One World By Night

Mage Packet – 2011

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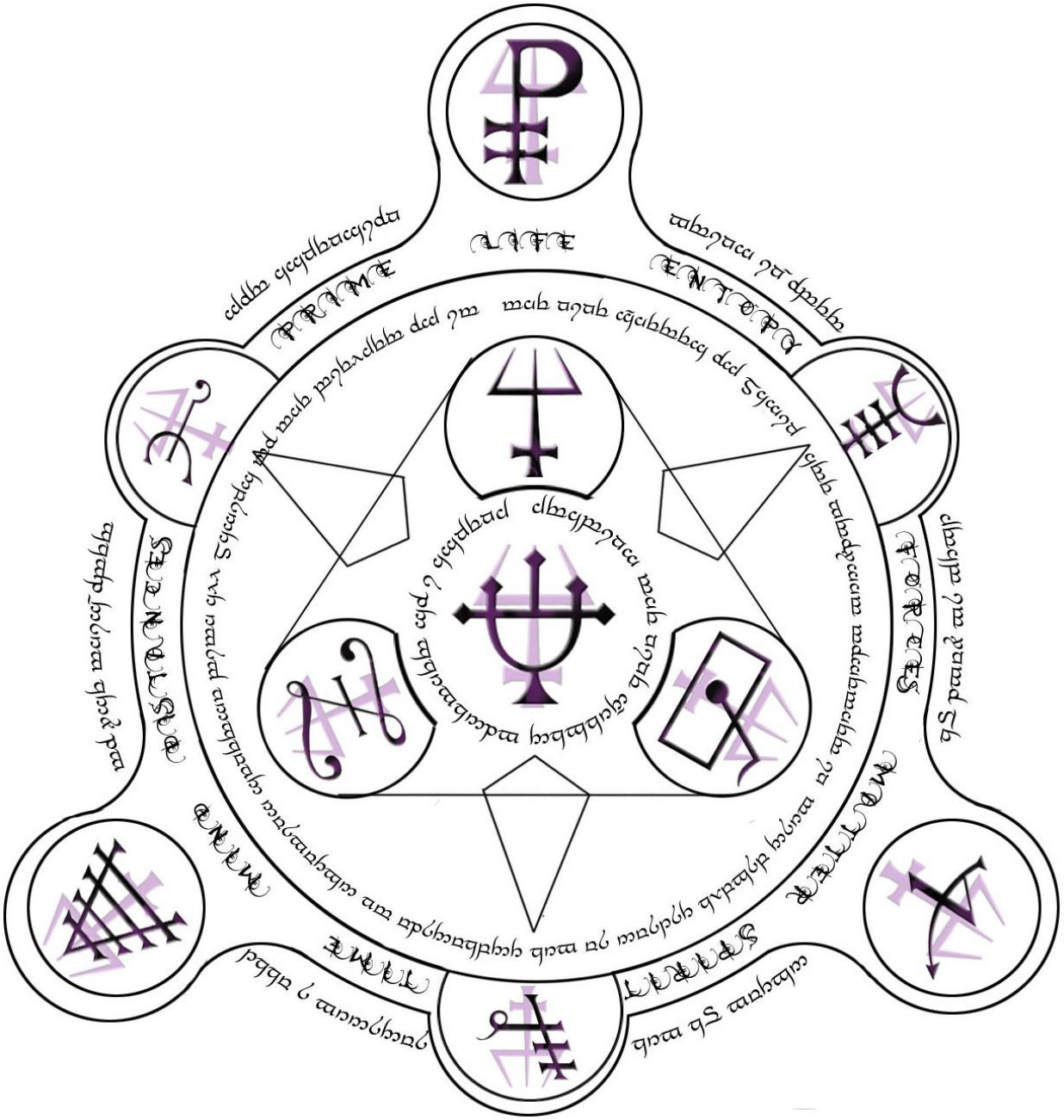

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OWBN Mage Packet – 2011

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Introduction

The purpose of this packet is to create a standard background and baseline for mages in One World by Night. As the most dynamic system out of all the World of Darkness games, Mage presents a number of challenges. After all, arguments about rules are common even when powers such as disciplines and gifts are spelled out in detail. What is presented here is intended as a baseline for Storytellers to work from, so that mechanical issues between games are minimized. If everyone starts on the same page, there will hopefully be less overall divergence.

As such, most of this packet consists of rules suggestions and guidelines. The only portion of this packet that shall be considered binding in OWBN is the section titled "Binding Rules and Restrictions." Everything else should be considered an optional resource.

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Section 1 – Errata / Clarifications

Sphere Levels

There are many discrepancies in the sphere descriptions as listed in Laws of Ascension. For example, the description listed under Forces 3 states that an effect at this level can deal three levels of damage. However the damage listed at Forces 4 is two, and the damage listed at Forces 5 is once again back to three. Therefore it is suggested that for most effects the following chart be used for base sphere effects (before grades of success). "Levels of Damage" can be used to measure relative power for other purposes, not just inflicting damage (healing, area of effect, etc.). Note that ST discretion should be exercised at all times – these guidelines are only to establish a baseline, not meant to restrict what is designed to be a dynamic system. For example, the Prime 2 rote Holy Stroke can inflict direct damage despite being a level 2 sphere effect – mostly because that advantage is balanced by the cost (1 quintessence per shot) and the vulgarity of the effect.

Level 1 (Apprentice) – Can inflict no damage, only provide sensory effects. Note that sensory effects can be bestowed upon another person.

Level 2 (Initiate) – Can inflict no direct damage, but can cause harm (hindrance or one level of damage) by manipulating the surroundings. Forces could be used to pull electricity from a power line, or Matter could be used to weaken a safety railing and cause a spill.

Level 3 (Disciple) – Can cause direct harm to a target, inflicting up to two levels of damage.

Level 4 (Adept) – Can cause direct harm on a larger scale, inflicting up to two levels of damage to a number of targets in a small area (ST discretion, but as a rule of thumb, five paces across is generally reasonable).

Level 5 (Master) – Can cause up to three levels of damage on a large scale (ST discretion).

When used for direct damage, Forces effects do an extra level of damage (provided any damage could be done in the first place). Mind effects do one less level of direct damage, and inflict bashing

damage only. Entropy cannot inflict direct damage until level 4 (Adept). Area effects are not always feasible. Use Storyteller discretion.

Conjunctional Effect Difficulty

While the MET rules assign a +1 difficulty per sphere beyond the highest, this rapidly becomes unwieldy and unreasonable, and does not fit with the spirit of the system. It is recommended that the Storytellers assign a +1 difficulty modifier to conjunctional effects, period. This still makes them slightly more difficult, but does not penalize the player or make some of the published rotes ridiculously impossible. In exchange, however, the Storytellers should be stricter in requiring diverse spheres. Throwing a lightning bolt without an electrical substation or thunderstorm nearby, for example, should require Forces 3 and Prime 2 (you need to get the base energy from somewhere).

The Arete Challenge

Note that unlike most MET challenges, the player wins on numerical trait ties in the Arete challenge to cast an effect. That is, if his Arete is greater than or equal to the casting difficulty, he will succeed in the effect.

Section 2 – Umbra & Spirits

High vs. Middle vs. Low

One of the potentially confusing aspects about mage is that unlike most other creatures in the World of Darkness, they potentially have access to all three “levels” of the Umbra. First, you have the Realm. The realm is the normal world. Surrounding the Realm are three "layers" so to speak - the Low, Middle, and High Umbras.

Each of these has a "borderland" with the realm where it (for the most part) shares topography, etc. For the Low Umbra, this is the Shadowlands. For the Middle Umbra, it is the Penumbra. For the High Umbra, it is called the Periphery. Sometimes these are collectively referred to as the Penumbra, which is technically correct, but most of the time that term is reserved for the Middle Umbra.

In the Low Umbra, things fall toward death/decay/entropy. So the Shadowlands are a decayed version of the real world. As you get deeper into the Shadowlands, you find Stygia (or the Jade Empire, if you're in the East). Deeper in is the Labyrinth, the Tempest, and finally Oblivion itself. The spirits here are wraiths, spectres, ferrymen, and so on.

In the Penumbra, things are an exaggerated version of their true nature. In a healthy forest, the trees are bigger, the air crisper, the flowers brighter. On the same token, even a secret toxic waste dump with canisters buried is foul, corrupted, and generally not a nice place. As you move deeper into

the Middle Umbra, you encounter a number of realms, all aligned with certain principles - the Battleground shows past conflict, the Flux realm is the raw stuff of creation, etc.

In the Periphery, things actually appear fairly normal. This is where astrally projecting characters go. However, as you move further into the High Umbra, things change. The High Umbra is the realm of concepts and ideas. Because of the nature of the place, a person tends to see what they expect, even if they don't understand it. For example, if two characters travelling together met a spirit embodying the concept of 'green,' one might see it as a large frog; the other might see it as a ball made out of ferns. Each is simply seeing what they would expect 'green' personified to look like. The 'lower' you are, the more basic and universal the idea. As you move higher into the High Umbra, ideas get more rarified. Instead of talking to a spirit of 'hunger' or 'language' or what have you, you are talking to a spirit embodying the concept of quantum relativity. There are realms here too, from the River of Language to the Well of Souls to Victoria Station.

Spirits from the Middle Umbra are centered around either natural forces, or basic human concepts that might as well be natural forces (although these latter tend to ride the line between high and middle umbral spirits). The distinction for the latter is whether or not they embody the fact of the thing or the concept of the thing. So you will see your usual collection of typical shamanic animals and plants, technological spirits, spirits of confusion, war, love, hate, corruption, and so on.

High Umbral spirits are, for lack of a better term, more refined. Most angels, demons, and gods are specialized High Umbral spirits (Demon: the Fallen notwithstanding). They tend to be more on the brainy side than the instinctual side, compared to Middle Umbral spirits. You're more likely to get anthropomorphic versions of concepts if the spirit is relate-able. So for example, summoning a Middle Umbral owl spirit will probably get you an owl. Summoning a High Umbral owl spirit might get you a scholarly man with an owl-cloak. Basically, the idea of an owl expands in the High Umbral, and brings along parts of concurrent concepts.

A good example is elementals - they're prominent in both the Middle and High Umbras. In the Middle Umbra, a fire elemental is pretty much relegated to burning things. It might have overtones of renewal, purification, and similar base concepts, but that's about it. In the High Umbra, a fire elemental also brings along the ideas of creativity, passion, lust, temper, and so on. Basically, the Middle Umbra focuses on the physical/base nature of the spirit, where the High Umbra focuses on the conceptual/associative nature of the spirit.

Each mage has an affinity for one of the layers of the Umbra. Euthanatos tend to align with the Low Umbra. Dreamspeakers and Verbena tend to align with the Middle Umbra. Most other mages tend to align with the High Umbra. This does not limit the mage, per se, but when first learning about the spirit world and when determining what sorts of spirits the mage is likely to summon, they tend to default to the area of their affinity. Gaining proficiency beyond that affinity is a process of roleplay and research.

TERMINOLOGY NOTE: Mage and Werewolf use overlapping terminology. What mages call the High Umbra, garou call the Deep Umbra. To mages, the Deep Umbra is breaking through the first Horizon (basically, another gauntlet that surrounds Earth) and traveling to the Umbras of the other planets, to Shard/Shade Realms, and so on.

Spirit Power levels

In Mage, spirits are categorized as follows, from highest to lowest power level. Werewolf terms are included here, so that those familiar with Werewolf can draw the appropriate parallels.

Mage Term:	**Werewolf Term:**
Divinity	Triat
Avatar/Aeon	Celestine
Sovereign/Lord	Incarna
Majordomo/Preceptor	Jaggling
Subordinate/Epiphling	Gaffling

- **Divinity/Triat** – This does not refer to "gods" attached to a given religion, but rather beings of such scope and power as to effectively be omnipotent. They are of such relative importance to the Umbra that their sway, in some ways, crosses all levels, realms, and pocket realities. For all this power, however, their very existence hamstrings them and they cannot act directly, but must instead use proxies and servants. It may be more accurate to think of these beings as the concepts that make up reality itself. They comprise reality – the Realm being an amalgam of the "bodies" of all divinities, and different Umbral realms being sections where one or more divinity holds greater sway. Examples of beings at this level are The One, Gaia, the Weaver/Wyld/Wyrm, etc. Functionally there is no way to truly differentiate these beings from reality itself, interact with them, or help/hinder them in any way except by means of interaction with their proxies.

- **Avatar/Aeon/Celestine** – More distinct than a divinity, this type of spirit encompasses beings which themselves represent the direct connection of a divinity to the affectation of reality itself. Where divinities thread themselves throughout the universe, Celestines are tied to specific concepts and spheres of influence governed by their patron divinity. These beings are often the face of a given divinity in monotheistic religions where there is a single, all-powerful deity; the Christian God, Allah, and Jehovah are all avatars of the divinity known as The One, for example. Similarly, there is often a Celestine that serves as an amalgamation of gods tied to very powerful concepts – the Sun is a Celestine, but can be served by/can manifest as Helios, Ra, or any number of powerful Sun gods. How close the tie is between a given god and the Celestine it

represents/shares a concept with is a matter of debate. Indeed, whether or not a Celestine can directly affect things is a matter of debate as well – in many ways, they may be too "close" to divinity to influence things directly. A common interpretation is that the Celestine must wear a given mask (an Incarna-level servitor or manifestation) in order to take direct action.

- **Sovereign/Lord/Incarna** – These spirits are the most powerful "rank" of spirits that can truly exert any kind of direct control on their surroundings, or be interacted with directly by lesser beings. This includes what would be considered gods in the pantheistic, limited gods type of view – Thor, Isis, some powerful Chinese dragons, etc. It also encompasses totem avatars (Falcon, Stag, etc.), and all other beings of roughly equivalent scope. At this level of power, there are few beings that can rival them, singly or in a group, except other beings of equal station. As an example, the Storm Eater was an Incarna, and required the sacrifice of 13 Legendary (rank 6) garou at 13 different caerns in order to bind it. A Legendary garou or an Archmage might, depending on circumstances, be able to successfully confront a being of this rank, but it is far from certain. For anyone of lesser power, refer to the Werewolf rule of "Incarna wins."

- **Majordomo/Preceptor/Jaggling** – This is the most diverse category as far as range of power is concerned, and the one that causes the most trouble mechanically. It covers from the most sedate glade child that is self-aware but has little actual power, all the way up to nexus crawlers, caern totems, and so on. Obviously, it is hard to make generalizations about such a vast range, but the major deciding factor on whether or not a spirit is a Jaggling or not is whether or not it is truly sentient.

- **Subordinate/Epiphling/Gaffling** – These are the smallest spirits, the figurative insects of the spirit world, those that are not intelligent enough to possess true sentience. They are either weak embodiments of a concept, or tools created by a larger spirit in order to serve a specific purpose. They may or may not be able to converse, but if they can it is only within the scope of their nature that they might be able to provide information. Most of these spirits will not have the Materialize charm. In any given area, it is typically these spirits that make up the majority of spirit activity.

TERMINOLOGY NOTE: Mage also occasionally uses the term "Incarna," but applies it to the "Celestine/Avatar" level. For the sake of clarity, that term has not been utilized here, but be aware of the discrepancy when utilizing mage sourcebooks.

Difficulties with spirits in MET

Mind's Eye Theatre rules differ significantly from Tabletop rules, and these differences are not well accounted for when dealing with spirits. For example, compare these two situations:

1) A MET character attempts to mentally affect spirit. The character has 12 mental traits, and the spirit has 10 gnosis (the maximum value possible in the standard rules). If we say the character has an appropriate ability at 2 and available for a retest, and it is not cancelled, the character has approximately an 88% chance of winning. If the retest is cancelled, the character has a 66% chance of winning.

2) The same character in a tabletop game has all mental attributes at 4 (4x3 = 12, so roughly equivalent). Again, he has an ability rating of 2, and therefore a dice pool of 6. Since the target number of the roll is the spirit's gnosis of 10, there is only a 23.5% chance of getting at least one success, a 53% chance of straight failure, and another 23.5% chance of botching the roll. If this was a contested roll between the spirit's gnosis and the mage's dice pool against a base difficulty, the chance of failure increases (although the chance of botching does go down as well).

Obviously, this is an extreme example, but it illustrates the disparity of spirits between Mind's Eye and tabletop rules. In general, spirits become much less powerful in the base MET rules. Even the strongest spirits with 10 of each temper (Gnosis/Rage/Willpower) are relatively easy for a minimally experienced character to overcome, due to their trait cap starting at 11 and going up from there. Ironically, many charms become much more powerful as written. This can lead to unpredictable situations where the difference between a couple of spirits wiping an entire game and being horribly destroyed themselves literally rests on initiative and a couple of chops.

There are a number of alternate spirit systems available, depending on the complexity desired, but providing them all here is beyond the scope of this packet. It is important, however, for Storytellers to be aware of the potential pitfalls of spirits. If you wish to look at the more detailed systems available, ask on the OWBN Storyteller or Council lists.

In the meantime, a good quick and dirty rule is to double the spirit's tempers (Rage/Gnosis/Willpower) when the spirit makes a test against a normal trait category (Physical/Social/Mental). Also, be aware of some of the troublesome mechanics in spirit charms, such as Blast and Freeze that inflict large amounts of damage with no test whatsoever. Those may need to be adjusted at Storyteller discretion.

Section 3 – Background information and Metaplot update

Metaplot Update

The Third Edition metaplot, for the most part, holds true in OWBN, but has progressed logically in the subsequent years. Both the Technocracy and Traditions are just getting on their feet again (although the Technocracy does hold the advantage still). Most of the Masters went missing as Horizon realms were cut loose and lost, and the memberships of the respective organizations are slowly rebuilding themselves. More information will be addressed in an upcoming metaplot update, describing

the details of the past several years, and that update will be incorporated here.

Avatar Storm

The Avatar Storm deserves special mention. In OWBN, the Maelstrom in the Shadowlands has subsided a bit, and is sporadic in both time and geography. This allows each individual game to determine if the Maelstrom is in effect in their game. The Avatar Storm, which is linked in origin to the Maelstrom, has also subsided. It is absent in some locations, present in others, and occasionally shifts without pattern or reason. This means that each chronicle can determine if and when the Avatar Storm affects their game while still providing In Character reasoning for the discrepancy between games.

Section 4 – Hedge Magic

Mages teaching Hedge Magic

Some magical traditions, including many of the Traditions proper, include hedge mages as part of their organization and structure. This often includes Awakened mages sharing research and information with hedge mages. If the STs wish to integrate Hedge Magic, they can use the following list for true mages teaching Hedge Paths. As a general rule, assume a true mage can teach a given path up to his corresponding Sphere level +1. (I.E, a mage with Prime 4 could act as a teacher for up to Mana Manipulation 5).

Typically, Mages cannot "teach" psychic phenomena, though such powers might be able to be granted with a combination of Mind 5 and the Prime 5 "Enchant Life" effect.

- Alchemy- Prime and Life
- Conjuration- Correspondence
- Conveyance- Correspondence
- Divination- Time
- Enchantment- Prime and Matter
- Fascination- Mind
- Fortune- Entropy
- Healing- Life
- Hellfire- Forces
- Mana Manipulation- Prime
- Oneiromancy- Mind
- Shadowcasting- Forces
- Shapeshifting- Life
- Summoning, Binding, and Warding- Spirit
- Weather Control – Forces

Dealing with Enchantment & Alchemy

Enchanting and Alchemy can become troublesome for game balance, as they effectively allow a character to "transfer" powers to others. However, it is problematic to limit the power of enchanted items without detracting from the personal utility of the power.

To combat this, first remember that each type of enchanted or alchemical item is essentially a separate ritual. Each time he wishes to make a new type of enchanted item, the hedge mage must purchase a new ritual of the appropriate level as outlined in Laws of the Hunt (Revised). Keeping track of exactly what the hedge mage is able to make is part and parcel of limiting the trouble these powers can cause.

Another way to help control this is to limit how much non-practitioners can use enchanted items and alchemy 'potions.' This can be done in a couple of ways.

1) Limit the number of items that a sorcerer can pass out. A number of items equal to permanent Willpower would be a good starting point. The disadvantage of this method is that it limits commerce in magical items, and can leave a hedge mage with little to exchange for favors and such. This rule is suggested for games that wish to keep tight control of hedge magic and its benefits.

2) Limit the number of items that any given character can use. A character must "attune" to any enchanted item he intends to use, a process taking an hour or two of concentration. A character may only be attuned to a number of levels of items equal to his permanent Willpower. So for example, a character with Willpower 7 could own a level 4 enchanted object and a level 3 enchanted object. Similarly, a character may use a number of levels of Alchemy potions equal to his permanent Willpower per month. Going beyond this limit should inflict some fairly nasty and possibly permanent side effects on the character.

   Items that a character makes himself should be exempt from these rules. So an enchanter can use his own items, and an alchemist can drink his own potions, without concern. This rule requires a bit more book keeping overall, and allows for a bit more spread of power than the first rule, but does stop things from getting to the level of absurdity. It is suggested for most games.

Section 5 – Adversaries

The Technocracy

Organization

With its influence, mastery of technology, and anti-supernatural agenda, the Technocracy is

often a potential antagonist for many games. However, it's easy to forget that they are not omniscient, omnipotent, nor do they have unlimited resources.

The Union's resources are extensive, but they are also spread wide. Think of them in some ways like the military – they can bring incredible force to bear if given sufficient reason, but it takes quite a bit to justify such a mobilization and expenditure of resources. The admonishment "Do not wake the sleeping giant," applies quite well to the Technocracy.

The basic organization of the Technocracy consists of the following, from the top down:

Control – This is a group mind made up of the highest ranking Technocrats. Any technocrat of Master rank may access this group mind. In recent years, Control took quite a blow, losing a large number of its more powerful minds. In some ways, however, this has actually benefitted the Union. While much of the sheer experience available to Control was lost, those remaining and those assuming new places have led to a quicker, more nimble thought process. In many cases, this process has been more suited to the recent times of even more limited resources and a need for rapid and decisive action.

Masters – Technocratic Masters, on the individual level, often become involved in their own projects and passions, wheeling through the politics of the Union to acquire the necessary funding and other resources. Those that prefer field work or seek to establish themselves in a better position for the future often assume responsibility for regional operations. Several Masters may operate in the same region, each representing the interests of a different Convention (the equivalent of a Tradition).

Experts – Experts are supervisors, and will often be responsible for constructs (Technocratic chantries) or for directly supervising a number of amalgams (Technocratic cabals). Often, the Experts of an area will be the most immediate leadership that Technocratic agents ever directly interact with.

The Enlightened – Also called Agents or Operatives, these are the bread and butter of Technocracy ground operations. They are the trained and Awakened hands of the Union. These operatives are the ones shouldering much of the delicate field work. Typically, three to six agents are assigned into a working team called an amalgam, and are used as a response team to address situations that fit the skills of the group.

Minor Agents – Also called "employees," these are recently Enlightened members who have not yet undergone the degree of training necessary to allow them to work reliably in the field. Much of their time is spent training and learning more advanced Procedures, and will be assigned to work with a local construct until they are ready to progress up the ladder.

Citizens – The foundation of the Union rests on its un-Enlightened brethren. There are quite a large number of otherwise normal people who serve as the eyes and ears, and occasionally the hands of the Technocracy. While rarely in a place of obvious power, they are often well regarded wherever they are placed. Most universities have at least one or two professors, librarians, or guidance counselors who keep an ear out for anything of interest to the Union. Police dispatchers are a favorite target for recruitment, as are content editors for media outlets and telephone company engineers. Not all of

them are completely "in the know," but a surprising number of them have a fairly complete perspective on what is going on, albeit from the perspective of the Union.

It is highly recommended that Storytellers consult with the Mage Coord if things reach a point where a Supervisor has to report some disturbing news up the command chain, or regional assets or better become involved (Master level intervention, large Constructs, or the requisition of force in the form of troops, Devices, or other similar things).

Use in Non-Mage Games

There are some basic guidelines to dealing with the Technocracy in games without a strong mage presence. Reading the source material would be ideal, but for non-mage storytellers here is a brief synopsis.

1) ***The Technocracy does not play well with others.***
   Any long term interaction with non-mage supernaturals of any sort is going to be long distance and of extremely limited parameters, and most likely at the Amalgam level or below. Even more so than any other group in the World of Darkness, the Technocracy will not share secrets with, establish treaties with, or otherwise ally with any other supernatural group except on the smallest scale and the most controlled situations.

2) ***Keep your head down, and you'll be fine.***
   While any sort of alliance with the Technocracy is pretty much impossible, it is possible to get on their good side, if by good side you mean the side the plasma cannon is not pointing. Vampires maintaining the Masquerade will generally be left alone. Garou killing banes in the city will likely be given tacit approval. As far as the Union is concerned, it has enough slavering monsters to deal with. Well behaved monsters or monsters that kill other monsters without creating a fuss can be left alone until last.

3) ***Resources are limited.***
   While the Union does have things such as HIT Marks, Void Engineer ships, and plasma cannons, these things are in limited supply. Only a truly extraordinary threat should warrant such an extravagant response. (And as a side note, HIT Marks should not be deployed against non-mage supernaturals. They are designed to resist True Magic, and are too valuable to waste sending against enemies they were not designed to combat).

4) ***Subtle and simple is better***
   This goes hand in hand with item 3. The odds are that if the Union has its attention drawn to a particularly flagrant vampire (or werewolf) and believe that he needs to be eliminated, they are not going to airdrop troops on him in the middle of the night. They are much more likely to continue watching him until they locate his haven, and then take him out during the day with a single infiltrator and a can of lighter fluid. They can also attack a vampire's

influence, possibly detain herd, and otherwise undercut a target before or instead of eliminating him.

Use in Mage Games

Mage games obviously give Storytellers an opportunity for deeper interaction with the Technocracy (assuming the game is not Technocracy based to begin with). The points above still hold true for mages, except that the Technocracy is much more willing to interact and talk with fellow Awakened humans. Indeed, with the pullback of the pogrom, there are some incidents of the Technocracy and the Traditions working together on a limited basis, especially when facing an outside threat.

A full write up of the interaction between the Technocracy and the Traditions is beyond the scope of this document, but keep in mind that the heated war of the past has cooled down considerably. For more information, two good books to consult are The Guide to the Technocracy and The Guide to the Traditions.

Running a Technocracy Game

While it is possible to run a Technocracy game, it is perhaps more difficult in an organization such as OWBN, considering that the higher levels of advancement in the Union usually involve either retiring to pure research positions (and thus becoming largely inactive by PC standards) or assuming regional positions, which causes potential difficulty with other games. That being said, if Storytellers wish to run a Technocracy game, they should be very familiar with the basics of Mage first, and work with the Mage Coord and surrounding games to make sure that all bases are covered and everyone is on the same page.

Nephandi

Types of Nephandi

Nephandi are perhaps the premiere "bad guys" of mage. A full exposition about them is beyond the scope of this document, but a there are a few key items of which Storytellers should be aware.

There are three main "types" of Nephandi. There are those that serve the Wyrm, those that serve the strange powers of the Deep Umbra that wait beyond the second Horizon, and Infernal Nephandi. They do not necessarily get along, but all seek the same goal – the destruction of everything that exists, including themselves.

Infernal Nephandi are a bit of an oxymoron. Despite their professed subservience to demons and devils, the beings that they worship are only a mask meant to hide things that no human mind could ever understand. Other, "true" Infernalists, assuming they know the motives of the Infernal Nephandi, look at them with a mix of disgust, fear, and pity. This should not be construed as some sort of

redeeming quality in Infernalists – instead, compare it to the way a prison full of killers and rapists will loathe a child molester.

They are, however, the most structured of the three groups. They have the best recruiting rate of other Awakened, and their field teams are professional and smooth. But for all their outer shine and organization, they are fiercely competitive with one another, a fact that hampers them despite the organization of their ranks. This competitive streak is usually abandoned if an external threat appears, but it does much to undermine their day to day operations.

Malfean Nephandi are those that serve the Wyrm. They worship the Maeljin Incarna, embodiments of dark archetypes like Corruption, Defilement, Seduction, etc. Their caul is to walk the Black Spiral itself. In many ways, Malfean Nephandi are about as polar opposite to Infernal Nephandi as you can get, as far as methodology of evil is concerned. They envision a future of formless chaos, destruction personified unleashed upon the world. Tensions between the Infernal and Malfean Nephandi is quite high.

Malfean Nephandi are the ones most likely to utilize banes and formori. In fact, formori slipping the leash and wreaking havoc is one of the most frequent ways that others can be alerted to the Malfean Nephandi's presence. Their worship is the most perverse of the three factions, and their lairs are often poorly hidden, almost a challenge to the rest of the Awakened world. While not stupid or incapable of cunning, the Malfeans are less subtle and manipulative than their Infernal brethren.

Finally, you have the K'llashaa. They are the smallest group, and the most alien. They do not view themselves as human but rather as tools, extensions of the will of the Lords of Outer Dark, or Those Who Wait Outside, among other names. They commit murder, torture, and other such acts not from personal enjoyment, but from a solemn sense of duty, believing that once they have unleashed enough pain the doors to the Outer Dark will swing open and admit their masters into this world once again. This agenda has led to the K'llashaa being the faction of Nephandi most frequently flushed out into the open and thus the stereotypical image of the Nephandi, despite their comparatively low population.

The K'llashaa rarely work in groups of more than three, and often relocate every few months in order to avoid pursuit. They spend a great deal of time in worship and study, and many rarely leave their homes. These can range from festering holes in tunnels and sewers to vast estates and mansions. All of them, however, stink of horrid Resonance that can often be detected from miles away (if the Nephandus does not take precautions). These lairs are often outfitted with torture chambers, labyrinthine gardens, and booby traps for unwelcome visitors. The K'llashaa would rather flee than face most intruders directly, fearing not death but rather the consequences of reporting failure to their masters. They are also the faction that most frequently dwells off Earth, where they gather in larger groups and show even less restraint than on Earth. Even other Nephandi sometimes find visiting their Horizon realms distasteful.

Using Nephandi

There are two primary ways to utilize Nephandi: the seductive and the unspeakable. Which you focus on depends on your goals and your players.

The unspeakable aspect of Nephandi is perhaps the easier of the two. Nephandi take their place as villains of the worst stripe, with ghastly rituals and vile acts. Resist the temptation to turn things into a B-movie gore fest, however. Such things rapidly lose their shock value if overused. That said, Nephandi as villains are interesting precisely because they are so despised – proof of Nephandic involvement in an area is one of the few things that will nearly always lead to mutual cooperation between Technocracy and Tradition mages in an area. This can roll well into an "unlikely bedfellows" sort of plot. With non-mage games, Nephandi can still be useful, but you might want to forgo them in favor of generically "evil" mages. Not every evil bastard in the mage community is a Nephandus, and it may be easier to forgo the detailed ties of these particular bad guys unless you have a specific reason for wanting them (i.e., Malfean Nephandi working with BSDs, etc.).

The seductive aspect of Nephandi is much more difficult and in many ways more rewarding. Slowly tricking a character into making bad decisions and backing them into a corner where they will choose to join the Nephandi can be a daunting prospect. For hints about how to go about it IC, consult The Book of Madness (Revised). On an OOC level, however, keep two things in mind. First, pick a player that you know will roll with the punches and enjoy the story no matter how it goes. Second, keep in mind that if the seduction goes beyond the initial "feelers" without the Nephandus being rebuffed by the target, the situation is likely to end in one of two ways - the death or the fall of the target. If you start a plotline like this, you should be completely prepared to kill the PC. The Nephandi do not play nice or fair, and in the unlikely event that they can't get to the target they will move on to family, friends, associates, and so on. Letting a PC "off the hook" if he's taken the bait at all cheapens the horror that the Nephandi represent.

On a final note, it's often particularly rewarding, from a plot point of view, to seduce a PC to the Nephandi AFTER you've already run them as horrid adversaries. If you can keep the lid on until after the PC has made major concessions and is "on the hook," then the horror as he realizes where he is heading and not being able to do anything about it is intense. Again, be sure that you're dealing with the sort of player who will be OK with that sort of thing, but it makes for a great dark story.

Infernalists

The Devil You Know

True Infernalists are unusual but not unheard of among mages. To put it simply, most mages who seek out dark entities for power are usually caught in the nets of the Nephandi. Infernalists are slightly more common among hedge mages.

When dealing with demons, remember that most of the time, mages are dealing with High Umbral spirits of one sort or another. These can take the forms of demons in the traditional Christian

sense, or they can be dark reflections of other notable forces such as Ishtar, Tezcatlipoca, or Ares. This does not mean that all mages who deal with Ares, for example, are infernal – but those who view him as a bloodthirsty, sadistic warmonger without honor or restraint likely are. It is possible for mages to deal with the Fallen (as presented in Demon: the Fallen), but such is rare.

There are varying degrees with which a mage may interact with the infernal. The first is demonology – the study of demons and dark spirits. This does not make the mage an Infernalist per se – while the practice is dangerous and viewed with some suspicion, it is not forbidden or inherently harmful. This practice is most common among Choristers, Dreamspeakers, the Order of Hermes, and a few other smaller groups. The important dividing line here is that most of these mages are focusing on how to contain and combat demons, and even those that use them for various tasks are commanding them and receiving nothing but simple service in return. Using a demon for such tasks is viewed as appropriate by some paradigms – after all, why enslave a good spirit if you can enslave an evil one? Mechanically, there is no real benefit to utilizing a demon in such a way over any other spirit.

A mage can be truly considered an infernalist when he begins to barter with demons. These bargains are diverse, but are not always inherently evil. Trade in information, Wonders in exchange for tomes of lore, and other such things are examples. Still, such trade serves to inure the mage to deals with the devil, so to speak, and often position him so that he will make the final step down the road. The important thing to note here is that the mage is not acquiring power directly from the demon at this point – tomes and Wonders are theoretically accessible without the demon, the demon is just a shortcut.

Soul Trade is the point at which the mage truly becomes a servant of evil. He gives up at least part of his soul – either literally, through magic, or symbolically through acts of evil such as the sacrifice of innocents. Either way, the mage becomes bound to his demonic patron and is given Investments and the like.

Infernalism Regulation

OWBN regulates Infernalism in order to keep it from becoming too common or too "easy." Please consult the Infernalism packet for full details, but the following guidelines apply to mages:

- Infernal Nephandi, i.e., those dealing with the powers that want to end existence, are just Nephandi dealing with dark powers wearing a more familiar mask. The Demon Coord is not needed to utilize these characters, though standard Nephandi R&U rules apply.
- Infernal mages & hedge mages who are dealing with demons but are only gaining "standard" benefits must be notified to the Demon coord. This applies to any barter with demons that gives the mage access to resources he could theoretically access normally, without a demonic patron – tomes of knowledge, Wonders, mundane tutelage in normal sphere magic or hedge magic paths, etc.

- Mages & hedge mages who begin to involve themselves in Soul Trade and Investments fall fully under the purview of the Demon Coord. Consult the OWBN Infernalism packet for details.

Marauders

Marauders are unusual in the fact that they are not necessarily directly antagonistic. Indeed, considering that they attack Nephandi on sight and by their very existence often reinforce the mystic paradigm, some Tradition mages have very little problem with them, philosophically. The danger Marauders present is that they are very much like a force of nature in the damage they cause – indiscriminate, unpredictable, and often extensive.

When using a Marauder, remember that they are not simply "kooky." Each of them is deluded in one way or another, but not all to the same degree. The mildest of Marauders might simply believe that one of their friends is actually a legendary hero from the past. Another might believe that it is the year 1237 and the Mongolians are invading Europe. The important point is to remember that a Marauder's delusions are usually logical within their own framework. It might make no sense to the observing Tradition mage why a number of horsemen appear and start attacking, but it makes perfect sense to the Marauder who flees the armies of the Khan on a daily basis.

Further exploration of Marauders is beyond the scope of this text, but please consult The Book of Madness if you wish to include them as a significant part of your chronicle.

Section 6 – Player and Storyteller Resources

Paradigm

Paradigm is perhaps the single most important part of Mage. It dictates what your mage can accomplish magically, how he does it, what foci he uses to do it, and so on. Paradigm shapes the beliefs your mage uses to shape the world.

Not every mage can accomplish every task, even if he has the necessary spheres. A Verbena Master of Forces will probably not be able to send a radio signal. A Virtual Adept is unlikely to be able to make a section of forest uproot and walk. Magic effects should flow from the Paradigm, and if an effect has no good analog within the mage's paradigm, having the necessary spheres is not enough.

It is possible to move beyond this limitation, but it is not easy. Storytellers should make a character play out experimentation and research into any effect that does not fit well into the character's paradigm. For example, Hermetic mages deal extensively with spirits of the High Umbra, dabble now again into the basics of ghostly interaction (mostly wards and simple communication), but rarely touch on the Middle Umbra. A Hermetic with the appropriate sphere levels could possibly affect a Middle Umbral spirit, but without exhaustive research and experimentation only "clumsy" effects

should be possible. Brute force can still solve some basic problems, but a metaphorical sledgehammer is only so useful as a tool.

It is highly recommended that inexperienced players choose to be members of a 'mainline' Tradition faction. This allows them to stick close to the core of the tradition and allows the Storyteller to assist the player in determining exactly what is and is not within their paradigm. To use the Order of Hermes as an example once again, House Bonisagus is very representative of what the tradition stands for, careful research, power through knowledge, and so on. They are perhaps as close to Tolkien-esque fantasy wizards as you get in the WoD, and as such would be a good fit for a new player. House Thig, a new House that focuses on merging the principles of Hermetic magic and modern tools, would be difficult for a new player, since the paradigm is inherently much more nuanced and straddles an odd line.

Foci Rules

Foci are one of the more misunderstood portions of mage. The following is simply a clarification of the published rules.

First, a mage may use any focus appropriate to their tradition in any effect. This has no benefits except for fulfilling the requirement for a focus and allowing the use of an appropriate ability to retest the effect. For example, Linguistics can be used to retest an effect that uses chanting in a foreign language as the focus, and Medicine could be used as the retest for an effect relying on blood as a focus.

A mage also picks a specialty focus for each of his spheres. If he can manage to work a specialty focus into an effect of the appropriate sphere, the mage gains a +1 trait bonus on the casting challenge.

A mage may choose to make any of his specialty foci a *unique focus*. This gives an additional +1 bonus, but any effect that uses the sphere tied to the unique focus MUST use the unique focus or suffer the penalty for surpassing a needed focus (spend a willpower and +3 difficulty). Buying off or replacing a unique focus requires experience points equal to the level in the sphere.

A mage can grow beyond the need of foci. If a mage has abandoned focus for a given sphere, but chooses to use one anyway, he gains a +1 bonus on the effect. This bonus is NOT cumulative with the bonus for specialty foci. There are two systems that a storyteller can use to allow characters to surpass foci:

1) As printed in Laws of Ascension, characters may abandon foci for two spheres per point of Arete above 5.
2) Some Storytellers may prefer the second edition method. In this system, mages with a mystical paradigm may abandon foci for one sphere at every Arete above 1. This represents their belief in magic and the awakened will. Mages whose paradigm is based on science (Technocrats, Virtual Adepts, Sons of Ether, etc.) instead abandon foci for two spheres per point of Arete above 5. The fact that their paradigm is much more acceptable to the

consensus is balanced by the fact that they are more reliant on tools and in many cases do not consider what they do to be "magic" at all.

When making judgment calls about whether or not a specialty focus gives its bonus to a conjunctional effect using more than one sphere, usually the highest or one of the highest spheres (if tied) should match the focus.

When determining Foci for a character, many players are tempted to choose a focus based on the character concept, and then try to link it to the paradigm. For example, imagine a Cult of Ecstasy drag racer. He is addicted to the adrenaline rush of the race, loves the feel of the engine, and so on. Sticking with the character's theme of "race car driver," he asks if he can use mechanical work (Repair/Technology) as his focus for Matter. Now, while the concept of a race car driver can fit within the philosophy of the Cult, that does not mean that all aspects of being a race car driver mesh with the paradigm. The adrenaline rush, the idea of getting into the "zone," and the concept of tiny split second decisions having large repercussions all fit into the Cultist paradigm. Fixing a car engine does not.

Instead, one should start from the paradigm and move outward toward the character concept. For example, meditation is one of the foci for the Cult of Ecstasy. The player could select meditation as his specialty focus for Matter, and then describe to the GM how the character uses the process of rebuilding an engine as a form of meditation. The ability retest for any effects using that focus would still be Meditation rather than Repair or Technology. In this way, a mage can find new ways for his paradigm to express itself, while still maintaining the core attributes that define it.

Crossover Guidelines

Vampire

1) Life effects that target vampires require that the mage have at least Matter 2 as well as the requisite level of Life, since the undead form is an unusual mix of life and death.

2) Vampiric disciplines may be countered if the mage knows what he is trying to counter (either through appropriate Lore, previous experience, or active Prime/other appropriate sensory effects to study magic) and possesses an appropriate sphere. In this case, consider the vampire's Arete to be equal to their discipline level. Similarly, if a vampire's discipline runs up against an effect of the mage, use the same system, pitting the vampire's discipline level against the mage's Arete level. Some appropriate Sphere/Discipline oppositions are listed below. This list isn't exhaustive, so depend upon ST discretion.

    - Animalism – Mind and/or Spirit
    - Auspex – Mind
    - Celerity – Life/Matter or Time
    - Chimerstry – Mind, possibly Forces
    - Dementation – Mind
    - Dominate – Mind

- Fortitude – Life/Matter (note that Fortitude is such a subtle power that it should probably require at least a couple levels of Vampire lore or other extensive experience to know how to counter it)
- Melpominee – Mind or Forces
- Necromancy – Spirit (When dealing with Wraiths), Prime, and/or Matter (When dealing with corpses)
- Obfuscate – Mind
- Obtenebration – Spirit and/or Entropy
- Potence – Life/Matter or Forces (see the notes on Fortitude, but Potence isn't quite so subtle. It should still require some good experience, though)
- Presence – Mind or Spirit
- Protean – Life/Matter
- Quietus – Level 1: Forces, level 3: Correspondence or Prime, all others: Life/Matter
- Serpentis – Level 1: Mind, all others Life/Matter
- Thaumaturgy – Many different possibilities, depending on the exact Path, but most can be countered with Prime as well as whatever specific sphere seems appropriate (Forces for Lure of Flames, etc.)
- Vicissitude – Life (if countering its use on a mortal) or Life/Matter (on a vampire)

3) Permanently breaking a Blood Bond through true magic requires a conjunctional Life 3/Mind 4/Spirit 4/Prime 3 effect, and should require at least a couple levels in Vampire lore and some dedicated study.

Garou

1) Life effects that target Garou require that the mage have at least Spirit 2 as well as the requisite level of Life, since the Garou form is an unusual mix of body and spirit.

2) Garou gifts/rites may be countered if the mage knows what he is trying to counter (either through appropriate Lore, previous experience, or active Spirit or Prime sensory effects to study gifts). All gifts are countered as if they were a Spirit effect, and the garou's "Arete" is considered to be equal to their rank (Cliath is 1, Fostern 2, Adren 3, Athro 4, Elder 5, and Legend 6).

Changeling

1) Effects that interact with glamour require a Spirit and/or Prime effect, and appropriate knowledge or Lore. Manipulating glamour directly requires both, while simply perceiving Fae and chimera ("enchanting" oneself) requires only Spirit.

2) Cantrips may be countered likewise by using an appropriate sphere (though Spirit and Prime will nearly always work by suppressing the Glamour of the effect), as long as the mage can perceive the Cantrip. Consider the changeling's Arete to be equal to his Art level.

3) Mages' banality ranges are as follows:

Banality Rating	Affiliation
0-2	Marauders
2-4	Mystics (Verbena, Cult of Ecstasy, Hermetics, Dreamspeakers)
4-6	True Believers (Nephandi, Celestial Chorus, Akashic Brotherhood, Euthanatos, most Crafts)
6-8	Modern cynics (Sons of Ether, Hollow Ones, Virtual Adepts, most Orphans)
8-10	Technocrats

4) Mages are not immune to the Mists, and if they encounter or detect a chimerical being or effect while not enchanted, their memory will tend to be glossed over just as anyone else, based on their Banality rating. However, mages (like other supernaturals) who are enchanted do not suffer from the Mists when their enchantment ends – they retain anything they experienced while enchanted. A Spirit/Mind effect could theoretically help prevent loss of memory to the Mists, but this should be limited to moving the character's effective Banality down a few points at most.

Wraith

1) Wraiths are affected by the Spirit sphere as if it were the Life sphere, and are unaffected by the Life sphere.

2) Arcanoi can be countered by using the Spirit sphere, using the wraith's Arcanos level as his Arete.

Other Systems

For other venues, ST discretion should be utilized. In general, as long as the mage has some idea of what he is facing, he can attempt to counter or otherwise affect any other supernatural group.

Common sensory effects

Sensory effects are some of the most frequently used by mages. This list is intended to give storytellers a place to start. Do not consider this list exclusive – these are only the most direct and thorough way to gain the specified information. For example, using Forces to view infrared might allow a mage to notice that a vampire does not have body heat. Most of these "alternate" methods may have room for ambiguity, rather than the 'best fit' sphere listings below. For example, a Risen or a cold-blooded fomori might show up similarly. But a creative mage can sometimes find useful alternatives even if he doesn't have the absolute best tools for the job.

A. Supernatural Type
    a. Mages
        i. Prime will sense people with excess quintessence in their pattern (more quintessence than Avatar rating)
        ii. Prime + Spirit will detect if someone is awakened, but this requires at least a minute of uninterrupted examination at close range (no more than 5 paces).

b. Vampires
    i. Life will confirm that a Vampire is dead
    ii. Life + Matter will confirm that they are a Vampire
c. Werewolves and other Fera
    i. Spirit will identify a Garou/other type of Fera as a shapeshifter, though Life magic and specific Lores might be necessary to identify the individual type.
d. Changelings
    i. Spirit will allow a mage to 'enchant' himself and perceive chimera/Fae, but this requires specific knowledge of them.
    ii. Spirit/Mind will reveal something 'odd' about a Changeling, but not enough to determine type or nature.
e. Wraith
    i. Wraiths can be detected with the Spirit sphere.

B. Personal Senses
a. Heightened Senses
    i. Life 2 can enhance any of the five senses
    ii. Forces 1 can enhance sight and hearing, but must be targeted specifically (i.e., "I want to be able to hear those two people across the room," not "I want to be able to hear anyone in the room I want.")
b. New Senses
    i. New senses can be created with Life 3 (effectively creating a new organ)
    ii. New senses can also be created either with Matter or Forces 1, depending what is being detected. For example, a shark's ability to sense electricity could be mimicked with Forces 1, while the ability to sense tiny chemical traces on the ground (effectively super-scent) would be Matter 1.
    iii. Some senses require the addition of Mind 1 to interpret them. For example, either Life 3 or Forces 1 could give you the ability to sense radio transmissions, but to translate them back into intelligible sound you would need to add Mind 1.

C. Magical Analysis
a. True Magic
    i. All True Magic (Mage) effects can be detected & analyzed using the same Spheres that created the effect.
        1. Complex effects, especially those cast in ritual form, may require an extended time to analyze if the person examining the effect is not familiar with it. For most effects, this will take approximately one minute, but for some effects it could take hours, days, even months or years in extreme cases.
        2. Possessing only some of the spheres of a conjunctional effect may grant incomplete understanding of the effect. For example, consider an effect meant to burn anyone who lies (Forces 3, Prime 2, Entropy 1). If analyzed with only Entropy, one could tell that the effect is meant to detect lies and then do something when it had detected one, but that is all.

3. A mage can tell the sphere level used to create any given effect that he is analyzing, as long as he has at least one level in that same sphere.

ii. Prime on its own can detect any true magic effect, and will give a complete breakdown of the spheres and sphere levels used to create an effect.
    1. Details about the basic structure of the spell can be determined, but details about the effects of other spheres are vague at best. For example, consider an effect meant to burn anyone who lies (Forces 3, Prime 2, Entropy 1). If analyzed with only Prime, one could determine that the Entropy is a trigger of some sort, that the Prime is used to fuel the creation of a Forces effect, and that the Forces portion of the effect is directed at whatever triggers the Entropy.
    2. Prime can determine the exact nature of other Prime effects, of course.

b. Disciplines
    i. Disciplines vary greatly. In general, a conjunctional Life/Matter/Prime sensory effect will reveal any discipline use, based on the principle of tracing the inherent power of vitae. In order to garner further details, these are the spheres you would need to detect each.
        1. Animalism – Mind and/or Spirit
        2. Auspex – Mind
        3. Celerity – Life/Matter or Time
        4. Chimerstry – Mind, possibly Forces
        5. Dementation – Mind
        6. Dominate – Mind
        7. Fortitude – Life/Matter (note that Fortitude is such a subtle power that it should probably require at least a couple levels of Vampire lore or other extensive experience to know how to detect it)
        8. Melpominee – Mind or Forces
        9. Necromancy – Spirit (When dealing with Wraiths), Prime/Matter (When dealing with corpses)
        10. Obfuscate – Mind
        11. Obtenebration – Spirit and/or Entropy
        12. Potence – Life/Matter or Forces (see the notes on Fortitude, but potence isn't quite so subtle. It should still require some good experience, though)
        13. Presence – Mind or Spirit
        14. Protean – Life/Matter
        15. Quietus – Level 1: Forces, level 3: Correspondence or Prime, all others: Life/Matter
        16. Serpentis – Level 1: Mind, all others Life/Matter
        17. Thaumaturgy – Many different possibilities, depending on the exact Path, but most can be detected with Prime as well as whatever specific sphere seems appropriate (Forces for Lure of Flames, etc.)

18. Vicissitude – Life (if detecting its use on a mortal) or Life/Mater (on a vampire)

c. Gifts/Rites
    i. Shapechanger Gifts and Rites can always be detected and analyzed with Spirit.
d. Arcanoi
    i. Wraith powers can always be detected and analyzed with Spirit.
e. Arts
    i. Spirit or Mind may be used to detect the effects of a changeling's cantrip, though both are required for a detailed analysis.
f. Hedge Magic
    i. Hedge magic paths, like disciplines, vary greatly. Use the following list to determine what spheres are required. Prime can always sense the basics of Hedge magic effects.
        1. Alchemy- Prime or Life
        2. Conjuration- Correspondence
        3. Conveyance- Correspondence
        4. Divination- Time
        5. Enchantment- Prime or Matter
        6. Fascination- Mind
        7. Fortune- Entropy
        8. Healing- Life
        9. Hellfire- Forces
        10. Mana Manipulation- Prime
        11. Oneiromancy- Mind
        12. Shadowcasting- Forces
        13. Shapeshifting- Life
        14. Summoning, Binding, and Warding- Spirit
        15. Weather Control – Forces
g. Magical Items
    i. Talismans, charms, and other true magic based Wonders can be analyzed with Prime. Note that in the case of magical items, Prime alone can determine the exact details of any Sphere effect embedded in the item. Binding an effect into an item creates a much "deeper" impression of the effect, alleviating the need for other spheres.
    ii. Items made with the Hedge Magic Paths of Enchanting and Alchemy can likewise be analyzed with Prime.
    iii. Fetishes are analyzed with Spirit.
    iv. Chimerical Treasures are analyzed with Spirit/Mind/Prime, though one can garner basic information with only two of those three spheres.

Prime & Node Rules

Despite being critical to Mage, the systems surrounding Prime, Nodes and Quintessence are often contradictory or nebulous. This system is suggested to provide a stable framework for Prime rules and Nodes.

What is Quintessence?

Quintessence is the basic building block of reality, but that does not mean it always manifests the same way.

Raw quintessence is that which is currently "locked" into a pattern of some sort. An apple, a door, and a bonfire are all made up at the most basic levels of quintessence. Raw quintessence is not easily manipulated or extracted - doing so generally requires Prime 4+.

Free quintessence is that which flows naturally through the universe, and accumulates in certain places (Nodes), people (Supernatural beings), and things (Tass). This is what is usually meant when someone says "quintessence" with no other explanation, and is represented by the quintessence rating on your character sheet. Note that free quintessence is free as in speech, not as in beer.

How much quintessence can I hold, and how do I get more?

A mage may naturally hold an amount of quintessence equal to their Avatar rating. This represents the natural amount of power that their pattern accumulates over time. This font of power can be recharged by meditating at a node, or by simple passage of time. As a rule of thumb, a point per month is average due to 'natural regeneration,' but this can increase or decrease based on the ambient energy wherever your mage is spending most of his time. Also, a mage cannot spend more quintessence per turn than his Avatar rating.

If your mage does not have Prime, this natural pool of quintessence is the limit. Also, note that a mage with up to his avatar in quintessence does NOT show up to a mage scanning an area for magical energies, aura perception, or similar effects. The capacity to hold that much energy is simply built into his nature. Assuming the caster already knows a person is Awakened, a targeted effect specific enough to reveal exactly how much quintessence someone holds will reveal this "natural" reservoir of power. An important note - this quintessence pool is **absolutely inviolate** to anything short of Archmage level Prime or the direct intercession of an Incarna or better. The amount of power there can be 'read,' but it cannot be stolen, burned, destroyed, or otherwise manipulated against the mage's will.

If your mage has Prime 1, they can attempt to utilize effects to increase their natural quintessence regeneration. As the regeneration is a long term process, it usually requires maintaining an effect at least half the day, every day, but the investment can be worth it. Prime 1 alone is usually not enough, but conjunctional effects can have a wide enough scope. Examples would include Entropy 2/Prime 1 to make it so your mage "by chance" is always standing in the best reasonably accessible energy flows of the areas he visits, Mind 1/Prime 1 to make himself subconsciously move to those same

areas, etc. These effects can double a mage's natural regeneration rate if maintained for long periods, but because free quintessence is so scarce in most of the world, even numerous grades of success will not improve the rate past double.

If your mage has Prime 1, he can suffuse his pattern with extra quintessence. This allows a mage to hold up to (20 - Paradox) quintessence. If you go over your Avatar rating, you can show up to Prime scans unless you utilize specific effects to disguise the excess energy.

Finally, a Prime 1 effect allows you to sublimate your own raw quintessence into free quintessence. This allows you to sacrifice a health level (as aggravated damage) for one quintessence.

Prime 2 is the generic "fueling" sphere for evocations and similar. Technically, in order to throw a fireball, you still need to get the energy from somewhere. You could transmute it from existing energy in the area, or you could do a conjunctional effect with Matter to consume some sort of "fuel" to create the fire. But if you want fire out of "nowhere," you essentially first have to create the Platonic ideal of said fireball using Prime 2, and then turn that ideal into reality with Forces.

If your mage has Prime 3, he can utilize free quintessence that has solidified - Tass. Tass generally shows up either around nodes or other supernatural phenomena, and always has some sort of resonance tied to it. For example, a ring of "fairy mushrooms" in Britain might produce a few mushrooms a year that hold quintessence, with the Dynamic resonance "Whimsical." The resonance of Tass is useful, sometimes necessary, in certain circumstances - more on that in a moment.

Although Prime 4 allows one to forcibly sublimate prime from any pattern, it does so in an uncontrolled fashion. The mage does not have sufficient control to harness the released quintessence.

Prime 5 allows sublimation from the surrounding environment, drawing quintessence from everything around. This is always vulgar outside of the umbra, and is accompanied by effects such as sudden drops in temperature, mirrors breaking, flames burning blue, and possibly other effects depending on the mage's resonance.

That's awesome! So, uh, what do I use quintessence for, anyway?

First and foremost, any effect may be given a difficulty modifier of -1 per quintessence spent, up to -3. Note that if you have an Avatar of 1 or 2, this means it may take a multiple turns to "power up" the effect, as you can only spend a limited amount of quintessence per turn. This use of quintessence is entirely optional, and the cost is charged separately from any mandatory quintessence costs of the effect.

In general, quintessence is required anytime that a pattern has to be "added to" or made "more real," or in which pure quintessence is used as an effect in and of itself. Some specific examples:

Any Life effect that heals aggravated damage requires 1 quintessence (per effect, not per health level). This is because aggravated damage represents damage that was egregious enough to deal damage to the pattern of the victim, shredding parts of it to bits. The quintessence is required to

reweave new parts of the life pattern, like using a new piece of cloth to patch a tear in clothing. Remember that any extensive damage is aggravated - cutting an arm off with a normal sword is still aggravated, even though a "normal" sword stroke only does lethal. Finally, note that attempting to sacrifice multiple health levels via Prime 1 for quintessence, and then healing them all using only 1 quintessence, is a surefire way to get Paradox pissed off at you.

The Prime 2 Holy Weapon effect essentially concentrates quintessence in a weapon, making it more "real" and thus more damaging. This normally only lasts a short time (a combat or a scene), but enough grades of success can make it permanent. This same principle could be used to enhance armor as well as a weapon.

Prime 2 can also be used for the Holy Stroke effect, which is just a blast of pure, free quintessence. It's not necessarily the most powerful of damaging effects, but it has one large advantage - it deals aggravated damage to anything, period. Only countermagic or prime effects can prevent the damage. This even goes through Fortitude. Of course, it's also one of the most obviously vulgar effects and simultaneously one of the most expensive. Everything has its price.

Making an Artifact of some sort with Prime 4 requires a substantial amount of quintessence, depending upon the exact nature of the Artifact and the level of the effect(s) it provides. This can be as little as one quintessence for a handful of extremely minor charms to dozens of points of quintessence for the most powerful Talismans. In addition, certain resonance qualities are often required for the more powerful Artifacts, which can necessitate some fevered searching for appropriate Tass.

Creating and maintaining a Horizon Realm is a feat that takes a steady supply of quintessence. Even the smallest Horizon Realm tends to take at least a couple dozen quintessence per month or thereabouts. The largest could take hundreds.

A familiar requires an upkeep in quintessence depending upon its rating.

There are a number of other uses, but these should provide the general idea.

From the sound of this, a mage doesn't really need quintessence for the vast majority of what they do!

This is true. A smart mage who knows his limits and how to work efficiently within them can get by without spending quintessence for vast stretches of time. Quintessence tends to be used for either extremely important effects in tight situations, that simply CANNOT be allowed to fail, or for large, permanent effects of substantial power. If a mage can avoid the type of do or die, back against the wall situations that require the first, and can live without the second, then he can get along without it.

What about Rage/Gnosis/Pathos/Blood Points/Glamour/Yugen/Chi/Etc?

These are all specialized forms of free quintessence that have been infused so thoroughly with a given resonance that they behave somewhat differently. From a mage's point of view, those power sources are somewhere between free quintessence and Tass. Some are closer to one extreme than the

other - Blood points can be treated as Tass, for the most part, down to having a physical representation. Gnosis, on the other hand, is much more ephemeral.

As for affecting these power sources, Blood points are the exception to the rule and may be manipulated with Prime alone, as if it were tass with Entropic resonance.

For Gnosis/Rage, you must have at least Spirit 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime. Figure the level of prime required is the same that would be needed to duplicate the effect if it were dealing with normal free quintessence.

Pathos requires Spirit 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime.

Glamour and Yugen require Spirit 1 AND Mind 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime.

Yin Chi requires Entropy 1 or Matter 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime. Yang Chi requires Life 1 or Forces 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime.

In all cases, manipulating these powers beyond clumsy blocking or channeling requires an understanding of their nature, either through in-game research or Lore. With the appropriate lore, a Prime 3 effect with appropriate conjunctional spheres can be used to convert the power to usable free quintessence, albeit quintessence that is flavored with the appropriate resonance.

You said that large undertakings can mean dozens or even hundreds of quintessence. Even with one of the most powerful nodes in existence, I'm still only getting 5 extra quintessence per month. How can that be?

Unfortunately, there is contradictory information in many White Wolf books about exactly how much quintessence a node actually produces (Book of Chantries, I'm looking at you).

If you attempt to directly correlate the Node background to node level (see below), you run into problems. If a level 3 Node produces 3 quintessence per month, your moderately established Chantry with 8 mages and their apprentices on that node is going to be starved for quintessence. Even the most powerful nodes would be insufficient for the most part.

If you look at the Node background as described in Laws of Ascension, you can effectively gain unlimited Quintessence by meditation, at a rate of 1 hour per point. The node background rating simply determines how much Tass the node produces. However, it notes that your node is only powerful enough to support one person, and if you lend it to anyone, you cannot use it. This does not make sense - if a mage with Avatar 5 can essentially get an unlimited refill from his Node 5, he loses all access to it if he lets a guy with Avatar 1 use it a couple times during the month?

For this reason, it is suggested to handle Node as follows:

The concept of a node's level reflects the relative power of that node. For those familiar with Werewolf, this is analogous to a Caern's level. A level 1 node might be a small intersection of ley

energies in an old cemetery crypt, while a level 5 node would be a huge confluence of power, such as Stonehenge.

Note that even within each node level, there are degrees of power. These do not have to be specified unless the need arises, but it is important to be aware that each node level is a range of power rather than an exact level. The aforementioned Stonehenge is incredibly powerful, even compared to other level 5 nodes.

Now, Node background does not equal Node level. This is because the Node background represents essentially solitary control over a node. To put it bluntly, no starting level mage is going to have the resources to hide or defend a node with a level greater than 1. Thus, it is assumed that any node held personally by any single mage is going to be level 1. If a mage manages to gain sole access to a higher level node at some point during play, it will be reflected by a node background rating of 6+.

If a mage does not want sole access to a node, the node background can represent his "share" of access granted to him by whoever is in control of it.

The Node background gives you a node that provides an amount of quintessence per month equal to twice the background. This is the quintessence that is accessible through meditation, and at extremely advanced levels is funneled out of the node to fuel Horizon Realms, etc. In addition to this, the node produces a random amount of Tass each month - make a number of tests equal to your Node background rating. Each win (not tie) generates a single unit of Tass appropriate to the nature of the node.

With Prime 2, you can directly channel energy from a node without spending time on meditation. This is also the only way to gain quintessence from a node that exceeds your Avatar background. Quintessence channeled out still counts against your normal budget.

With Prime 4, you can force a node to give more energy, but it is dangerous. For every 2 quintessence (or fraction thereof) beyond the node's limit you go, the node becomes useless - to anyone who uses it - for a month. For every month beyond the first that a node is useless, make a simple test. On a loss, the node's Level drops by one, permanently. If it drops to 0, the node is destroyed. The energies that sustained it ***might*** allow it to be rebuilt eventually, but it will require years at least to be opened again, and strong nodes could easily take decades to return to their former strength.

Needless to say, squeezing extra out of a node is risky, and with a shared node is often considered a crime carrying penalties up to and including death, depending on the circumstances.

For a rough guideline of node levels, you can use the following.

Level 1 Node - Produces 1-10 quintessence per month, plus tass.
Level 2 Node - Produces 11-25 quintessence per month, plus tass.
Level 3 Node - Produces 25-45 quintessence per month, plus tass.
Level 4 Node - Produces 46-70 quintessence per month, plus tass.

Level 5 Node - Produces 71-100 quintessence per month, plus tass.

Hey, wait a minute! I'm a smartass werewolf player, and I know that a sept of garou on a level 2 caern is going to consume WAY more than 25 Gnosis per month, just by having them sit around and regain gnosis. What gives?

The easy answer to this is that all Caerns are Nodes, but not all Nodes are Caerns. A caern has two things going for it that allow it to sustain a higher energy output as long as that output is specifically to fuel Garou. The first is the caern's totem, which helps regulate and distribute the power. The second is the Moot Rite, where garou actually return gnosis to the caern. This regular infusion and the intercession of the totem create a flow of power that is greater than normal.

This is also why mages draining power directly from a caern tend to damage it. A mage can gain quintessence from a caern harmlessly by meditating, assuming the werewolves give him an hour of peace. But any Prime 2 attempt to directly channel energy out is blocked by the caern's Totem, as it would damage the caern. Circumventing the Totem, either by Spirit effects or other means is possible. If this is done, treat any power drawn as being drawn from a node past its limit. This negative effect cannot be avoided by any means short of simultaneously channeling back in an amount of energy equal to what was taken (which, admittedly, makes the entire act pointless for the most part). Similarly, if a mage physically takes Tass from a Caern, treat it as if they were draining an equal amount of quintessence from the caern past its limit. It's easy to see why garou don't like mages touching their caerns.

Resonance and You

What is resonance?

Simply stated, Resonance is the "flavor" of your magic. It influences your magic's appearance. At higher levels, it also affects you more dramatically, adding traits and negative traits to your character.

What types of resonance can I pick?

This is kind of a two part question. You can think of Resonance as you would Physical/Social/ Mental traits, in the sense that there are three broad categories and individual traits under each. The broad categories are Dynamic, Static, and Entropic.

Dynamic Resonance reflects the pure creative force of the universe, the drive to make new and different things, action without thought to consequences and continuous motion and evolution. Many mages will find themselves with Dynamic Resonance, because they are by nature changers of the world; this is of course not always the case. Also keep in mind that a Dynamic Essence, while commonly carrying Dynamic Resonance, doesn't have to. Sometimes, it's far more interesting to do a clashing set. A mage who carries Dynamic Resonance, though, is generally more likely to be an active individual then others, and a real force for change and creativity. Dynamic descriptive words describe things in motion,

change, new ideas and action. Example traits include Quick, Flashy, Unique, Creative, Spinning, Whirling, Frantic, Fiery, Stormy, Frenzied, Intriguing, Liberating, Novel, and Nurturing.

Static Resonance shows up in patterns, constants and the solidification of Creation into permanent or semi-permanent forms and repeatable ideas. Static Resonance often falls to intellectuals, the organizing, or similarly stabilizing forces of the world. Obviously, one would tend to think the Technocracy when one thinks of Static Resonance, but this is definitely not an absolute by any stretch. Static Resonance ties into principles of definition and construction. Example traits include: Single-Minded, Focused, Intense, Stabilizing, Supporting, Patterned, Tiered, Enfolding, Encompassing, Defined, Programmed, Concealed, and Calming.

Entropic Resonance reflects the mage's tie to primordial energy, the bubbling morass that melts Creation back down into fluid emptiness and makes room for new birth. Entropy is the breakdown and decay that makes the cycle possible, and while many people associate Entropy with death (thanks, in no small part, to the Euthanatos), it's often a misconception. Death is an important part, but Entropy is as much a beginning as an end, and many old souls or those who seek the favor of old gods and ways find themselves giving off the aura of Entropy. Entropic Resonance covers destruction, death, decay, renewal and primordial energy. Example traits include: Seething, Bubbling, Destructive, Corrupting, Withering, Disintegrating, Chaotic, Subtle, Primal, Storming, or Ravaging...and the ever present Jhor, but we'll deal with that momentarily.

Note that particular adjectives may fit into more than one category, but the meaning is changed. For example, the trait Static: Arctic might be similar to Icy, cold, still and unchanging. But the trait Dynamic: Arctic, while still cold, would represent the fury of a blizzard howling around you, and the trait Entropic: Arctic would represent the leeching, draining effect of bitter cold.

What does Resonance do for me?

If you cast a spell that fits with your highest resonance trait, then you get a 1 trait bonus to that spell. For example, if I have the traits Dynamic: Fiery x2 (and it is my highest resonance), I get a 1 trait bonus to throw fireballs and such.

Conversely, if I cast a spell that goes against my highest Resonance trait, then I have a 1 trait penalty. So if I have Entropic: Lethal x2 as my highest resonance and I try to cast a healing spell, I take a penalty.

If/when a category of Resonance totals 3 or more, you get a bonus trait and a negative trait. This bonus trait can surpass trait caps. You become so in tune to that force of creation that it suffuses your being. If a category gets to 5 traits total, then you can gain another trait and another negative trait. Check Laws of Ascension pg 120 for details, and ignore the horrible formatting of the table there.

So how do I gain Resonance? Can I lose it?

Resonance is gained in a number of ways. First is through personal experience and exposure. A mage who works as a coroner may over time pick up a bit of Entropic resonance. One who spends every free moment programming might pick up some static resonance. In general, this should never happen more than once or twice over a lifetime, and only if the day-to-day activity suffuses the character's goals and personality.

Any sort of strong magical event or any sort of event that profoundly affects the psyche of the mage can also grant Resonance. Examples include entering Quiet, finishing a Seeking (successful or not), losing permanent Willpower, learning a Master level sphere, changing one's Nature, etc.

Losing Resonance typically isn't possible. However, in some circumstances, it IS possible to negate an old Resonance trait. For example, someone with the Resonance trait Static: Constructive goes through a major life crisis and begins tearing down everything he spent his life building, and a few things that aren't his as well. He begins to see his role not as constructing good things, but as tearing down old, corrupt ones. He begins to learn magic centered around that. When he next becomes eligible for a Resonance (entering Quiet, finishing a Seeking, etc.), he could gain the trait Entropic: Destructive. Since this is directly opposed to his Static resonance trait, it is possible that the two of them will "cancel out," effectively removing the Static trait instead of granting him the Entropic one.

Note that this is a matter for ST discretion and discussion with the player. It is very possible to hold conflicting Resonance. The question is whether or not the character holds both principles to be important to his life/being/philosophy, or if he has moved on to focus on one rather than the other.

So...Jhor?

Jhor is a special type of Entropic resonance. Jhor is the death-taint, the callous acceptance of destruction. Fundamentally, Jhor erodes one's empathy and leads one to focus on decay, death, and the end of things. It can affect anyone, but the Euthanatos are particularly susceptible. Indeed, they are the only Tradition where their starting Resonance is dictated, and this is the unfortunate burden they are given.

Jhor is also a type of Quiet that can afflict a mage with the Jhor resonance. These specific episodes of Quiet can manifest in a number of ways; cold, death-obsessed behavior, fits of rage, obsession with vengeance, or even self-centered brooding melancholy are all possibilities.

Jhor is not a moral position. It can arise from any excess of magic dealing with killing, necromancy, the dead, etc. Even "ethical" uses of such things - for example, summoning a ghost to talk to it and learn what it needs to be set at rest - can lead a mage to accumulate Jhor as well.

Jhor is not simply a reflection of the sphere of Entropy. Indeed, Spirit and Prime lead to Jhor almost as frequently. Spirit effects can deal with the dead and the Underworld, and Prime effects can disrupt the fundamental structures of the Tellurian. Effects that simply attack one Pattern with another (like attacks with Forces) are far less likely to accumulate Jhor. The mage is usually (though not always) directly accessing the energy of decay when the death taint strikes.

In mechanical terms, having Jhor as a resonance trait means that it is possible for a Jhor-based Quiet to affect the mage. These Quiets are often even more destructive and debilitating than the norm. In addition, Jhor leads to callousness and a disregard for life; storytellers may impose mechanical penalties on social or empathy based challenges if they feel it is appropriate. Higher levels of Jhor tend to mean both broader and stronger penalties.

Finally, a mage with Jhor resonance shows up as Wyrm-tainted to any who know how to sense such things. A single point of Jhor means the mage will always smell slightly more of Wyrm than typical surroundings, and this slight tinge cannot be cleansed or removed short of getting rid of the Jhor resonance trait (see above, but note that Euthanatos cannot be rid of their initial point of Jhor). Two or more traits of Jhor begin showing up as moderately strong Wyrm-taint, usually strong enough to provoke attack rather than an attempt to cleanse from most shapeshifters. Three or more Jhor almost guarantees assault by shapeshifters, while four or five traits may actually lead them to consider the mage a priority target on par with BSDs and the like.

So is it just people who have Resonance?

No. Magical effects, energy, and items can also have Resonance.

For magical effects, this usually happens only if the effect is very strongly aligned with a certain resonance or was performed by a mage with a high degree of a given resonance trait (3 or more, typically). This doesn't have any significant mechanical impact, but it can be detected and perhaps give a hint as to the nature of the magic or the mage who cast it.

For magical energy, this does have a significant impact. Raw "free" quintessence such as that drawn directly from a node will generally not have any such leanings, or at least not enough to affect magic. The Tass that such nodes produce, however, will. Using appropriately 'flavored' Tass can help with an effect more so than normal quintessence. Conversely, inappropriately aligned Tass can hinder an effect as much as it helps. Tass can be used to create magical items as well, and can lower the sphere requirement used to construct them (see Forged by Dragon's Fire).

Magical items tend to have a resonance that aligns with their effect. The main difference is that the resonance of an effect tends to fade quickly in most circumstances, while an item will always bear the appropriate resonance if either the effect is powerful/aligned enough or if the item was constructed with Tass.

Paradox

The Paradox rules as presented in Laws of Ascension are somewhat problematic from a mechanical standpoint. For example, a 10 point backlash will deliver five levels of bashing damage to the subject, while an 11 point backlash will deliver 1 level of lethal damage. While lethal damage is theoretically worse, most will tell you that dealing with a single level of lethal damage is nowhere near as dangers as dealing with five levels of bashing, especially if the backlash happens to hit in combat. For

this reason, the following alternate Paradox system is presented for Storytellers who wish to make Paradox more unpredictable and dangerous.

Accumulation

The amount of Paradox gained from an effect remains unchanged. A mage may still spend Willpower to stave off Paradox until the end of the scene/hour. See Laws of Ascension, pg 172.

Testing for Backlash

Each time a mage gains Paradox, make a test. If the mage loses, the Paradox backlashes against him. If he wins or ties, the Paradox accumulates in his pattern. Note that this means mages will tend to suffer fewer backlashes than with the standard system, but those they do suffer will be more dangerous.

Backlash Results

When Paradox finally backlashes against the mage, his pool of Paradox points is reduced to zero. The results of the backlash are up to ST discretion, but can include the following.

- **Damage** – The mage suffers one level of aggravated damage for every three full points of Paradox in the backlash (minimum 1 level of damage). This damage cannot be healed by magic, only by natural recuperation. This effect tends to happen anywhere between a 1 to 15 point backlash. This will generally not take the mage past Mortally Wounded unless the Storyteller feels the mage has been particularly vulgar and careless, and in essence deserves it. However, excess levels of damage beyond Mortally Wounded may "overwrite" previous levels of bashing or lethal damage, making recovery time much longer. While dangerous, this is also the most boring way of Paradox manifesting, and should be used when things need to be resolved quickly or the Storyteller lacks any other inspiration.

- **Paradox Flaws** – The mage suffers some sort of flaw or negative effect, often based on the effect that triggered the backlash. For example, a botched scrying effect may blind the mage or switch his view so that he is always looking backwards. An attempt to conjure lightning may result in any electronics within ten feet of the mage to throw off sparks and possibly fry if he does not move away quickly, and could last a week or more. In general, Paradox flaws tend to happen anywhere up to 15 point backlashes, though larger ones are possible and should be epic in their scope. The larger the backlash, the worse the flaw and the longer the duration. Storytellers should feel free to be creative and appropriately mean – dealing with these flaws ICly should always be a trial of patience, and the serious ones should be a serious and spectacular hindrance to even mundane tasks. For suggested flaws, see Mage: the Ascension (Revised) pg 195.

- **Quiet** – Quiet is a broad effect that essentially represents "magical insanity." The victim's mind becomes so overwhelmed by the possibility inherent in the Awakened will that they have

trouble distinguishing what may be from what is. Quiet can happen at any level of backlash, but tends to work best between 5 and 15 points. The rules presented in Laws of Ascension, pg 174 are a fairly good representation. Quiet works best when the Storyteller has time to prepare in advance and tailor the experience to the paradigm and mind of the character suffering the Quiet.

- **Paradox Spirits** – A spirit manifests to harass the mage, representing the will of the consensus. Paradox spirits are not normal spirits, and cannot be affected by Spirit effects less powerful than Master level, excepting those that cause damage. Non-damage causing Master level effects are twice as hard. Paradox spirits can show up at any level, but are most common with backlashes that are 10 points or more and are caused by a particularly vulgar effect, but they are absolutely relentless and get stronger based on the strength of the backlash. At 10 points, the spirit will likely be roughly twice as powerful as the mage. At 20 points, it could quadruple the mage's power and be nigh unstoppable. Most Paradox spirits won't kill outright, but they will happily inflict flaws, hinder the mage's effects, and in general make his life a living hell, especially anything involving his magic. Note for non-Mage storytellers; Paradox spirits cannot be summoned, controlled, or otherwise affected by the powers of non-Mage supernaturals. The one exception is the Viskr Ananasi, who have an Advanced gift and a rite, but even these do not command Paradox spirits so much as draw their attention to a target.

- **Paradox Realms** – If a mage truly outdoes himself, he may be thrown into a Paradox realm, a small pocket realm that seems custom designed to teach him a lesson about his last vulgar workings. Most magic will not work there, but nearly all of them are set up as a puzzle. "Solving" the puzzle represents acknowledgement from the mage that what he did was wrong and that he will correct it. For example, a mage who attempts to raise a huge thunderstorm and garners a large enough backlash may find himself in a realm where he is constantly falling through dark clouds, kept aloft by the winds of the storm and dodging lightning. His task may be to return the storm to calm and darkness, even though this means he may fall as the fury of the wind fails to lift him up. Paradox realms usually only show up for particularly nasty backlashes of 10 to 15 points or more, and can take a mage out of play for days or weeks. Some are known to have lasted years or even centuries, testaments to the sheer arrogance of their creators.

- **Permanent Paradox** – If a mage manages to accumulate more than 20 points of Paradox, the Storyteller may wish to grant them a permanent point of Paradox when the backlash occurs in exchange for making the backlash non-lethal (though still likely very damaging). For the purposes of backlash, permanent paradox counts as a temporary point of Paradox that adds to the total but is not discharged or otherwise gotten rid of in the process. Ridding oneself of permanent Paradox is difficult in the extreme, usually requiring Master level Prime or better, or trips to dangerous and difficult to find Umbral realms, and there is always a significant price to be paid for doing so.

Bleeding off Paradox

Getting rid of Paradox safely is a difficult venture. Short of Master level Prime effects or having the benefit of a Familiar, the only way for most mages to safely drain their Paradox is with time. If a mage performs no act that generates Paradox for a full month, he can shed a single point of temporary Paradox. Any act of vulgar magic or anything else that garners Paradox for the mage instantly resets the timer. This natural shedding of Paradox cannot be increased by any means. Familiars are valuable not only because they can divest a mage of Paradox, but also because they can do it regardless of whether or not he's "behaved."

Casting Difficulty and Grades of Success Cheat Sheet

The following is a simple cheat sheet for calculating the final casting difficulty of an effect, and where you can obtain grades of success. Feel free to reproduce and pass out to your players.

Casting Difficulty Cheat Sheet
Base Difficulty = Highest Sphere Level

Vulgarity: +1 if vulgar, +2 w/ witnesses
Domino Effect: +1 per effect, up to +3
Opposed Resonance: +1
Surpassing Necessary Focus: +3
Conjunctional Effect: +1
Fast Casting: +1

Spend Quintessence: -1 per, up to -3
Spend Extra Time[1]: -1 per grade of time
In or near a Node: -1
Using Specialty or Surpassed Focus[2]: -1
Using Unique Focus: -1
Assisting Resonance Trait: -1

Total Difficult may not drop below the Base -3.

If the final difficulty is double your Arete or greater, failure is instead a botch.

1 - Each extra grade of time (round, minute, hour, day) spent requires an additional casting test (see Grades of Success Cheat sheet). Each grade of time may either be used to generate a grade of success or reduce difficulty, not both.

2 – These two difficulty reductions do not stack.

Grades of Success Cheat Sheet

Willpower: Spend a point of willpower to gain one grade.

Overbidding: If you can overbid the trait difficulty of the effect, you gain one grade of success.

Spending extra time: Each extra grade of time (round, minute, hour, day) spent requires an additional casting test, and provides one grade of success. If one of the tests fails, the mage may choose to continue at +1 trait difficulty, and must recast the unsuccessful portion of extra time. This continues until the difficulty equals twice the mage's arête, at which point another failure triggers a catastrophic botch which cannot be negated or suppressed via Willpower. Each time interval spent on an effect can either reduce difficulty or add a grade of success, not both.

Quintessence: A Prime 4 effect will allow you to spend up to 3 quintessence for a grade of success each on your next effect (which must be started within a scene). Any quintessence spent in this way counts toward the quintessence spending limit for the subsequent effect.

Section 7 – Binding Rules & Restrictions

World-changing effects

Any truly world-changing effects are not possible, as consensual reality will only bend so far. Pulling the moon out of orbit, putting out the sun, rearranging continents and so on are all completely out of the question.

"Fixing" Supernaturals

Mages cannot turn humans into any other supernatural group, although they might turn them into a creature that superficially resembles a supernatural group. For instance, a mage could turn a human into a large, furry, half-wolf creature with enough time and use of the Life sphere, but the creature would not be Garou, have access to Gifts, etc..

The exceptions to the above are when a mage triggers an Awakening through Archmage level Spirit or the creation and use of a Principae (a magical tome designed to Awaken those with potential). A mage can potentially teach a normal human Hedge Magic, or bless them as per the "Enchant Life" Prime 5 effect/Blessing background. Finally, a mage with enough of the Spirit sphere can theoretically create Possessed character types such as Formori and Gorgons (though definitely not Kami, and Drones are debatable), though this comes with its own potential pitfalls and moral quandaries.

For the purposes of OWBN, mages cannot turn a member of a supernatural group back into a normal human. Assume that any attempt to do so immediately garners enough Paradox to destroy the effect and either knock out or kill the mage. Again, "counterfeits" may be possible – a mage with Life 5 and Spirit 4 could create a living body and bind a Wraith into it, making a creature that appears to be human, but is in fact not. A mage with appropriate spheres could suppress a shapeshifter's abilities, Rage, Gnosis, and Gifts, but the fundamental nature of the creature would remain.

An exception to the above is when a mage enacts Gilgul upon another mage. Also, the aforementioned Possessed character types may be an exception as well, though exorcising the spirit in those cases invariably leads to the death of the host (barring Archmage spheres, the intercession of a Celestine, or something equally impressive).

Finally, a mage cannot directly turn one supernatural type into another. The very few possible exceptions to this are those where the victim becomes a spirit of one type or another (you kill another mage and he becomes a wraith, you pull out someone's soul or sever their silver cord and they become a spirit, etc.). In these cases, however, the transformation is closer to a side effect rather than a direct result of transformative magic.

Though there are no published rules or Paths that would seem to be able to accomplish these feats, these guidelines limit Hedge Magic/Numina as well as Sphere magic.

Supernaturals with Hedge Magic/Numina

Unless part of a canon group that specifically allows the use of Hedge Magic/Numina, no major supernatural type (Vampire, Werewolf, Mage, Changeling, etc.) may possess Hedge Magic/Numina.

If the character is part of a group that is able to utilize these abilities (Uktena Path Dancers, Bubasti, Runewise Gangrel, etc) that character must obtain Coordinator approval from their appropriate Genre Coordinator unless more stringent R&U guidelines are already in place.

"Semi-supernatural" characters such as Kinfolk, Ghouls, Kinain, and so on may possess Hedge Magic/Numina, subject to any R&U regulations.

Avatar Enslavement

There are a small number of circumstances that can stunt the growth of a mage's avatar. Specifically, ghouled mages and mages involved in Soul Pact with demons.

Any mage who becomes ghouled must deal with the effects of avatar addiction. A mage may safely consume a number of blood points equal to his Avatar rating. This is a cumulative lifetime limit. A mage who drinks three blood points has still used up three of his "safe" points even decades later. After that point, the avatar becomes addicted. Mechanically, this means that the mage cannot advance in Arete or Spheres, and may not fuel his personal quintessence at all except through vampire blood. Even worse, the vampiric blood begins to destroy the avatar of the mage after a few years, effectively Gilguling the mage over time. These rules apply even to Mages with the Unbondable merit. For more details, see Blood Treachery, pg 77.

Any mage who enters into a Soul Pact with a demon risks enslaving his avatar. A mage may safely enter into Pacts (as outlined in the 2011 OWBN Infernalism packet) with a final rating equal to or less than his Avatar rating. Once the total of all Pacts exceeds this amount, his avatar is completely enslaved to his demonic patron. Mechanically, the mage may not increase his Arete rating. He can no longer gain Quintessence from nodes, save those that are consecrated to his demonic master. The mage is also incapable of learning any new Spheres except those learned from his demonic patron as part of another Soul Pact. Finally, over a period of years, the demon separates the avatar from the mage, leaving the infernalist with only his Investments. For more details, see the 2011 OWBN Infernalism Packet and the Book of Madness (Revised), pg 94.

This Old Umbra (Changing Umbral Realms)

Mages in canon Umbral realms cannot fundamentally alter the nature of those realms, although they can temporarily alter their immediate surroundings. For example, a mage in Pangaea could not create a modern building that lasts more than a short while (a few hours more than the duration of the

mage's presence at most). In addition, mages should not be able to access the few Garou-only realms: Wolfhome, Summer Country, and Erebus.

Grimoires and Primers

Grimoire is the general term for any sort of media – from books to traditional oral history chants to complex computer programs - designed to convey the complexities of spheres and/or enlightenment (Arete). There are a number of other names for them depending on faction, etc., but mechanically it is defined here as any creation that gives an experience discount on the purchase of spheres/Arete, and possibly allows the purchase of Arete without a seeking. Primers are a specific type of Grimoire that Awakens the reader if they have sufficient natural potential (usually at least a Willpower of 5 and ST discretion).

Because of the rarity of these items, the difficulty of their creation and the fact that their purpose is to give experience discounts, the existence and use of these tomes require Coord approval. Any such item must be outlined specifically with what it can teach, and the limitations of who can learn from it based on paradigm.

Section 8 – Legalities

This packet contains numerous references to, paraphrasing of, and the occasional quote from published Mage: the Ascension / Laws of Ascension books. Any reference herein is intended as fair use and is not a challenge to the copyright holder. All relevant elements are © 2013 CCP, hf, and all rights are reserved.

Revision History

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V1.1 – Correction of typographical errors
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V1.3 – Updated for public distribution, 01/2014