.

Possessed by: Shamans, Mystics, Storytellers, Game Designers

Specialties: Creation Myths, Cosmologies, Eschatologies, Soteriologies, Navajo, Celtic, Persian

LORE: MAGICAL SOCIETIES

You know the histories and traditions of magical societies across the world — from their origins and foundations to their present-day status. This is obviously a difficult Lore to master. Few sorcerers manage to gather much information about societies other than their own. A good Lore roll might reveal a few secrets about the Awakened Traditions, and possibly the other factions as well. The Ascension War may be hidden, but certain people know how to dig up dirt about it, even if they don’t understand all the details.

- Novice: You know a few names or ideas.
- College: You’ve learned a few unusual details of interest.
- Masters: You’re well-versed in the history of magical societies in general.
- Doctorate: You know as much about these societies as their own members do.
- Scholar: You know all there is to know (or so you think).

Possessed by: Scholars, Investigators, Sorcerers, Artists, Poets

Variations: This must be chosen for each magical society (e.g., the AOAR, the Balamob, etc.)

LORE: SUPERNATURAL CREATURES

There are many secrets to be found in the night. You may have been lucky — or unlucky — enough to learn just how extensive these societies of the night have become. The Kindred, the Garou, the Changing Breeds, ghost factions, the faerie courts, and, of course, the Awakened Ones at the fringes of reality — all these conspirators lurk just out of mortal sight. This Trait allows you to discover just enough about these creatures to be dangerous — to them and to yourself!

Without this Trait, you *don’t* know the ins and outs of Camarilla politics, Wyrms warfare, the Shadow Court, or anything else. These secrets must be pried from the darkness, and the darkness isn’t always willing to share....

- Novice: “I’ve heard that vampires have an organized society.”
- College: “Um, the vampires all belong to some clan called ‘Camarilla.’”
- Masters: “The Kindred divide themselves into warring factions called Camarilla and Sabbat.”
- Doctorate: “Kindred clans go by many names. Shall I explain them to you?”
- Scholar: “Funny, you don’t *look* like a Brujah....”

Possessed by: Nosy Magicians, Supernatural Conspirators, Servitors, Arch-Enemies

Variations: Each being has a separate Lore; most have several types (Camarilla, Sabbat, alternate bloodlines, etc.)

METAPHYSICS

The sciences that fall under this rubric represent fields of learning related to the Western occult tradition, particularly the so-called “secret traditions” of Hermetic and Kabbalistic study.

These disciplines supposedly contain clues to the mysteries of the universe. Knowledge of one of the metaphysical sciences includes a history of the field and a basic understanding of the symbolism, language, lore and mysteries associated with it. Some sciences (like alchemy) may concentrate on producing specific, tangible results; this Knowledge Trait reflects theoretical understanding, not the additional skills you may need to put it to use (like Chemistry, Mathematics, Crafts, etc.). Still, it’s a beginning, a stepping stone to greater things.

A number of disciplines fall within this category. These include:

- **Alchemy:** The method of transmuting metals, and a metaphor for the transformation of the human soul. Alchemical magic is described with more detail in Chapter Four; it's also described as a secondary Knowledge in the players guides for **Mage** and **Vampire**.

- **Astrology:** The method of divining the influence of the heavens on the Earth, particularly on human personalities.

- **Gematria:** The method of divining hidden meaning from names and words, particularly by converting words into their numerical equivalents. Often used in conjunction with sacred texts, particularly the Bible, Kabbalah and Qur'an.

- **Numerology:** The science of determining the essence of an object or name by reducing it to its numerical meaning. In numerology, everything is a number, and this number is a key to understanding Creation and the magician's role in it.

- **Sacred Geometry:** The method of divining secret knowledge from the dimensions and shapes of man-made or natural structures, including the human form. The builders of the pyramids, the Aztec and Mayan temples, and the Gothic cathedrals are said to have been masters of sacred geometry.

- Novice: You understand very basic concepts.
- College: You've had some instruction in the field.
- Masters: You've got a comprehensive grasp of the discipline.
- Doctorate: You know things that are not written.
- Scholar: You are a master of things hidden and arcane lore.

Possessed by: Hermeticists, Scholars, Kabbalists, Ritual Magicians

Variations: This knowledge must be chosen separately for each occult science: Alchemy, Astrology, Gematria, Numerology, Sacred Geometry

BACKGROUNDS

Everybody has their resources. For magicians, who often stash themselves away until after nightfall, a private place or helping hand can mean the difference between security or a police investigation. Sorcerers cherish their mundane resources, too; a smart magician nourishes his contacts and friendships while he stockpiles cash and paraphernalia for the day when they might be needed.

Sorcerer characters begin with five free points for this Trait. The common Backgrounds — Allies, Contacts, Influence and Mentor — can be found in the main rulebooks, and function just as they're described in those books. (**Note:** A sorcerer's Mentor Background may help her save experience points when she attempts to learn Knowledge Traits or magical Paths; see "Library" for details.) Other sorcerous Backgrounds include:

ARCANE

Masters of the mystic arts can hide in plain sight. The shadows seem to slide around them; crowds seem to swallow them; their faces seem to blend into a haze of barely-recognizable features. Strangely enough, they're hard to pin down in other ways, too. Birth records get lost. Pictures blur. Papers get mysteriously misfiled. As you can imagine, people like this are hard to track down. Lucky you — you happen to be one of them.

Although this odd talent usually manifests in True Mages, some weird mortals (especially sorcerers) exhibit it, too. With this Advantage, you tend to "slide away" from view and memory. While it won't make you invisible or help you in combat situations, it will make you extremely hard to trace. Somehow, things just *happen* to cover your tracks.

In game terms, the Arcane Background adds its rating to your Stealth attempts and subtracts the same amount from any Perception or Investigation Dice Pools that others use to find you. If you wish, you may "dampen" the effect and "appear" in plain sight.

- Wallflower
- A face quickly forgotten
- A master of misdirection
- A needle in a haystack
- Who?

FAMILIAR (LESSER)

You have a special helpmate, a minor spirit or odd animal that walks beside you, advises you and sometimes protects you. Like a master of magick, you sent out a mystic call and this being answered. This familiar may not share the powers of the greater mystick spirits, but it has talents — and appetites — of its own.

In game terms, this Background grants you a special "pet" — a talking black cat, a sinister raven, a prankish imp, invisible servant, totem animal or some other weird yet intelligent aide. Most familiars take the forms of animals (see **The Book of Mirrors** or **The Vampire Players Guide** for animal Traits), but the creature's appearance depends on what you — or your Storyteller — want it to be. In most cases, a magician performs a simple ritual and the familiar answers; sometimes the spirit simply appears on its own and makes itself at home. This attitude suits a familiar — these creatures are rarely subservient, often rude and always independent. Sometimes it's hard to tell who's the master and who — if anyone — is the servant.

Unlike a normal animal, a familiar can communicate clearly, and possesses a range of Knowledges and Skills in addition to its usual Talents. Once the spirit strikes up a relationship, it employs its resources to your best advantage. Naturally, the familiar wants something from you in return. In most cases, the spirit's demands will be simple: respect,

shelter, food, attention and the occasional treat. The “treat” part can get complicated — some familiars feel that dead children, king’s toenails or tomes of esoteric lore make excellent treats, and a familiar can be very insistent when it wants something.

Familiars require a bit of work on the Storyteller’s part, but add lots of atmosphere and complications to a story. Your Storyteller should create the aide to her own specifications, decide on its personality and play the spirit for all it’s worth when it appears. Ideally, you won’t know all the details; such spirits are an enigmatic lot, easily underestimated by willful magicians. Most familiars are fairly basic: animal forms with human intelligence and a few helpful Abilities. Really strong or esoteric helpmates get more complicated, but shift the balance of power in the familiar’s direction. After all, if your servant is one of the Five Handmaidens of the Lord of Thunders, she’s not likely to take much rubbish from some mortal sorcerer!

- Weak familiar — a talking cat, rabbit or raven with one or two occult skills.
- Minor spirit — a small animal with exceptional savvy and occult knowledge.
- Average familiar — a large, smart animal (wolf, horse, bear), a supernatural creature (imp, unseen spirit), or a small beast with amazing lore and skill.

- Strong familiar — an animal (of any natural size) or obvious spirit with one or two magical talents in addition to its extensive knowledge and skill.
- Powerful spirit — a creature with Otherworldly contacts, exceptional knowledge and three or four supernatural powers.

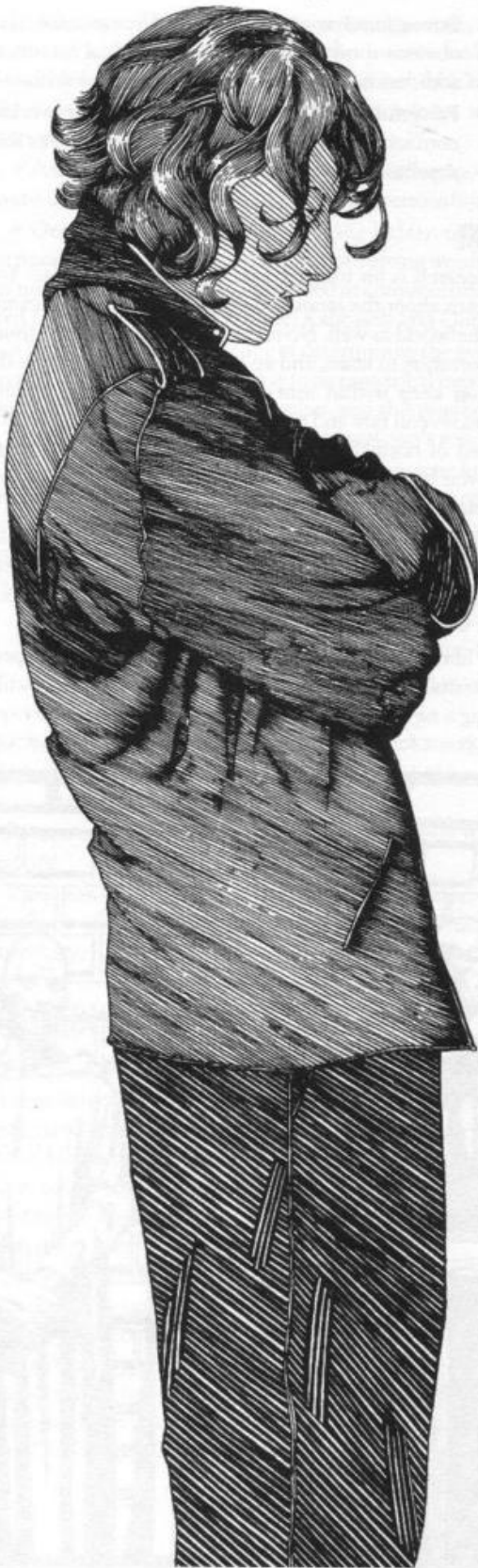
LIBRARY

Research is an integral part of magical practices. You must learn about the mundane world if you are to command the Otherworld as well. No magician worth the name shuns an opportunity to learn, and an extensive library reflects the facts you keep within arm’s reach. This private archive includes several rare and possibly mystical works in addition to a host of normal books. Naturally, this Background assumes you have someplace to store a library; with modern technology, however, this isn’t as hard as it once was.

Such resources aren’t always books. Scrolls, databases and even friends who know a lot of folklore can be considered libraries if you can study continuously, access the information at will, and find what you’re looking for.

A library comes in handy when you’re spending experience points. By rolling your Library rating (difficulty 7) while learning a new Knowledge or Path, you can save one experience point for every success you win (minimum cost: one





experience point). You may roll only once for each learned skill, and must spend at least a week in heavy research to do so.

Magicians sharing a common sanctuary may pool their archives together for mutual use. Thus, this Background can be pooled so long as the means allow it and the characters stay together.

- A collection of New-Age paperbacks.
- A few notable works and lots of superficial stuff.
- A handful of rare and ancient books, and vast mundane resources.
- An impressive collection of occult and mortal lore.
- A horde of lost secrets, a sea of common wisdom.

RELIC

Fittingly enough, you possess some artifact of supernatural origin. It may be a minor relic (see **The Inquisition, Halls of the Arcanum**), a fetish (see **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**) or even a magical Talisman (see **Mage: The Ascension**). In any case, this rare, arcane plaything grants its holder certain powers.

In story terms, you've got some item with obvious occult overtones: a rune-inscribed dagger, a box of black candles, an ancient brass chime, etc. When you perform some incantation or simple action, the relic sets a weird event in motion: The dagger bursts into flame; the candles chase ghosts away; the chime sends everyone in the room into a trance, etc. In game terms, this item contains some magical power; the higher the Background rating, the more potent the relic. Sample relics can be found in the appendix and in the books mentioned above.

(**Note:** For crossover purposes, a hedge wizard can employ fetishes or Talismans up to the third level in power. The Storyteller may require a Wits + Enigmas roll (difficulty = level + 5) if the sorcerer tries to activate a fetish, a Wits + Occult roll if he wants to use a Talisman, and a Wits + Technology roll if he tries to access a technomagickal Device. Any Paradox that a magical Talisman or Device incurs goes against the Talisman; 10 points or more destroys the object. A hedge wizard who wishes to buy a Talisman with his Background points must spend two points per dot, as these are especially powerful and mysterious objects.)

- A minor relic.
- A useful relic.
- An item of significant power.
- A legendary object of great value.
- An artifact of incredible power.

RESOURCES

The road to magical knowledge might not be paved with money, but wealth definitely helps. From the poverty line to vast riches, this Background reflects your financial well-

being and amount of material goods. The Resources in question don't necessarily translate to cash in hand, but they give you some idea of how much you can afford to spend. In a crunch, you may liquidate this property for extra cash.

This Background assumes you have a monthly "allowance." You should determine where your money comes from, however; depending on the course of the chronicle, you might find those Resources growing... or going.

- Small savings. An apartment and a small car, perhaps. Liquidated, you'll get roughly \$1,000. Allowance: \$500 per month.
- Middle class. You've got a small place to call your own. If sold, your property would net you about \$8,000. Allowance: \$1,200 per month.
- Large savings. You've got a house, one or two cars and some property. If liquidated, you'd have about \$50,000 in cash. Allowance: \$3,000 per month.
- Well off. That big house in the woods belongs to you, and that collection of occult artifacts is worth a good deal. If sold, they would yield about \$5,000,000. Allowance: \$9,000 per month.
- Rich. You've got your own mansion, a private tower, a fleet of cars, and a trove of occult knickknacks and lore. If (gods forbid!) you should suffer misfortune, you could still net at least \$5,000,000 in cash. Allowance: \$30,000 per month.

SANCTUARY

Every magician needs a place in which to work. This Background grants you a secret workshop of some size, stocked with the necessary tools and materials — herbs, wards, ritual instruments, cauldrons, fireplaces, braziers, reference books, whatever your practice might require.

Although hidden from mortal view, this Sanctuary exists in the material world. Often (but not always) attached to your dwelling, this literally sacred place might be an alchemical laboratory, a secluded grove, a garden, a dungeon, a tower or even a simple basement with hidden cupboards. Within your Sanctuary, you effectively have an Arcane rating (see the Background of the same name); this won't help if your experiment blows the laboratory to pieces, but it *will* keep the neighbors from wondering about the roaring sound when you summon that minor demon. Assume that any workings that don't involve major destruction are "quieted" by the wards around your Sanctuary. Those wards keep trespassers at bay, too; unwelcome visitors (including Otherworldly ones) must make Willpower rolls (difficulty = Sanctuary rating + 3) to approach the area. Still, the place remains subject to the normal laws of physics; fires, explosions, floods, lightning strikes and large-scale combats will wreck a Sanctuary, devastating the stock and dispelling any wards or securities you've placed around the area.

- A small area, roughly basement-sized, stocked with a few essential items. Arcane rating: 1
- A decent space, the size of a large backyard; it contains a number of useful tools and ingredients kept in easy reach. Arcane rating: 1
- A spacious area, the size of a small house; it's stocked with food, a good selection of tools and materials and a small reference library. Arcane rating: 2
- You're the envy of your associates; a mansion-sized space contains enough esoteric materials, occult works and ritual spaces to host a small, active coven. Arcane rating: 2
- A tower, small castle or large manor house holds your trove — anything short of the virtually impossible is within reach. You'll still have to leave the nest to acquire really esoteric materials (dragon's blood, unique grimoires, etc.), but almost anything else is right where you need it. Arcane rating: 3

STATUS

You've got respect in occult circles. For whatever reason — birthright, social standing, affiliations, personal achievements, etc. — your magical associates know your name and give it weight. You aren't necessarily *liked* — occultists are remarkably elitist — but people do defer to you. At the higher levels, the spirits know you, too. This can be an amazingly double-edged sword, as mystical gunslingers call you out on a regular basis, and strangers slander you without ever having seen your face.

This Background is the spotlight of the magical community; it doesn't necessarily mean you're powerful (look at number five), simply that you're notorious. A successful sorcerer can live in complete anonymity; most of them do. In your case, however, fate has gifted you with some kind of attention.

- The sorcerer's apprentice
- David Copperfield
- Isaac Bonewits
- Timothy Hunter
- John Constantine

MERITS AND FLAWS

Merits and Flaws are Traits that help define your character further. While Merits (obviously) make a sorcerer's life easier, Flaws keep life... interesting. Most of the following Merits and Flaws vary in intensity. Some provide minor distractions while others reflect a significant aspect of the magician's existence.

Merits can only be purchased with freebie points during character creation. Likewise, Flaws — also chosen at creation — add freebie points to a beginning character. A beginning character may take only seven points worth of Flaws; an “experienced” character (one who has supposedly been around for a while) may take more at the Storyteller’s option, but we don’t recommend it. Loopholes like this might be too wide for some Storytellers’ comfort. Each Merit or Flaw should have some story attached to it; such significant things do not happen “just because.”

The various players guides describe a variety of Merits and Flaws, and present the rules about them in a bit more detail. Many of the more “mundane” Traits (Ties, Psychological, Awareness, etc.) are perfectly appropriate for budding magicians. The Supernatural Merits and Flaws often apply to specific entities, and probably aren’t worth much to a mortal character. After all, how useful is a ghost’s Merit to a living man? Some of the weirder Traits below work the same way; a werewolf or Awakened mage might be related by blood to the changelings, but he could not learn their cantrips in addition to his “normal” talents. A sorcerer can do so if her Storyteller allows such “stacking.”

LIGHT SLEEPER: (1 PT. MERIT)

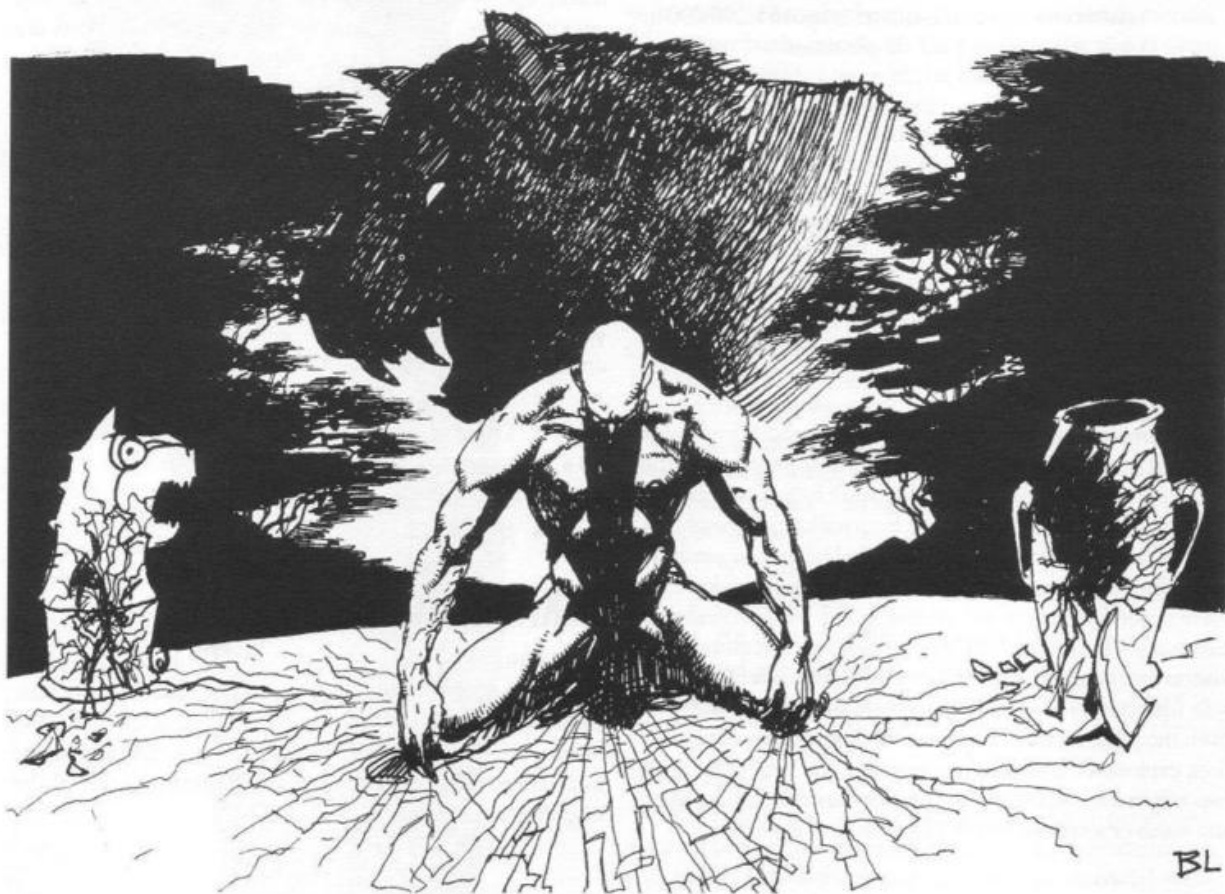
You function quite well on four hours of sleep a night. More rest is always welcome, but if some circumstances (like research or tight deadlines) keep you awake, you’ll suffer less severely than other mortals might. If something happens during your slumber, you’re more likely to awaken quickly than another person in your position.

LOYALTY: (1 PT. MERIT)

You’re sworn, loyal and devoted to some person, group or cause. This bond allows you to resist any form of temptation or coercion that could lead you to betray your trust or oath. Especially nasty forms of “persuasion” (torture, Mind magic, vampiric Dominance, etc.) are harder to shake, but you do get a bonus to your Willpower (either two additional dice to roll, or two added to the inquisitor’s difficulty, whichever is appropriate) if the offending party tries to make you break your promise.

SOOTHING VOICE: (1 PT. MERIT)

Your voice is calm and soothing, almost entrancing. Add two dice to any roll that directly involves using your voice — to sing, to preach, to hypnotize, etc. — or reduce Social roll difficulties by two.



BURNING AURA: (2 PT. MERIT)

Your aura, no matter what its color, is unusually brilliant. To those who can see this “inner light,” you stand out like a beacon burning with a mystical fire. Even people who can’t see auras feel drawn to your side. Some supernatural entities find people like you intriguing; others consider you a threat. Likewise, sensitive mortals might consider you appealing or repulsive, depending on your personality and their inclinations.

HIDEAWAY: (2 PT. MERIT)

You have a special hiding place that no one knows about — a house, a cottage, a nicely furnished cave, etc. You never registered this place in your name, so anyone trying to trace you there is going to have a very hard time. This hideaway is modestly furnished and stocked with enough goods for a two-week stay. Such places are good for practicing secret magics — or for hiding from enemies.

If someone goes on an active search to find your hideaway, your Storyteller may roll two dice against difficulty 6. Success (at least one six) means that no one has found the place. Failure indicates that you didn’t cover your tracks very well; now they know where you live (more or less). Four cumulative failures leads them right to you; a botch immediately renders your secret worthless.

CLEAR SIGHTED: (3 PT. MERIT)

Illusions do not fool you. This vision may be a supernatural gift, an inborn insight or a practiced skill. In any case, vampiric Obfuscation, Chimerstry and other Disciplines or Gifts that deceive most observers don’t work as well as they should against you. Confronted with such deception, you get a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty = opposing power’s level +3) to see right through it.

FAERIE COMPANION: (3 PT. MERIT)

You have a faerie companion, a friend and associate who’s one of the Kindly Ones — the changelings. Perhaps your creativity feeds his craving for dreams, or perhaps he’s taught you of things beyond mortal view. Maybe you’re just in love. In any case, this fae companion tends to stay out of human sight, but commands various magical talents of his own (see **Changeling: The Dreaming**). Naturally, he’ll probably want something in return for his generous, if quixotic, aid.

A changeling makes a boon companion; moreover, his teachings allow you to learn Abilities like Kenning and Mythlore, knowledge outside the mortal spectrum. In a real emergency, your friend might even hide you away in his Freehold for a time! Beware of this offer, however. One never knows the truth behind such refuge, and the price for the trip could be steep indeed!

LUCKY: (3 PT. MERIT)

The luck of the Saints (or the Devil) follows you. Three times per story (not per session), you may use this good fortune to re-roll any failed or botched attempt. Only one try is allowed per failure. Even the Devil’s own run out of luck eventually.

NIGHTSIGHT: (3 PT. MERIT)

You can see in near-total darkness. This odd gift may come from an arcane power, an affinity to darkness or some faint relation to the catfolk. So long as some light source exists, your vision remains acute. Really bad conditions (smoke, fog, total darkness) might demand a Perception + Alertness roll, but under most circumstances, you can see as well by night as you can by cloudy daylight. Bright lights, especially sudden ones, dazzle you for a turn or so, perhaps longer if the light is really blinding; otherwise, your sight is fairly normal, not enhanced.

“SPECIAL FRIEND”: (3 PT. MERIT)

You’ve got a friend — a supernatural friend. Perhaps she’s a werecat, an enigmatic keeper of secrets and sensations; maybe she’s a True Mage with powers you can only dream of having. It could be that she’s a vampire, watching over you in the night. She might even be a ghost, a Restless soul you’ve done a favor. Whatever she may be, she isn’t “normal” company and her tastes run to dark pursuits.

Chances are, your friend isn’t telling you much about her kind; you might acquire a dot or two in the appropriate Lore Knowledge from listening to her tales, but that’s about it. Still, you’re there for each other; she’ll watch your back if you watch hers. Naturally, your Storyteller will want to fill in the details regarding your friend and the relationship you share. In the midnight world, these kind of friends are good to have — even if they *do* tend to bring their problems with them....

UNBONDABLE: (3 PT. MERIT / 6 PTS. FOR GHOULS)

Vampire blood cannot control your will. No matter how much of it you consume, the dreaded Blood Bond won’t take you down. This Merit can be powerful — a little *too* powerful for some chronicles — if combined with the Ghoul Merit; hence, a character who wants to be a free-willed ghoul must pay double the usual amount.

FAE BLOOD: (4 PT. MERIT)

Though not a changeling, you’ve got their heritage running through your veins — literally. This doesn’t necessarily make you Irish, though a little touch of Eriu never hurts! Faerie blood allows you to walk in the Dreaming as if you were fae yourself; while this exposes you to chimerical attack, it also opens you to a new and wondrous world.

In fae terms, you're *kinain*, a human with some innate Glamour who can learn limited cantrips fueled by her own power (see **Changeling: The Dreaming** and its supplement **The Enchanted** for details). This Glamour pool must be "refreshed" by full-blooded changelings — doing so is beyond your mortal means. Even so, your Banality is quite low (typically two to five) and your presence is often welcome in the courts of the fae. Naturally, this sort of gift carries an obligation to play faerie politics; nevertheless, it can be a wondrous game.

IRON WILL: (4 PT. MERIT)

Once your mind's made up, nothing short of a sledgehammer can change it. This Merit allows you to resist the effects of vampiric Domination, Mind magick or other coercive mental attacks. The Trait does nothing to deflect mental trauma or deception, but makes it damned hard for someone to mind-control you. Potent attempts from really powerful foes might demand a sacrifice of a Willpower point per turn; if a vampire or mage of your approximate "level" tries to turn your head around, however, you can consider yourself immune.

PRECOGNITION: (4 PT. MERIT)

You occasionally have glimpses of the future. Although such visions are beyond your control, you may try to "summon" one by entering a trance and attuning yourself to fate. When employed with the Divination Path (see Chapter Four), this Merit lets you add two dice to your pool; otherwise, the Storyteller will determine what (if anything) you see and how accurately it reflects coming events. This Merit should, of course, offer some insight, but as any seer knows, prophecy is an odd and chancy business. Visions often strike without warning and are not always pleasant to receive.

PROPHETIC ABILITY: (4 PT. MERIT)

The Higher Powers speak to you in signs and portents, visions and images. Some may speak of the future, while others offer clues to existing mysteries, or reveal hidden facts. Prophecies come when they will — you cannot control them, and may not even *want* them when they do occur (the classic prophets were not exactly thrilled with their "gifts"). Some messages will be crystal clear while others seem just flat-out obscure. Symbolism, foreshadowing, flashbacks — all the tools mentioned in the rulebooks' Storytelling chapters come into play when your Storyteller decides to let prophecy strike. The truth, content and effect of the prophecies remain the Storyteller's prerogative, but should have some significant role in coming events. This Merit is not a quick-fix or an "oracle machine"; it exists to provide dramatic moments and enigmatic clues, not to dole out obvious answers.

SHAPECHANGER KIN: (4 PT. MERIT)

By some quirk of fate, you're closely related to one of Gaia's Chosen, a werewolf, -cat, -raven, -bear or perhaps even one of the more mysterious breeds. The Changing Blood has not stirred in you, but it has left its mark. You're immune to the Delirium (the madness that claims those who see a werebeast's half-human form), and have friends (or at least respectful relatives) among whichever Breed you're related to. This doesn't mean that you know their secrets, or that you can wander around their sacred caern without retribution, but you have a certain edge when dealing with the Chosen that no normal mortal can match. With your Storyteller's permission, you might be allowed to learn a few spirit Gifts, up to a certain level. (See "Sorcerers and Their Fellow Beings" and **Kinfolk: Unsung Heroes** for details.)

Aside from the benefits described above, this Merit has no special system significance. You've got a good chance to know some Garou Lore, though, and may share some common contacts and allies. You will probably claim some degree of affection from your relative's tribe and some animosity from their enemies. Kinfolk from the other Changing Breeds have an especially hard time with this Merit. Highly prized as breeding stock, mortal relatives of the Corax, Bastet and Gurahl are so rare that their benevolent cousins often go overboard when protecting them — to the extent of forbidding them at claw's length from doing something dangerous!

"IMMORTAL": (5/7 PT. MERIT)

You have witnessed the passing of ages and survived to tell of it. Through some form of magic, you've got the potential to live hundreds of years. Perhaps, if your Storyteller is kind (and a little crazy herself), you may have *already* lived for centuries, and boast a truckload of freebie points — not a part of this Merit — to reflect your age. As an immortal sorcerer, you get the following benefits: an increased life span, a slight immunity to most fatal diseases (but not necessarily to the *pain* associated with those diseases), and the potential to live indefinitely.

This Merit's stronger version protects you from almost *any* form of death — save one — that does not destroy your body entirely. If your corpse can rise again, it will; the fatal damage or disease will slowly repair itself at the normal rate of healing. If some disaster annihilates your body, the magic is dissolved (along with your flesh). Otherwise, you can continue on for centuries.

One given thing can end this immortal dance. The final doom must be selected ahead of time, must be fairly common, and should play some role in the chronicle. Typical dooms include: getting your head chopped off, being stung to death by insects, being frozen to death, being killed by a woman, etc. Naturally, you'll probably do anything you can to avoid this fate; just as naturally, your Storyteller will go out of her

way to make sure you can't. This potential immortality should not unbalance the game; if your Storyteller considers the idea inappropriate, she may feel free to disallow it.

GHOUL: (5 PT. MERIT)

At some point in time, a vampire fed you some of her potent vitae, possibly Bonding you into service. Somehow, you broke free, but the blood's force has granted you some of your mistress' power. In addition to a vague knowledge of vampiric society (one dot of Vampire Lore), you age slowly, have an extra automatic success on any Strength roll you make, and inflict an additional die of damage with all hand-to-hand attacks. (If your game integrates the **Vampire: The Masquerade** rules, you have a Blood Pool, a dot in Potence and the potential to buy and use some Disciplines).

This does not come without cost, however. You must continue to feed on vampire blood occasionally. Otherwise you regain your mortality and crave forever the sweet rush of your former mistress' essence. Should you revert (after going a month or more without the sacred vitae), you lose your supernatural might (and Disciplines) forever.

PATH NATURAL: (5 PT. MERIT)

You're a prodigy, a natural at some mystical Path. For whatever reason (inborn talent, powerful heritage, past life, supernatural bargain, etc.), you've got an affinity to one certain kind of magic. You picked it up quickly (with little or no study) and now progress through it at an unusual rate.

During character creation, select *one* magical Path: From this point on, you only pay three-quarters of the normal cost (rounded down) when buying advanced levels or Rituals *for that Path only*. A natural shapeshifter, for example, would pay only 10 points to raise her Shapeshifting Path from two to three. The "favored" Path must be declared during character creation, and this Merit can be purchased only once.

SPIRIT GUIDE: (5 PT. MERIT)

You are aided in your magical journey by a spirit guide, a friendly entity that offers you advice, messages and sometimes aid. The guide's nature depends on your magical society: A Uzoma sorcerer would recognize one of the orishas, while a Hermetic wizard would claim assistance from an angelic entity.



Spirit guides can help in a variety of ways:

- **Problem Solving:** Dialogue with your guide could lead you to insight on various problems. (This gives the Storyteller a voice within the chronicle.)

- **Help:** A friendly spirit may grant its patron a point of Willpower, take some sudden action or restore a Health Level or two to a sorcerer in need. This aid is rare (once per story, if at all), and may require some thanksgiving offering when the crisis ends.

- **Messages:** Your guide can deliver a brief message to someone far away. This message must be short and simple, as it comes more in a hunch than in a definite thought: "I think Timmy is in trouble. Let's go find him," not "Timmy's canine spirit-guide just arrived and told me that Timmy's trapped in a well three miles from here."

A sorcerer with a spirit guide may use it as part of her magical Rituals — as the "delivery boy" of a curse or blessing, for example — but does not receive any particular bonus for employing the entity in her workings. Some traditions (especially shamanic ones) stress initiation by spirits, not people. By adding this Merit to the Mentor Background, you may consider the spirit guide your mentor as well.

TOTEM: (5 PT. MERIT)

A great spirit smiles upon you. Perhaps you're familiar (or related) to the Changing Breeds; perhaps you remember what other mortals have forgotten, and the spirits respect you for it. Perhaps you once performed a great act of service or devotion. In any case, some totem spirit has granted you its favor.

This Merit allows a sorcerer to learn Changing Breed Gifts from the appropriate totems (see *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, *Axis Mundi: The Book of Spirits* or *Werewolf: The Wild West* for details), and bestows any other favors the totem normally gives. All Bans, Chiminage and other restrictions apply; the totem may even expect greater services in return for its recognition — very few mortals receive such honors, and you may be asked to return the favor in kind. Your Storyteller should choose an appropriate spirit and play it for all it's worth. A totem's attention is a grand thing, and should not simply offer a "get outta jail" card to a player with points to spend.

COMPULSIVE SPEECH: (1-2 PT. FLAW)

You talk too damn much and too damned freely. No matter how important the circumstances or how rarefied the company, you run off at the mouth. It could be that you're compelled to tell the whole, ugly truth no matter what the fallout. Perhaps some agency has cursed you to ruin whatever chances you might have for success — or maybe you're just a prick.

Choose some reason for your obnoxious habits and decide how badly you get on people's nerves. A one-point Flaw means you speak out of term occasionally, and among equals or inferiors. A two-point Flaw makes you rude toward everyone,

regardless of their relationship to you. Spending a point of Willpower allows you to ignore the urge for one scene, but your motormouth tendencies are always close to the surface....

ECHOES: (1-5 PT. FLAW)

Folklore harms you. From the earliest human societies, people have feared your kind — and developed ways of dealing with them! For some reason (probably related to the power of belief), the traditional superstitions apply to you wherever you go. Deep inside, you may believe that you *are* some unclean thing; or perhaps that pact with outside powers came with certain strings attached.

The cost of the Flaw determines the severity and frequency of the "echoes." Low-cost Flaws cause minor inconveniences, while more "worthwhile" ones leave you open to a host of problems. A magician who acquires her powers through some Infernal pact probably suffers from this Flaw to some degree (see Chapter Four).

- **1 pt. — Very Minor:** Slight manifestations of no real consequence. Milk sours in your presence; bread will not rise; a slight scent of sulfur follows in your wake.

- **2 pts. — Mild:** The echoes become inconvenient. Dogs growl and horses sweat when you're around; your gaze causes flowers to sag; you must be invited into a house, and cannot enter without some kind of welcome.

- **3 pts. — Noticeable:** To a trained occultist, you're pretty obvious. Religious symbols distract you; holy ground repulses you; church bells break your concentration (perhaps requiring a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to keep a spell from falling apart); the wind blows cold as you pass.

- **4 pts. — Distracting:** You begin to stand out, even among normal folks. Your powers may be disturbed (see above) by people who understand folk "counterspells" like prayers and warding signs; you cannot pass a hex symbol, a line of salt, or a holy threshold; your shadow moves of its own accord; you do not cast reflections in silvered glass.

- **5 pts. — Severe:** Reality shifts when you're around, even when you don't want it to. You will not sink in water; psychically sensitive people may go into fits or convulsions when nearby; animals feel your presence if they can, and small ones may even drop dead; a person who knows folk cures can harm you by casting salt in your face, driving nails into your footprints, burning a lock of your hair, etc. (Contested Willpower rolls, difficulty 6; if you lose, you take one Health Level in unsoakable damage for each success your opponent scores.)

RIVAL: (1-5 PT. FLAW)

You have a sorcerous rival who regularly tries to unseat you. The reasons for this rivalry can vary: You replaced him as your master's favorite student; you beat him to the discovery of an occult grimoire; you come from societies at odds

with each other; maybe he just doesn't like you. The strength of the rival, the frequency of his appearance, and the ferocity of his intentions determine the point value of this Flaw.

- 1 pt. — An equally matched rival who rarely shows up.
- 2 pts. — Rival is slightly more powerful than you.
- 3 pt. — Rival is considerably more powerful than you.
- +1 — Rival shows up frequently.
- +1 — Rival doesn't just want to unseat you. He wants you dead.

SUPERNATURAL ENEMY: (1-5 PT. FLAW)

You pissed off someone powerful — a vampire, werewolf, True Mage, demon, whatever. He won't show up every story, but will make trouble for you and yours on a fairly regular basis. This Flaw works like the Rival Trait; the more powerful the enemy, or the more frequent his appearance, the more your Flaw is worth. Determine the name, nature and grudge your enemy bears, but leave the details to your Storyteller (who will undoubtedly make him an interesting addition to your chronicle setting). This enmity should provide some important detail about your sorcerous — or pre-sorcerous — past.

HERO WORSHIP: (1 PT. FLAW)

You regard another individual (probably your mentor) with almost reverent respect. He or she can do no wrong as far as you're concerned. Disobeying your hero requires an effort of will (perhaps a Willpower roll, difficulty 5 or more). Perfection is, after all, hard to question. In fact, it's so hard to question that you add +2 difficulty to any roll that might force you to admit that your hero is possibly wrong.

ISOLATED UPBRINGING: (1 PT. FLAW)

You were born and raised entirely within a sorcerous community, and don't really understand the outside world. Whenever you deal with some community other than your own (mystical or otherwise), add one to all of your Social difficulties, or reduce your Social Dice Pool by one die.

OFFENSIVE TO ANIMALS: (1 PT. FLAW)

For some reason, animals are uneasy in your presence and cringe from your touch. Perhaps you have been touched by something in the course of your arcane practices; maybe you're cursed or related to a cursed family or bloodline. For whatever reason, animals are jittery around you. Add +2





difficulty or subtract two dice from your Dice Pools whenever you're dealing with a beast; in story terms, it doesn't like you, and you don't like it, either.

OTHERWORLDLY TAIN: (2 PT. FLAW)

Something about you just isn't right. Perhaps you have white hair at a young age, or you're unusually tall, or you've got eyes that shine slightly silver in the moonlight. Regardless, you've got some feature or mystique that other people consider disturbing, even if they don't know why.

To most observers, you're simply uncanny; a person skilled in occult or mystical matters can recognize you for what you are with a successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7). Some people might find your disquieting presence compelling. Most, however, will give you a lot of breathing room — or a lot of trouble.

AGING: (3 PT. FLAW)

You're not as spry as you used to be; any one Physical Attribute score (your choice) must be lowered by one point. This Flaw may be taken once per decade past the 40 year mark.

GESA: (3/5/7 PT. FLAW)

Gesa is technically a phrase from the Celtic tradition, but the concept of the magical commandment is fairly universal. In short, a gesa is a taboo or mandate that cannot be disobeyed without some serious consequences. Often bestowed during magical initiation, a gesa lasts a lifetime. Its terms — often delivered by a prophet, priest, midwife or supernatural agent — are clear from the beginning. Disobeying a gesa is a deliberate act, not an ignorant mistake, and doing so is punished accordingly. In short, you're mystically forbidden to do something; doing it anyway puts you in danger.

Some gesas are simply commandments that the recipient is compelled to follow whether she wants to or not. She must always accept a drink, for example, or must always give away gifts that she receives. Other gesas are taboos — the recipient may not eat a certain type of meat, usually from some significant animal, or cannot go without shoes, even in bed.

Violating a gesa ends in catastrophe. The doom might fall on you immediately, or could occur over time. It might punish you personally, or wound a loved one. It would cause all of your magic workings to fail. Some punishments fall in a single blow, while others become prolonged curses. If you break your gesa, don't expect a lightning bolt to come from heaven that minute. However, the death of a child, a terrible car accident, even the loss of your magical ability could be right around the corner.

This Flaw may be purchased more than once, but doing so isn't really a good idea. Taking on a single gesa is asking for trouble; taking several prohibitions is flirting with certain doom.

• **3 pts.** — A commandment or taboo unlikely to be broken: “May never run naked through the rain under a full moon.”

• **5 pts.** — A commandment or taboo likely to be broken: “May never run naked through the rain.”

• **7 pts.** — A commandment or taboo that could easily be broken: “May never run through the rain under a full moon.”

(Note: An inventive Storyteller can always find ways to push a character with a gesa into compromising circumstances; she should not, however, simply engineer a situation in which a violation is inevitable. Defying a commandment should always be the player's choice, and should come as a result of some dramatic situation. The magician cited above might have to run naked through the rain to save his lover from a burning building. Is the cost worth the sacrifice? That should be for the magician — and the player — to decide.)

BOUND: (5 PT. FLAW)

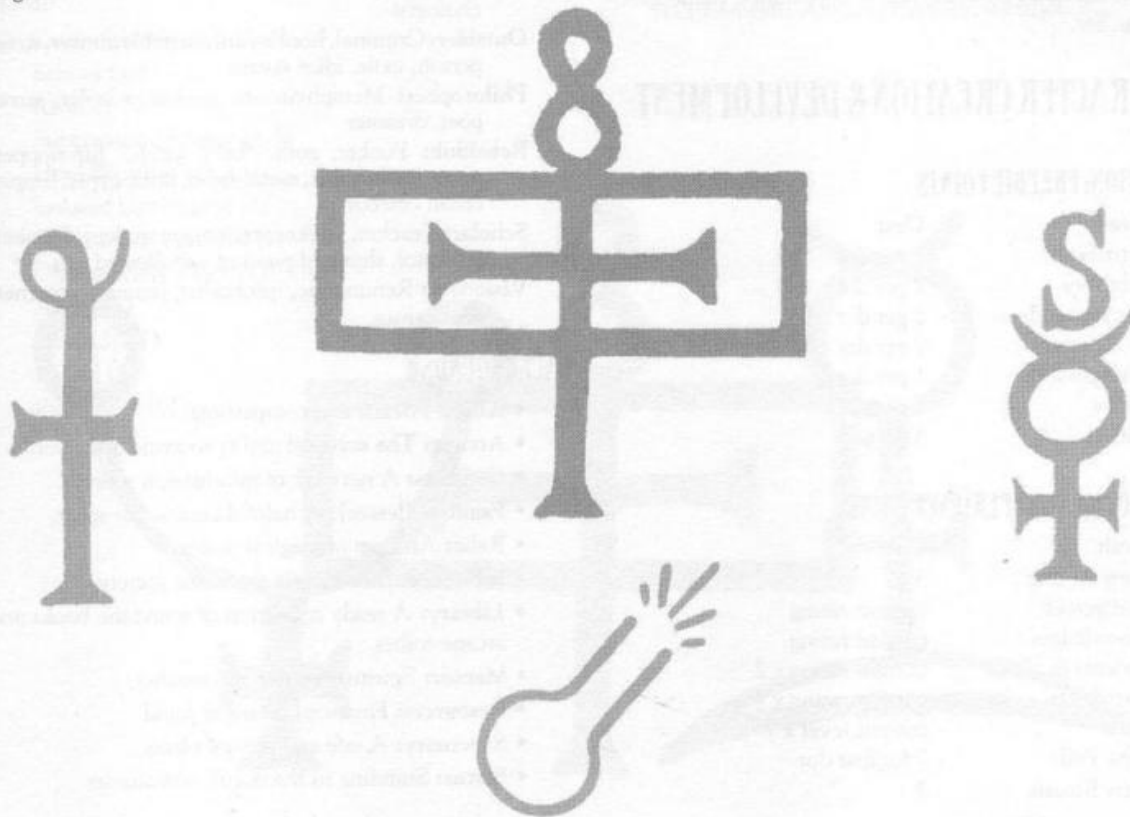
You owe someone. Owe him big, and he's a tough collector. We're not talking about Jolly Joey Marconi, we're talking *really* big time: a demon, a spirit, a vengeful ghost, an angel. In exchange for some bargain, a powerful entity offered you something important. Now you owe him — or her, or it — a very big favor. And he's gonna hold you to that bargain.

A Bound character should feel the weight of her obligation at all times. Your Storyteller should discuss the terms of the “bargain” with you, and work out a plausible story behind it. Things to consider: With whom did you bargain? What did you get, and for how long? What did you offer in return, and how long before the “lender” comes to collect? No matter what the answers might be, this is a serious Flaw. At some near-future time, something will be knocking on your door. And it may want payment in full — with interest.

PATH INEPT: (5 PT. FLAW)

For some reason, you *suck* at a certain kind of magic. You could be paying off some karmic debt, or struggling with some metaphysical concept. It could be one of the terms of an unearthly bargain — trade for trade, if you know what I mean.

This Flaw acts like Path Natural in reverse. Advancement in one particular Path (chosen at the beginning of the chronicle) costs one quarter more experience points than normal, rounded up. The aforementioned shapeshifter might be especially bad at Ephemera; rising from Level Two to Level Three costs her 18 points instead of 14. To take this Flaw, choose one Path *that your character plans to study*. (Don't lie to the Storyteller about this just to get some extra points; she has ways of getting back at you.) This Flaw can only be selected once, and must be chosen during character creation.



CHARACTER CREATION OUTLINE

Step One: Who are You?

- Choose *Concept, Society* (if any), *Nature and Demeanor*
- Determine *motivation*: What drew you to study magic?

What are you looking for once you've discovered magic, and what do you want from life?

Step Two: Attributes

- *Prioritize your three categories*:
 - Primary — 6 points
 - Secondary — 4 points
 - Tertiary — 3 points

Step Three: Select Abilities

- *Prioritize your three categories*:
 - Primary — 11 points
 - Secondary — 7 points
 - Tertiary — 4 points

Step Four: Select Advantages

- Choose *Backgrounds* (5)
- Choose *Magical Paths* (5)
- Choose *Rituals* (3)

Step Five: Finishing Touches

- Record *Base Willpower* (5)
- Spend your 21 *Freebie Points*: improve *Traits*, buy *Merits & Flaws*, purchase additional magical *Paths*
- Determine *Personality details*: appearance, home, motivations, etc.

CHARACTER CREATION & DEVELOPMENT

CREATION: FREEBIE POINTS

Trait	Cost
Attributes	5 per dot
Abilities	2 per dot
Backgrounds	2 per dot
Willpower	2 per dot
Backgrounds	1 per dot
Paths	7 per dot
Rituals	3 each

DEVELOPMENT: EXPERIENCE POINTS

Trait	Cost
New Ability	3
Willpower	current rating
Knowledges	current rating
Talents & Skills	current rating x 2
Attributes	current rating x 4
Path	current level x 7
New Path	7 for first dot
New Rituals	3

TRAITS

ARCHETYPES

- Crackerjack**: You da man!
- Renunciate**: You left an old life behind, but it hasn't left you.
- Sage**: Life is a classroom; you are both teacher and pupil.
- Sensualist**: Experience is your drug, your love and your life.
- Supplicant**: You serve powers greater than yourself.
- Theorist**: Grand ideas are your province.

CONCEPTS

- Authority**: Cop, detective, professor, lawgiver, enforcer, soldier
- Artist**: Dancer, painter, busker, actor, storyteller, musician
- Crank**: Conspiracy theorist, mail-order teacher, fake psychic, eccentric millionaire
- Devotee**: Cultist, fanatic, ascetic, monk, clergyman, nun, priest(ess)
- Hermit**: Recluse, sage, antiquarian, shut-in, holy person
- Mystic**: Babbling madman, mystery seeker, neo-pagan, wise man, martial artist, ancestral witch, parapsychologist
- Outsider**: Criminal, hooker, untouchable, drifter, street person, exile, idiot savant
- Philosopher**: Metaphysician, ancient scholar, street poet, dreamer
- RebelSub**: Punker, goth, "baby witch," hip-hopper, raver, medievalist, metal-head, rasta, gypsy, hippie, urban cowboy
- Scholar**: Teacher, lorekeeper, intense student, forsaken professor, shunned pupil of unhallowed arts
- Visionary**: Renunciate, spiritualist, shaman, searcher, mad genius

BACKGROUNDS

- **Allies**: Friends and compatriots.
- **Arcane**: The mystical ability to avoid attention.
- **Contacts**: A network of information sources.
- **Familiar (lesser)**: A helpful creature or spirit.
- **Relic**: An item of magical power.
- **Influence**: Influence in mundane society.
- **Library**: A ready collection of mundane books and arcane tomes.
- **Mentor**: Spiritual master and teacher.
- **Resources**: Financial means at hand.
- **Sanctuary**: A safe and private place.
- **Status**: Standing in the occult community.

MERITS

- Light Sleeper (1)
- Loyalty (1)
- Soothing Voice (1)
- Burning Aura (2)
- Hideaway (2)
- Clear Sighted (3)
- Faerie Companion (3)
- Lucky (3)
- Nightsight (3)
- "Special Friend" (3)
- Unbondable (3/6)
- Fae Blood (4)
- Iron Will (4)
- Precognition (4)
- Prophetic Ability (4)
- Shapechanger Kin (4)
- "Immortal" (5/7)
- Ghoul (5)
- Path Natural (5)
- Spirit Guide (5)
- Totem (5)

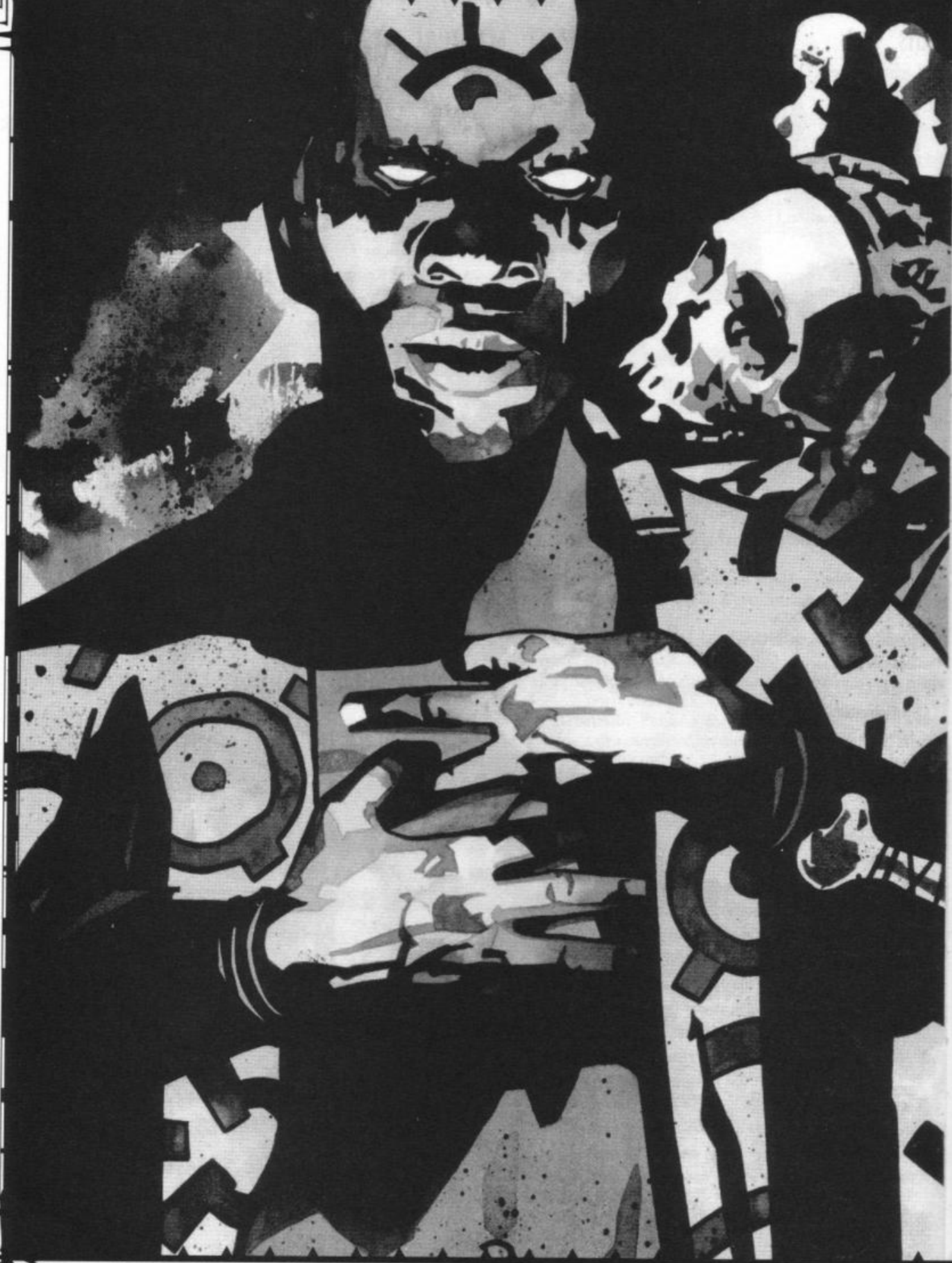
FLAWS

- Compulsive Speech (1-2)
- Echoes (1-5)
- Rival (1-5)
- Supernatural Enemy (1-5)
- Hero Worship (1)
- Isolated Upbringing (1)
- Offensive to Animals (1)
- Otherworldly Taint (2)
- Aging (3)
- Gesa (3/5/7)
- Bound (5)
- Path Inept (5)

MAGICAL PATHS

- **Alchemy:** Magical chemistry.
- **Conjuration:** Moving items from place to place.
- **Conveyance:** Moving oneself across great distances.
- **Cursing:** Bringing harm to someone.
- **Divination:** Seeing the future or the hidden past.
- **Enchantment:** Creation of minor talismans.
- **Ephemera:** Communicating with the spirit world.
- **Fascination:** The art of charms and compulsion.
- **Healing:** Restoring a body's health.
- **Hellfire:** Conjuring fire or other harmful elements.
- **Herbalism/Brewing:** Drawing on the magic of plants, potions and salves.
- **Shadows:** Black magic that shapes shadows to your will.
- **Shapeshifting:** Changing your form, or transforming others.
- **Summoning, Binding and Warding (Material):** Calling creatures to come to you from the material world (including some supernatural creatures, e.g., werewolves or vampires).
- **Summoning, Binding, and Warding (Daimonic):** Bringing creatures from the higher planes: demons, angels and other associated beings.

Weathercraft: Altering the local weather.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE PATHS

The forces of wyrd are like the winds and tides for a fisherman. If they are known, the sailor can trim his sails to adapt to them. He can be in harmony with the forces and use power. But he cannot thereby change them.

— Brian Bates, *The Way of Wyrđ*

It begins with a candle.

A quick flare. A touch. A flame. A glow.

Twelve more just like it, all guttering on shiny black wax.

Hands are raised. An invocation. A magician calls out to the dark.

"Hail to thee, O' Running Twilight.

"Hail to thee, and to thy brood.

"Hail to the Sun now fallen, to the Moon ascendant

"To the lion's whisper and the doormouse cry.

"Hail Cemunnos; Hail Manannan; Hail Brigit; Hail Arianhod!

"Fire Have you!

"Fire Take you!

"Fire Free you!"

Suitably freed, one candle falls, spattering the carpet with black wax.

"Shit!!!"

The magician falls, grabs the candle, snuffs it and thrusts his fingers into the spill. Goopy beneath his fingers, the black stuff clings to fiber.

A click. A creak. Sudden light from above.

"Charles, have you done the laundry like I asked?"

"Geeze, mom!" cries the magician. "I'm busy!!!"

THORNS, BLADES AND WISDOM

The heart of the magician is, of course, magic. While arrogant mages lay claim to the only "True Magick," the sorcerer commands his own limited yet effective form of the art. Flowing down Paths carved by millennia of experimentation, wisdom and use, this static magic follows what is known and proven, rather than what is ultimately possible. While such Paths are somewhat overgrown these days, the magician sets forth with compass and machete in hand. His compass is knowledge; his blade, the tools of his profession.

It's not an easy journey. Thorns of disbelief, arrogance, half-truths and total lies rip at the sorcerer's hands. Striped and bleeding, he pushes on, determined. The mundane life is a waste of time. To the magician, the hidden city — mastery — is worth any cost.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The Masters of the World have always been able to produce their miracles by the power of Will, operating in harmony with the forces of Nature, without any other adjuncts, whereas lesser magicians have been compelled to use symbols and material things to obtain their results.

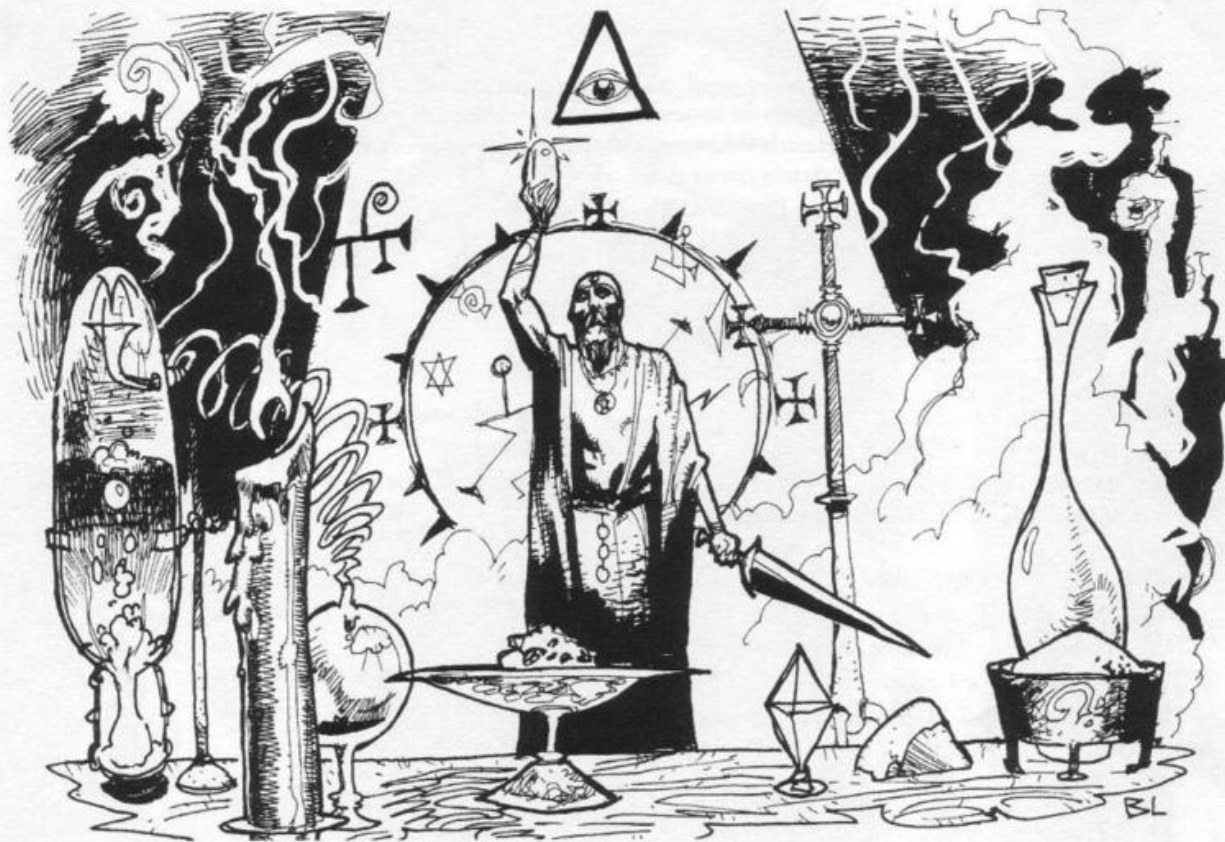
— Rollo Ahmed, *The Black Art*

Each sorcerer understands magic a bit differently. To the Christian Hermetic, it flows from secrets imparted by God. A Wiccan priestess calls upon the elements and her will. An ancient Uzoma might tap into the endless well of spiritual guidance, but even the modern Thal'hun devotee feels a deep sense of the Otherworld when she sings. Regardless of the wellspring, magical lore always seems to come from the past — from some secret our wise ancestors knew.

The magician distrusts the present. Modern science seems too dispassionate, too removed, too impersonal to make a good mystic tool. Modern people wander around in a haze, faithless, trustless, consuming and destroying just to prove that they're alive. If magical societies seem sacred, it's because they *are*. There's not much room for secular cynicism in the magician's realm — each act of magic is a leap of faith. Most wizards look to some outside force to utilize their powers; such wellsprings might be gods, spirits, demons or elements, but they are never mundane. The mystic arts *reject* mundanity. To reach beyond your fingers, you must look beyond your eyes.

MAGIC STYLES

Magic, even hedge magic, is an art, not a series of combat maneuvers. To the magician, the beliefs that guide magic are more vital than the effects of the magic itself. The form these



beliefs take shapes the caster's style and the rites that open the channels in the self, allowing the sorcerer to defy mundane reality.

The bottom line with any form of magic in the World of Darkness is that intent shapes reality. Mages and magicians throughout the ages have disputed *whose* intent shapes *how much* of *which* reality, but they generally agree that intent is the prime magical component. Thus, the magical practices of Chinese geomancers, Wiccan herbalists and Hindu fakirs are equally valid if the people themselves truly know what they're doing. Although many True Mages realize that foci are merely a means to an end, most un-Awakened practitioners swear by the art they study. Thus, the ceremonies they perform are always guided by the style of magic they pursue.

Styles are not just special effects. Although they do not have much of an impact on game systems, the style your character practices colors her whole life. Through those rites, she learns to reach beyond, to look beyond, to accomplish things science deems impossible. In short, a magician's practice is the key roleplaying. Player or Storyteller, you should define your sorcerer's magic style and keep it in mind whenever magic comes into play.

RITUAL TOOLS

Rituals demand tools, instruments of the craft. Through them, a magician focuses her intentions, unlocks the mystic gates and directs her will. Many practitioners of the arts swear that the tools hold power themselves. The truth behind the claim isn't nearly as important as the role these instruments play in the magician's life story — or in your chronicle.

Some instruments are harder to come by than others; some get damned expensive, while others are easy to find if you know where to look. The real significance of a magical tool isn't so much in the material as in the effort taken to obtain it. Magic isn't supposed to be easy, it's supposed to be special, Otherworldly, sacred. Most ritual implements stress that alien mystique in their form or usage. Herbs must be harvested under a full moon. Blades must be forged in special fires and quenched in blood. Salves must be prepared with ingredients like corpse fat and crushed maggots. Wands must be crafted from virgin ash or rowan, inscribed with obscure symbols that relate to the magician's purpose. Few magicians use their tools for mundane purposes, and fewer still allow them to fall into a stranger's hands. A ritual tool is a key to the unknowable and a link to the magician. It may be more symbolic than enchanted, but as any magician can tell you, the heart of magic is the symbol. A ritual tool is the symbolism incarnate.

Most tools invoke sympathy — the connection between two parties. If you've literally got a man's heart in your hand, you've obviously got some powerful connection to him.

Many tools create a sympathetic bond by standing in for something else. Really powerful — and dangerous — spells employ tools fashioned from actual remains. These spells set powerful energies in motion, but it's their tools — corpse parts, personal effects — that are difficult to obtain and dangerous to keep.

HOW DO I USE THEM?

In game terms, tools define the magician, adding a new dimension to the story. A sorcerer's workings become much cooler when she lays the circle, consecrates the elements and calls the corners than if her player simply says, "I use Cursing 3 to make that asshole suffer." When you work your magic through your character, describe what she does to set the wheels in motion. That'll add a new flavor to your game.

Magic tools spark stories, too. Let's say your magician employs a sword, one he inherited from his grandfather. What if one day he drops the sword, bending its blade? Where can he repair it, and who might he meet when he does? What if another party wants the sword and is willing to kill for it? What if that sword was quenched in the flesh of a child, and the child's brother, now a congressman, learns that you've got the blade that killed his sibling?

Even the search for ingredients can lead to stories. Most tools are eventually used up, and must be replenished or refreshed. Such items are never found easily. Imagine the complications that could arise from a simple herb-gathering mission. Most plants must be harvested nude, at night, often during certain times of the year. What if your magician needs belladonna but lives in Lynchburg, VA (not the most tolerant town for magical needs)? What if she needs it in December, or runs into her neighbor while creeping around naked, or happens to blunder into a Garou sept's caern? What if she enters a vampire's hunting ground, or meets a cop who "don't like them Satanists..."? The art of magic is *full* of potential complications.

THE TOOLS

As integral parts of a magical style, most ritual instruments simply allow the magician to do that which she could not do on her own. At the Storyteller's option, a *really good* focus — a powerful group rite, a specially prepared silver sword, etc. — might reduce the caster's difficulty or increase her Dice Pool by one or two. (We recommend the Dice Pool option; a large spell, like a large Dice Pool, can make things go really well or really badly, depending on the whims of fate.)

Common implements of magic include:

- **Alchemical Laboratory:** A complex collection of tubes, burners, vessels, charts, tables, ingredients and containers, the alchemist's laboratory is as much a reflection of the alchemist as it is a workplace. Some alchemists keep

spotless shops, while others strew their tools haphazardly around the room. Although alchemical lore insists on many special tools, it's the shop itself that shapes mundane materials into magical elements. In the laboratory, those materials are transformed, broken down and rearranged to the magician's expectations. Thus, the shop becomes the instrument. No alchemist can work his art without processing the elements in his laboratory.

• **Blood and Other Bodily Fluids:** The blood is the life, as they say, and the fluids of the body carry that life even after they're removed. Fresh fluids — from tears to semen to piss to puss — are best, but some spells call for "aged" humors, fluids that have had time to ferment. Blood, the most common sacred element, often flows from live sacrifices, ritual mutilations, small incisions or deadly cuts. Blood seals pacts, creating bonds that can only be broken by death.

• **Bones, Skin and Other Remains:** Like blood, bones form the foundations of many living things. Carry the bone and you carry the being. Bones get ground up into powder, carved into other tools (see below) or snapped to pass a curse onto a living person.

Skin protects its "wearer." By extension, it also protects a magician who dons the skin after its "owner" is finished with it. Skins are stretched over drums, fashioned into garments, boiled in cauldrons, or simply eaten to carry their protective powers onward.

The same is true of hearts, livers, eyeballs and other organs that pass their purpose on to whomever consumes them. Hearts are eaten for valor, livers for vitality, eyeballs for vision — the list is as endless as it is obvious. Many primal practices employ cannibalism, not as an insult, but as an honor to the person being eaten; other more "civilized" practices — like the Catholic Eucharists — still use animal remains or symbolic representations to embody the same qualities.

Remains don't have to come from live victims. Many spells require fingernail clippings, hairs, tears, excrement. Imagine trying to gather such items without being noticed. Imagine transporting them back home. Imagine the excuses you'll have to make if you get caught....

• **Books:** As bearers of writing (see page 84), books trap thoughts, wisdom, observations and confessions, and set them down for others to see. Most magical texts are written in code or lost languages, either to protect them from the authorities or to safeguard their wisdom. Magic is all about understanding, and some truths are too sacred to be read by common people. The sorcerer employs books for study, spellcraft, mediation and reflection. In the Western traditions, it's a poor magician who cannot read or write.

• **Cards, Dice, Straws and Lots:** The term "sorcerer" comes from "one who casts lots." The connections between fate and its influence are pretty obvious. Hence, a number of seemingly random tools — cards, dice, carved bones, sticks, shells, etc. — form the backbone of divination, blessings and

curse. Typically, the magician sets out a selection of lots, shuffles or mixes then draws a series of them to determine what will happen. By fixing a certain lot with an intention — concentrating on drawing a "bad card," for example — the sorcerer can turn events in her favor if her magic succeeds.

• **Celestial Alignments:** While it's been said that "Our fates are not in the stars but in ourselves," many magicians would disagree. Many practices depend on astrological conjunctions, celestial influence and precise "windows of opportunity" opened by the planetary dance.

The intricate symbols and formulae connected to planetary influence are way beyond the scope of this book. Most of the basic connections are pretty obvious — Mars for hostile spells, Venus for emotional bonds, Saturn for fate and time-based workings, the Moon for mystery, etc. If you're interested in the deeper significances, read a good book on astrology or symbolism.

• **Circles and Other Shapes:** A universal symbol of infinity, unity and wholeness, the circle finds its way into rituals of all types. Sorcerers from all over the world link hands, carve circles, draw spheres and dance in the round. Other tools, like rings, belts and diagrams, often take the circle's shape in order to pass its qualities off to the magician.

Other shapes, like squares, triangles and pentagrams, represent different qualities. The square represents stability; the triangle directs intentions upward or downward; the rectangle creates a base for Earthly matters; the cross reflects an intersection. Magicians draw the shapes into symbols (see page 82), trace them in the air, lay them out in powder or liquid, or work them into talismans, charms and artwork.

• **Cups, Chalices and Other Vessels:** As the container of an essence, the chalice represents the sacred magician, a vessel of wisdom and change. Since cups usually hold water or some other liquid, they represent the feminine principle, symbolize mystery, and carry water (see "Elements"). A magician might share a drink from the cup, hold it aloft, swirl its contents or leave it dry to invoke barrenness.

Larger vessels — tubs, cauldrons, buckets, gourds — make common magical tools, too. Some contain mixtures (the "witch's brew"), while others remain dry or are filled with dirt, seeds or stones to create noisemakers or small environments.

• **Dance and Gesture:** Dancing is fun, especially when it's done with partners. Besides its obvious sexual overtones (which make dance a forbidden art in some cultures), dancing combines physical exercise, emotional passion and artistic expression. The combination raises lots of power, stirs the dancers and pleases the gods and spirits.

Most practices, especially the more primal ones, employ dances of some kind. More "civilized" or refined styles turn the wild dance into a ritualized set of movements (the right arm is raised, then the left is lowered, then the right foot is placed firmly in front of the magician) that become significant mystic gestures and poses.

• **Drugs and Poisons:** To transcend mortal vision, many sorcerers employ toxins. The shock to the magician's system brings on visions (hopefully). While most people tend to think of Mexican mushroom-droppers or Chinese opium smokers when "drugs" and "magic" are mentioned in the same breath, every practice uses toxins in its own way. From the ceremonial wine of the Catholic service to the moldy bread eaten by starving prophets, from the Hindu soma drink to hallucinogenic body paint, magicians have eaten, drunk, smoked or smeared themselves with a wide variety of minor — and major! — poisons. Most sorcerers concoct the potions from natural or artificial ingredients, but some allow toxic animals like snakes, spiders and even bees to sting them into an ecstatic state. Please note that this sort of thing is best left to storytelling description, not to live roleplaying!

• **Elements:** What could be more powerful than nature? By working raw elements — earth, air, fire, water and sometimes wood, metal, ash and ice — into a ritual, magicians of all kinds evoke the spirits of the natural world and bind the materials to their commands.

• **Group Rites:** "Raising power" is incredibly important to most magicians. By gathering a group (magicians and non-magicians alike), focusing its attention toward a certain thing and then riding the wave of energy, priests and anti-priests alike enhance their workings.

Getting a bunch of people together is easy; getting them to concentrate deeply on one thing requires a bit of showmanship and dedication. Ideally, groups should be worked to a frenzy by a single magician or his helpers, who often use music, chanting, prayer, speeches or sex to bring out the best (or worst) in the crowd. From there, the magician directs the energy as the participants reach a climax and then drop from exhaustion.

• **Herbs and Roots:** Like the elements, plants hold living bits of Creation; like toxins, they often retain some special properties of their own. Magicians of all kinds mix potions, brews, salves, wines, powders and other ingredients out of herbs, roots and other plants. By drinking, smoking, eating, painting or dusting these concoctions, a sorcerer can invest a bit of the plant's essence with the object of the spell.

• **Household Tools:** As extensions of the hands, tools become obvious magical instruments. Brooms, ploughshears, sickles, mirrors, scissors, knives, butterchurns, pots, cauldrons, horseshoes, hammers, nails, pens, clocks and hourglasses have long magical pedigrees. More modern tools — computers, pagers, blenders, ovens, sound systems and cattle prods — have found





their way into the mystic arts, too. In each case, a sorcerer simply uses her tools to create a magical bridge between the mundane activity — like cleaning or reflecting — and her magical intentions. Most magicians keep their ritual tools away from mundane tasks, but so-called “kitchen witches” use the instruments in everyday chores as well.

- **Machines:** Tools built for specific magical uses can be pretty damned effective. In the hands of a Daedalus or a Dr. Frankenstein, technology can shape raw elemental power to a “sorcerer’s” ends. While most mystic artificers cringe at the title “magician,” that is, in essence, what they are.

Advanced inventions with a mystical bent can include cybernetics, robots, computers, odd weapons and unique widgets in a thousand varieties. While un-Awakened technomagicians cannot reach the wild heights of the Technocracy’s better moments, the sophisticated machinery of the Thal’hun demonstrates how thin the line between magic and high technology can be.

- **Sex:** Sex is power, the power to create, the power to attract, to bind, to command. Sexuality forms the most intimate connections, breaks down barriers and inhibitions, makes people lose their minds and opens their senses. Anything that powerful deserves the name “the Great Rite,” and every magical practice employs (or denies) that unharnessed power. Orgies, abstinence, intercourse, stimulation without contact, even ritual mutilation of sexual organs — all focus sexual energy to mystical ends.

- **Symbols:** All tools are symbols of greater things; some tools, though, are symbols in the most literal sense. Complex labyrinth patterns, crosses and crucifixes, swastikas, Hermetic designs, written runes or phrases (see below), alchemical sigils, hex signs and hexagrams, hieroglyphs, mandalas, yantras and other complex designs embody some magical truth and fix it to a place or object. The magician understands the power of symbols, and employs them in his workings.

- **Voice:** The chant, the song, the prayer, the wail—each type of magic employs a spoken invocation that carries the magician’s thoughts out into the open, declaring them to Creation. All spiritual magicians pray aloud for guidance or favor, while their secular cousins shape syllables into spells. Few magics, even subtle ones, work without a spoken component, and some employ the voice alone.

- **Wands and Staves:** By lengthening a sorcerer’s reach (and penis), a wand, staff or other masculine tool directs the magician’s will. Whether the tool is carved from ivory, shaped from wood, or crafted from stone, glass or even bones, it serves as a badge of office. Waved during a spell, a wand gathers the mystic energy and sends it on its way.

- **Weapons:** Like a wand, a weapon extends the hand past the reach of a mortal arm, carrying force to the magician’s target. Common mystical weapons (masculine symbols of will) include blades, hammers, axes, spears, bullets, arrows, clubs and crossbow bolts. Most gods favor a certain weapon

INFERNAL PACTS

*Took off running but I'm takin' my time
A friend of the Devil is a friend of mine
— Grateful Dead, "Friend of the Devil"*

Some people are never satisfied. Driven by power-madness, they make bargains they cannot keep, mortgaging their lives and afterlives to Otherworldly forces. The payment: a fast track to magic and a collection of powers that only the hellbound can possess.

It's a time-honored tradition: A sorcerer, frustrated by the discipline of learning and too proud, rebellious or cynical to care about the consequences, calls upon forbidden entities and promises them his loyalty. More often than not, his entreaties are ignored. Sometimes, though, he gets an answer. The so-called "powers of light" rarely respond to prayers directly; other, sinister entities, however, seem eager to aid true believers. In return for good service and perhaps a bit of metaphysical life force, the tempters are glad to make a deal.

All cultures have their version of soul-service: the anti-Christian warlocks and their Black Mass; the cannibal corpse-eaters of Thailand and the Sahara; the *bokors* who petition Baron Samedi, Chango and Damballah; the left-hand *tantrikas* who embrace the Twenty Thousand Demon Hosts; the African Nhangas and the Kys'Tayaa people of the Pacific island chains.... The supplicants, rituals and patrons differ, but the bargain remains the same. First, the petitioner asks for power and a visitation; assuming the wizard is lucky enough to get his audience, the new patron demands some demonstration of the devotee's intentions. The test is dangerous, bloody and foul — murder is only part of the equation. If the demon seems satisfied, it'll demand that the supplicant desecrate whatever he once found holy, renounce his former gods and pledge himself to darkness. If he agrees, the infernal one bestows its gift — the demonic pact.

Popular misconceptions aside, such bargains rarely begin with soul-selling. That comes later. In game terms, the bargain works like a Merit and Flaw in one: It costs freebie points to purchase, but confers benefits that would normally cost more. The real price comes across in the story, not the systems. The initial pact grants the diabolist three dots worth of some Path for "free," without study, experience or additional time. Suddenly, the secrets are revealed and the power flows through the black magician. If the Path requires Rituals, the pact grants three of them, too. Special Paths, called *Ritualis Infernal*, Dark Sorcery or Dark Thaumaturgy, can be bought only through a pact. Unlike Hedge Magic, these demonic arts channel the power of the hells through their cracked but willing vessel — the warlock.

A greater pact, which includes the soul and a promise of servitude, bestows five dots worth of magic and six new Rituals. The fun needn't stop there — demons love to encourage their pets to greater acts of perverse devotion — but each successive bargain gets harder to top. Demonic Investments, which grant literally unholy powers to helpful servants, are the next step. These powers (which run beyond the scope of this book) rip the warlock's humanity to shreds. With each "gift," he becomes less a man and more a demonic freak. Wings, claws, poisons, even toxic farts — it should never be said that demons lack a sense of humor when it comes to granting Investments.

The upside? Cool powers with little work, an Otherworldly tutor and the mystique that always follows the forbidden. Suddenly the diabolist gains new insights, wild friends and a whole new perspective. Taboos disappear like glass beneath a sledgehammer and in their absence, confidence swells. Who gives a shit about good and evil? Morality's for pussies! Once the bargain is completed, the warlock becomes a whole new man, flush with Otherworldly strength and ready to take on the world.

Powerful as he may seem, though, the soul-bound sorcerer is pathetic. He may excel at magic from that point on, may acquire great wealth, crush his enemies like dung beetles — it doesn't really matter in the long run. His life and his soul no longer belong to him and his magics seem fragile and hollow. Other creatures and sensitive humans can sense his allegiance; some might flock to him, but most avoid his presence. One day, the patron will come to collect the balance due. From that point, the very best thing the sorcerer can hope for is service in some greater demon's household — not a pleasant duty, but an improvement over the tortures that await most mortgaged souls.

Character Point Costs

Initial Pact	10
Extreme Pact	15 + soul
New Path	7
Path Levels	current rating x 5
New Rituals	Path rating

(Dark Sorcery — the so-called *Ritualis Infernal* — and demonic Investments can be found in *The Book of Madness* on pages 137-141, and in the *Storyteller's Guide to the Sabbat*, pages 50-62.)

— Thor's hammer, Diana's bow, Michael's flaming sword, etc.; sorcerers who work toward that god's purpose often employ that deity's weapon.

• **Writings and Incriptions:** As students of the mysteries would tell you, language is the greatest magic of all. Writing, which captures magic and sets it into a permanent form, channels thought into reality. By writing a phrase, carving a rune, etching a blessing or pressing a holy glyph into clay, the magician sets her intentions into the material for others to see. Some castings demand that the writing be read aloud, but others simply lock the mystic forces onto an object once the thought has been transferred to it through writing.

GAME COSTS AND EFFECTS

Belladonna and aconite

Give to me the gift of flight

Take me up airborne in the night

In a dream

Across the sky

Hundred million miles high

Take me ever upwards in the night

— Incubus Succubus, "Belladonna and Aconite"

(Note: When referring to game systems, the phrase "Hedge Magic" will be capitalized for clarity. "You" refers to both the character and the player.)

Each magical discipline is called a *Path*; in game terms, each Path allows you to do certain things, regardless of the practice you pursue. A witch, a shaman and a missionary all use the Healing Path to cure a friend's illness, even though the tools they employ will vary tremendously. The names below are offered for simplicity's sake. No healer's going to be caught dead saying, "I practice the Paths of Healing, Herbalism and Ephemera." Each practice gives its own names to the arts.

(In the original Hedge Magic system, each activity required a separate Ritual; now, Rituals have become separate spells that a magician can buy in addition to her Hedge Magic Path. You no longer need to purchase separate Rituals for every conceivable Path spell. Yes, this is an official revision, one that makes it cheaper and easier to play an effective hedge magician.)

Other rules are as follows:

BASIC CASTING

• **Cost:** As a magician, you'll begin with five free dots of Hedge Magic and three Rituals. While each society given in Chapter Two favors certain Paths, you may place these dots

anywhere you desire. One Path — the primary — must always be higher than the others. This reflects the magician's initial studies and her affinity for a certain type of magic.

If you want to add to your Path rating, use freebie points as indicted on the Character Construction spread. No Path rating can rise higher than your primary Path's rating; a magician who specializes in spiritualism, for example, won't be better at Herbalism than at Ephemera. When you want to increase your current levels, see the experience point costs on the same chart.

• **Rolls:** Most spells or Rituals require an Attribute + Ability roll, usually Intelligence + Occult. See the Path descriptions for details.

• **Difficulty:** Unless a Path description states differently, Hedge Magic rolls go against a difficulty of the Path level +4. A Level Four spell or Ritual, then, would be difficulty 8.

• **Successes:** Most Hedge Magic spells require a single success to perform. Really strenuous spells—difficult Healings or Enchantments, storm brewing, etc.—require one or two successes per Path level before they'll work.

• **Time and Effort:** Hedge Magic is not a rapid art — it requires time, patience and work to perform a spell correctly. Storytellers can assume that a spell takes at least one turn per level to cast properly (we'll get into improper casting in a minute). Hence, a Level Five Summoning would demand at least five turns, and probably longer.

Although magical actions flow from intent and concentration, tools and rites are *essential* to Hedge Magic workings. You can't simply think up a spell and send it on its way — you must perform the proper ceremony (see "Magic Styles") and steer your intentions during the entire spell. If you get distracted, the magic fails.

• **Failure:** If you fail a magic roll, nothing happens. The spell is wasted and must be started again at +1 difficulty. Subsequent attempts add another level to the difficulty; after three failures, for example, you're working at +3 difficulty.

• **Botching:** As usual, a botched roll has messy consequences. Although Hedge Magick is immune to Paradox *per se*, the tides of creation work in unpredictable ways. No magician can afford to get too cocky.

When things go wrong, the level of the Path or Ritual determines how bad the fallout gets. A botched Level Four Ritual will have more explosive results than a ruined Level One spell. Typical disasters can be found under each Path description. If some sort of damage seems appropriate, assume that you take one Health Level for each level in the Path or Ritual. This damage can usually be soaked, although certain catastrophes (wounds that rip open instead of heal) might sidestep the usual soak roll.

COMPLICATIONS

- **Fast Castings:** In an emergency — like throwing up a Ward against an angry vampire — you may take half the usual time to cast a spell or Ritual. Doing so adds +2 to the usual difficulty (maximum 10) and requires a Willpower point.

- **Hitting a Target:** Combat magic is pretty difficult. Most Paths and Rituals require that you prepare your subject in some way to accept the magic. A willing subject doesn't present a problem; an unwilling one can be difficult to affect. Touching an opponent in combat demands a Dexterity + Brawl or Melee roll (depending on what you're touching him with). A moving target can attempt a Dexterity + Dodge roll to escape a physical attack, or make a Willpower roll to fend off a mental one. Both "soak rolls" go against difficulty 6.

- **Willpower and Quintessence:** A point of Willpower may be spent to grant one automatic success. Raw Quintessence, however, is useless to magicians. At the Storyteller's option, a really potent bit of Tass (materialized magickal essence; see **Mage: The Ascension**) might help a sorcerer reduce her casting difficulties by one or two if she employs it in some significant way — by eating a magic mushroom, painting herself with potent blood, sprinkling enchanted dust on an object, etc. — before she performs the spell.

- **Learning:** In story terms, you've got to dig up arcane wisdom, find learned mentors and experiment with new and dangerous spells to raise your Path ratings. In game terms, the Storyteller may require some solo roleplaying, a personal quest, prolonged research or some other sacrifice to reflect the time and effort spent alongside the experience points. The Library and Mentor Backgrounds may help this process along (see Chapter Three), but the two bonuses cannot be combined to save large amounts of experience.

- **Teamwork:** If you want to cooperate with another magician to cast a single spell, both of you must possess the same Path. (An Herbalist won't be much good when a soul-bound sorcerer tries to invoke Hellfire.) Decide who the prime caster is from there. That person makes the magic roll.

From there, each assistant rolls the appropriate Attribute + Ability as well. An additional turn may be required for each magician after the second. For each successful assistant, lower the difficulty of the prime character's roll by one, to a minimum difficulty of 3.

Teamwork failure leaves the prime character where she started, with no help or hindrance. Anyone who botches, however, adds two to the prime caster's difficulty, or



subtracts two of her successes. If the task involves some heavy-duty power (a Level Five Spell, for instance), an unpleasant side-effect might be forthcoming....

- **Combining Paths:** Hedge Magic Paths cannot be combined for additional effect, nor may Rituals. A Ritual might be set in motion before or after a Path spell, but not during. Although some Rituals have lingering effects, a spell or Ritual must be completed before another magical action can begin.

- **Levels:** Each Path has five basic levels, that cost the normal amount of points to achieve. A sixth level — supreme mastery — costs 50 additional experience points to attain, and demonstrates the upper limits of Hedge Magic. Storytellers might forbid this level to player characters if its effects seem too powerful for the chronicle concept.

- **Storyteller Prerogative:** Magic moves in unpredictable ways, and tends to blend into the landscape. Without the power of the Spheres, human will only stretches so far; Hedge Magic cannot move mountains on command. If a player attempts some huge spell that obviously defies reality (making a truck levitate in broad daylight, shooting Hellfire out of her fingertips in a shopping mall, etc.) without backing the spell up with some serious roleplaying, the Storyteller is perfectly within her rights to simply say, "It

doesn't work." Even then, massive workings might not succeed. Hedge magicians are enigmatic beings with mysterious powers, not *Dr. Strange* refugees.

(**Storytellers Note:** This "loophole" is not intended to let you screw your players over on a whim, simply to reinforce the limitations of Hedge Magic while discouraging power-gaming. A spell conducted under dramatic circumstances with all the trimmings should be left to the usual systems, or even be granted immediate success.)

- **Additional Numina:** "Numina" is a general term for unusual Advantages — the three Affinities of Hedge Magic, Psychic Phenomena and True Faith. (See *The Hunters Hunted*, *Ascension's Right Hand*, *The Inquisition*, *The Quick and the Dead* or *Project Twilight* for these additional powers.) Few individuals are multi-talented enough to master several Numina at once, but some brilliant sorcerers manage to do so.

If by chance you possess some additional Numina Affinity, those initial dots cost 14 points each instead of seven. If, for example, you wanted to begin the game with both Herbalism (Hedge Magic) and Telepathy (Psychic Phenomena), it would cost you at least 14 freebie points in addition to your original three Hedge Magic dots. Sorcerer characters cannot divide their three initial dots between Hedge Magic



and other Numina; such talents must be purchased with freebie points or experience. Obviously, if you're learning the mystic arts, it helps to specialize.

Unlike True Magick, Hedge Magic is not nullified by True Faith (see **The Book of Shadows** or **Ascension's Right Hand**). However, high levels of Faith (five or more) may invoke the Echoes Flaw on nearby sorcerers. (See Chapter Three for details.)

- **True Magick and Hedge Magick:** In case it needs repeating, Hedge Magick and Sphere magick are incompatible. An Awakened mage cannot use Hedge Magick, a sorcerer cannot use the other. (See Chapter Three for other crossover systems.)

- **Rituals:** Sometimes, a working requires precise, specific knowledge — in other words, a Ritual created for that purpose. Since thousands of mystic rituals exist worldwide, we'll reflect those endless possibilities with three-point Rituals bought as "specialties" for a related Path.

Certain Paths demand certain Rituals to obtain certain results. The various Path listings describe their affiliated Rituals (if any) and the things you can do with them. Each Ritual costs an additional three points and allows you a bit of flexibility beyond the Path's usual limitations. In all other ways, a Ritual resembles a normal magic working: It takes the usual amount of time, requires tools and conforms to the sorcerer's magic style.

COUNTERSPELLS

By North and South, I seal thee

By East and West, I seal thee

By Air, Earth, Fire and Water, I seal thee

Three times three, protected and warded

So Will It, I

So Mote It Be.

— protective warding invocation

Counterspells are elementary magic. Any magician who wants to survive learns the proper wards and counters before she sets out to possess stronger arts. Such protections take a thousand different forms, from the sand circles of the Anjavho to the guardian runes of Norse *vitkar*, and the blessings that all religions teach their faithful servants. In plain terms, they slow or stop the effects of dangerous magics, unweave spells in progress or form a mystic barrier against mystic energies.

- A **normal counterspell** can be cast immediately, and protects its subject against hostile enchantments. Blocking an incoming spell requires a successful Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 8). Each success you win eliminates one success from your opponent's attack. Total victory on your part nullifies his spell completely. Willpower points may be spent to aid a counterspell, but you must score at least one natural success to complete the protection.

- An **unweaving counterspell** undoes another party's enchantments. You have to understand what you're attempting to undo, so knowledge of the Path involved is essential. If you've got at least one dot in the caster's Path, you may attempt an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 8). Each success cancels one of the original magician's successes until either you fail the roll (which ends the attempt) or his spell is undone. For long-standing enchantments, a Storyteller might simply tell her player to accumulate five successes or more; really strong or True Magick workings would demand 10 or even 15 successes to unravel.

- A **warding counterspell** (not to be confused with a Ward from the Path of that name) sets up a small protective field. First, you prepare the area — which can range from a three-foot circle to a 20' x 20' room — by inscribing mystic designs, marking out protective sigils and performing a blessing invocation. A roll of Wits + Occult (difficulty 8) sets up a "barrier" of successes. To reach past the ward, a rival spellcaster must roll more successes than you had accumulated when you created the barrier. Once he does, the ward is broken and must be reset. Obviously, it's a good idea to make extended rolls when setting such protections, and to refresh them from time to time. Preparing a counterspell ward takes roughly five minutes for every 10 square feet in the protected area.

Each form of counterspell costs three points to learn (see "Rituals"). Such protections usually guard the sorcerer himself, but may be used to shield another person instead. Basic counterspell rites can cancel the effects of Hedge Magic, True Magick, vampiric Thaumaturgy, and faerie cantrips cast against the magician or his protectorate. Spirit powers — Gifts, Charms and Arcanoi — require additional counterspell Rituals, which also cost three points each. Full "protection," therefore, would cost you a total of 18 points. As most wizards would attest, it's worth it.

CREATING NEW PATHS

With the permission of a particularly brave (or stupid?) Storyteller, you might be able to create new magical Paths. The requirements, should the Storyteller allow this, are as follows:

- Your primary Path rating must be at least five before you can design new magical roads.

- The initial dot in the newly created Path costs 10 experience points; each level thereafter costs (current level x five).

- In story terms, you'll have to do plenty of research, experimentation and practice before this new Path comes together. It's not unreasonable to spend years of game time developing some new occult talent, then perfecting it well enough to achieve consistent results.

- All Path elements must be tied to a certain theme. The Path of Enhanced Senses won't allow you to fly.

THE PATHS

• Hedge Magic is subtle and slow. No new Path will allow a magician to blow up buildings with a wave of her hand or transmute enemies into puddles of seawater. Really powerful spells are the purview of True Mages, and they pay the Paradoxical price for that power.

...magic is precisely that thing which cannot be explained or predicted in ordinary physical terms.

— Donald Tyson, *Ritual Magic*

Tyson is right; even so, for game purposes, we need a rough system to reflect the powers of the magician. The following Paths represent those arcane abilities and the

HEDGE MAGIC

SUCCESSES NEEDED

Standard task (Conjuring a card)	one
Difficult task (Healing a gunshot wound)	one per path level
Impossible task (Binding a raging werewolf)	one per path level, + 2 difficulty (10 maximum)

COUNTERSPELLS

Normal	Wits + Occult	Difficulty 8
Unweaving	Intelligence + Occult	Difficulty 8
Warding	Wits + Occult	Difficulty 8

PATH LISTINGS

Path	Effect	Roll	Willpower cost
Alchemy	Transmutation of elements	Intelligence + Alchemy(Occult Science)	1 Willpower (no cost)
Conjuration	Pull things from "nowhere"	Dexterity + Occult	(no cost)
Conveyance	Swift Travel	Stamina + Occult	1 Willpower
Cursing	Cause bad fortune	Manipulation + Intimidation	1 Willpower
Divination	Foretell the future	Perception + Fortune Telling	(no cost)
Enchantment	Create minor talismans	Intelligence + Occult	1 Willpower
Ephemera	Deal with spirits	Charisma + Enigmas	(no cost)
Fascination	Charms people	(Social Trait) + Occult	(no cost)
Healing	Reduce pain or injury	Manipulation + Intuition	1 Willpower
Hellfire	Creates elemental attacks	Manipulation + Occult	1 Willpower
Herbalism/Brewing	Create potions	Intelligence + Herbalism	(no cost)
Shadows	Shapes shadows, bends sounds	Manipulation + Stealth	(no cost)
Shapeshifting	Changes caster's form	Stamina + Occult	1 Willpower
Summoning (Material)	Call, Bind, Ward and Dismiss	Charisma + Occult to Summon	(no cost)
		Manipulation + Occult to Bind	1 Willpower
		Wits + Occult to Dismiss	(no cost)
		Wits + Occult to Ward	(no cost)
Summoning (Daimonic)	Call, Bind, Ward and Dismiss	Charisma + Occult to Summon	(no cost)
		Manipulation + Occult to Bind	1 Willpower
		Wits + Occult to Dismiss	(no cost)
		Wits + Occult to Ward	(no cost)
Weathercraft	Changes weather	Manipulation + Occult	1 Willpower

things they allow a sorcerer to do. By necessity, these Paths are broad yet limited. The ultimate magic comes from the power of the story, not the power of the dice.

Some of the following powers have been collected and revised from **Halls of the Arcanum**, **Ascension's Right Hand** and **The Quick and the Dead**; several others are brand new. It's important to note that although each Path indicates some pretty broad powers, your sorcerer still needs to cast different spells to set different things in motion. This idea really falls more under the heading of "Roleplaying" than of "Game Mechanics"; nevertheless, it shouldn't be ignored.

You begin with one particular Path in which you're especially well-acquainted. This primary Path marks your real talents, while the others reflect things you've learned along the way. No additional Path can be higher than that primary talent, though the others reach the same level.

The magician's affinity to magic often shows through in his personality, dress and bearing. A sorcerer who excels at Hellfire is going to be a tempestuous soul with a sharp temper and aggressive mannerisms. Contrast that with the calm healer, the passionate shapeshifter and the absent-minded dream-mystic and you'll see how these dots can become story elements unto themselves.

ALCHEMY

The Great Art, Our Sacred Philosophy, the Divine Work, *Ars Chemica*—these terms surround the occult (some would say sacred) science/art of alchemy. But what was, or is, alchemy?

Popular conception remembers alchemy as medieval proto-chemistry — a pseudo-science that sought to transmute base metals (e.g., lead) into gold. While many alchemists pursued that goal (if only to pay the bills), the art itself concentrates on perfection of all kinds — material, mental, scientific and finally spiritual. The transmutation of lead into gold is merely the symbol for the best alchemists' true goal: transformation of a mortal man into an immortal god.

As it's practiced in the West, alchemy is the epitome of the Hermetic tradition, the mystic discipline that draws together the myths of Egypt, Greece and Rome, mingles them with Biblical traditions and adds elements of the Kabbalah and Qur'an. Like the worm Uroboros, alchemy is endless, circular and symbolic. It defies description because, by nature, the practice ideally defies limitation. Alchemy crosses the borders between art and science, between spiritual discipline and scientific practice; it crosses Asia Minor and Europe, and has been practiced for over 2,000 years.

The key to — and often the aim of — Western alchemy is the Philosopher's Stone, sometimes called simply the Stone. Like the art itself, this rarefied material is a paradox; some alchemists claim it's an actual stone, others deny the claim. The Stone has been described as a tincture, an elixir, a wax, a powder and, of course, a brilliant stone. In any case, it is this material (often sought but rarely gained) that transmutes lead into gold, cures disease and grants immortality.

The alchemical art brings nature to perfection. *Prima Materia* — the primal material — is the base substance that is turned, through a variety of processes, into the Stone. Naturally, alchemists disagree on the *Prima Materia*, too; some believe that it should be a truly base material — dog droppings, bones, blood, etc. — while others argue that the *Prima Materia* itself is a supernatural substance. Part of the alchemical process involves experimenting with a variety of substances, observing the paths that ideally lead to the Philosopher's Stone. Once the alchemist chooses a substance for his experiments, he must determine a process toward perfection.

The first step usually involves putrefaction, which culminates in *nigredo* (the black stage), when the substance is dead, or has been reduced to its first matter. The substance is then reborn in *The Peacock's Tail*, a stage of many colors, followed by *albedo* (the whitening), when a white elixir forms. Ideally, the process concludes with *rubedo*, when the substance becomes a red tincture, elixir or powder: the Philosopher's Stone.

The Great Work is not learned easily. True, there are many works in print that *claim* to detail the secrets of alchemy, but these are often analogical reflections, not "instruction manuals." To understand anything beyond the most basic symbols of the art, an alchemist can spend literally lifetimes in study. The best sources of alchemical knowledge are personal experimentation, apprenticeship to a senior alchemist, or "revelation," a collection of dreams and visions that unlock the symbols and confer — one hopes — the power of understanding.

In game terms, the Alchemy Path allows you to synthesize various powders, potions and other concoctions, or to enhance some existing material to unusual potency (see Enchantment and Herbalism/Brewing, below). Unlike the Enchantment Path, Alchemy doesn't create "magic items"; rather, it brings out the item's innate powers, strengthens them and combines them with other enhanced properties. Like other Hedge Magic Paths, Alchemy is rated in one to five dots; those dots reflect the principles you understand and the expertise you possess. The highest level of Alchemy

theoretically expands beyond material things; in game terms, an Alchemist who reaches this exalted state may Awaken and continue his road with the Spheres.

Alchemical workings depend on the proper tools, environment and preparation. You can't just fire off a spell if Alchemy is your calling; while items may be prepared ahead of time and carried along, creating new enhancements take both time and workspace (see "Tools of the Trade — Alchemical Laboratory"). Preparing a material or concoction may take days or weeks, depending on what it is and what it does. For systems' sake, assume that it takes one or two days to prepare materials of Path Levels One and Two, and one week per Path level for higher-level concoctions.

Roll: Alchemy (Occult Science) + Intelligence
Costs one Willpower per operation

Effects

- Minor substances can be created, such as simple poisons, tranquilizers, anesthetics or even stimulants — nothing that's obviously "magical" or "supernatural," but simply extra-potent versions of normal materials.
 - A liquid that, when imbibed, removes minor Health Level penalties (through Injured) until the individual is wounded again or heals.
 - A powder that, when combined with an alcoholic beverage, allows a person to recover instantly from a drunken stupor.
 - A mirror that cannot be chipped or smashed.
- More powerful versions of Level One materials. At this stage, you might also open the doors to a person's mystic insight, granting dreams or visions to whoever consumes your concoction.
 - A liquid that allows the drinker to go for an entire week with only one hour's sleep per night.
 - A powder that grants a vision to whoever eats it; this vision is always clothed in symbolic language, and may either portend future events or show previously unknown aspects of a current situation.
 - A blade with an ultra-keen edge, one that never needs to be resharpened.
- At this level, you can create items that have some obviously supernatural effects, or enhance existing materials to unearthly levels.
 - A potion that imbues the drinker with some low-level, psychic power (perhaps one of the Psychic Numina described in *Ascension's Right Hand* or *The Hunter's Hunted*) for one scene (or one hour).
 - A dust that reveals hidden, disguised or invisible things for what they truly are.

— A small weapon (a knife, a handful of bullets) may be altered so that it inflicts aggravated damage.

- Stronger versions of the previous creations may be made, and concoctions that enhance a person's Attributes (by one or two dots only) may be brewed.

— A drought of this potion raises the drinker's Physical Attributes by one each for an hour or so.

— A salve that, when applied to the eyes, grants the user the ability to see through the Shroud for one night (see **Wraith: The Oblivion**).

— A bullet that bursts into flames when fired. This projectile inflicts an extra two dice worth of fire damage and ignites flammable items whenever it lands.

- You may, given time, brew substances that simulate the supernatural abilities of other denizens of the hidden world — vampire Disciplines, werewolf Gifts, etc. — from the first through the third level, or create concoctions that duplicate those creatures' innate powers (regeneration, stepping sideways, even frenzy). True Magick Spheres may *not* be simulated, although individual rites may be copied at the Storyteller's discretion. Wraithly Arcanoi cannot be synthesized (how could you study the powers of a ghost?), nor may the cantrips of the fae (which depend upon their link to the Dreaming). Obviously, these elixirs require samples from the creature in question — ground vampire fang, werewolf dung, etc. — and often carry nasty side effects like blood-thirst and a hair-trigger temper. These droughts duplicate only one specific effect (Sweet Whispers, Blur of the Milky Eye, etc.), not an entire Discipline or tribal inheritance, and last for one day or less.

— A regenerative powder that, when consumed, allows the user to heal damage slowly (one level every other turn) for the duration of a story. As a side effect, the drinker sweats heavily and smells like a caged beast.

— An elixir (requiring at least five Blood Points of vampire vitae) that simulates three dots in Potence for three hours. Sadly, this magical fluid also creates a ravening hunger; for a day and a night, the drinker eats whatever food might be nearby.

— An amulet that protects the wearer from physical vampire attacks. The Kindred might employ Dominate, Auspex or some other "long range" Discipline against the protected one, but may not touch her so long as she wears the amulet. As a side effect, the wearer feels cold whenever she's wearing the amulet.

- Formulae "above" Level Five exist: these are the pinnacle of the alchemical tradition, the most mysterious and sought-after formulae, including the Philosopher's Stone, immortality elixirs or transmutation potions.

Disasters: Naturally, home-grown chemical compounds — especially formulae created for the first time — can have all kinds of nasty side effects. A failed roll simply creates a worthless (and often foul) substance; a botched roll might very well indicate a poisonous mixture, a flawed item or a laboratory explosion.

CONJURATION

With this Path, you can move pre-prepared objects from one place to another. Rabbits can be pulled out of hats, coins moved around and swords summoned to one's hand. Mages who've studied the art declare that such feats are limited applications of Correspondence principles, but claim that the magicians lack the understanding or might to truly access the Sphere itself.

Any object to be moved must be prepared in advance by some method of the caster's belief. If the conjurer is a Voudun mambo, she must make sacrifices to the loa, sprinkle the objects with blood, ash, bone dust or blessed earth, and consecrate them. If he's a stage magician, he could hypnotize his assistant before sawing her in half. A Satanist may dedicate his machete to Lucifer while a Wiccan witch might inscribe the item, call the corners and invoke the goddess and god (see "Magic Styles"). The magician's expertise determines the spell's maximum range. Failure means the Conjunction did not work, while a botch makes it go spectacularly wrong.

Conjunction is difficult to use offensively. The item moved cannot be chosen at whim. It may be an animal (rabbit, cat, mouse, or even human), but may not be whisked in and out without prior ritual preparation. Unconscious beings may, with proper preparation (like hypnosis), be moved against their will by a powerful conjurer, but this Path cannot be used against an enemy in combat.

You can nudge or summon one additional object for every level above that required to move it in the first place. A magician doing the magic coin trick could move one coin at level one, two at level two, three at three and so on. Multiple living beings cannot be Conjured across space at the basic level; only the greatest of conjurers can move more than a single creature with this art.

A series of related Rituals (see "Rituals") allows a skilled magician to manipulate an object without moving it, make a coin spin in midair or a rope grow taut and hang from nothing. Once the subject is readied, it can be called or moved with a simple command (*O Blade of my Father, I summon thee!*). The item itself does not become magical in any way, and once the magic is used, it must be reset.

With a bit of style and a good Dexterity + Subterfuge roll, a conjurer can fool even the most sophisticated audiences into thinking that his magic is merely a good trick, or



can hide the conjured item until it's needed. This is difficult, though not impossible, with larger (or living) subjects. Just ask David Copperfield!

Roll: Dexterity + Occult No Willpower cost
Effects

- Wow! You can nudge a tiny nonfunctional object (a coin, knife, business card) without touching it. The magic carries no real force behind it. Anyone who wants to stop the item from moving can simply pick it up. Range is roughly 10 feet or less.
- At this level of expertise, you may move a small simple item (a book, jar, rope) or Conjure it across intervening space from up to 15 feet away. Anyone wishing to stop an object moved with this level of magic should make a Strength roll (difficulty 5).
- A large or complex inanimate object (a sword, telephone, boom box, bottle of wine) or a simple life form (snail, ant, roach) can be moved, levitated or snatched from thin air. This object can be no larger than a chair, and you must be within 25 feet of it. An item moved at this level can support about 200 pounds; anyone attempting to stop it must roll her Strength against difficulty 7.
- Where'd that rabbit come from? At this level, you can move, levitate or summon a living mammal, reptile or bird — any complex life form of less than half-human mass. Inanimate objects as large as steamer trunks can also be moved or levitated at this level. Maximum range is 50 feet or less.
- Presto! Now you can move or manipulate a human or human-sized animal from up to 60 feet away. This subject *must* be either willing or unconscious. It's best to work with a longtime partner when performing this trick, as the experience is disorienting and distressing. Botching this Conjunction roll can have disastrous consequences. At best, the magic will simply fail. At worst, well... ick.
- The ultimate mastery of Conjunction magic allows you to shift a large (roughly car-sized) object or being, or move up to three human-sized creatures. Maximum range is 100 feet. All the usual specifics apply.

Disasters: When such spells fail, the conjured object either fails to appear, remains motionless or drops to the ground. Botched spells summon the wrong object, place it in the wrong place (like directly over your head), or destroy it. Things get especially messy if you were trying to shift a living being at the time. Some tales tell of magicians who attempted some spectacular feat of Conjunction, only to disappear *themselves* when the magic failed! The fate of such sorcerers is unknown.

CONVEYANCE

To travel swiftly, without hindrance or delay, has been one of humanity's greatest dreams. Until the current century, a long journey — and “long” could mean 10 miles or less — meant inconvenience, danger, expense and time. Naturally, the earliest magicians sought a way around such hassles. In this Path, which bears a traveler from one point to another while avoiding obstacles in between, they found an answer to their needs.

This Path is not without its own risks and limitations. First and foremost, a magical traveler needs some means of travel. The archetypal witch's broom is but the most obvious solution; some wizards employ friendly spirits, conjurer's cabinets, fiery chariots or flying beds. The “vehicle” depends more upon the magician's preference than upon the Path, and the ceremonies that imbue an inanimate object with the power of transportation vary from practice to practice. In practical terms, however, all of these methods accomplish the same goal — moving the magician from one place to another with a minimum of fuss.

The other constraints come from the innate unpredictability of magic, the suspicions of one's neighbors and the wild means of travel. A flying broomstick isn't as safe or comfortable as, say, a Lexus; a flying carpet is a fragile thing, and the disorientation that comes from long-distance teleportation leaves the traveler sick and dizzy. By the same token, the nosy old lady down the block isn't going to keep the news to herself, if, by some chance, she notices you flying out the window on a broomstick. In today's skeptical world, the Path of Subtle Transportation is unpredictable, often failing when you need it most. Generally, it's safer just to use a car. When emergencies occur, however, this Path presents an option for wizards with a taste for tradition and the nerves for some serious magic.

In game terms, you must first define the “vehicle” of transportation. Is it an enchanted broom? A teleportation booth? A carpet? A handful of blessed dust? Each method has its own limitations and rites, and few sorcerers use more than one Conveyance style. Once you choose the method you prefer, you'll have to “prime” that vehicle before each trip. Storytellers note: This should involve a bit of time and trouble — this Path evokes some serious juju. The final roll signifies the beginning of the trip; from there, the distance, method and time of the journey should determine its ease.

You don't have to be the one who travels; this spell may be cast upon a *willing* subject. Once she departs, though, you cannot direct her flight; for better or worse, she ends up where your magics send her. Like Conjunction spells, Conveyance magics cannot be used against an enemy in combat. The subject must be prepared, ritually and emotionally, to take the trip before it begins.

Like Conjunction, this Path works along the same principles as that most esoteric of Sphere magicks, Correspondence. Of all the Paths, Conveyance is the one most prone to failure. Depending on the method and distance of your travels, the Storyteller should check at least once to see if some disaster occurs. A brief jump across the block should pass without incident; a flying carpet ride across the state ought to be a bit riskier. The "Travel Complications" chart reflects a few common methods and the problems that come with them.

Once the trip ends, the magic dissipates. Unless the vehicle itself is enchanted (see the Witch's Steed in the Appendix), you'll have to cast a new spell to travel again. Finding your feet after a trip might take a turn or two, especially if you've just taken a long journey. Short trips — a quarter-mile or so — occur instantly. Longer jaunts require some travel time, typically one turn per mile. Long trips — five miles or more — should become stories unto themselves, and ought to involve some extra risks. Who's to say what you might meet on an extended flight over Central Africa?

Like most static magics, this Path depends more upon expertise than upon personal success. An exceptional roll (three successes or more) might grant you some helpful side effect, like an immunity to complications or an especially quick trip. For the most part, however, a skillful sorcerer can travel faster and further than an inexperienced one. This Path works better in remote, uninhabited places than in populated areas. A magician who wishes to travel across an area full of people (or during full daylight) should add two to her casting roll difficulty (maximum 10); on the other hand, a sorcerer traveling across uninhabited regions — like deserts or rain forests — or at night might be able to double her effective range at the Storyteller's discretion.

Roll: Magician's Stamina + Occult

Costs one Willpower

Effects

- You may move one small (10 lbs. or less), object roughly 10 feet.
- Several small objects or one large one (100 lbs. or less) may be moved about 100 feet.
- One human-sized living being may be moved roughly a mile.
- That same being may travel up to five miles. A large object (500 lbs. or less) may move the same distance.
- You may move up to three people roughly 10 miles, or shift a 1000 lb. object the same distance.
- Up to five people (or 2000 lbs. worth of material) may be moved up to 15 miles.

Disasters: A failed roll leaves the traveler(s) sitting in place; a botched roll usually makes a mess, stranding the passenger in some dangerous place, dropping her from a great height, or melding her with the nearest wall. (*The Fly* and *Star Trek I* demonstrate the gruesome effects of botched teleportation rolls.)

CURSING

One of the oldest forms of magic, a curse imparts some bad wish onto an offending party. This ranges from the Evil Eye to a group malediction. Though anybody can direct ill will at someone else, this Path allows you to vent your spleen with real effect. At its most basic level, such a curse quickly fouls up its victim's life, then dissipates. At its worst, potent Cursing can last for generations.

TRAVEL COMPLICATIONS

Method	Complications	Result
Cloud of Smoke	Wrong Destination	"Where am I?"
Flying Bed, Broom, Carpet, etc.	Slipping off/Unwanted attention	Dexterity + Athletics roll to keep from falling (also see below)
Flying Potion/Ointment	Bad batch	Travel power wears off too soon
Helpful Spirits	Temperamental — some bargain required	Ending up in some hazardous place
Magic Chariot	Unwanted attention	Word gets around; attack may be forth coming
Strong Wind	Too strong/Not strong enough	Wrong destination, or faltering flight
Teleportation Booth	"Oops..."	Wrong destination (if you're lucky...)

The severity of the Curse is usually bound to the dots in your Severity rating (the dots in his Path), and the effects usually only happen once. With a number of successes, however, you can make nasty things happen to more than one person in a given group. A magician cannot Curse someone more severely than his skill allows (i.e., above the dots he has) if working alone. If he works with a group versed in the same Path, however, his anger carries more clout.

The basic system for Cursing is simple: First, decide how much punishment you want to inflict (within your ability, of course), spend one turn per level of Severity magically collecting and focusing your (*character's!*) hate, then discharge it in some cathartic fashion (a scream, a dance, a venomous e-mail message, etc.). From there, you roll Manipulation + Intimidation to work the Effect and spend a point of Willpower. Your successes get divided between Relation and Severity (player's choice), allowing you to customize a Curse. That Curse's Effect strikes soon afterward. At some point and in some way, it is determined by the Storyteller, *not* the magician; you can choose who you want to hurt, but not how it happens.

If, for example, Jaymi Darkangel (with three dots in Curse) rolls four successes when Cursing her landlord, she could choose to inflict a serious injury on him, or cause embarrassment to both the landlord and his wife. Two days later, the landlord trips and falls, breaking his leg (Severity 3). If Jaymi had decided to humiliate the family instead, the fall might have ended in a pile of dog feces; the wife, meanwhile, burns the brownies for her first PTA meeting (Severity 2). Simple, but effective!

Unlike most forms of Hedge Magic, Cursing can focus the will of a group into a force more potent than anything a single magician could muster. By acting in concert (see "Teamwork"), an angry pack of Curse-skilled hedge witches can bring down death and worse upon their enemies. In such cases, each additional member grants a new dot to the pool, adding to either Severity, Relation or both. Jaymi, therefore, could use up to four levels of Severity if she teamed up with Cheryl of the Five Rose Sect to curse the landlord, and her difficulty drops by one. In the case of group Curses, set the initial difficulty at 8 for simplicity.

Curses do not force events to happen or rearrange the laws of nature (that's True Magick's providence). They do, however, subtly nudge things or people already in motion toward the caster's intent. A hedge wizard's Curse may take days or even months to occur, but it *will* happen. Someone successfully Cursed may not immediately walk through a plate glass window, but she may find herself under a falling windowpane the next time she passes a construction site. In magickal terms, such events are always coincidental and will only strike when a strong possibility exists for them to.

An especially skilled magician may invoke the Death Curse. By spending all her permanent Willpower, that wizard's player can add that Willpower to her Curse dots, and divide the total as she sees fit between Severity and Relation. The character then turns into a mindless husk and dies soon after,

burned out by inner hatred. A witch with minimal skill in Cursing might only get four or five dots to spend, but a powerful one could wither a whole family!

Supernatural creatures may be Cursed, but can resist the Effect with a successful Willpower roll. This roll's difficulty will usually be 7 or 8, but might go as high as 9 if the magician is especially powerful or successful.

Naturally, the being in question has to be aware of the Curse in order to resist it. Short problems will probably just happen and be done with, but a prolonged Curse can be discovered with a little work (consulting the spirits, checking auras with Prime magick or *Auspex*, reading probability with *Entropy*, etc.). A mage's or magician's Arcane Background can take successes away from a wizard attempting to Curse her on a one-for-one basis.

As any wise practitioner knows, rearranging the paths of fortune can backfire. Botching a Curse brings the effect back at the caster in ways that should delight the most sadistic Storytellers. Even if the roll is successful, there's always some kind of fallout from a Curse, especially if it's a severe one. The nature of this payback lies more with storytelling than with systems, but should be in line with the general power of the Curse and the ill will of the magician. Backripples range from dropping an expensive item (and having to pay for it) to foreclosure, physical ailments or sudden disappearing acts on the parts of one's friends.

No Curse needs to be used at full potency. You can choose to revoke the Curse at any time prior to its effect. A magician skilled in this Path can also try to undo another's Curse with a Wits + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 9) and a Willpower point.

Roll: Manipulation + Intimidation

Costs one Willpower

Severity Effect (Path rating)

- A brief inconvenience (dropping an object, saying something stupid, closing a door on your fingers, etc.)
- A slip-up that results in a lasting injury or embarrassment (stepping on glass barefooted, throwing up on the Japanese Prime Minister, breaking an heirloom, etc.)
- A serious injury or illness, not incapacitating, but painful and inconvenient (broken limb, hernia, gunshot wound, etc.)
- A lasting illness, not fatal, but debilitating (infection, stroke, heart attack, Alzheimer's disease, etc.)
- Death, usually by some ghastly means (decapitation, impaling, mangling, torture, disease, etc.)

Relation

- One person only
- One close relation or friend
- Two similar relations (male heirs, lovers, parents)

•••• All close living relations or friends

••••• All relations *and* friends!

5 + Relatives or friends for generations to come

Disasters: As described above, a Curse can boomerang on its caster. A failed roll discharges the malediction into the surrounding area, peppering it with bad fortune (Storyteller's option as to what happens after that). A botched Curse roll infects the sorcerer with her own hatred, dropping the spell's effects into her lap.

DIVINATION

"What's in my future?" For as long as human beings have understood the concept of "future," they've wanted to know what lies around the next bend in the road. Foresight is important, especially to rulers, merchants, warriors and magicians; hence, this Path — often attributed to the gods themselves — became a well-traveled road on the sorcerer's journey.

Throughout time, fortune-tellers have employed any number of divinatory styles:

- **Cartomancy** — fortune-telling through card-reading. Each card has a different divinatory meaning, and drawing cards in certain orders offers insight into hidden or unknown aspects of the past, present, or future. Cartomancy tools include: Tarot decks, regular playing cards, or custom designed selections.

- **Casting** — Tossing sticks, bones, stones, coins, shells, or any other such objects on the ground, and finding meaning in the positions in which particular objects fall (similar to cartomancy, which could simply be considered a subdivision of casting). Different cultures use different objects: Chinese sorcerers might use joss sticks for I-Ching divination, vitki employ rune stones or staves for futhark, Yoruba sorcerers would use shells for Ifa divination, etc.

- **Dream Interpretation** — Digging past the obvious "Boy, that was a weird dream," the diviner interprets the symbols of the mind. Since all cultures possess archetypal symbols (which may or may not come from the gods, depending on who you ask), a skilled sorcerer can make a good guess about the meanings of a dream.

- **Scrying** — Gazing into a shiny or reflective surface — a crystal ball, a pool or lake, a bowl of water, a mirror, etc. — in order to catch visions of the future. The surface, of course, is less important than the sorcerer's own intuitive connection to the Otherworld; the reflection simply opens the channel to farsight.

Other divination methods include palmistry, tea leaves, bibliomancy (opening a book up to a random page), entrail-reading, and so on. In game terms, the method you choose isn't really important; in story terms, it may be vital. Fortune-tellers specialize in one form of divination — you won't find a Kabbalist casting joss-sticks with runic markings on them.



That style can become the jumping-off point for any number of stories; imagine the difficulties an entrail-reader will encounter if she plies her trade in the United States, or the perils of Tarot reading in Iraq....

Divination can only be performed after meditation and prayer; depending upon how far ahead (or behind) you're trying to see, that meditation time can vary from a half-hour to an entire day. Since divination often means shaking hands with the gods, most fortune-tellers cleanse themselves physically and spiritually before beginning the rite.

For you the player, Divination offers a tricky kind of insight into coming events. It's far from accurate and never literal; even so, a successful Divination roll can grant you a glimpse at the forces behind your chronicle. What you do with that knowledge depends on you.

In game terms, you describe what you're looking for, the method you're using and the results you expect to receive. A simple Perception + Fortune-Telling roll determines the answer's accuracy, and the question determines the difficulty (see chart). The more successful the roll, the more precise the information.

Your Storyteller makes the roll (What? You expected to know how accurate your divinations are?) and decides what to tell you. Since divinations are symbolic, not literal, the insights will appear as signs, not direct answers. Unless the Storyteller wants to give you a healthy clue, she'll leave the interpretation up to you:

Good Example: "The sticks fly up, fall to the ground and scatter into a pattern. Three sticks lie at odds with the fourth, and the fourth lies crossed over the fifth."

Acceptable Example: "According to the sticks, your group will soon be betrayed from within. Someone's going to die."

Bad Example: "Wintersshade's going to betray you, and Olaf is going to die."

Your Path rating determines how well — and how far — you might peer into the past or future. Since Divination puts extra demands on a Storyteller's time, plans and patience, she may decide to disallow this Path for player characters.

Roll: Perception + Fortune-Telling

No Willpower cost

Effects

- One week into the past or future with notable inaccuracy.
- One month into the past or future with some degree of accuracy.

- Vision for one or two years before or behind; that vision is fairly accurate, but has been known to be wrong.
- You might be able to see 10 years forward or back. That sight tends to be pretty acute; even when you're wrong, your information contains some glimpses of truth.
- You can see for a lifetime or more with very accurate results. Distant divinations (20 years in the future, 100 years in the past) raise your difficulty to 9 or 10.
- Your prophecies may reach as far into the past or future as your Storyteller choose to allow. Although distant visions can become unreliable, there's some element of truth in everything you foretell.

Disasters: Prophecies are notoriously misleading. A failed roll might indicate a false omen, or no omen at all. A botched roll represents a vision inaccurate enough to be dangerous (telling someone, "That pass is perfectly safe" when in actuality a nasty ambush awaits).

ENCHANTMENT

The magical art of creating minor talismans (as opposed to the more powerful True Magick Talismans), Enchantment imbues an item with the spellcaster's essence. Crafting magic from ingredients both eldritch and mundane, the enchanter spends much of his time closeted in a laboratory peering through foul smoke, containing minor explosions, and tracking down bizarre magical ingredients.

Minor talismans differ from their magical counterparts in many ways. Each has a single power that usually operates a few times under set circumstances. Even the strongest such talismans pale in comparison to those crafted with True Magick. Their Effects aren't flashy, but they do get results... usually. Although they carry a trace residue of magic (detectable with Prime magick), they show up less readily than Talismans with a capital "T." Most reflect their homemade origins. Crafting a talisman, even a minor one, calls for a certain degree of mundane craftsmanship, which some enchanters have and some... well...

Talisman creation should flow more from story concerns and good roleplaying than from die rolls. In game terms, you begin the process with a ritual invocation, purifying your

workplace, meditating, praying for guidance and consecrating your tools. After the preparations are finished, you set to work on the object itself. Once the talisman's form is crafted (which may require a few Dexterity +

DIVINATION RESULTS	
Question	Difficulty
Simple query/Recent events	7
Complex query/a year or more past of future	8
Deeply hidden or distant information	9
Protected or very distant information	10

Ability rolls), the item should be prepared in some special way according to the belief or style of the magician — carved with runes, inset with crystals, dipped in blood, blessed by the son of a priest, etc. Useful Abilities for these tasks include Crafts, Artistic Expression, Gunsmithing, Hunting, Traps, Alchemy, Herbalism, Poisons, Stone Lore and Hearth Wisdom, depending on the purpose and manufacture of the talisman.

After this, pick *one* purpose for the item. This is the power it will have. A successful enchantment usually demands a day or two of preparation per talisman level. A simple Level One item would require only two to four days of work, while a Fifth Level one would demand at least five. At the end of this time, make an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty is the talisman's level +4). A point of Willpower, spent during final creation, infuses your magician's might into the talisman.

No enchanter can create a talisman more powerful than his Path level. If he's got four dots in Enchantment, he can only craft talismans of four dots or less in power. Once created, a minor talisman will work within some specified framework, i.e., when the moon is waning, when a blind man coughs, when the blade is drawn in anger, etc. These conditions should be colorful and very specific, tied to the purpose of the enchanter, not to general utility. Such particulars should be described during the creation process and must be adhered to. Each minor talisman only works a certain number of times (usually based on the number of successes rolled) and winds up useless, if decorative, thereafter.

Minor talismans vary tremendously, from the rowan necklace that protects against faerie magic to bones that allow one to (hopefully!) speak to one's ancestors. Such talismans can be used by anyone. Some potential talismans appear below and in the Appendix, but a clever enchanter can create her own items with a little ingenuity and a lot of work. First, decide which *single* Effect the talisman contains. From there, describe the research and development process. A simple "I create a Level Five talisman that makes me invisible" will not suffice! Both player and Storyteller should check the prospective talisman to make sure that it fits the general guidelines offered below. After a period of story-defined time (anywhere from a few days to a year or more), make an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 9). Success means your enchanter has discovered the secret of enchantment and can proceed as described above.

Roll: Intelligence + Occult Costs one Willpower

Effects and Sample Talismans

- A small object with tight restrictions and a limited power, perhaps a brief addition to an Attribute or Ability, that's never obvious as magic.
 - A silver toe ring that protects its wearer from incoming projectiles so long as she goes barefooted (two dots of Dodge vs. missiles).

- A colored candle that grants the user some one-time favor after it's been burned (two points of Resources, Arcane, Allies or Influence, depending on the color of the candle). The Background works once to provide a favor, then fades. Each success creates one candle.

- A handful of grave dust that enables the user to sleep soundly. He awakens immediately if someone approaches him with hostile intent.

- An oak picture frame that preserves any painting or document placed in it for as long as the frame remains intact. Both frame and contents must be sealed with almond oil and sprinkled with pure water.

- A more potent version of a Level One talisman (with an additional die or two of effect), or one that alters reality more noticeably.

- A handful of bullets (one per success) that do two additional dice of damage when fired from a specially prepared gun.

- An iron nail that enables the user to cause someone to painfully stub his toe. The nail must be driven by an enemy into a footprint left by the target.

- A golden charm that alerts the wearer when the talisman maker (or some other single party) is in danger. The charm must be sprinkled with wine each time it is used and works once for each crafting success.

- A rowan ring that negates any fae cantrip used to bewitch the wearer. This works for one incident per crafting success, granting the wearer an effective Banality of 10 until the enchantment fades away.

- The item performs some obviously unusual function. Witnesses who know anything about magic will sense it in the air. Clueless folks will be confused; how did he do that?

- A salve that heals three non-aggravated Health Levels worth of open wounds in a matter of minutes. This must be applied by moonlight by someone who loves the wounded person. Each success creates one application of balm.

- An obsidian bull torque that strengthens the wearer once after it is bloodied (three points of Strength that last for one scene per success after blood is wiped across it).

- A handkerchief that wipes away any normal thing it is used to clean (blood, ink, spilled food, fingerprints). The user must hum softly while mopping up. This works once for every success rolled during creation.

•••• With a talisman of this caliber, the user can defy a fair amount of conventional reality, albeit with some restrictions. If these limits are ignored, the magic is ineffective.

— Bones that allow the user to contact the person they came from. Note that this isn't always successful! If it is, however, the user can ask one question per creation success. Whether or not the ghost answers accurately is the spirit's (and Storyteller's) prerogative, but it will answer if it can. These bones work only three times, then crumble to dust.

— A book that translates anything written in it into the reader's native language. This book must be sprinkled with paper ash before the magic works. The translation effect works once per creation success, then reverts to the original language set down.

— A knife that stabs directly for the heart when used. This inflicts Strength + five dice of damage, and can be thrown. The blade must first be drawn in hot anger and washed afterward in fresh blood. Works once per success.

••••• Items this potent are rare and unpredictable. In places where the people refuse to believe in magic, such items might fail completely. Nevertheless, they work some wonder that obviously defies the seeming order of things.

— A black cloak that softens the user's footsteps, even if he walks across a squeaky floor. While using this magic's, the wearer is effectively silent unless he speaks aloud. Silver threads must be sewn into this garment; they break and fall away after the magic expires.

— An exquisite piano that plays beautifully for anyone who strokes its keys, even if she knows nothing about music. A prayer to the nine Muses (by name!) must be recited before the piano will play.

— A brass amulet that protects the bearer from detection and observation by magickal means. This amulet of the mists obscures its bearer from the flow of magickal energies (adds four to the difficulty of any roll made to locate the wearer magickally). The user must first answer an enigma before the amulet will protect him. This veil lasts a number of weeks equal to the creator's successes.

Disasters: Botching a creation roll can be a bad thing. Many an enchanter has disappeared in a sudden conflagration caused by something as prosaic as an untimely sneeze or a misread passage in his alchemical notes. Obviously, talisman creation is not a quick and easy art! Failed rolls render the item useless; botched castings can turn a beneficial talisman into a cursed one, blow the laboratory to bits, drain the caster's life into the item (one Health Level in damage per "1" rolled), or make other horrible things happen.

EPHEMERA

Since the days when flesh and spirit separated, mystics and spirits have longed to reach the other side. Talented people — mediums — can learn the Art of the Living Bridge — the Path that turns a sorcerer into a doorway between worlds.

This Path allows you to reach across the Gauntlet or Shroud and contact spirits or ghosts. Since most people, even mediums, assume that all spirits are more or less the same (they aren't), this can be a risky proposition. Fortunately, this body of occult lore includes a number of safeguards so that when the worst *does* happen, you have something to fall back on.

Ephemera's learning curve is steep; the early steps of this Path are dangerous but unavoidable. Amateur mediums get themselves in trouble by confusing Banes with ghosts, or nameless Spectres for ghostly loved ones. Less of an art than a shot in the dark, Ephemera shows you the way, but does not teach you how to walk it. That knowledge comes only with experience.

If your talents lie in this direction, the Ephemera Path allows you to put them to good use. As a medium, you open yourself up to the spirits — becoming, in effect, their conduit into the material world. In story terms, you abandon most of your self-control and allow the entity to take over. In **Wraith** terms, you become a temporary Consort for a ghost with the Puppetry Arcanos; as long as you both stay in touch with each other, the ghost uses your body for its own purposes. In **Werewolf** terms, you make yourself available to a nature spirit with the Possession Charm (see **Werewolf's** Chapter Seven, **Mage's** Chapter Nine, or **The Book of Madness'** Appendix), lowering your effective Willpower by two points so that the spirit can have an easier time getting into your skin. Spirits have minds of their own, though, and many of them (especially angry ghosts) take advantage of the "arrangement."

Thankfully, this Path includes a few defensive Rituals in case the spirits get nasty. Wise mediums are versed in the practices of Warding and Forbiddance (**Wraith**, pages 287-289). Each of these counts as a Level One Ritual and has the following system effects:

• **Warding** protects an area from ghostly intrusion. By using some precautionary charm (an intricate chant, a prayer, painted sigils, iron nails, sprinkled salt, smudging with incense), spending a point of Willpower, and rolling same vs. difficulty 7, you can block wraiths from entering an area for a certain period of time:

Ward Successes	Duration
One	One hour
Two	One day
Three	One week
Four	One month
Five	Three months

• **Forbiddance** immediately drives a wraith from the area. By rolling successfully (Willpower vs. difficulty 7), you can push a ghost out of your sight. A willful wraith can oppose this Ritual by spending one of its own Willpower per success, but until you've left the area, he has to stay away himself.

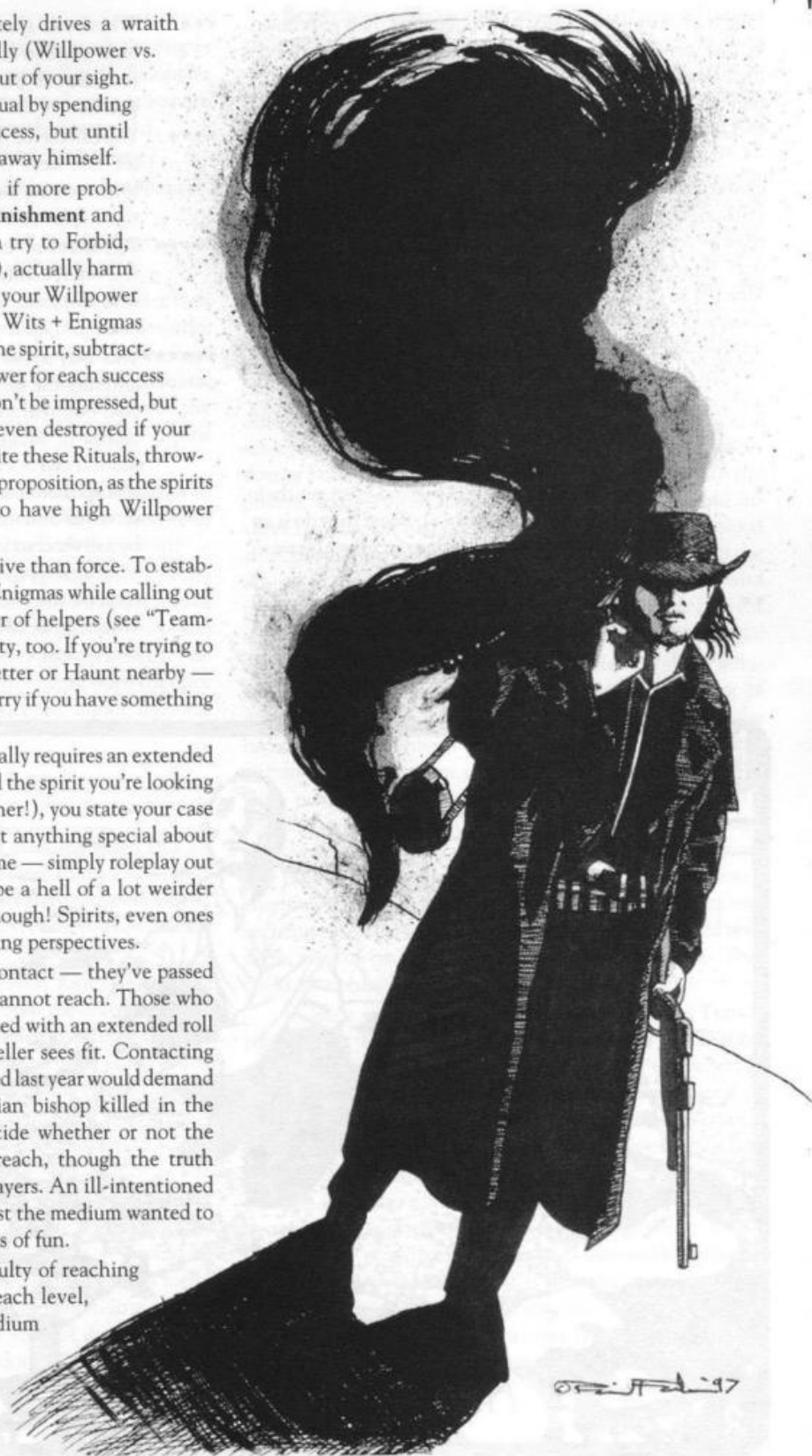
Nature spirits are more direct, if more problematic, to deal with. With the **Banishment** and **Seal** Rituals (Level Two), you can try to Forbid, Ward or, with **Dolor** (Level Three), actually harm a natural spirit. This last tactic uses your Willpower rating as a weapon. Each successful Wits + Enigmas roll takes a figurative chunk out of the spirit, subtracting one point of your adversary's Power for each success you win. A strong spirit probably won't be impressed, but a weaker one may be wounded or even destroyed if your luck and Willpower hold out. Despite these Rituals, throwing your weight around is not a safe proposition, as the spirits often fight back. Mediums tend to have high Willpower scores!

Persuasion is often more effective than force. To establish contact, roll your Charisma + Enigmas while calling out to the spirits in the area. A number of helpers (see "Teamwork") can lower the initial difficulty, too. If you're trying to reach a ghost, it helps to have a Fetter or Haunt nearby — you're more likely to reach your quarry if you have something precious to her nearby.

Locating the ghost or spirit usually requires an extended roll (see below). Once you've found the spirit you're looking for (or at least think you've found her!), you state your case and try to win her over. There isn't anything special about the systems for this point of the game — simply roleplay out the talk. Such meetings ought to be a hell of a lot weirder than your average conversation, though! Spirits, even ones that began as people, have unsettling perspectives.

Many dead souls are beyond contact — they've passed on to places the greatest medium cannot reach. Those who can be called back may be summoned with an extended roll of as many successes as the Storyteller sees fit. Contacting your brother in the city where he died last year would demand less work than finding a Colombian bishop killed in the 1970s. The Storyteller should decide whether or not the ghost has passed beyond mortal reach, though the truth should remain a secret from the players. An ill-intentioned spirit might masquerade as the ghost the medium wanted to meet, and this could cause all kinds of fun.

Unlike other Paths, the difficulty of reaching across the barrier goes *down* with each level, while your ability increases. A medium with one dot in Ephemera works against difficulty 9 and cannot actually communicate with anything other than human ghosts



(and then only if they wish to be spoken to). This goes down by one step per dot, to a final difficulty of 5, but cannot go lower than 3. As a medium's skill grows, she can speak with natural spirits, see into the Penumbra (but not pass through) and seek out specific entities.

Several Traits are especially appropriate to medium characters. Enigmas and Spirit Lore are essentially required (although the latter cannot be bought during creation — it must be learned the hard way). Occult, Subterfuge, Awareness, Cosmology and Intimidation are very helpful. The Merit/Flaw Spirit Magnet is common, as are the Haunted, Guardian Angel and Spirit Mentor permutations. Characters with the Shapeshifter Kinfolk or Medium Merits reduce all Ephemera difficulties by one. Spirits, it should be known, make good allies — and terrible enemies! Behave.

Roll: Charisma + Enigmas No Willpower cost
Effects

- You can feel the spirits moving and even get their attention with a successful roll. What they do is up to them. This is a dangerous but necessary phase in a medium's Path.
- You can distinguish between spirits, and may call up specific ones if you know how. If things get out of hand, you can try to dismiss what you have called.

- When you speak, *something* always comes. With luck, you can address it, befriend it or dismiss it. If you want to personally address a particular spirit, you can try at this level.
- You can pierce the veil between worlds and actually see and hear those ephemera around you. Most spirits respect you for your insight and ability. Some show up even when you *don't* call....
- The spirits of nature and the dead know your name and often come when you call. You can hurt those who displease you and dismiss those who offend you.
- You may cross the line in the other direction, entering the spirit world in an astral form. Leaving your body behind, your spirit travels into the Penumbra or Shadowlands; Physical Traits become Mental and Social ones — Wits replaces Dexterity, Manipulation serves as Strength and Intelligence serves as Stamina. Connected to your mortal form by a silver cord (which may be snapped by a spirit or wraith, stranding you in the spirit world), you traverse the Penumbra. Your Willpower rating becomes your Health Level rating; when you're dropped to 0 Willpower, the precious silver cord snaps....



Rituals

(Each type costs three points; until you reach the proper level, however, you may not buy a given Ritual. **Example:** Randi Marsellia, a medium with Ephemera 2, cannot acquire a Level Three Ritual until she reaches Ephemera 3.)

Level One: Call Ghost, Ward, Forbiddance

Level Two: See Ghost, Call Naturae, See Naturae, Seal, Banishment

Level Three: Gossip (allows the medium to “spread the word” around her chosen contacts), Dolor

Level Four: Grasp (medium becomes a Fetter for a chosen wraith for seven days), Command (medium can order a minor nature spirit to do one task and expect to be obeyed), Deny the Veil (allows medium to see into the Penumbra; actually two separate Rituals, as one grants a view of the Shadowlands and the other a look into the nature spirit world)

Level Five: Distant Call (Medium can attempt to speak briefly to one who has passed on to some afterlife or punishment. This works within Storyteller’s discretion)

Disasters: Dealing with the spirits (ghosts or otherwise) is always perilous. Letting them possess you is a major leap of faith, and a mistake can be eternal. Failed rolls still have bad consequences — the wrong spirits can and occasionally do answer fumbled calls. A botched seance might open the door for evil spirits — Spectres, Banes, even minor demons. Remember *The Exorcist*...?

FASCINATION

“Bewitching” reassumes its old meaning when this art comes into play. Many people once feared that a witch could steal their souls; to a degree, they were right. By working the charms and bindings of the Fascination Path, you can shackle the will of another and bring him to your side.

Spells from this Path take several forms. The most obvious domination flows directly from the sorcerer to her target; a more devious route travels through an amulet, charm or potion that the witch gives to a third party, either to carry or to use. The most insidious weaving carries through the air, unseen and undetected. One moment the target is himself; the next, he belongs to the enchantress, or to her client.

“Client” is the best term for a person who hires a Fascination sorcerer. Many sorcerers make good livings by weaving entrapment spells for third parties — would-be lovers, business rivals, political conspirators and so forth. While folklore exaggerates the power of willbinding, there’s no doubting its effectiveness. That control doesn’t *usually* last forever, but it often gets the job done, at least for a while.

Bewitchment takes a multitude of forms; some enchanters enhance their physical beauty or instill themselves (or their clients) with confidence or guile, while others channel a mystic snare into some object or concoction. The doll impregnated with personal effects; the spell woven from words, hair and helpful spirits; the love philter; sweet glance or pillow book — all are classic examples of Fascination at work. Either form requires a ritual beforehand to set the spell in motion. A “glamour” spell is easy: The enchantress simply performs some personal rite upon herself, calling upon whatever powers she employs to make her more impressive. In the case of a client, she works the magic on her patron instead. The client collects the benefits, the sorcerer collects her fee, and the magic works in a general way; everyone the subject meets falls under her spell.

An enchantment against a specific person is a bit more difficult: Raising a connection between the caster and her subject, the binder employs bits of the victim’s hair, nails, skin or bodily fluids, conjures whatever mystic energies she prefers, and performs some “knotting” rite. This could involve braiding the hair into a circle, making a doll with blood and clay, mixing semen into a potion, etc. — that chains the subject to the caster, her client or an object. If there’s a third party involved, the sorcerer must include some bit of him (or it) in the spell. If the caster succeeds, she snares her prey.

Once set in motion, Fascination creates a bond of influence. As the enchanter, you’ll garner a certain amount of influence, either for yourself or for your client. Depending on the nature of the spell, that attention may come from several people or from a single, lovetorn sap. The more specific the spell, the more powerful its effects; a roomful of people may notice a literally fascinating person, but a guy who has been linked to that same person by a magical thread may find it impossible to ignore her. Both kinds of influence have their downsides, of course; a charismatic individual stands out whether she wants to or not, and may receive unwanted attention, too. An entrapped man might fawn on his beloved, but he’ll obsess over her, too. That could get unhealthy... very unhealthy for both parties.

In game terms, you roll an appropriate Social Trait + your Occult Knowledge whenever you cast a Fascination spell. That Trait depends on the method you’ve chosen to employ, and the roll is the same whether you cast the spell on yourself or on your client. Generally, such spells play on that client’s best features; if she’s attractive, the Fascination may enhance that beauty (Appearance); if she gets her way through cunning, a Manipulation-based spell might work better; if force of personality is her strong point, a wise sorcerer will play to that strength (Charisma). Each enchantment is woven especially for the circumstances, however; if the extraordinarily attractive Lilavati Chandra prefers to emphasize her wiles over her looks, her player simply rolls Manipulation rather than Appearance.

General enchantments don't actually alter your physical features or make you more sociable; instead, they "blend the edges," setting you in your best light. People see you differently — you don't change, their perceptions of you do. Specific Fascinations work differently, snaking into your subject's heart and wrapping it up in a package. Since both types seek different results, each form of Fascination works differently. To be proficient in one type, buy the Path normally and specify your specialty; To be an accomplished enchanter, pay an additional three points and purchase both forms. The two types cannot be combined.

• **General Enchantment:** With this form, you attract attention from a large group of people. None of them will be especially bound to you, but they'll become very attentive to your desires. Infatuation, loyalty, respect, lust, even fear — folks feel what you want them to feel until the spell wears off.

A general Fascination's effects depend on the sorcerer's skill. Setting things in motion requires a (Social Trait) + Occult roll. If you're playing Fairy Godmother to some other character's Cinderella, roll *her* (Social Trait) + *your* Occult rating. The difficulty is normal (Path Level + 4), although a good Social roll or really appropriate circumstances might lower that number by one to three places. The better the roll, the longer the magic — and the Dice Pool bonus — lingers (one hour per success rolled). Note that a large Dice Pool is a double-edged blade; a really impressive person can make a really memorable mistake.

Path Rank Effects

- You make an impression; add one die to your Social Dice Pools.
- You cause a stir; add two dice.
- You've got them in the palm of your hand; add three dice.
- Everyone wants to be where you are; add four dice.
- You sway the multitudes; add five dice.
- When you want to be, you can become a legend; add six dice.

• **Specific Fascination:** One person is chosen to become your slave (or your client's plaything). As it says above, you'll need some of the victim's personal effects in order to work this enchantment. When the spell is cast, roll your (Social Trait + Occult) against your target's Willpower, or roll the *client's* Social Trait + *your* Occult if you're setting things up on another's behalf. The successes you win determine the effectiveness of your enchantment (one roll only):

Successes	Effects
One	A turn of the head; subject's attracted to you.
Two	Immediate attention; subject makes a point to be around you.
Three	Infatuation; subject goes out of his way for you.
Four	Lasting love; subject will sacrifice a lot to please you.

- Five Obsession; subject does anything to be near you.
- Six + Virtual ownership; subject will do whatever you ask.

To resist being Fascinated this way, the target rolls his Willpower against your Path Level + 4. Each success reduces your influence by one level, but under most circumstances, he may only roll once, when the casting takes place. If you're abusive or demand really unreasonable things (*shoot a cop, give me your gold card, etc.*), your paramour immediately gets another roll. If he succeeds, the Fascination breaks completely right then and there. Naturally, "abusive" and "unreasonable" are pretty subjective; a man with low self-esteem might take an awful lot from his "beloved" before cracking, and a smitten gangster might be perfectly willing to shoot a cop if you ask him nicely. The breaking point will depend a lot on the characters and their relationship up until then. Unless this Fascination is dispelled, it lasts until some event breaks it.

Certain people are immune to this Path's effects. Characters with similar mind-influencing powers (Domination, Presence, Dementation, Psychic Phenomena, the Mind Sphere, etc.) can wave Fascination away without effort, while innately mystical creatures (shapechangers, faeries, etc.) can counter the spell with Rage, Glamour or Quintessence if they care to (each point reduces the enchantment by one level). A Blood Bound character will never turn against her previous master, though she might be Fascinated by someone else for a short while. Spirits, ghosts and inhuman creatures are totally unimpressed; they might look fondly upon a charming mortal, but cannot be drawn in by this magical bond.

A general Fascination spell can be easily undone; you perform some "smothering" action (a hood thrown over the enchanted one's face, a whispered unweaving spell, a denial of the subject's beauty, etc.) to undo your own enchantment. Breaking a specific charm is much harder; a new spell, similar to the first, must be woven with many of the same materials as the first. Even then, the affected person makes a Willpower roll to resist the second rite; if he *succeeds*, the spell remains in effect, even if all parties concerned want it broken!

Outside parties can break an entrancement if they've got the skills to do so. A character with this Path (or any of the aforementioned mental powers) can detect a Fascination spell placed on another person by making a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 8). From there, he might be able to dispel it by placing a counter-command on the Fascinated party (all normal rolls apply). Five successes or more breaks the sorcerer's hold over the victim. To reassert control, the enchantress might appeal to her thrall with a psychic push through the existing bond (Manipulation + Occult, diffi-

culty 6). This effort, which can be done only if the enchantress is present, acts like a soak roll against the meddler's attempts. Whoever wins this roll wins the victim — for now.

Despite the sexual connotations of the Path, Fascination is more a matter of heart than hormones. The entrancer simply wants to please — and possibly to possess — the entrancer. Depending on the personalities involved, the goals of the entrancer and the activities they pursue together, the bond may or may not be sexual. Since many people equate intense desire with sexual attraction, the spell might raise a few unexpected issues, too; a CPO who commissions you to make his underlings loyal to him could discover that many of them — including the men — suddenly have crushes on him, too. This is the nature of magic: to set forces in motion. Where they go once they're released is out of the enchanter's hands.

Roll: (Social Trait) + Occult No Willpower cost

Effects: See above.

Disasters: This sort of magic can go wrong in several ways: You might end up looking really horrible and get the opposite of what you wanted (reverse the planned effects); you could fry your victim's mind and end up stuck with a besotted lapdog; other people could get jealous (homicidal, even); or your target could simply snap and decide to keep you safe forever — even if it meant killing you to do so.

HEALING

This Path allows you to quell pain or even heal illnesses or small injuries. Such Healing is not a miracle cure-all. It takes a long time to treat an illness or injury and longer still for the patient to fully heal. Even the simplest magics, though, can ease pain for as long as you've got your hands on the ailment, and the risk of infection drops greatly when you're working on a wound.

Healing magicians usually need some form of Medicine Knowledge, though that Ability need not be Western medicine (in fact, it's usually more effective when it's not). Meditation, needles, chanting, massage, herbs and foul-smelling brews are common ritual tools. Some healers believe that medicine is simply a matter of contacting (or driving out) the right spirits, while others insist that internal energy must be guided around an obstruction. If you've chosen to run a healer character, you ought to decide what her magical and medicinal outlook is before the game begins.

Healing isn't quick or easy. This Path saps a certain amount of energy from the healer — it's easy to burn yourself out by healing too much too quickly. Magical healers often have a strong sense of duty and compassion, and the traumas of the World of Darkness often use up such people long before their time.

This Path cannot heal aggravated wounds.

Effects

Roll: Manipulation + Intuition

Costs one Willpower per illness or injury

- You can soothe a headache, backache or other minor pain. The ailment doesn't go away, but your patient feels better for a while.
- Sprains, migraine headaches, flu, minor infections — you can speed the healing process by 50% or more with a little work.
- A cure for the common cold! Broken bones and nasty wounds heal twice as fast as they would normally and without infection. You can help an Incapacitated character to her feet and get her moving, though you cannot heal the injuries.
- Chronic diseases (asthma, arthritis, diabetes, etc.) are not beyond your care, although healing them will take hours or weeks. Broken bones and severe trauma heal 50% faster than normal, and your touch banishes all but the worst pain.
- With effort, you can cure deadly conditions (AIDS, cancer, meningitis, stroke), though it takes a lot out of you and requires weeks of treatment. When these diseases go, they're gone for good. Broken bones and major trauma heal in one to three weeks of care, and infection poses no risk as long as you're on the job.

HELLFIRE

As its name implies, this Path comes from sinister places. At the very least, it taps into the most destructive aspects of the elements or the gods. In most perspectives, however, this art comes from the Infernal Realms, from malicious spirits and tempter demons. The arts of Hellfire are simple, direct and messy. The magician who understands them receives respect, suspicion and fear.

If you happen to be that sorcerer, this Path allows you to summon violent elemental attacks — firestorms, lightning bolts, sleet, earthquakes, clouds of deadly smoke or other phenomena. Each variety requires a different Ritual; in game terms, it costs three points to buy each different kind of elemental attack, though you get the first for free when you buy the Path. Each variety inflicts a certain amount of damage but carries special effects of its own:

- **Earthquake:** The ground cracks open, swallows a target and crushes him for the damage indicated. He'll have to dig his way out afterward (Strength roll against difficulty 6 until he's free). Normal damage.
- **Fire:** An explosion engulfs the target; after the blast, the fire burns, inflicting half the usual damage, for one turn per caster's success. Aggravated damage.

• **Lighting:** A sudden arc of electricity fries the target. Any conductive material (metal, water, wires, etc.) shares the damage with whoever happens to be connected to the target. Aggravated damage.

• **Rust:** Any ferrous-metal object on the target suddenly rots. This effect destroys up to five pounds of metal per caster's success. No damage to living targets.

• **Sleet:** A blinding sheet of freezing water slashes across the target, inflicting the damage indicated unless he's wearing some kind of insulation or is otherwise immune to the cold. Normal damage.

• **Smoke:** A thick, noxious cloud fills the area. Everyone within 10 feet per caster's success takes one Health Level's worth of aggravated damage unless they've got some sort of protection or (like vampires) do not need to breathe. This lasts until the damage level is reached (two turns at level one, six turns at level five, etc.). Aggravated damage to living targets.

• **Tanglewoods:** Any living plants or dead wood suddenly lashes out, throwing splinters or thorns into the target. A lucky magician might be able to stake a vampire this way, but it's a really difficult proposition (five successes, difficulty 9). If the target happens to be standing amid thick vines or brush, the plants drag him down and wrap him up (Strength roll, difficulty 7, to escape). Normal damage.

• **Drowning Tide:** Requires a large body of water; a strong current or sudden wave drags the target down, forcing water into his lungs or battering his body (and boat, if he has one) for the damage indicated. (See drowning rules in the main rulebooks.) To escape, he'll have to fight his way out (Strength roll, difficulty 8). This lasts until the target escapes or dies. Normal damage.

• **Dust Storm:** A blinding cloud of dirt whirls through the area, scouring everyone within 20 feet per success for one turn per Path level. Although this dust inflicts half the usual damage, all living (or undead) creatures in the cloud get blinded for one turn per success. Normal damage.

Hitting a moving target requires a Dexterity + Melee roll (difficulty 7); striking an area lowers the difficulty to 5 but offers the subject a chance to escape (see "Hitting a Target"). The difficulty might be reduced if the subject is standing right in the middle of a briar patch, wading in the ocean, walking through a desert, or otherwise surrounded by the element in question.

Hellfire's a risky Path to pursue — casters are not immune to their own elemental spells, and most societies consider Hellfire to be black magic. Many Hellfire ceremonies involve blood sacrifice, corrosive concoctions, blasphemous incantations or favors to violent spirits, in addition to samples of the element in question. It's also worth noting that such magics still demand the same ritual preparations that other spells require. If you want to use these arts in combat, it's a good idea to plan ahead.

Roll: Manipulation + Occult Costs one Willpower

Effects

- Two dice of damage
- Three dice of damage
- Four dice of damage
- Five dice of damage
- Six dice of damage
- Eight dice of damage

Disasters: Isn't it obvious? The attack rebounds on you. A failed roll does nothing; a botched one sends the element back in the caster's face, inflicting the usual damage.

HERBALISM/BREWING

This elemental Path allows you to brew natural ingredients into potions, salves, oils, incense, poultices, stews and powders with real potency. It requires the Herbalism Knowledge to perform and usually involves dozens of harvested materials — plants, mosses, grains, molds, earth and sometimes bodily fluids or remains, depending on the herbalist's practices.

Many herbalists believe that the magic they work comes through an affinity with the innate power of living things. Most dispute the concept of will-driven magic, arguing that all things have powerful properties (or inner spirits), essences that must be respected. Herbal magic is not simple enchantment — it is a relationship between the wise one and the Earth.

Like the Enchantment Path, magical Herbalism demands a certain investment of time, effort and material. Only the right ingredients will do! The basic system for herbal magics works the same ways as Enchantments, but the concoctions take longer to prepare. Each level of Effect demands two to four days of harvesting, sorting, mixing and aging before the results can be achieved. This time can be reduced by a well-stocked pantry or ready garden, but will almost never drop below one day per level. These things take time, dearie!

Herbal concoctions are usually good for a single use and a single purpose. The potency of the broth, salve or brew depends on the herbalist's successes (Intelligence + Herbalism). A single success indicates a bitter batch that's only marginally effective, while four or more indicate an especially enticing bit of work with double potency and a pleasing form. Victims of the darker variety of Herbalism should be allowed to resist the Effect by rolling their Stamina (or Willpower) against the herbalist's successes.

Because of the slow and subtle nature of herbal and brewing magics, their exact Effects are better left to stories than to systems. We encourage you to devise your own recipes, using the samples below as guidelines.

Roll: Intelligence + Herbalism No Willpower cost

Effects

- You may concoct poultices and brews that cure minor aches or rashes, induce or prevent sleep, alleviate symptoms of slight illnesses, preserve foods when they would otherwise spoil, and other minor effects that would never be considered magic.
- At this level, your creations can quickly cure minor illnesses and pains, avert or confer pregnancy with 100% certainty, radically alter a person's mood, discourage or attract animals or insects, induce or cure intoxication with a few sips, and other noticeable effects that, while not apparently magical, seem remarkable.
- These potent concoctions can put people to sleep with a pinch, reduce the effects of deadly poisons and serious illnesses, speed recovery of open wounds and broken bones by 50% or more, put folks into light trances or randy moods, and perform other obviously unusual functions with amazing speed.
- Brews and items created with this level of Herbalism can accomplish some obviously unearthly things — adding one or two dots to a Physical or Social Trait for a scene, clearing up an infection in a few minutes, aid recovery from life-threatening illnesses and such. Obviously, these effects are subject to both accepted local reality and Storyteller judgment; they are not sudden, flashy or long-lasting.
- These are the magic brews of legend — sleeping potions, love oils, deadly poisons, healing salves, instant cures, all-night aphrodisiacs, flying ointments and other impossible (or at least improbable) solutions. Such potions, if they work, allow the imbiber to defy conventional reality for a scene or two. Like Curses, the reality such concoctions displace is open to interpretation. Did this person *really* fly, or did she just *think* she did? Did the apple kill her, or was there strychnine in the apple? Players should not merely drink some potion and turn into swans — the effects of the mightiest herbal arts remain subtle and subjective.

SHADOWS

The art of deceit has always proved rewarding. Building on the idea that shadows conceal the truth, black magicians crafted this mysterious Path, a discipline that reworks light and sound to hide the magician or his treasures.

By making a servitor of darkness, you may hide yourself, your friends or your property from casual inspection, or drive a helpless target to distraction and possibly to madness. This is not, shall we say, a holy art; tales claim that demons helped

lay this Path, and that they guard it still. Magicians who make soul pacts (see page 83) often receive the Path of Shadows as their first “gift”; by learning to deceive, they open themselves to greater forms of corruption.

Reflecting their sinister origins, Shadow castings often demand blood, dust, bone, tears or a combination of them all. Dark magicians call upon their patron spirits, urging them to conceal the spellcaster's secrets, and sprinkle the subject with appropriate “blessings.” As the shadows obey, the room grows darker. Sounds blur into muddles, like whispering currents of half-hidden noises. If the magician prefers to distract rather than to conceal, he sends this muddle settling over his target's head; if he elects to hide, those impressions smear all observations. This blurring extends to machines; film fogs, tapes crackle and hiss, video recorders skip and lights dim slightly. The shadows swallow all.

In game terms, you simply make the appropriate roll. The effect lasts roughly two turns (or two minutes) per success and travels with the subject of the spell. You may cast that spell upon any appropriate party (see below), or upon yourself. To peer through the shadows, an observer must make a successful Perception + Occult roll (difficulty = caster's Path rating + 4), or must possess some mystical perception (Level One Sphere magick, the Clear Sight Merit, vampiric *Auspex*, etc.).

Roll: Manipulation + Stealth No Willpower cost

Effects

- By shifting sounds or shadows nearby, you can distract another person — she sees things “out of the corner of her eye” or hears “faint murmurings in the distance.” By casting the spell on yourself, you may “blur your edges,” making it harder to recognize you for who you are (add one die to Arcane, Disguise, Intimidation or Stealth Dice Pools). This level affects one person or human-sized object.
- By “bending” the local shadows or sound waves, you may disguise yourself to some degree, baffle your words or cause the surrounding darkness to rise. Things get eerie when this magic kicks in; lights fade, shadows deepen, sounds become watery and indistinct. If such spells are cast out of malice against another person, that victim's mind begins playing tricks on her. If cast on yourself, this magic allows you to add two dice to Dice Pools involving Arcane, Disguise, Intimidation or Stealth.
- As above, but more unsettling; darkness seems to rise, colors seem to fade and sounds become mere bleats and thumps. A victim may need to make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to avoid minor panic. If you've cast this magic to conceal something, add three dice to the appropriate Dice Pools.

•••• The shadows may swallow two or three people or one large object. Sounds become completely indistinct and local cameras and recorders malfunction. Unless a victim succeeds with her Willpower roll (difficulty 8), she breaks into a panic attack (or fear-frenzy, if appropriate). Engulfed in darkness, you add four dice to Arcane, Intimidation or Stealth rolls under the right conditions; the swelling black cloud around you makes you stand out unless the area was dark to begin with.

••••• By twisting shadows and sounds, you may drive your target to distraction or even insanity, or conceal yourself from mortal sight. A victim who fails her Willpower roll (difficulty 8) becomes a terrified heap, shivering and weeping until the spell effects fade. If she was afraid of the dark in the first place, she might need extended psychiatric care. Any person(s) or objects within the cloud of darkness become totally invisible unless some form of mystical sight penetrates the gloom. Mundane technology simply fails until the magic ends.

•••••• Everything within 50 feet or so goes black and stays that way until the spell ends. This does not work in direct sunlight.

Disasters: An unsuccessful sorcerer may ruin his own perceptions. A botched roll drops the Path's unsettling effects down around the caster's head, muddling his vision until the spell runs its course. Some tales speak of shadow-demons that emerge from conjured darkness to strangle the sorcerer responsible. Given the left-hand origins of this Path, such a fate would not be inappropriate....

SHAPESHIFTING

The ancient providence of witches and shamans, the so-called "animal art" allows you to take beast form for short periods of time. Spells for doing this sort of thing usually involve prayers to the animals spirits, skins, bones or body parts from the beast in question, body painting or other decorations, and trance states from which you awaken as an animal.

According to most mythologies, humans once were animals themselves, or were closely related to them at the very least. Some great act — an original sin or a god's blessing — moved the humans down a slightly different track, but most cultures still reserve a bit of respect for their animal cousins. A magician who masters the tricky art of beast-magic can turn back the clock, stepping into the form of her

brothers. It's a difficult art to study, and it certainly leaves its mark on you; for those with the talent and dedication, however, the animal craft becomes a passion.

Shapeshifters tend to be wild-looking people, abrupt and direct about their needs and shameless about fulfilling them. The more experienced the shapechanger becomes, the more animalistic she grows. As the line between human and beast thins, most "normal" people either shy away from the magician or attracted by her, literally, animal magnetism. If you choose to follow the Beast Path, you ought to reflect the changes that the art works upon your character.

Learning this art requires intense study — study of animals, of other people, of bodies, minds and emotions. Before you can shift between forms, you must understand the creatures you want to become. This bond often leads to an odd combination of empathy and remove: On one hand, you can look out at yourself from behind an endless set of eyes and empathize with all kinds of beings. On the other hand, though, you eventually understand the pragmatic, unsentimental viewpoint the animals share. To a beast, life just is. Things happen; things pass. It's not always pleasant, but it happens and then one day you die. Animals don't worry about the things we humans consider so important; after a while, a master shapeshifter doesn't, either.

In game terms, this art's pretty straightforward; a successful roll transforms you into an altered shape. At lower levels, those changes are limited and superficial; as you advance, the alterations grow more distinct until you achieve actual transformation. This costs one Willpower point each time the shift occurs, and demands total concentration.

Although most magicians retain their own minds while assuming a beast-shape, some risk still exists. Upon achieving an animal state, you must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to keep your own mind. A failed roll sends you into beast mode. Every morning, you can make another Willpower roll at +1 difficulty per day. Some people never make it back, but that's the price of magic....

As a side effect, you gain one additional Social die for each Path Level you attain; this die reflects your connection to your primal nature, and is especially handy during fights, seductions or bonding sessions with real animals. A really accomplished shapeshifter might also make small changes in her Physical Traits, reflecting her body mastery. The extra Social dice cost nothing to employ; additional Physical dots cost one Willpower point and require a small, quick spell to set in motion.

(Animal Traits can be found in the following books: *The Vampire Players Guide*, *The Book of Mirrors: The Mage Storyteller's Guide*, *Ways of the Wolf* and *The Dark Ages Companion*.)

Roll: Stamina + Occult

Costs one Willpower point to shift, another to return to normal

Effects

- You may alter one minor physical feature (eye color, skin color, nose shape, hair length, etc.).
- You can change one major feature (height, weight, build), or several minor ones.
- You might make odd alterations to yourself (grow claws, see in the dark, leap great distances) that normal humans can't possess. At this level, you can also add one dot to some Physical Trait.
- You may transform into one particular animal shape (cat, hawk, wolf, etc.) and acquire its natural abilities. At this level, you may also add two dots to your Physical Traits.
- Any normal modern animal (no gargoyles, dinosaurs, dragons, etc.) can be your new shape for a limited time. The sizes range from mouse to elephant — no larger, no smaller. You may also add three dots to your Physical Traits.
- Any animal you can study, you can become.

Disasters: Failing a Shapeshifting roll changes nothing; you're still the person you were when you closed your eyes. Gods help you if you botch, however. You might assume some unexpected feature (whiskers, a snout, excessive hair, etc.), lose your mind (see above) or lapse into a frenzy (see the Vampire or Werewolf rules for specific game effects).

SUMMONING, BINDING AND WARDING

The most dangerous kind of magic, Summoning Path rites draw forth creatures—from rats or birds to vampires or werewolves—, guard against



them, or press them into service. It's a complicated Path, loaded with precautions and Rituals, and even under the best of circumstances, it creates lifelong enemies.

As with any other form of Hedge Magic, there are multitudes of Summoning styles, from simple pagan appeals to the creatures of the goddess to elaborate medieval rituals, Aboriginal soul-snarings and modern black magic compulsions. Few such spells are designed with politeness in mind; most order some being to appear, bind him magically when he does, and keep him at arm's length until he does what you want him to do. The style of magic and outlook of the magician will have plenty to do with the Summoned creature's disposition — and its desire for revenge.

Most Summoning Rituals require long preparations. You don't want to compel something, especially something powerful, to appear without covering your ass first. These protections require different Rituals (see "Rituals") — a separate one for each different kind of being. After these Wards are laid, the Summoning begins. This too requires a specific Ritual; one cannot Ward against a dog, then Summon a vampire. Finally, when the creature does arrive, a Binding may be laid to force some kind of service. A Minor Binding merely requires one task to be performed before the

Binding dissipates. A Major Binding compels servitude until some condition is met, and usually creates an eternal grudge. No one, not even an animal, likes being forced into service.

Some magicians prefer to use only Wards or Summonings to protect themselves or to call upon aid. Only a fool would dare to lay a Binding without protection, although some sorcerers have tried. Dismissal Rituals offer the magician some sort of compromise. If the rite is successful, the Summoned being will leave in peace — for the moment, at least. The forms these Rituals take can range from dancing around a consecrated mound to human sacrifice, bended-knee prayers or intricate circles that take days to engrave. Players and Storytellers should play such ceremonies to the dramatic hilt. Calling a creature and compelling it to obey is strong magic indeed.

The bare-bones systems for such actions work as follows:

- **Warding:** The magician lays some sort of Ward (a pentacle, a triangle of salt, an offering of food and good liquor, gold, herbs, a plate of wolfsbane and blood, etc.) and rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty is the Path's level + 4). The target of the Ward will have to spend one Willpower per the magician's success to enter the area protected. A Ward lasts



for one scene per success. A fair but devious Storyteller might make the Ward roll herself, leaving the magician to wonder whether or not his Ward will hold!

This Ritual acts like countermagick (one die per success) or reduces any incoming Gift or Discipline by one dot of effect for every one of the wizard's successes. Wards do not, however, restrict gunfire.

• **Summoning:** After a long series of recitations, entreaties and preparations, the wizard rolls his Charisma + Occult with the usual difficulty. He must accumulate twice as many successes as his target's (permanent) Willpower rating, making one roll per hour. The range of the compulsion is one mile per level of the Path rating used; a Path Level Three Summoning, for example, has a reach of three miles. Once the call is sent forth, the first such being within the area of enchantment will be compelled to go to the wizard as rapidly as possible.

This magic does not instantly conjure a creature out of thin air. The Summoned one comes at her own speed. If there isn't a suitable being in range, the wizard may have to continue until he finds one. For each Willpower point spent, he may add another mile to the range. This is a dangerous tactic, because if it works...

• **Minor Binding:** Once the subject arrives, the magician can try to compel her to service — if he dares! A Minor Binding pits the wizard's will against his subject's, using the Immutable Laws of What Is. True Mages claim that such a contests pit one Avatar against another... with perhaps a bit of outside help from other concerned parties.

To affect a Minor Binding, the wizard spends a Willpower point and performs his Ritual (Manipulation + Occult). His target rolls her own Willpower (difficulty of the wizard's own). If she wins, the Binding has no effect. If she loses, she must perform one task for him before she is freed. This should be spelled out in as complete a form as possible. Rest assured that any Bound being will be looking for the way out.

• **Major Binding:** The system for a Major Binding works like a Minor one, except that both parties extend their rolls to amass 10 successes. For each roll, each party spends a Willpower point; whoever reaches 10 first (and still has Willpower left over) wins. If the Summoned one loses, she's bound to the wizard until some condition is met. This "contract" must be specified at once and can be anything from "Until my hair goes gray" to "Until Haley's Comet next approaches Earth," so long as it is a possible event (conceptions of "possible" can get pretty fluid, however!).

If the wizard loses, he's toast.

• **Dismissal:** If the wizard wants his subject to depart in peace, he performs another Ritual (involving some sort of thanks, a benediction and a request to depart, usually

with a healthy bribe attached). A simple Wits + Occult roll with normal difficulty "persuades" the Summoned one to leave without ripping the wizard a new asshole. This does not prevent later animosities, but for now, the being will leave content. This Ritual will *not* work after a Major Binding has been attempted.

Hedge Magic Summonings work only on material beings. Ephemera handles spirit-dealings, while Daimonic Summoning or the Dark Sorcery Path of Summoning (see **The Book of Madness**) handles Otherworldly entities. Vampires, wercreatures, mages and changelings can counterattack with their own magical abilities unless a Ward or some other outside force prevents them from acting. This Path is best performed with allies standing by to help.

The Rituals above need not be performed together. Bindings or Wardings can be used on their own if the circumstances permit. Players and Storytellers should be flexible, dramatic and fair when running such Summonings. This magic Path could stimulate either suspenseful storytelling or intense debate.

Rolls: Wits + Occult (Warding)	No cost
Charisma + Occult (Summoning)	No cost
Manipulation + Occult (Binding)	Costs one Willpower
Wits + Occult (Dismissal)	No cost

Effects

- This level's Rituals affect only small animals — rats, bats, birds, lizards, etc. You may Summon three of these creatures per success.
- The higher mammals (chimps, dolphins, cats, dogs, wolves, apes) may be Summoned and controlled at this Path level. You may control two of these per success.
- Normal humans can be Summoned at this level. If you want to compel someone to arrive, you'll have to obtain some personal effect of hers and add it to the Ritual. This spell summons only one person at a time.
- Minor supernatural beings (ghouls, Kinfolk, other consors or familiars, fomori, etc.) can be brought forward and Warded. The limitations of normal humans apply.
- Major supernatural beings (vampires, wercreatures, mages, faeries, and some types of earthbound monsters) can be Summoned and Bound with these Rituals. Only one individual can be so treated, and some bit of fur, blood, armor, clothing, etc. must be used. This is really dangerous territory; one blown roll and...

Path Rituals

This Path gives you the knowledge you'll need to employ these Rituals, but does not grant you automatic command. Each different kind of subject, whether bird, wolf, or vampire, has a unique set of Rituals, and each Ritual must be purchased separately.

Let's say you wanted to Summon a werecat; that would require a Level Five Ritual designed especially for Bastet. You couldn't use the same rite to call a Garou, nor would that Summoning Ritual Bind the Bastet. To Summon, Bind, Ward and Dismiss a werecat, you'd need five dots in the Path, plus four three-point Rituals. It seems expensive, but this is an especially powerful type of magic!

Warding, Summoning, Minor Binding, Major Binding and Dismissal all require separate Rituals as well. Rather than write out an exhaustive list of Rituals — **Summon Bastet, Bind Bastet, Ward Against Bastet**, etc. — we can simply assume that Rituals exist for any sort of creature found within the World of Darkness. Each Ritual corresponds to the appropriate Path level; an eagle-call would be Level One while a human-Summoning spell would be Level Three and so on.

Unlike most other Paths, Summoning, Binding and Warding has only five Path levels, not six.

SUMMONING, BINDING AND WARDING (DAIMONIC)

Wizards have always excelled at godplay. Safe (they believe) in their sigils and wards, practitioners of the mystic arts have always sought to command the Otherworld. Through this art — a perilous one, to be sure — an accomplished magician can do just that.

Unlike Ephemera (which creates a passage from the spirit world), this Path opens a direct gateway to the Otherworldly Realms and invites an occupant through for a while. With the proper charms, offers and protections, you can call an incarnate elemental, a demon, an angelic being or even a totem avatar. Tales claim that a powerful sorcerer can summon the Devil himself, but the nature of that entity may be up for debate in the modern world. The wizard could, of course, summon a devil, and assuming he was strong enough to hold it, actually demand some service.

In story terms, this is the most hazardous kind of magic imaginable. No one with half a brain performs it carelessly, though some poor fools have been known to do just that. A proper summoning demands ritual tools galore — designs, elements, swords, candles and some form of offering for the invited party — and lots of preparation. Ideally, you should bathe, meditate, pray and fast for at least a day before attempting

such work. Certain designs are considered essential — pentacles of various kinds, a circle and some holy or unholy text — and certain offerings are considered polite. The particulars depend on who you are and what you want; an American Satanist and a Jewish Kabbalist would obviously call upon different entities, and employ different instruments to do so. Once the preparations have been arranged, the Ritual begins. Each type of Otherworldly creature demands a certain kind of call; it wouldn't do to summon a Christian angel with a rite intended for a Chinese devil.

Although their origins are as mysterious as their powers, the gods do indeed exist. Some sources claim that every demon, god and celestial host in human history has a counterpart somewhere in the Endless Realms. Each magical practice has its own rites for calling upon its gods. These Rituals can be very hard to find, but if you're resourceful enough, its tools are at hand. Once the invocations have been performed, some entity — hopefully the one you're looking for — arrives within the circle. Once the creature appears, you'll have to be clever, strong-willed and fortunate. There are reasons the gods do not walk the Earth, and one of them is because those gods don't wish to be disturbed.

This art tears a hole in reality as we know it. Most manifestations shift the environment in their favor, whipping up storms and setting rooms ablaze while others simply appear in near-human form and ask "What do you require?" in deceptively soft voices. These are usually the ones to fear the most. Depending on the entity, the summoned one may be angry, resentful, pleased or afraid; most tend to be in a bargaining mood when they appear, however, and despite their horrific threats, seem interested in helping — for a price.

Ah, yes — the price. This too depends on the creature you have summoned. Obviously, an angel won't demand a crucified baby, though she very well might demand an oath to God or some other charitable act be performed in exchanged for her services. Most Otherworldly creatures have fairly obvious tastes; Mammon, the demon of wealth, seems more eager for jewels and golden offerings than, say, Damballah the Burning Serpent of Wisdom. The "fee" might be negotiable, but Otherworldly beings drive very hard bargains.

Once the price is agreed upon, the summoned being performs one service, then departs. The length and nature of the service depends on the Binding (see below) and the wizard's power. No wizard can compel a major manifestation to remain in his service indefinitely, however; sooner or later, the being *will* break free. Any human stupid enough to contain it will then suffer an appropriate punishment unless some *really* hard bargain is struck. It's far safer, therefore, to ask a brief service, let the being fulfill it and set it free without further coercion than it is to try to make a pet out of an unearthly creature.

In game terms, this variation works exactly like the normal Summoning, Binding and Warding Path; the stakes are simply much higher. Otherworldly beings have inhuman levels of Willpower; few mortal sorcerers can keep up with a full-fledged demon, let alone an angelic being or a divine avatar. A Major Binding (see the previous Path) demands 15 successes, not 10, and if you lose this contest, you lose big. Otherworldly entities tend to have many powers at their disposal, and it's perfectly reasonable for one to try to take you home for its own amusement if you've tried to imprison it yourself.

(The following books have a variety of Otherworldly creatures for Storytellers to choose from: **Beyond the Barriers: The Book of Worlds**, **Axis Mundi: The Book of Spirits**, **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, **Mage: The Ascension**, **The Book of Madness**, **Vampire: The Dark Ages** and **Dark Ages Companion**. Full descriptions of the Otherworldly hosts and their abilities can be found in those sources.)

Roll:	Wits + Occult (Warding)	No cost
	Charisma + Occult (Summoning)	No cost
	Manipulation + Occult (Binding)	Costs one Willpower
	Wits + Occult (Dismissal)	No cost

Effects

- A minor Summoning calls forth a simple entity — a weak elemental spirit, or Minion Umbrood, an infernal host creature or a spirit-animal Gaffling that serves a greater totem.
- This slightly more powerful version of a simple Summoning calls a fairly potent or intelligent minor entity.
- The lower infernal and celestial hosts are at your disposal; elementals of some power, demonic servants, minor angels, Jamak spirits and minor Jagglings attend this level.
- Powerful entities — infernal tempters, Umbrood Preceptors, powerful Jagglings and lesser angelics — answer the call of the powerful and crafty sorcerer who understands this level's secrets.
- The lesser Lords — demon barons, Umbrood Lords, totem avatars, greater angelics and the most powerful elementals — might answer your entreaties. Such beings are fairly powerful; a Greater Binding against one requires 20 successes or more, and the summoning area will probably bear traces of the entity's presence for decades to come.
- If it is indeed possible to summon the Devil, a sorcerer of this level would know how. Although such an entity would never send his only personal form to such a meeting, an incarnation of Old

Scratch — or some other Greater Entity, Celestine or Divine (capital D) avatar — may well appear. Such beings are not bound, only begged. If you're nice, it *might* help you.

Disasters: You really don't want to know. Ever heard of the Hell of Being Skinned Alive...?

WEATHERCRAFT

One of the most revered yet terrifying abilities of the traditional witch is her affinity to storms. In a good mood, the weatherwitch might water the fields, nurture a harvest or quench the parched soil; on a more destructive whim, she might call the thunder, chill the crops or whip waves to a frenzy. Although some cultures (notably the tribal Africans) connect weatherwork to male sorcerers, most folklore draws a parallel between woman's fertility and the bounty of the Earth and elements. Hence, this tends to be a feminine art, one that has awed men since the dawn of magic.

As a weatherwitch, you can summon and shape the environment to suit your needs. Temperatures may rise or fall; winds may surge or still; at the greater levels, tempests may literally be brewed in teapots and directed at your enemies. While Weathercraft is a slow and steady art — its rites and effects are measured in hours, not minutes — the forces it commands are awesome to behold.

Weather rituals usually involve sacrifice and sympathy. The caster draws the connection between a living being (often, but not always, herself) and the elements, calls the attention of suitable spirits, and asks them for a favor. By giving the spirits something in return (often blood, occasionally a whole life), she completes the circuit between woman and weather, and shapes the latter to her will. Even the most benign workings demand some powerful sacrifice. To conjure a wind, you might shed a drop or two of blood; to conjure a storm, you may have to kill an animal, a person, or even yourself, depending on your beliefs, practices and patrons.

In game terms, things get a bit simpler. The Path level determines the power of your influence; a series of rolls — played out over several turns or even scenes — builds the power of the storm. Once the weather patterns are in motion, the Storyteller takes over, describing the results in dramatic detail. Some spells provoke drastic effects — thunderstorms, hail, tempestuous seas, etc. — which rise then quickly disappear; others create more subtle but enduring climates — soft rains, cool breezes, warm days, fertile soil — which may last for days or even weeks. Generally, the most dramatic and damaging weather lasts for a few turns then fades, while slow and gentile changes endure indefinitely. The successes rolled may affect the weather patterns to some degree, but destructive tempests tend to dissipate quickly.



As mentioned above, Weathercraft requires time and effort. Since nothing occurs in a vacuum (especially not magic), the weather patterns you shift will manifest in other, less-obvious ways across the region. While small spells — a sudden shift in room temperature or a single breeze — may be cast quickly, it takes longer to rouse a tempest. Assume that large workings require at least one *hour* per Path level to set in motion. Once they begin, Weathercraft magics are hard to undo — a counterspell will have to negate a lot of successes to shift the balance back to where it was. Even then, the effects of a conjured storm linger for quite a while. Imagine the weather as a pond surface, then picture Weathercraft as a rock tossed in. A small rock might skip across the waters, but even then the ripples spread; a larger spell becomes a stone or even a boulder. The most successful workings still make waves; botched workings can send those waves crashing down on your own head.

Roll: Manipulation + Occult **Costs one Willpower**
Effects

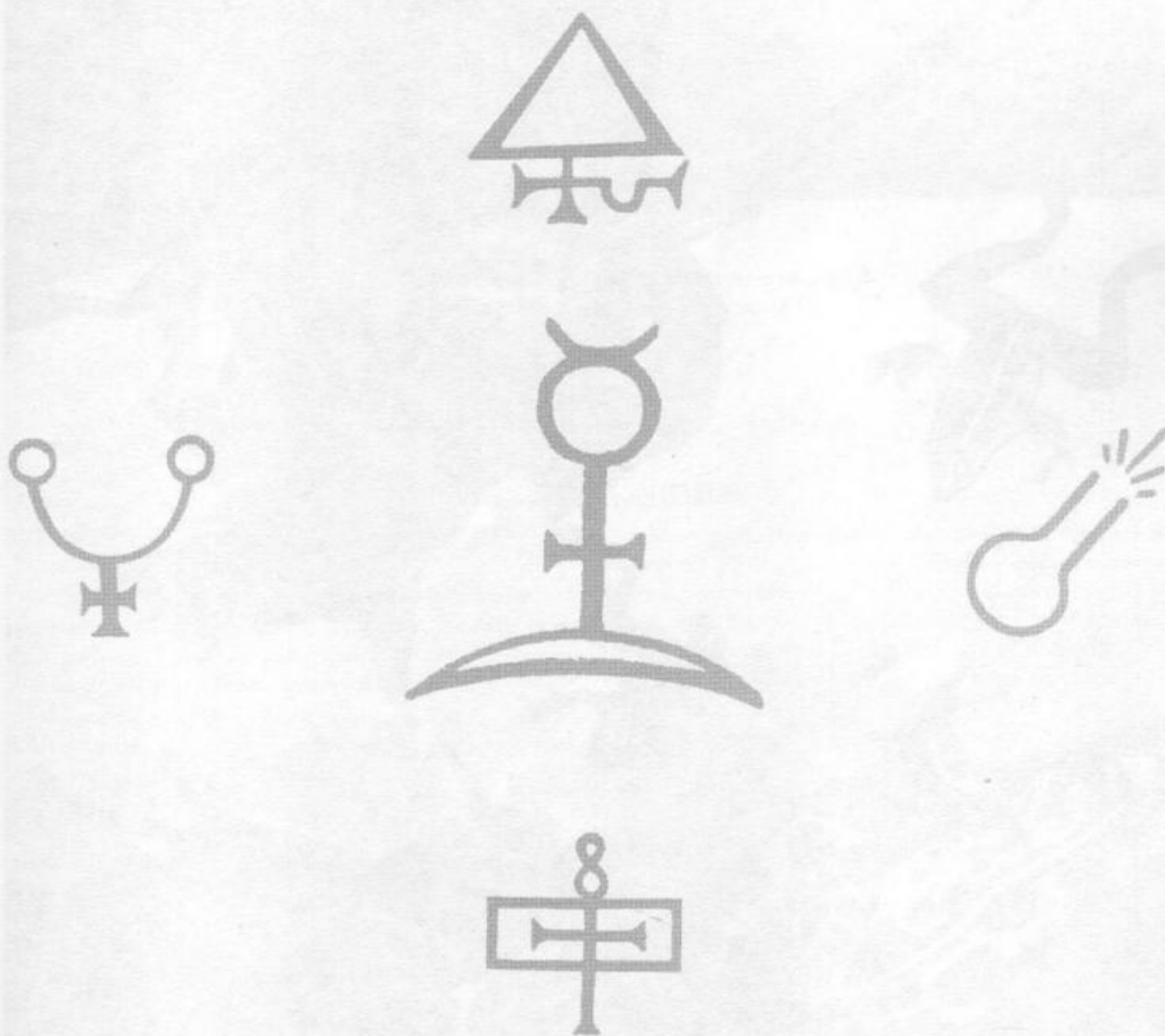
- You may conjure some small, sudden disturbance — a cool breeze, a room-temperature drop, a flare of candlelight — or a slight tilt in the local environment — a richly fertile garden, a softening of the light in a single room. Neither option inflicts any form of damage. Requires at least one success; affects roughly 50 square feet.
- You may do any of the above in a larger area. Requires at least three successes; affects roughly 1000 square feet.
- Drastic changes become possible; you may raise or lower the local temperature by as much as 30°, conjure strong winds (up to 30 mph), summon a rain shower or cause existing light to brighten or darken by dramatic degrees. On the “softer” side, you may enrich a large field, cool or warm a house for several days or stir strong currents in the local seas. Although these climate changes aren’t damaging *per se*, they might eventually lead to accidents, crop failures or bountiful harvests. Requires at least five successes; affects roughly a mile or two.
- Storms rise at your command; drastic weather changes include driving rains, winds of up to 40 mph, sudden cold snaps or hot spells (up to 40° difference), or a rapid crop failure or bloom. Subtle effects include vastly improved harvests, homes that remain cool or warm despite the temperature outside. You may also cause “boosts” to existing climates (longer rain showers, colder winters, stronger currents, etc.) that may extend a *natural* weather pattern for days. An additional Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 7) during an existing storm

may direct some damaging phenomena — a lightning bolt, hailstones, powerful waves, etc. — to harm a specific target. With the exception of lightning bolts, this attack inflicts non-aggravated damage (four Health Levels + caster's successes; a new roll must be made for each attack). Conjuring such storms requires at least 10 successes; this level affects roughly five miles.

- You may alter the climate as above, but over a larger area (10 miles or more) and for longer periods of time. Weather-based attacks inflict five Health Levels + successes on a separate Manipulation + Occult roll. Requires at least 15 successes.

- You may call the most destructive kinds of storms: tornadoes, hurricanes, monsoons, floods, killing frosts, ocean tempests, raging thunder, dust storms, crop blights, dry spells, etc. Damage from the worst effects may inflict six Health Levels + attack successes. Dramatic storms last for an hour or less, but slow, subtle changes can drag on for weeks. These weather patterns disrupt the local climate for weeks or months afterward. Requires at least 20 successes; affects roughly 20 miles.

Disasters: The weather is not twisted lightly. Even failed rolls create eddies in the local climate that might lead to some odd phenomena in the coming days. Botched rolls send disastrous forces into motion, especially if they come during large workings. An unlucky magician might find herself roasted by her own thunderbolts or drowned in her own currents.





CHAPTER FIVE: SOLITARY TEMPLATES

The first and most important effect of a living mythological symbol is to waken and give guidance to the energies of life.

— Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live By*

Again, the dream.

I am a jaguar running through the forest. My heart is pounding; with my paws and legs, I nimbly leap from ground to tree branch back to the ground, racing along the jungle with my belly low to the floor.

What am I hunting?

This time, the dream is clearer. I can see now the foliage that was simply a murky green shadow before: here a cohune tree, there gumbolimbo, there palm. Is it my dream that has become so clear, or have I simply learned that much more?

Ahead in the path: a fer-de-lance, its immense serpentine body coiled in a deadly loop. This time I see it, though. In the first dream I was struck, blind to the serpent's presence, its venom pierced my heart and threw me into fatal spasms. The second dream, I saw it, but too late to avoid its fatal strike. This time, I avoid it and fly past.

And there, ahead of me in the path, another serpent. But this one looms before me, and I hear my mentor's voice: 'To become one with the spirit world is to become one with the natural world. They are no different; those who are blind to one world cannot see the other.'

Praise the spirits, I am no longer blind.

A SOLITARY ROAD

Many sorcerers practice alone. Most join a society at some point. After all, it's hard to learn how to drive when no one's around to teach you. Given the treacherous nature of occult societies, however, many magicians (and Awakened mages for that matter) go off to follow a solitary path for a time. Without the freedom to drive on the open road, it's pretty difficult to learn how to handle yourself — especially if the teacher keeps yanking the wheel out of your hands.

The following character templates depict young aspiring magicians, travelers without a craft, armed with confidence, vision and lots of attitude. With some slight modifications (changing the Paths to Sphere ratings and Arete), these characters work equally well as Awakened Orphan-solitarities. Take them where you will.

ANTIQUARIAN

The last and greatest art is to limit and isolate oneself.

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Quote: *Unless you have something to trade, go away. I don't have time for the likes of you.*

Prelude: Books... so many books. Fascinating, really, when you consider the permutations of the human imagination and experience. So many things to read. So many facts to discover. You read them all as soon as you could. Soon, you discovered that facts were power. Considering what happened with your so-called peers in school, you needed all the power you could get.

They beat you up, the Philistines. Tore your books to pieces, blackened your eyes, left your glasses shattered on the curbsides and went away laughing. More times than you could count, they shut you out for your love of learning. The teachers saw nothing, did nothing. They who should have fostered you shielded your tormentors instead.

Until you discovered magic.

It is real, you know. Wrapped in dusty books, disguised in ancient riddles, epitomized in a thousand symbols. With practice, you learned the subtle arts and walked the shadowed path. Let the others laugh — you learned secrets that would send them screaming into the night, and you were glad.

As your age and fortunes matured, a lifelong obsession with learning birthed a library of your own, and a collection of ancient oddities as well. Through shrewd machinations, you established a network of sources and allies to acquire new and interesting items. When those methods fail, you prowl the night like a thief. There are astonishing things to be learned in the hidden corners when you've got the soul of a collector and the mind of a magician....

Concept: An obsessive connoisseur of knowledge, especially of the forbidden kind. Delving into darkness has given you an edge more-squeamish collectors lack, and you exploit it (and your contacts) for all they're worth. If any other person has ever shared an intimate moment in your life, you don't recall. Such nonsense is for those less learned than yourself.

Roleplaying Hints: Never fight when you can deceive. Never steal what you can purchase — at good rates. Speak eloquently yet hurriedly, as if the thoughts were bubbling so quickly from your mouth that a moment's hesitation would cause inspiration to escape. Note all details; look for an advantage, and impress everyone with the fact that you know too much for their own good.

Magic: Though the books at your fingertips reveal a host of magical theory, you understand classical magic best. It's reliable, precise — a mark of distinction. Not just *anyone* can master such arcane formulae. To command the elements as you do displays true discipline and art.

Equipment: Notebook; several pens and pencils; pocket tape recorder; large roll of cash; reading glasses; conservative, sensible clothing.



S-O-B-C-E-R-E-R

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Sage*
DEMEANOR: *Curmudgeon*
CONCEPT: *Antiquarian*

SOCIETY: *None*
MENTOR:
MOTIVATION:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ●○○○○
Dexterity ●●●○○
Stamina ●●○○○

SOCIAL

Charisma ●○○○○
Manipulation ●●●○○
Appearance ●●○○○

MENTAL

Perception ●●●○○
Intelligence ●●●○○
Wits ●●○○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ●○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○
Awareness ○○○○○
Brawl ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Instruction ○○○○○
Intuition ○○○○○
Intimidation ●●○○○
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge ●●○○○

SKILLS

Animal Ken ○○○○○
Drive ●○○○○
Etiquette ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Meditation ●●○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Research ●●●○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival ○○○○○
Technology ○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Computer ●○○○○
Cosmology ●●○○○
Culture ○○○○○
Enigmas ●●●○○
Investigation ●●○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ●●○○○
Lore ○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult ●●●○○
Science ○○○○○

PATHS

<i>Alchemy</i> <u> </u> ●●○○○	<u> </u> ○○○○○	<u> </u> ○○○○○
<i>Ephemera</i> <u> </u> ●●○○○	<u> </u> ○○○○○	<u> </u> ○○○○○
<i>Shadows</i> <u> </u> ●○○○○	<u> </u> ○○○○○	<u> </u> ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Library ●●●○○
Resources ●●●○○
Sanctuary ●○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

FAITH (IF APPLICABLE)

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

RITUALS/PATH

Counterspells
Counterspells - Spirit
Warding

OTHER TRAITS

Metaphysics ○○○○○
-Alchemy ●●●○○
-Gematria ●○○○○
Lore: Vampires ●●○○○
 ○○○○○

HEALTH

Bruised	-0	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated		<input type="checkbox"/>

EXPERIENCE

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Paths: 5 Rituals: 3 Freebie Points: 21

SECRET AGENT SABRINA

There are two great pleasures of gambling: that of winning and that of losing.

— French Proverb

Quote: (James Bond theme song softly whistled.)

Prelude: From infancy, your life's been one dare after another. From the boys, you learned to climb trees and fight. From the girls, you learned to pass notes and put on makeup. Both "sides" had their double-dares-yous, and you went for it every time. Some stunts damn near got you killed, but it was worth it.

It all went to hell when you turned 16. Mom died and Dad didn't want to be bothered. He called you a problem child and sent you off to rehab. Two years later, you had an open door, an attitude problem and a set of skills that qualified you for all sorts of "extralegal" pursuits. So what were you gonna do, join a typing pool? It wasn't long before you got caught again, and this time you were of age — shit.

That's where you met Marion, a slinky chick with connections, charm and some interesting talents of her own. She introduced you to the goddess and showed you how to break all the rules. More importantly, she gave you focus, family and a sense of purpose. After your parole, Marion took you around to meet some friends. They seemed impressed. One claimed he could set you up with the ultimate dare if you were interested. You were. He did.

The academy was hard. They trained you for years — disguise, languages, explosives and more. They taught you to lie, steal and kill for your country, and you loved every minute of it. The thrill didn't come from patriotism, but from the high-octane rush of another challenge. Now you play the grown-up versions of those kids' games, but the stakes are higher. You play for keeps, my friend, and you love the game.

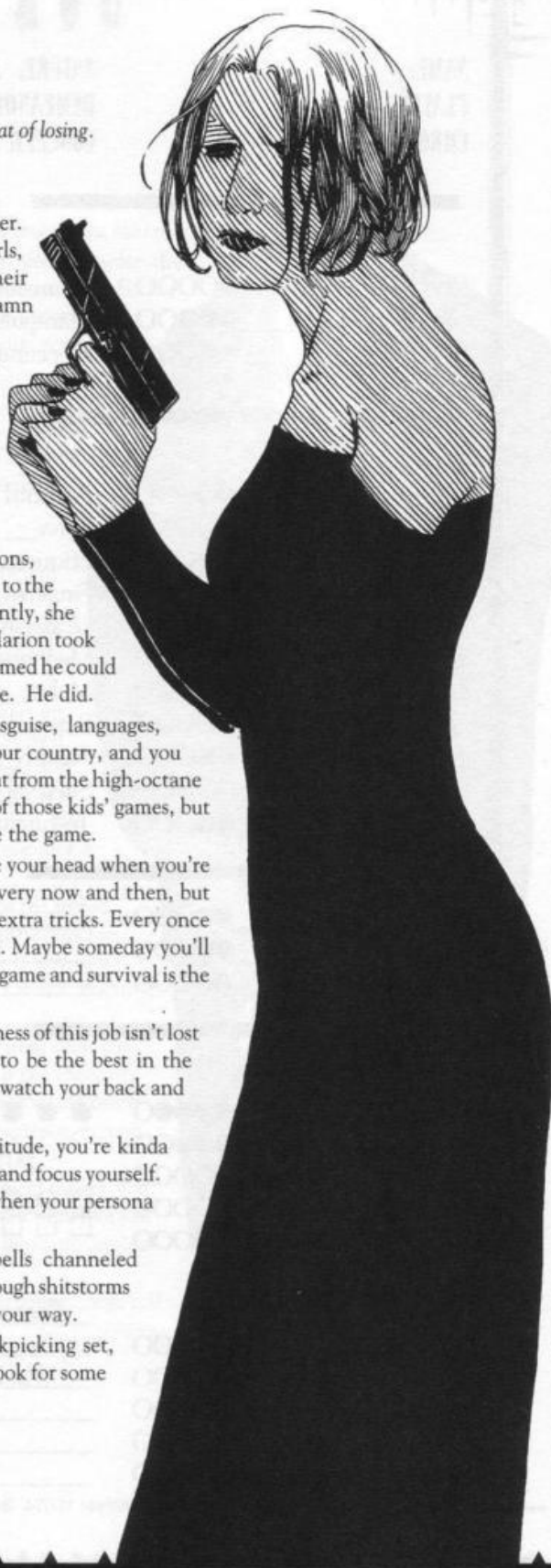
Marion's still close, and it's a good thing, too. It's easy to lose your head when you're Jane Fucking Bond. The rituals she taught you come in handy every now and then, but you'd never call yourself a magician. Still, it's nice to have a few extra tricks. Every once in a while, you chill out and take a little time with Mother Moon. Maybe someday you'll mellow out and leave the agency behind. For now, though, life is a game and survival is the jackpot. So far, you've been a winner.

Concept: A thrillseeker with a mission. Although the seriousness of this job isn't lost on you, the real payoff is bucking the odds. You're determined to be the best in the business — a treacherous business — and you learned long ago to watch your back and take nothing for granted.

Roleplaying Hints: Death on two legs, baby. Under the attitude, you're kinda scared, but that fear *never* shows through. When you can, get away and focus yourself. Magic has taught you discipline, and it's given you a place to run when your persona gets too thick to let you breathe.

Magic: Your Wiccan practices emphasize small, subtle spells channeled through incantations and simple herbs. Healing helps you come through shitstorms more or less intact, while Weathercraft keeps the wind blowing your way.

Equipment: Stiletto, disguises, forged IDs, Walter PPK, lockpicking set, mini-camera, hidden pouch of herbs, lots of tiny gadgets, phrase book for some new language.



S-O-R-C-E-R-E-R

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Bon Vivant*
DEMEANOR: *Crackerjack*
CONCEPT: *Secret Agent Sabrina*

SOCIETY: *None*
MENTOR:
MOTIVATION:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ●●●●○
Dexterity ●●●●○
Stamina ●●●●○

SOCIAL

Charisma ●●●●○
Manipulation ●●●●○
Appearance ●●●●○

MENTAL

Perception ●●●●○
Intelligence ●●●●○
Wits ●●●●○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ●●●●○
Athletics ●●●●○
Awareness ○○○○○
Brawl ●●●●○
Dodge ●○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Instruction ○○○○○
Intuition ○○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Streetwise ●○○○○
Subterfuge ●○○○○

SKILLS

Animal Ken ○○○○○
Drive ●●●●○
Etiquette ○○○○○
Firearms ●●●●○
Leadership ○○○○○
Meditation ○○○○○
Melee ●●●●○
Research ○○○○○
Stealth ●●●●○
Survival ○○○○○
Technology ○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Computer ●○○○○
Cosmology ○○○○○
Culture ○○○○○
Enigmas ○○○○○
Investigation ○○○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ●●●●○
Lore ○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult ●●●●○
Science ○○○○○

PATHS

Conjuration ●○○○○ ○○○○○ ○○○○○
Healing ●●○○○ ○○○○○ ○○○○○
Weathercraft ●●○○○ ○○○○○ ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Allies ●●●●○
Contracts ●●○○○
Mentor ●●○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

FAITH (IF APPLICABLE)

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

RITUALS/PATH

Counterspells
Warding
Unweaving

OTHER TRAITS

Disguise ●●○○○
Demolitions ●●○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

HEALTH

Bruised -0
Hurt -1
Injured -1
Wounded -2
Mauled -2
Crippled -5
Incapacitated

EXPERIENCE

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Paths: 5 Rituals: 3 Freebie Points: 21

STREET PROPHET

Know ye, then, that the Soul which has found God in the Ineffable Light is at last freed from death and rebirth, grief and old age of spirit. Such Souls have drunk deep of the water of Immortality.

— R. Swinburne Clymer, M.D., *A Compendium of Occult Laws*

Quote: *I know what it is to sin, and I understand what it is to be saved!*

Prelude: Jesus came to see you on your 25th birthday.

Before that, you'd been a badass. A literal hellraiser with beer on your breath and blood on your fists. It wore you down quick, though. By 25, you were like a whitewashed shack, pretty on the outside but termite-ridden on the inside. When Billy Ray shot your dumb ass outside Skilllets, he was just putting the finishing touches on what you'd already done to yourself.

Jesus did not let you die. Oh, yeah, you wanted to, it hurt so bad. Layin' there sucking air through a plastic tube while nurses held their noses. *Happy birthday to me*, you thought as you nodded off, ready to feel the Devil's pitchfork in your butt. That thought scared you. A lot. For the first time in a long time, you started to pray.

Hey, it worked. The Lord God walked right out of a cluster of doctors, took your hand and taught you The Word. You cried all night while He held your sorry-ass sinner's paw and spoke to you in low, loving tones. For the next few weeks, He told you His plans for the world. When the docs kicked your ass out of bed, Jesus guided you out the front door and back into the garden of sinners.

No one liked you anymore. Seeing the way you had acted before, you could kinda understand why. Like that guy who made fun of Jesus on the way to the cross, you've gotta walk forever without resting. That's okay, though. When you get used to it, living outside ain't that bad. It gives you lots of time to spread The Word, that sweet Gospel that brought you back from the edge of death. Jesus gave you the gift of prophecy before He left, and you use it to bring other sinners closer to God before it's too late for them.

Praise God, you've been saved. Do His good work.

Concept: A wandering madman with the light of God in his eyes. By most folk's standards, you talk crazy and act real weird. That doesn't matter. You've got a mission and the gifts you need to carry it out — holy miracles and skills honed by the Devil but tamed by the Lord's hands. Once a sinner, you've found redemption through The Word.

Roleplaying Hints: Stare. Talk loudly. Gaze into each sinner's eyes and tell him your story. When you see a soul in need, pitch in to help — preach, fight, step in front of a semi, whatever it takes. Jesus charged you to protect the weak. His Will be done.

Magic: The Word is your focus and prayer is your guide. Without those blessings, you are nothing; with them, you can see the future, speak with authority and help folks who need a bit of healing.

Equipment: Dirty clothes, tattered Bible, broken toys, salvation pamphlets lifted from phone booths and tables (you can't afford to buy your own).



S-O-R-C-E-R-E-R

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Suppliant*
DEMEANOR: *Fanatic*
CONCEPT: *Street Prophet*

SOCIETY: *None*
MENTOR:
MOTIVATION:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength _____ ●●●●○	Charisma _____ ●●●○○	Perception _____ ●●●○○
Dexterity _____ ●●●○○	Manipulation _____ ●●●●○	Intelligence _____ ●●●○○
Stamina _____ ●●●●○	Appearance _____ ●○○○○	Wits _____ ●●●○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness _____ ●●○○○	Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○	Computer _____ ○○○○○
Athletics _____ ○○○○○	Drive _____ ○○○○○	Cosmology _____ ●○○○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○	Etiquette _____ ○○○○○	Culture _____ ○○○○○
Brawl _____ ●●●○○	Firearms _____ ○○○○○	Enigmas _____ ●○○○○
Dodge _____ ○○○○○	Leadership _____ ○○○○○	Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Expression _____ ●●●○○	Meditation _____ ○○○○○	Law _____ ○○○○○
Instruction _____ ○○○○○	Melee _____ ●○○○○	Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Intuition _____ ○○○○○	Research _____ ○○○○○	Lore _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○	Stealth _____ ○○○○○	Medicine _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ●●●○○	Survival _____ ●●●○○	Occult _____ ●●○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○	Technology _____ ○○○○○	Science _____ ○○○○○

PATHS

<i>Divination</i> _____ ●●○○○	_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○
<i>Fascination</i> _____ ●●○○○	_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○
<i>Healing</i> _____ ●●○○○	_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS	WILLPOWER	HEALTH
<i>Allies</i> _____ ●●○○○	● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Bruised _____ -0 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Arcane</i> _____ ●●●○○	FAITH (IF APPLICABLE)	Hurt _____ -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Injured _____ -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Wounded _____ -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○	RITUALS/PATH	Mauled _____ -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Counterspells</i> _____	Crippled _____ -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Counterspells—Spirit</i> _____	Incapacitated _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Ward—Spirit</i> _____	

OTHER TRAITS

Fortune-Telling _____ ●●●○○

_____ ○○○○○

_____ ○○○○○

_____ ○○○○○

_____ ○○○○○

EXPERIENCE

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Paths: 5 Rituals: 3 Freebie Points: 21

"BABY WITCH"

I sing true

And I can see right through you

— Faith & the Muse, "Hand of Man"

Quote: *Don't ever speak to me that way again. You might not like what will happen.*

Prelude: They always said you were weird. You decided to prove it.

That really wasn't much of a stretch. School's dull, peppered with cheerleaders, broadheads, geeks and wannabes. They used to laugh at you, but now they whisper instead, and keep their distance. You *know* things, and the pathetic losers around you can tell. Now nobody wants to get too close.

Good.

It started with the books. Hey, it's not *your* fault you could read before most kids could talk. Maybe the Horned God was trying to tell you something. While Mom and Dad fought, you retreated to your room, curling up with Mercedes Lackey, Tolkien and MZB. In time, your tastes grew more sophisticated: Rice. Gardner. Crowley. La Vay. De Sade. The darkness drew you in. Finally, you answered.

His name was Walter, but he called himself Ace. Your candlelight fumbles with spellcraft and sex led to a deeper awareness. For him, it was a lark; you, however, heard the Horned God call from beyond the flickering lights, and you sought him out in sweaty fantasies and moonlight walks. The knowledge burned like a molten silver thread, and you chased it through the night, away from the hollow crucifix in Mom's bedroom and into a place where good and evil are chess pieces moved by the same hand. Stef and the other coven members met you there and initiated you into truths that Ace could only brag about.

Yeah, you're still in school. Why cause trouble for yourself by dropping out early? In a year or two, you'll be free. Free of Mom and her constant bitching. Free of Ace and his stupid games. The coven has prepared a place for you; when the shit gets too thick, you can seek solace there.

Time is on your side.

Blessed be. Or else.

Concept: A teenager who knows more than most people do, but less than she believes she does. While most of your "occult wisdom" comes from the New Age section of your local bookstore, you do possess a bit of real insight. Unknowingly, you've entered a crucible; the next few years will shape you in ways you never expected. Raw and full of attitude, you believe you're something that you really aren't. Still, you *do* have power. Pray it doesn't destroy you.

Roleplaying Hints: Young, arrogant and deadly serious. Aside from your coven, the world is full of clueless fucks. Initiation into the mysteries has given you a real attitude, and that's just fine with you. Mutter darkly about the wisdom you possess. Stare at people with a mixture of threat and contempt. The darkness is your playground. Remember that as it enfolds you.

Magic: Modern darkpagan store-bought craft. You recite the spells in self-help magick books and weave minor workings with invocations to the Horned God.

Equipment: Athame, well-thumbed *Witch's Bible*, black clothing, pentacle necklace, clove cigarettes, copies of *Blue Blood*, *Con-Tours*, *Green Egg* and *Permission*.



HITCHHIKER

Rolling me down the highway

Moving ahead so life

Don't pass me by

— Jim Croce, "I've Got a Name"

Quote: *Don't fence me in!*

Prelude: From the start, you were drawn to the music of the open road. Legends of hikers' freedom drowned out the boredom of suburbia, and you longed to wander the countryside. Never mind that those highway tales were older than your mom. You wanted to go out on your own. And one night, you did.

With a backpack of possessions, you put your thumb to the wind and your feet to the asphalt. Young and pretty, you found plenty of willing rides. Soon, you learned to be more discriminating about which offers to accept. Still in all, things weren't that bad. When you got hungry, people were always ready to buy you a meal, and they didn't ask that much in return. The Cat saw to that.

The Cat has been a part of you since your first period. A secret from your parents, she's part of that wandering spirit that led you away from home in the first place. After a series of, um, mistakes, you learned to control The Cat; now she comes when you call her and stays put otherwise—well, usually. The hiker's life satisfies you both.

There's a price, of course. There always is. You've become one of those urban legends, one of those reasons so many others fear the open road. The Cat is never far from the surface, and every so often, she needs to be fed. For the most part, the corpses belonged to assholes who didn't deserve to live. You don't like to think about the bystanders who were in the wrong place when... Well, let's just say the road is a wonderful place to be, especially for a girl with your talents. So many things to see, so many people to meet!

Concept: A flighty kid who turns into a cat — a big, dangerous cat. You're young enough not to care about the big picture, and have all the time in the world. Someday, a real crisis may get you to change your careless ways. But for now, the wild life is the only one worth living.

Roleplaying Hints: Like a kitten at play, you swat at everything in view. Your only concerns are immediate ones — food, shelter, survival, and fun, and not necessarily in that order. Your attention skitters from one shiny object to the next without much forethought. Live for the moment and let the world take care of itself.

Magic: What's magic? You're a weird prodigy with some slumbering powers and no idea what to do with them. (See the Path Natural Merit.) Despite appearances, you're not a member of the Changing Breeds, nor do you know anything about them. As far as you're concerned, you're a freak of nature. Maybe the right mentor could teach you how to focus those talents, but for now you're on your own.

Equipment: Backpack full of odds and ends, the clothes on your back.



S-O-R-C-E-R-E-R

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Sensualist*
DEMEANOR: *Loner*
CONCEPT: *Hitchhiker*

SOCIETY: *None*
MENTOR:
MOTIVATION:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength _____ ●●○○○	Charisma _____ ●●○○○	Perception _____ ●●●○○
Dexterity _____ ●●●○○	Manipulation _____ ●●○○○	Intelligence _____ ●●○○○
Stamina _____ ●●●○○	Appearance _____ ●●○○○	Wits _____ ●●○○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness _____ ●●○○○	Animal Ken _____ ●●○○○	Computer _____ ●○○○○
Athletics _____ ●●●○○	Drive _____ ○○○○○	Cosmology _____ ○○○○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○	Etiquette _____ ○○○○○	Culture _____ ○○○○○
Brawl _____ ●●●○○	Firearms _____ ○○○○○	Enigmas _____ ○○○○○
Dodge _____ ●●●○○	Leadership _____ ○○○○○	Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○	Meditation _____ ○○○○○	Law _____ ○○○○○
Instruction _____ ○○○○○	Melee _____ ○○○○○	Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Intuition _____ ○○○○○	Research _____ ○○○○○	Lore _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ●●○○○	Stealth <i>silent</i> _____ ●●●○○	Medicine _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ●●○○○	Survival _____ ●●○○○	Occult _____ ●●●○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○	Technology _____ ○○○○○	Science _____ ○○○○○

PATHS

<i>Shapeshifting</i> _____ ●●●○○	_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○
<i>Shadows</i> _____ ●●○○○	_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS	WILLPOWER	HEALTH
<i>Allies</i> _____ ●●●○○	● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Bruised _____ -0 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Sanctuary</i> _____ ●●○○○	FAITH (IF APPLICABLE)	Hurt _____ -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>(hidden glen)</i> _____ ○○○○○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Injured _____ -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Wounded _____ -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○	RITUALS/PATH	Mauled _____ -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Counterspells</i> _____	Crippled _____ -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
OTHER TRAITS	<i>Warding</i> _____	Incapacitated _____ <input type="checkbox"/>
_____ ○○○○○	<i>Warding-Spirit</i> _____	
_____ ○○○○○	_____	EXPERIENCE
_____ ○○○○○	_____	
_____ ○○○○○	_____	

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Paths: 5 Rituals: 3 Freebie Points: 21

APPENDIX

There shall be not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or daughter to pass through fire, or useth divination, or an observer of the times, an enchanter, a witch, a charmer, a consulter of familiar spirits, or a necromancer.

— Deuteronomy 18:10-11

SORCERERS OF REPUTE

Magician? Magus? Who can tell the difference? So many individuals have been attributed with magical powers that compiling a “definitive” list of sorcerers would be an endless task. While several legendary figures — Crowley, Simon Magus, John Dee, Catherine de Medici and many others — are often credited with full Awakening, no one really knows the true talent such practitioners possessed. The sorcerers listed below are but the tip of an iceberg millennia old and fathoms deep. While it’s unlikely that these “midnight missionaries” have attained True Mage status, no one who has heard their stories can dispute their obvious abilities.

COUNT CAGLIOSTRO AND LORENZA FELICIANI

“The Divine Cagliostro” supposedly died under Catholic “custody” in 1795; his wife Lorenza, an accomplished magician in her own right, was imprisoned in a convent and

is said to have passed on in 1794. Horribly tortured for their practices, these sorcerers may have had the last laugh on their tormentors after all. According to the Ancient Order of the Aeon Rites, Cagliostro’s infamous Elixir of Life proved to be more successful than its creator expected.

Born in the early 1740s, this Sicilian magician went on to charm courtiers and commoners alike. A renowned alchemist, healer, spiritualist and conjurer, Alessandro Cagliostro founded several occult societies, gave generously to the poor, foretold the French Revolution and fabricated a life story of charming absurdity. Accompanied by the beautiful Lorenza (whom he once deified as a goddess to his order), the count fed Europe’s rising fascination with the unseen world. Although probably un-Awakened, both Cagliostros certainly trucked with True Magi, spirits, demons and the Kindred throughout their colorful careers. Toasted by aristocrats

from Italy to Britain, they eventually fell prey to jealous rivals, bad fortune and finally the church, who imprisoned them in the 1780s.

According to mortal histories, the Cagliostros met their painful ends soon afterward; both, however, had consumed the Elixir of Life prior to their imprisonment. When the sorcerers' bodies gave in and were buried, the revitalizing effect of the potions took over. Common wisdom holds that both Count Alessandro and Lorenza dug their way free and fled Italy forever. One tale claims that Lorenza escaped first with the help of a faithful lover, went to her husband's grave and found him too dissipated to leave; another version has things the other way around. The Brotherhood of Saint Hermes speaks of Lorenza's conversion to Christianity; supposedly, Count Cagliostro found his wife alive, but quarreled with her when he learned she had joined their enemies. Bitterly split, the two parted ways in 1800 and have not spoken since. Both have supposedly formed new orders, the ritualistic Tenth Seat of Iehova and the Christian Light of Our Lady, a cloistered order. Although the Brotherhood offers some compelling evidence of their tale, most authorities doubt the truth behind it.

Alive or dead, Count Alessandro and Lady Lorenza provided a bold template for aspiring magicians. Championed, admired and reviled, these charismatic sorcerers lived by their eclectic codes, promoted the mystic arts and wove a romantic shadowplay down the center of the Age of Reason. The world may never see their like again.

GIDEON MCKAY

His spirit was as devout as his demeanor was dour, and many consider Gideon McKay to have been the greatest Nephite of the modern day. Where Uriah Spence discovered the lost gold mine that was the Nephite Priesthood, Gideon McKay ored and forged it into a thing of strength and beauty.

Though not born to the Mormon faith, young McKay's family moved to Utah and proudly took up the Mormon banner. A dutiful child and a hard worker, Gideon bent his back beneath the harsh sun so that future generations might profit from his labor. Others remarked that his 15-year old body held the spirit and conviction of a man twice his age. A farmer like his father, Gideon built a homestead—a home consumed fire one twilight. In the tragedy that took his home and family, he heard the voice of the Lord compelling him to seek the Great Salt Lake Desert.

In that waste he met Uriah Spence and his band of followers, who initiated Gideon into the newly restored Nephite Priesthood. Later, as Uriah's failing health took its toll, Gideon stepped in, fueling the Priesthood with a new vigor. Strong in body and mighty in mind, Gideon was powerful in magic, too. As a wandering prophet surely touched by God, he gave a bold vision and momentum to the rag-tag group of Mormon wanderers.





Under Gideon, the Nephite Priesthood grew in strength and size, becoming the vigilant guardians of Zion that they are to this day. Uriah gave the Priests the lost and forgotten rituals of the Priesthood: Gideon gave them his unflinching devotion. To become a Nephite Priest, Gideon taught, was to devote spirit, mind and body equally to the service of the Lord. He lived and eventually died by that code.

To this day, Nephites speak of Gideon in revered tones: his miraculous healings, his terrifying encounters with the Prowlers of the Wastes; his frequent battles with the progeny of the Anti-Christ; his friendship with the Lamanite Ute warrior, an Indian who abandoned his ancestral pagan ways and converted at Gideon's feet; and his death in a shoot-out with a band of anti-Mormon army troops. Although dead, his legacy lives on. Many Nephites believe that in the final battle for Zion their forces shall be led by Gideon himself — now a celestial being who walks with Mormon and Moroni.

TANEELA RANGI YA FEDHA, THE SILVER LADY

While many of her Uzoma relations live and die in forgotten parts of the African heartland, Taneela is a wanderer. A major figure in the African modernization movement, she lives up to her society's name. Journeying from continent to continent, Ms. Rangi ya Fedha seems to attract riches. Her wallet is always full, her bank account is always healthy and her credit is always spotless. It has been said that the spirits of prosperity follow the Silver Lady. Taneela's patron orisha, Oyá, clearly shares her prodigy with Elegba, Opener of Ways — and, some say, of bank vaults.

Is Taneela a high-class thief? No one's quite sure, although several InterPol investigators would like to have words with her. If she *does* steal, Taneela's more Robin Hood than robber. No one hungers when the Silver Lady is nearby. Generous gifts of food, goods and cash greet the poor, and huge grants grease the wheels of conservation efforts, poverty relief programs and political activists who win Taneela's favor. The Silver Lady never comments on the source of her wealth; the fact that she shares it with her countryfolk should be, in her view, enough of an answer for the curious.

Despite her name, Taneela is as dark as a woman can be. Her black hair falls in cornrows past her shoulders and her shockingly green eyes contrast with mahogany skin. Dignified and charismatic, she dominates any conversation with witty observations and eloquent charm. Taneela speaks French, Yoruban, Swahili, English, Italian, Japanese, Arabic and Afrikaans with equal fluency and seems to understand the deeper meanings inherent in each language. Her vast network of friends and contacts keeps this sorcerer well-informed. The Silver Lady always seems to know what's going on, even when she has only recently arrived. Dressed in the height of international fashion, this globetrotting priestess makes no secret of her ancestral spirituality. Although pursued by would-be initiates, Taneela travels alone. No one who has tried to harm her lives to try again.

"GRETCHEN"

A persistent rumor speaks of a German girl who may be over 700 years old. Although she has never demonstrated mastery of the magical Arts, this immortal clearly understands mystic principles. A legendary participant in hundreds of occult societies, "Gretchen" always goes by one name only. While many occultists (especially ancient ones) presume to lead their cults or covens, "Gretchen" is a follower, a bit player on the fringe of whichever group catches her fancy. She is most noted for her involvement with Gerald Gardner, Aleister Crowley and Countess Cagliostro. "Gretchen" appears in Inquisition records, personal diaries, home movies and videotapes, flowing between Tantrik temples, Satanic cults, Christian monasteries and Japanese gardens with equal enthusiasm. Despite her antiquity, "Gretchen" appears to be no older than 25; her melodious voice trembles like a virgin in her marriage bed and her charming naiveté belies her vast experience.

Despite her age and talents, "Gretchen" always looks and acts the same; a slender girl with simple tastes, she stands slightly over five feet tall. She's pretty with long brown hair and almond eyes, but not exceptionally attractive or charismatic. "Gretchen's" apparent youth and innocent air lead many associates to underestimate her; although she has never taken an obvious leadership role, this ageless girl may have been the true force behind innumerable societies, a muse to mystic artists.

Although many mages, magicians and even Kindred have tried to uncover "Gretchen's" secrets, she remains an enigma. If asked, she denies her age and experiences; "I'm sorry," she insists in a common German lilt, "but you must be mistaken." While she appears to be a frightened but curious country girl, "Gretchen" frustrates mental incursions, Blood Bonds and grosser forms of coercion with ease. The ultimate magical submissive, "Gretchen" charms her way past more "sophisticated" occultists, satisfies her eternal hunger for knowledge, and silently moves on.

RELICS

Any being, Awakened or otherwise, can utilize any one of the following mystical objects. He must understand its purpose, and may need some occult research or study to understand what he holds and how to use it; once he comprehends the item, however, the magician can employ it to his own ends. (See the Relic Background in Chapter Three, and the Enchantment Path in Chapter Four.)

• GRACE POTION

One of the most basic magical charms, the potion embodies a single mystical spell in a drinkable form. Dozens of arcane serums exist, from cinnamon love philters to bitter strength concoctions, and each enchanter favors his own formulae.

These simple "grace" draughts enhance the drinker's physical prowess in a single, predetermined way. Consumed in a single long gulp, such potions take hold almost immediately and last for a few minutes at most. While most concoctions leave the drinker slightly nauseous afterward, some brewers have perfected the art to create sweeter, more-appetizing forms. Even so, potions are noxious things. Drinking raw magic can have some very odd long-term effects....

In plain system terms, a Grace Potion adds two dots to a single selected Attribute — Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, Charisma, Appearance, Perception or Wits — for one scene. Each Attribute's enhancement has a certain "special effect": Strength sends a surge of raw power; Dexterity rides in on a burst of adrenaline; Stamina settles down like a block of stone; Charisma lightens mood and inhibitions; Appearance blurs the taster's features into a more pleasing form; Perception sharpens the senses to an almost painful edge; and Wits quickens thoughts and reactions.

Potions are very rare, especially in the modern world, and always carry some nasty side effects. The Storyteller should mandate some unpleasant consequences after the rush fades away — especially if the drinker acquires "potioholic tendencies."

• SILENT FEET

Stealth is often a necessity for practitioners of the *ars arcana*. Fortunately, a simple charm worn on the foot — sometimes a shoe, more often an anklet or toe ring — can silence the wearers' footfalls. After donning the relic, the sorcerer chants a whispered incantation to Hecate or Hermes. No matter where she travels thereafter, the magician walks quietly until the next time she speaks. The first word uttered after the charm takes effect dispels the magic until the following night.



In game terms, a Silent Feet charm gives the wearer a five die Stealth rating, or adds five dice to her existing Stealth Skill. The relic silences *only* the magician's footfalls, not her voice, her actions or the rustle of her clothing. The moment she speaks, the charm is broken.

•• LOVE POPPET

An ageless figure of wax or straw, this magical charm entrances a would-be lover into helpless passion. The specialty of magicians and witches from Africa to the Americas, the Poppet includes fingernail parings, hair, blood, semen or a mixture of all of them. When the proper incantations have been spoken in a suitable rite, these personal effects carry powerful sympathetic magic to the object of desire. If all goes well (at least by the caster's definition), the object of desire falls deeply in love with someone he had earlier avoided.

Few magicians craft these objects for their own use; instead, they make them "on commission," often with a warning to the buyer. Once kindled, magical passion is hard to quench; charmed lovers tend to be ferociously jealous, obsessive and insatiable. No mortal stalker can compete with the victim of a Love Poppet; if the enchantment takes hold, it's often there for life... and perhaps even longer. As they say, the line between love and hate is pretty thin. An abused lover might explode into a self-destructive frenzy, destroying himself and the charmer in a single dramatic act.

In game terms, the Poppet ignites its version of "love" in a single human subject. Although vampires and other odd creatures may be stirred by the relic's effects, they're sufficiently inhuman to escape the item's powerful pull. A human victim isn't so lucky; in most cases, he's hooked for life, no matter what his new paramour says or does thereafter. A magician, mage or other mystic disciple can recognize such a charm, and might be able to break it's hold with his own arts (counterspell or countermagic, three successes on a single difficulty 7 roll; one roll per month).

•• VISION SKULL

A blackened skull decorated with white chalk designs, this potent scrying relic allows a magician to glimpse at distant people or places, peer into the past or prophecy the future. Filled with blood and fresh herbs, the skull's tracings shine with faint fire. After entering a trance, the magician consumes the blood and begins to dance. In her mind's eye, the visions unfold. After a minute or two, the magical sight passes and the sorcerer falls into a drugged sleep.

In game terms, the skull grants the magician a temporary vision, similar to Divination 2. Appearing as a vivid dream, this vision often takes symbolic, not literal, form. A magician who uses the skull to scry out treachery might see an army of carnivorous beetles munching their way through a sleeping



man's body, rather than the faces of the conspirators or their current location. Each divination requires a separate ritual, and the sorcerer must rest at least one day between viewings.

••• SYMPATHETIC BINDINGS

A helpful tool for the traveling magician, this ancient recipe prepares bandages that heal wounds from a distance. After soaking in a concoction of sulfuric acid powder, linen and blood from the person to be healed, these wrappings transmit their recuperative powers across a room, leaving the wound free to "breathe." The wound itself closes of its own accord and heals at a rapid (but not unnatural) rate.

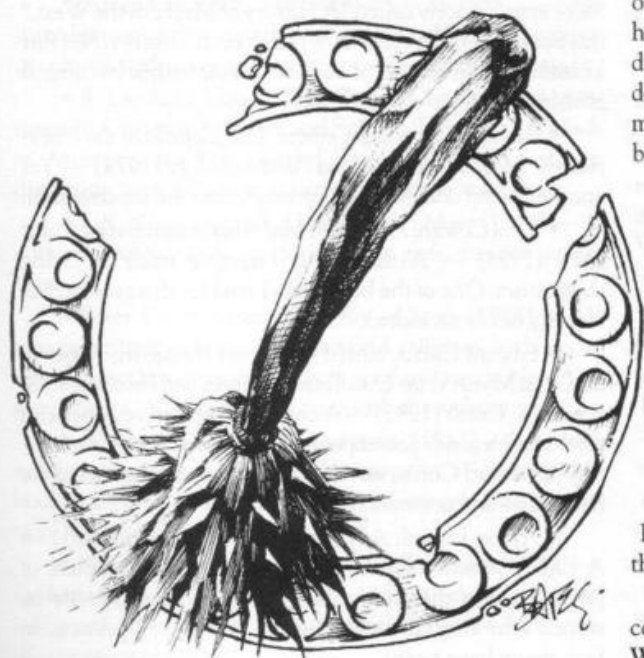
In systems terms, the Bindings cure damage from open cuts, slashes, burns or gunshot wounds at a rate of one Health Level per day. Staving off infections (an essential thing in primitive medicine), the magical bandages keep the injury safe so long as the wearer rests periodically. Each wound requires a separate batch of Bindings, and the wrappings themselves must be used no more than one day after they've been prepared. Once used, the bandages become normal blood-soaked cloth.

••• WITCH'S STEED

A common tool of European witchcraft, this broom seems normal enough by day. It sweeps especially *well*, of course, but displays no outward sign of magic. After nightfall, however, it's a different story. The broom handle lengthens and blackens; its bristles grow thorny and sharp. A magician straddling the broom feels a sudden libidinous rush

exploding from her crotch and bursting upward like fire. A cry of "Hey! Hie! In the Devil's name we fly!" carries the broom and its rider upward at incredible speed, filling the sorceress with an uncontrollable abandon. Where she goes and what she does from that point is up to her; it will, however, be a wild, dangerous and magical trip.

A sorceress on such a broom flies at roughly 50 mph and "acquires" an Arcane rating of 5 for the duration of the trip. So long as she keeps the Steed nearby, the sorceress may return home at any time she wants. It's generally a good idea



to hang on to the broom — it travels hundreds of feet in the air and has no particular affection for its rider. If she falls, the Steed keeps going.

An object of obvious black magic, the Steed is a frankly carnal relic; regardless of the rider's gender, the broom kindles a shocking sensuality and abandon. Although the broom works for male witches too, it seems especially alive in a woman's embrace. Sweeping inhibitions away like dirt, this witch's broom carries a magician off in more ways than one.

◆◆◆◆ DESHAYES' FATAL CUP

Named for the legendary poisoner Catherine Deshayes, these cups and chalices come in many different forms. Seemingly normal, such vessels bear faint inscriptions across their bowls or bottoms. When rubbed with fresh blood, these carvings transmute whatever liquid is in the cup into deadly magical poison. Untraceable by mortal means, this poison kills whoever

drains the cup, often within five minutes or less. A lesser Cup, often called **Dionysus' Chalice**, transforms the liquid into a heady beverage or hallucinogenic potion.

To save himself, the drinker of the poison may attempt a counterspell (see Chapter Four; difficulty 7). A True Mage might stop the effects with Life, Prime or Matter countermagic (see **Mag: The Ascension**), while a shapechanger could dispel the potion with a successful Stamina + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 7) or healing Gift. An ordinary mortal is probably doomed. Although the poison cannot kill a vampire, ghost or other undying thing, it causes him incapacitating pain unless he can overcome the magic (Willpower roll, difficulty 8), in which case he'll simply be agonized, not helpless. If the drinker consumes a draught from Dionysus' Chalice, he'll fall into intoxication or delirium for roughly six hours unless he wins three successes or more on a Stamina roll (difficulty 8), in which case he'll simply be giddy for a while.

◆◆◆◆ MASK OF THE MIDNIGHT GHOSTS

Crafted by Nhangas on moonless nights, these terrible masks transform a living body into spirit form. Carved of rotting wood, painted with blood, semen and urine and decorated with the skin of stillborn infants, these masks call to gangs of evil orishas. After a series of live sacrifices, the conjure man sues for his reward — a spirit-body. Once he becomes like a ghost himself, the Nhangas passes among the living, bringing sickness, nightmares and misery until morning's light drives him back into his body. Exhausted by his travels, the conjure man sleeps until dusk; by this sign, many Nhangas have been discovered and executed.

In game terms, the Mask allows the sorcerer to pass his consciousness into the Near Umbral Shadowlands (see **Wraith: The Oblivion** or **Beyond the Barriers: The Book of Worlds** for details), leaving his body behind. Once he reaches the land of the dead — a bleak, depressing reflection of the living world — the Mask's owner can float in the air, pass through material obstacles and observe the living without being seen himself. Accompanied by his orishas, the witch doctor can travel several hundred miles from his sleeping body; if, however, he cannot return by the next dawn, his body crumbles to dust, trapping the magician in the Shadowlands for eternity — or at least until the Restless Ones consume the conjure man's soul.

A sorcerer in ghost-form can reach through into the living world by rolling his Willpower against the local Shroud (a.k.a., the Gauntlet). In **Wraith** terms, he has 10 Corpus but no Arcanoi. His body is his only Fetter. Traveling this way is extraordinarily dangerous; the sorcerer's magics cannot affect anything on the dead side of the Shroud, so he's effectively a normal person with ghostly "physicality." Fortunately for the average Nhangas, Spectres are rare in the rural African forests. For details about the Jade Kingdom of Ivory, see the **Wraith Players Guide**.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I referenced many books (and simply tossed aside many more) during the writing of this work. There's a gold mine of material available on occult societies and sorcery within the context of global cultures; unfortunately, there's also a horde of dreck out there. Enterprising Storytellers and characters who want to add more depth to sorcerer characters or build new societies should peruse this list.

The following books were particularly useful or interesting, and I'd recommend them either for research or for inspirational reading. Sometimes the amount of reference material is disproportionate to how much was ultimately written. I often had to wander through various works to get to a point of understanding; other times I was just interested and kept on reading!

I fully realize that books that have had an impact on me might have absolutely no impact on anyone else — "Your mileage may vary," as the saying goes. This reading list is merely a reflection of my own study and path while writing this book.

— James Estes Looking Eagle

• Rollo Ahmed, *The Black Art* (1936) — An often amusing but likewise compelling look at magical practices through the eyes of an "authority" who believes most forms of the art are blasphemous. Very World of Darkness, and politically incorrect as hell.

• Rosita Arvigo, *Sastun: My Apprenticeship with a Maya Healer* (1994) — The true story of an American woman's apprenticeship under an authentic Maya spiritual/botanical healer. This is not simply a fable of someone's "apprenticeship into ancient Maya magic": Rosita Arvigo lives in Belize, where she cultivates rain forest plants and trees and conducts research into the medicinal properties of traditional Maya herbal remedies, including possible cures for AIDS, cancer, and other diseases. Her work has attracted international attention and recognition.

• Brian Bates, *The Way of Wyrd* (1983) — A fictional retelling of a medieval Christian monk's introduction to Norse magic and mysticism.

• Peggy Beck, Anna Lee Walters and Nia Francisco, *The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Ways of Life* (1992) — An insightful study of Native American spirituality, well-received by scholarly and Native American communities alike.

• Hal Zina Bennet, *Zuni Fetishes* (1993) — A study of Zuni fetish construction and the use of such fetishes in meditation and reflection.

• Madeleine Biarreau, *Hinduism: The Anthropology of a Civilization* (1989) — An erudite examination of Hindu culture; highly recommended for those who want a greater understanding of Hinduism, but not recommended for beginners.

• J.F. Bierlein, *Parallel Myths* (1994) — A cross-cultural examination of common themes in world mythology. Magic is often born of a culture's mythology, and though this book is somewhat light, it is flavorful.

• Ralph Blum, *The Book of Runes* (1982) — The book that popularized runic divination for the masses. Many serious rune-workers don't care for this work, but it's still a fun read.

• Margaret Bunson, *A Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (1991) — A valuable reference on ancient Egyptian history, culture and mythology.

• Richard Cavendish, *A History of Magic* (1987) — More appropriately called "A History of Magic in the West," this book covers the scope of Western occult history. Not just a catalog of movements, it discusses magic within its cultural affiliations.

• Richard Cavendish, editor, *Encyclopedia of the Unexplained: Magic, Occultism and Parapsychology* (1974) — Yet another useful compendium on magic and the supernatural.

• Tom Cowan, *Fire in the Head: Shamanism and the Celtic Spirit* (1993) — A thoroughly engaging study of Celtic shamanism. One of the best books I read for this project, but it really needs an index!

• Edward Curtis, edited by Gerald Hausman, *Prayer to the Great Mystery: the Uncollected Writings and Photography of Edward S. Curtis* (1995) — A collection of Native American myths and legends accompanied by the evocative photography of Edward Curtis, an American photographer noted for his studies and portraits of Indian life.

• Arkon Daraul, *A History of Secret Societies* (1961) — A highly sensationalistic book penned in the purplest of prose. Each of the groups depicted within could easily be turned into magical societies in the World of Darkness; in fact, many have been!

• Afolabi Epega and Philip John Neimark, translators, *The Sacred Ifa Oracle* (1995) — the authentic source of Yoruba tribal wisdom, and a must-have for anyone interested in African traditions.

• David Fridel, Linda Schele and Joy Parker, *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path* (1993) — A fascinating examination of Maya shamanism, based upon anthropological study and not just on whimsy or alleged apprenticeships.

• Rosemary Guiley, *Harper's Encyclopedia of Mystical & Paranormal Experience* (1991) — The title says it all. An invaluable reference work.

• E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (1950) — A historical survey of alchemy across the world; dry but informative.

• Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: Ancient Wisdom for the New Age* (1987) — A collection of Gnostic works deemed heretical by orthodox Christianity and Judaism. In addition to its historic value, this is an interesting look at a church that might have been.

- Daniel C. Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (1994) — An excellent (and well-received) introduction to Kabbalism, containing both original texts and commentary.

- Caitlin and John Matthews, editors, *Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom: A Celtic Shaman's Sourcebook* (1994) — A collection of essays dealing with various aspects of Celtic shamanism.

- Caitlin Matthews, *The Celtic Book of the Dead: a Guide for your Voyage to the Celtic Otherworld* (1992) — A study of Celtic voyage tales and their spiritual significance.

- Arnold Mindell, *The Shaman's Body* (1993) — An introduction to shamanism and the dreambody in a variety of cultural traditions, written by a process-oriented therapist.

- R. Laurence Moore, "The Occult Connections? Mormonism, Christian Science, and Spiritualism," in *The Occult in America* (edited by Howard Kerr, 1986) — An article discussing occult themes in early Mormon history.

- R.K. Narayan, *Gods, Demons, and Others* (1964) — A collection of South Asian stories about gods, demons, magicians.

- Peter Occhiogrosso, *The Joy of Sects* (1996) — A clearly-written introduction to world religions with occasional forays into mysticism. Has a good section on New Age movements. A fun and engaging book throughout.

- Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (1957) — A very sympathetic treatment of the Mormons by a Gentile, this book is a useful introduction to the Mormon world for the non-Mormons.

- Scott Peterson, *Native American Prophecies* (1990) — Perhaps a little bit sensationalistic and not very scholarly, it still contains some interesting material on Native American religio-magical prophetic beliefs.

- Idries Shah, *Oriental Magic* (1956) — A stroll through magic of the Middle East, Africa, India, China and Tibet. Although somewhat dated, it still contains some interesting bits of information.

- Jonathan Z. Smith, editor, *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion* (1995) — An incredible piece of work, constantly at hand during the writing of this book.

- Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Book of Mormon* (1830 ff.) — According to Mormon tradition, Smith is the translator of an angel's work. *The Book of Mormon* is at times fascinating, at times droll, but overall a peculiar work (from a non-Mormon viewpoint).

- Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (1978) — The seminal scholarly work on how Jesus was viewed as a magician by his Near Eastern contemporaries.

- Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult* (1987) — A collection of articles from the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (edited by Mircea Eliade), this is a scholarly but still quite readable introduction to various occult traditions and themes.

- Luisah Teish, *Jambalaya: the Natural Woman's Book* (1985) — An easily read collection of African-American feminist folk wisdom from a priestess in the Yoruba Lucumi tradition.

- Edred Thorsson, *Futhark: A Handbook of Rune Magic* (1984) — An important book in the subject of runes and Germanic magic. The book is somewhat controversial, and some of its ideas may not be very legitimate; but it does make interesting reading, and is worth considering if you're contemplating researching Germanic sorcery or playing a *vitki*.

- Time-Life Books, "Mysteries of the Unknown" series (various dates) — Rather light in content, these books nonetheless contain many useful tidbits. The volumes **Ancient Wisdom and Secret Sects**, **Magical Arts**, **Witches and Witchcraft**, and **Secrets of the Alchemists** are particularly relevant to this book.

- Donald Tyson, *Ritual Magic: What It Is and How to Do It* (1992) — Fascinating reading on theories of ritual magic and its various cultural manifestations.

- Ken and Jo Walton, *GURPS Celtic Myth* (1995) — Yes, a game book. This is filled with well-organized and well-written information on Celtic culture, mythology and magic.

- Bill Whitcomb, *The Magician's Companion* (1993) — A compendium of details relevant to a number of magical traditions. Quite useful in adding flavor and depth to a magical tradition.

SITE-OGRAPHY

A few websites make very useful tools, especially for those trying to understand various cultural traditions. Only the major sites are listed — they all inevitably link to each other anyway. Addresses for these sites may (will) change over time, but with any luck you should be able to find them through major search engines.

- OrishaList (<http://members.aol.com/starkana/index.htm>) — A collection of links, specifically dedicated to the Yoruba tradition and its relatives (Candomblé, Vodoun, etc.).

- Ifa Foundation of North America (<http://mcni.net/~obatala/>) — A center that hopes to spread understanding of Ifa and the Yoruba tradition across the West.

- Gnostic Society Index of Links (<http://www.webcom.com/~gnosis/hotlist/pagan.html>) — A compendium of links across the web to different sites dedicated to shamanism and neopaganism.

- Svartur's Mystic Links (<http://artemis.centrum.is/~stefanpm/morestuff.html>) — Many links dedicated to a variety of esoteric topics.

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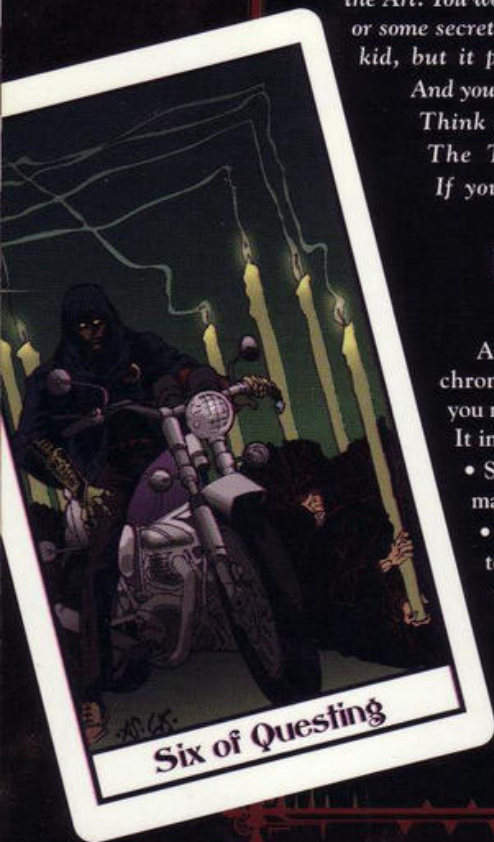
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