Tome of the Mysteries



MAGE
THE AWAKENING

a World of Darkness

TRUTHS

I guess, if I'm being honest,
I've always known about magic.

I remember being eight years old and listening
to my mother and my father argue. That's nothing
special, except that when they caught me,
Mom would glance at me and squint a bit,
and I'd wake up the next morning
thinking it was all a dream.

I can't blame her. She just wanted me
to be happy. She didn't want her son to worry
about his parents. I bet a lot of people
with rocky marriages wish they could make
their kids forget the screaming matches
and the lies and everything. My mother
just happened to be able to do it.

The word "magic" didn't occur to me, though,
until the day she disappeared. I was about 12,
I guess, and my mother was late coming home.
By then I was old enough to know words like
"affair" and "alcoholic," and I had been suspended
from school for punching out a kid who
used those words in reference to my mom.
I didn't hit him because he was lying.
I hit him because I believed him.
He said my mother came to see his father,
at least once a month, and they went off together.

So that day I was home from school,
my knuckles still swollen. And Mom pulled

into the driveway, and when she got out of her car, she looked awful. She didn't look like she'd been out all night. She looked ragged, like she hadn't slept for a week, even though it had only been a day since she'd been home. Dad came storming out of the house, but he didn't call her names or accuse her. He just said, "This has to stop. Joel knows something's wrong. You can't keep doing this."

I'll never forget the look on Mom's face. I guess it all came crashing down that morning Ð me standing on the porch cradling my hand, Dad standing in front of her angry, but so obviously scared, and Mom half-in, half-out of her ancient Olds, hair in snarls, burn marks (*burn marks?*) on her face. I saw tears in her eyes, and she said something, but I didn't catch it. And Dad just turned around, walked right by me into the house, sat down in his chair and fell asleep.

Mom told me she was going away and that it didn't mean she didn't love me, blah blah blah. It was the usual speech that kids get, I guess, but it felt *wrong*, because she really did love me, and she really did love Dad. There was just something between them, she said, and that part was true, but it wasn't another man or anything like that. It was magic.

I knew it when Mom touched my forehead, and I felt the memories of that morning sliding away like icicles through my fingers. I fought, I shut my eyes and shook my head, trying to keep my mind,

and the next thing I knew, I was waking up. Dad was in his chair, staring at the TV, trying not to cry. He didn't remember why Mom had left, and he went to his grave thinking she'd run off with another man.

I remembered. I found out when I went back to school that the kid I'd punched out had lost his father, the same day my mother had left. Only that kid didn't know the truth, and he never would, because his father was dead. His father had died in a fire outside of town, at a farmhouse that had stood empty for 30 years. No one even knew why he'd been there, and the local police chalked it up to a secret drug or booze habit and called it a day. I didn't know the truth about why that man died, but I knew a truth -- I knew that it had something to do with my mother. But I was 12, and I didn't know who to tell or what to do, so I just let it be. I didn't see any more magic for four years.

Four years later, my sophomore class took a trip across the bridge into Cincinnati and went to the Natural History Museum. I got bored and left the group, and I opened a door into a stairwell. I heard two people talking on the floor above me, so I was about to duck back into the museum, but then I heard one of them say, "You're going to wind up like Helen."

Helen was my mother's name. I stopped to listen. It never occurred to me for a second that they weren't talking about my mother. They were. It was a truth, though I couldn't have said how I knew it.

The voice I'd heard was a man. The one who spoke next was a woman. "Helen tried to control everything. She lied to her family and then tried to make them forget it," she said.

The man scoffed, and I heard him tapping on the railing. "There wasn't anything she could have done. She married a Sleeper. He wouldn't have understood even if she'd tried to help him. She should have left before she did, but thank God she left before her kid got old enough to figure it out."

I wanted to yell at them. I wanted to tell them that I *had* figured it out Ð but really, I hadn't. All I'd known was that Mom had a life she didn't share with Dad and me, and to say that, to admit that, would have been more than I was ready for. So I stood there and waited, hoping they'd say something about where Mom was.

They didn't. The door opened, and my teacher found me. She accused me of going in there to smoke, even though there were no cigarettes around and no smoke in the air. My teacher was a bitch.

I stole my Dad's car that night and drove back to the museum, but I couldn't find the courage to go in. I just sat there across the street, trying to figure what I'd say. I didn't even know what those people looked like. I didn't know what they meant by "Sleeper." I just knew they knew my mother, and I had this sick feeling, from the way they talked, that she was dead. I was wrong about that.

I drove to that museum three times a week for the next two years. It wasn't until I graduated that I actually went in. The night I graduated from high school, there was a party at a club in Cincinnati. There weren't many of us in attendance. A lot of my classmates' parents were conservative Kentucky Christians, and the notion of their kids spending the night at a private club, even supervised, was a little too much. I went, but I left the club an hour after midnight, even though we weren't supposed to leave. I just walked right by the teachers and out the door, and no one stopped me. Nobody would call that magic, but I knew it was. That was a truth, and no one saw it.

I drove to the museum and walked right up to the door. I remember feeling lost. I guess a lot of kids that age probably do Ð high school's over, and now what? I was enrolled to start school at the University of Toledo the next fall, but that seemed unreal, staged somehow. I reached out to open the museum door, even though I knew it was locked.

The door was locked, but I knew it would open. What happens if you *know* two truths, but they conflict?

The door opened. I walked in, and I heard the same two people talking. They weren't alone; they were just the two loudest voices. There was something going on.

"This is completely unacceptable," the man was saying. "You don't even have a cabal, you can't just come in here--""

The woman cut him off. "She can. She's a member of this Consilium, and she has been for many years. Because her cabal is gone doesn't mean--"

The man again, louder. "I am well aware of this Consilium's laws, Callista. The law states that Councilors must represent the cabals of this city's--"

A new voice. Soft, gentle, but I heard it as if the woman speaking was standing next to me. I knew the voice, even though I hadn't heard it in more than six years.

"I think you may have misunderstood my challenge, Silas," my mother said. "I'm not attempting to become a Councilor. As you say, for that I would need a cabal, and the last surviving member of the Guiding Hand died this past winter."

"Then why are you here, Helen?" I didn't like the way the man said her name. It sounded like a put-down, like her name wasn't worthy of this place. But Mom's reply was steady and still gentle. It even sounded like she was smiling.

"I'm here to take the position of Hierarch. I'm here to challenge you to the Duel Arcane."

Even if you don't know the meanings of words, sometimes you hear the power behind them. I went to Mass with a Catholic girl I was dating in high school, and I didn't understand what the priest was talking about, but I felt the importance of the words. It was the same here -- I had no idea what "Hierarch" or "Duel Arcane" meant, but I understood that something heavy was happening. So did

everyone else. I heard at least a dozen voices all start shouting, talking among themselves, calling out objections and support. But then Silas' voice rose above them all, and I snuck forward to see what was happening.

"I'll accept this Duel," he said, and the assembly fell silent.

I peeked out from behind one of the pillars and saw my mother standing at the far end of the room. She looked a little older, but much better than when I'd last seen her. She looked rested and in control, and there was an air of power about her. It wasn't obvious, it wasn't like the power my teacher tried to have. It was more like the priest's, the power to command respect because of authority from a greater source. She was wearing a white dress and carried a rod in her hand about the size of baton. It looked like it was made of bronze or brass, but I couldn't see it clearly from where I was.

I didn't even look at the other people in the room until Silas stepped into my field of vision. He was a lot younger than his voice made him sound, maybe only 25 or so. He was wearing a brown suit that looked like it had been hanging in a closet for the last decade or so, and he was carrying a silver knife. He stood across the room and faced off against my mother. "Callista, square the circle," he said, and I remember thinking what a stupid thing that was to say.

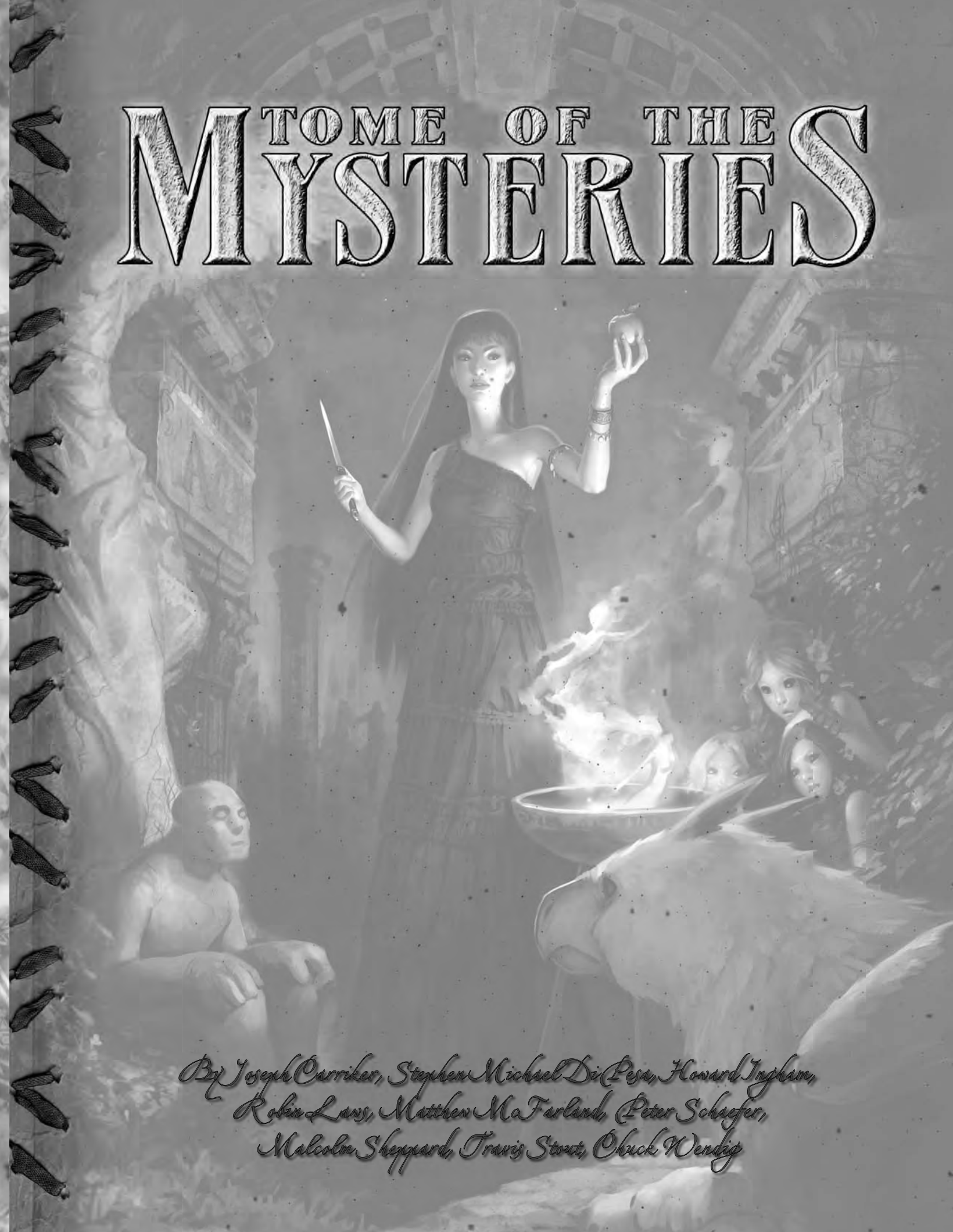
But then my mother saw me.

We locked eyes across the room, and I saw her falter a little. I don't know that anybody else noticed, but I saw it. That power and control wilted, just a fraction, and I knew that whatever fight she was in for, if I stayed, she would lose. That was a truth, and it was probably the best truth I'd ever learned. It meant she loved me.

I turned around and walked out. I stood outside and watched the building, and from inside I could see -- or rather, I could feel -- magic happening. In my mind's eye, I could see my mother, wrapped in splendid white light, hurling out power with just a glance. I could see Silas crumbling under her onslaught, trying to call down fire and fury even as my mother's attack left him unable to remember his own name. I stood there by my car watching, tears running down my face, and I didn't even notice when the cop walked up and wrote me a ticket.

He handed me the ticket to sign, and handed me a pen that looked like a silver thorn. I signed my name and he walked away, and I just kept watching the doors, waiting for the fight to be over, so I could go in and congratulate my mother, the new Hierarch.

Tome of the Mysteries



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Atlantean Certificate of Honor Winner

Once again, a Paradox caused us to omit Michael William Kaluta's credit for his cover illustration to Tome of the Watchtowers. We apologize for the error and hereby award him with the Atlantean Certificate of Honor*.

* We can't print the actual certificate, as we're not really sure what it says; it's written in High Speech. The recipient of the certificate is free to comb any Atlantean ruin in search of a translation, as per the guidelines listed in Secrets of the Ruined Temple, although White Wolf offers no indemnity against temple guardians or Atlantean wards or traps of any kind.

Caveat magus!

COMING NEXT FOR MAGE

LEGACIES II: THE ANCIENT

On June 29, 2006, Jonathan Shepherd (contributing author to *World of Darkness: Chicago*, among others) passed away in his sleep. This book is dedicated to him, to a writer whose life and death helped others better appreciate the gift of life.

Jonathan: The world is poorer for the books you will never have the chance to write, but far richer for the many friends who are better human beings for having known you. Thanks for all the stories we shared and chapters written in sagas unfinished. We miss you.

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This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. This book contains mature content. Reader discretion is advised.

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TOME OF THE MYSTERIES™

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INTRODUCTION: THE ARS MYSTERIORUM

Any one who has any experience of any mystical state of the soul knows how there float up in the mind profound symbols, whose meaning, if indeed they do not delude one into the dream that they are meaningless, one does not perhaps understand for years.

— William Butler Yeats,
"The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry"

Magic is not a legal practice — it is an Art with a capital "A." Mages call the study and practice of magic the *Ars Mysteriorum*: the "Art of the Mysteries." While some mages occasionally defend the viewpoint that magic is a science (see "Ars Nova," in Chapter Three), most find the evidence lacking. The meeting point between soul and the Supernal cannot be so easily pinned down, defined or even repeated with exacting certitude. The Ars Mysteriorum is not a natural law so much as a rule of thumb — it tends to follow certain guidelines, but can often follow its own mysterious course, regardless of the mage's desires.

When discussing the study of magic, mages have traditionally categorized subjects by their elemental connotations. Some mages claim that the Western classical scheme of the five elements — earth, air, fire, water and spirit — originated in Atlantis, while others say this is a more historical system, developed in Greece, India or Egypt, depending on what evidence is accepted.

This classification system, when applied to magic, is not intended to literally map substances — that is, the fire element does not refer to the Forces or Prime Arcana. Fire connotes passion, intuition and the will. Each element has a host of correspondences, and each represents a human capability. Since Awakened humans are a Fallen microcosm of the Supernal macrocosm, it is fitting that the universe of magic can be examined in relation to human experiences.

So, when speaking about the application of the will to magic, the fire element is the appropriate container. When referring to intellect, air is the proper element, with water for feelings and emotions and earth for the manifestation of ideas.

The elemental scheme is not the only one used for the study of magic, although the elements are perhaps the most prevalent when presenting magical concepts to apprentices. In China, mages prefer the traditional Chinese five element system, using it as part of a broader scheme for envisioning energy, or *qi*, in all its forms, both subtle and gross.

Some mages prefer to talk about the halls of the Atlantean Temple, the chief schola of magic in ancient Atlantis. The Temple was supposedly built in a pentagonal shape to represent the Supernal Realms, with five separate halls.

Another system posits disciplines or fields of study within magic, such as imaginology (the study of Imagos), implementology (the study of magical tools), immanence

theory (the study of spell Aspects), disequilibrium theory (the study of Paradox) and so on.

Regardless of the scheme used, the study of magic is remarkably similar across cultures, despite surface differences. The Supernal rules over everywhere in the Fallen World equally, and any attempt to understand the laws of the Supernal depends more on Supernal knowledge than Fallen information. And yet, cultural beliefs do color the Art, for the ways in which the Supernal are revealed vary, as does a mage's ability to connect with the Higher World through symbols. A Western mage might find that the rites and spells of ancient Egypt speak strongly to him, imparting a sense of the Supernal, while he has trouble using Eastern symbols to gain the same sympathy. The difficulty here lies not with the symbols, but the perceiver. Magic is sometimes in the eye of the beholder, or, more accurately put, a mage can sometimes more easily perceive Supernal connections when they are displayed in terms of his own cultural paradigm.

The Art is just that — an art. Sometimes, feelings and instinct drive magic more readily than intellect. The many facets of the Art — in all its elemental affinities — form the curricula of most courses of Awakened study.

Theme: Illumination

The goal of the study of the Mysteries is illumination: knowledge beyond mundane understanding. Magic is the Art of the impossible, the making manifest of imagination. Every new discovery in the study of magic illuminates new possibilities, showing how things that were impossible before are now within reach, so long as they can be concretely imagined.

Some mages come to know their magic more intuitively than intellectually. They don't care why or how they do it, they just know that it can be done. Most prefer to leave the big questions for those with the inclinations to ask them; these mages'd rather just *do* magic than think about it. Those who do ask the big questions, who seek to understand the hows and whys of magic, are often called "illuminates" — at least for those who have proven that their studies have yielded them wisdom; those who can't show results are more often than not labeled mere "bookworms" or "scribes."

Mood: Elusiveness

Illumination — the discovery of magical secrets in the Mysteries — doesn't come easily. Magic seems to resist the inquiry of the mind's eye. While magic readily yields itself up to the production of Imagos — the Awakened imagination is fertile — magic hides its true face from easy scrutiny. Mages who want to really understand the Art must be persistent when hunting this elusive prey, and be prepared for many defeats and false trails. Each small epiphany, however, makes the frustrations worth it. Even a tiny pearl of magical wisdom is worth more than all the world's diamonds.

What's Inside

This book is a toolbox for players (and Storytellers) about how to use magic. It begins in **Chapter One: The Way of Fire — Making Magic** with advice on creating your own spells, including what the 13 Practices comprise, choosing a spell's Aspect and other considerations involved in creative thaumaturgy.

Next, **Chapter Two: The Way of Air — Spell Lore** addresses the look of feel of magic: how to describe the casting of spells. This is followed by a host of new spells, then an essay on rotecraft: how to expand the possibilities of rotes.

Chapter Three: The Way of Water — Magic and Being begins with a discussion of magic and culture and how the one can be informed by the other. The Ars Nova — the "New Art" of technologically based magic — is explained, followed by a discussion of daily magical life for a mage, living in a society of secrets. Important to any consideration of magely life is a discussion of ethics and magic, and the wisdom of when and what to cast on whom. Finally, the chapter wraps up with an introduction to the Code Duello that often informs the Duel Arcane.

Chapter Four: The Way of Earth — Magic Manifested provides a host of spells for enchanting items of all sorts, and introduces the art of alchemy and the creation of salves, unguents, powders and sprays that can be imbued with spells. No discussion of magic made manifest is complete without an examination of soul stones and the special properties they impart to their creators and owners.

Finally, **Chapter Five: The Way of Void — Greater Secrets** speaks of the unspeakable. The chapter begins with an essay on how Storytellers can manage the spell-casting capabilities of the characters they pit against the players' characters, and then goes on to speculate on the ways of the legendary archmasters: who they are and what kind of magic they might wield. The book ends with a glimpse of a dire phenomenon: the Abyssal Watchtowers and the grim powers a mage can gain by getting too close to them.



CHAPTER ONE: THE WAY OF FIRE — MAKING MAGIC

"Speak up, child: to what Practice does this spell belong?"

Just in front of Grandmother Winter's tiny, gnarled hand, a sigil burned in the air, a glyph indicative of one of the enchantments that the old witch had been teaching to Vasilisa. The young woman peered at it intently, her eyes tracing the contours of the character, noting its nuances. Aloud, she pondered the question, "The curling quality is obviously indicative of Life Arcanum magics, while the use of the straight line means healing, I think." She met her teacher's gaze. "This is the spell used to purify the bodies of others from toxins."

The ancient woman rapped Vasilisa's knuckles with a viper-like swiftness, using the heavy old ladle that served as her wand. "Wrong! I did not ask what the spell did; I asked to what Practice it belonged."

Vasilisa withdrew her hand, rubbing at the sore spot and asked angrily, "Who cares what it is, as long as you know what it does?"

Grandmother Winter, her glum, wrinkled face still set aglow by the luminous sigil drifting in the air, clucked her tongue. "When a man builds a house, he begins not by hammering nails into boards, but instead by knowing which trees to cut down. So, too, is it with magic: you cannot begin at the end . . . ."

WHO CARES WHAT IT IS AS LONG AS YOU KNOW WHAT IT DOES

Thou hast the power of taking thought, of seeing it and grasping it in thy own "hands," and gazing face to face upon God's Image. But if what is within thee even is unmanifest to thee, how, then, shall He Himself who is within thy self be manifest for thee by means of [outer] eyes?
— *The Corpus Hermeticum*, G.R.S. Mead translation

The element of fire is associated with intuition, imagination and the higher will. Fire is the energy that empowers a mage's ability to dream up new spells, new ways of working magic — to practice creative thaumaturgy. This chapter examines the "laws" of magic: the 13 Practices, spell Aspects and the mechanics of creating new spells.

Magic is a complex thing. It defies the laws of the universe as we know them — granting access to hidden worlds, allowing a consciousness to move among bodies or creating sunlight in the middle of the night. Not all feats of mystic prowess are quite so grandiose, of course, but all are, in one way or another, miraculous and awe-inspiring. Imbuing a mechanical device with flawless function or perceiving all life in one's immediate surroundings is no mean feat, after all.

Long ago, willworkers established certain precedents in the practice of magic, rules, codes and simple identifiers that could be used to easily classify spells, making the processes of education and invention that much simpler. The Awakened have discoursed on and debated these systems ceaselessly, probably for millennia, arguing the various virtues and flaws of these conventions. Not long after the inception of the Free Council, serious questions regarding the validity of the system as a whole began to be asked, but the work set down by the ancients has stood, likely because no one has yet thought of a better way that adequately encompasses all of the variables. Certainly, scattered willworkers, some saner than others, put forth theories and categorizations of their own, but none have yet caught on. Certainly, none have yet constituted as thoroughly inclusive, and yet elegantly simple, a system as that which was drafted in elder days.

But magic is a growing thing, very nearly a living thing, and the perceptions of it, if not the nuances of magic's use, change with the passage of time. How, then, do the Awakened of today see the science of magic as conceived of by the Atlanteans themselves? What kinds of opinions and prejudices do mentors pass down to students regarding, say, the Practice of Making or the use of vulgar magic? This chapter explores those questions, both in-story and on an out-of-game level. This chapter also delves into some of the overarching issues of play balance that can occur when players and Storytellers make use of crossover among World of Darkness game lines.

Please remember that everything in this chapter is intended for use as guidelines, rather than hard rules. Given the extreme flexibility of the 10 Arcana, there really is no way to create a perfect system for them. There will always be some fuzzy rules calls, some questions of whether or not a given effect should be covert or vulgar or what a particular Death Arcanum spell might do when used against a Kindred who has a given level of a Discipline currently active. In such cases, just take what's written here as advice, and go with what seems right to you, what makes the most sense for your game.

The 13 Practices and the Five Dots

In the days of Atlantis, if the stories are to be believed, the Awakened codified a system of 13 mystic practices, the 13 categories of effect into which all magical feats could be placed. Perhaps, in those elder days, there were other, more esoteric categorizations, but today, only these 13 remain and, from the most hidebound of théarchs to the most irreverent of Libertines, almost all Awakened pass the understanding of these Practices along to their students. Even the Seers of the Throne and the Scelesti teach their apprentices these distinctions and, thus, they have become part of the *lingua franca* of Awakened society as a whole.

From a rules mechanics perspective, the 13 Practices are divided among the five dots of each Arcanum, according to a set progression (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 131). To be clear, mages recognize that an individual capable of casting Life Arcanum spells that call upon the Practice of Unraveling is at least an Adept of Life. They know that Unraveling spells require greater training and discipline to cast than Ruling or Fraying effects, but are not quite as difficult to master as those of Making. While mages understand that the willworker in question has attained the fourth tier of Life Arcanum proficiency, they would not indicate as much by saying, "He knows the fourth level of the Life Arcanum." Instead, they might say, "He has clearly studied the Practices of Patterning and Unraveling for the Life Arcanum," or "He is an Adept of the Arcanum of Life." Likewise, a tremendously powerful mage might indicate her prowess by referring

to herself as "a third-degree Master, of the Arcana of Death, Matter and Prime."

This, of course, also means that mages are aware of the names of the 10 Arcana and use them conversationally with one another. Some Awakened prefer to use more poetic reference for the Arcana (such as a Disciple of Forces announcing himself as "a Disciple of the Arcanum of all force and energy"), but this is not universal, and some deliberately avoid it, to prevent any confusion on the part of others. Most willworkers habitually include the word "Arcanum" or "Arcana" when referring to spell effects, degrees of mastery and the like ("The spell called upon the Arcana of Space and Time," or "She's an Apprentice of the Mind Arcanum," as opposed to, "It was a Fate spell," or "He's an Initiate of Spirit.") Some mages, however, less reverent or traditional, use the truncated reference, simply omitting any mention of "Arcana."

When the Awakened classify spells, they most commonly do so in terms of Practice, rather than in terms of dot level. Thus, in an old Necromancer's library, formulae pertaining to the Death 3 "Entropic Shroud," a spell of the Practice of Shielding, is likelier to be found with references to the Death 2 "Entropic Guard" (also of the Practice of Shielding), rather than with other Death 3 spells. The mage in question is aware that one needs greater proficiency with the arts of the Death Arcanum to cast "Entropic Shroud" than one needs for "Entropic Guard"; the same amount of skill that is needed to use most Death Arcanum Fraying, Perfecting and Weaving spells, but the classification of Practices remains constant. Rather than seeing such higher-level spells as being fundamentally different in their nature (on account of which dot level they belong to), they're seen as refinements of the same skill. For example, throwing a curveball is harder than throwing a baseball straight, but both are, in essence, the same sort of action. Mages tend to think of higher-level applications of a Practice in these terms, as refinements of the Practice's lessons, expressions of superior expertise.

Suppose that you want to create a new spell, though? What Practice (and what dot level of the appropriate Arcanum) should the spell fall under? Below is a breakdown of the 13 Practices, intended to clarify the issue. Granted, some particularly creative magical effects may be difficult to classify, but this structure will hopefully point you directly at the proper Practice most of the time.

A Comprehensive System

The 13 Practices encompass virtually anything a mage could want to do. Perhaps there exist Practices beyond the understanding of all save the mightiest of mages, Practices belonging exclusively to the archmasters, but these lofty heights of power would not be easily categorized, even by the ancients for whom, if the stories are to be believed, such things would have been less rare, if still tremendously uncommon. This means that any spell that you might create that doesn't fall under the purview of the sixth dot of an Arcanum *should* fit into one of these 13 categories. For those that do seem to be six-dot or higher spells, some speculations about archmastery can be found on p. 175.

When creating spells, it's probably wise to devote a bit of thought, right at the outset, as to which Practice you want the effect to fall under. This will give you a rough idea of power level (in terms of dots) and may be of help to you in assigning the specifics of the spell. All you need to do is look at spells within the same Practice, of the same dot level under which you intend to place the spell, and you can use the spell effects at that level as a guideline for comparable magics. Don't be afraid to sample directly from systems that you like; this was actually done within the spells section in the **Mage: The Awakening** core rulebook (such as the "Soul Jar" effect shared between the Death and Spirit Arcana). The extant rules can be a useful tool in the beginning, but as you get a feel for creating magic, you'll become increasingly comfortable with the notion of expanding beyond from them.

But what happens if a new spell doesn't seem to quite fit under the description given for *any* existing Practice?

Don't worry too much about this. There are a few spells that got placed in their respective Practices because they fit at a given dot level of power and the Practice in question was the closest to what the spell did. There's no need to adjust your spell to make it fit within one of the 13 Practices; instead, feel free to adjust the parameters of the Practices themselves to accommodate your new spell. The definition of a Practice is definitely not a hard science (as Sophia, sage of the Mysterium, summarizes it, "The Mysteries cannot be fully tamed by the ordered mind; they evade too close a scrutiny, like a fox evading hounds . . . . "), and the idea behind the rules is to give you the resources you need to make the kinds of effects that you want. If the systems as they stand are in the way of an enjoyable roleplaying experience, rather than facilitating one, change them.

First Dot — The Practice of Compelling

Compelling magics, which are almost always covert in their Aspect, can actually be a bit tricky to categorize at times. In general, if a given effect



subtly influences a simple phenomenon without harming it, granting it the ability to directly cause harm, or fundamentally altering its nature, then the effect is quite probably a Compelling effect. Such spells can almost always be written off as natural or probable by a Sleeper, even if the spells' effects are directly witnessed: the room seems darker and spookier than it should, but (probably) not unnaturally so, or the guy behind the desk just seems to have a natural knack for multitasking and so on. Overall, spells of the Practice of Compelling are the most surreptitious of the magics used to directly affect the world, interacting with its people, places and things through the use of the Arcana alone.

Compelling spells *might* grant a one- or two-dice bonus to the mage properly exploiting the spell's results, but such magics don't usually create the circumstances under which the bonus would come into play. Think of it more like making temporary magical equipment: the willworker still has to set up the situation so as to make use of the bonus. In the example of shadows above, the mage might receive a slight boost to any use of his Intimidation Skill, but he still needs to properly set the scene for such. In effect, the shadows might make a scary situation a little scarier, but they don't, in and of themselves, convey a *necessarily* fearsome aspect upon a person or place.

An example of a Compelling spell:

Otherworldly Instrument (Death ● + Spirit ●)

The mage simultaneously shapes existing ectoplasm and/or ephemera into simple forms that are identical to both ghosts and spirits and can be interacted with by either. The willworker can create a basic tool for use by a spirit or ghost, such as a bar to use as a lever, a claw hammer for pounding in or removing nails or even a club that the entity could use to attack others of its kind.

Practice: Compelling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell's Potency determines the equipment bonus of the incorporeal item created, up to a maximum of the caster's Death, Spirit or Gnosis, whichever is lowest. This item may *only* be used by a ghost or spirit, unless the mage possesses other magics that allow her to interact with such otherworldly constructs.

Free Council Rote: Immaterial Artifice

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Crafts + Spirit

During the course of experimentation, Libertines occasionally find cause to work with Twilight-bound entities; this rote enables Libertines to craft functional equipment for their physically insubstantial assistants.

Compelling In-Story

Some Free Council mentors jokingly refer to this as the "Practice of Suggesting," as the mage isn't so much exerting any kind of control over the phenomenon in question as gently nudging it in small ways. Still, Compelling effects tend to be covert in their Aspect and, while they are the least powerful magics that can be used to directly influence a mage's environment, they are still able to do just that. A clever willworker with only one dot in a given Arcanum can still use Compelling spells to great effect, especially if she has already learned the lay of the land, as it were, with Knowing and Unveiling magics.

Discerning teachers of the Arcana tend to spend a good deal of time educating their students about Compelling spells and their effects, since they are, more or less, the "baby steps" of magics intended to alter phenomena in the Fallen World. Without first learning how to properly make a candle flame burn a little brighter or a little hotter, for example, a willworker will never be able to exert the degree of control necessary to defy gravity or vanish from sight. Also, most mentors see such teaching as a good way to get a handle on a student's proclivities as a mage, beyond just the magics favored by her Path. How an Apprentice uses Compelling magic says a great deal about how she intends to use mightier magics when they are at last within her grasp.

Even as mages grow in power and experience, the Practice of Compelling remains an eminently useful one. You never know when you'll need to adjust circumstances just a little bit. Even the most skillful master can find a reason to change this detail or that one every so often. Compelling magics won't reshape the Fallen World, and they usually aren't sufficient, in and of themselves, to make the difference at those crucial times, but they *can* push things in the right direction, and help an insightful willworker to make those changes for herself, whether through other, more powerful magics, or even through fully mundane capabilities.

On rare occasions, rival mages with a penchant for dangerous and/or blatant magics are forced by their Consilium to forego the Duel Arcane, and instead settle their differences through a test of subtlety that allows only for use of Compelling magics. Those Consilii with recourse to such often place each contender under a *geas*, so that the contest remains fair and each willworker remains bound to use only the simplest of spells. These duels usually take the form of complex puzzles, or long chains of mundane tasks that must be accomplished through the use of small magics alone. Such tests of cunning and discretion are most often invoked, when they are used at all in these times, by very traditional Consilii that are adamant in their commitment to the use of covert magic.

First Dot — The Practice of Knowing

Knowing magics reveal subtler information than those found within the Practice of Unveiling. While Unveiling imparts sensory knowledge, Knowing allows a willworker to delve into the lore of the Mysteries. Spells from the Practice of Knowing almost never cost Mana to cast (since they are imparting information to the mage, rather than allowing her to interact with her environment) and are, likewise, almost always covert in their Aspect.

By casting magics of the Practice of Knowing, a willworker can discern the health of a human soul, detect the presence of conscious thought or even learn the qualities of an unknown relic of sorcerous power. Such spells not only answer questions for the Awakened, but also help them to discover the right questions to ask. Such magics are equally useful to spies, investigators, socialites and warriors, bestowing awareness beyond the ken of ordinary thought.

An important detail to note is that Knowing magics specifically do not bestow sensory information upon the mage. The Practice of Knowing deals in facts, not the senses. (Not even exceptional senses, such as those granted by certain Arcana effects.) A mage who casts a Knowing spell simply acquires knowledge thereby, rather than perceiving phenomena that must then be analyzed. A mage doesn't always understand what Knowing spells help her to learn, but she receives the information directly, without the need for interpretation. What she makes of that knowledge, however, is up to her.

An example of a Knowing spell:

Eye for Destruction (Death ● + Matter ●)

This spell enables the caster to discern the hidden flaws in any object made of lifeless matter (including animated corpses, but not sentient undead like vampires or Prometheans, who are not exactly dead or undead).

Practice: Knowing

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Through the use of this spell, a willworker gains the ability to ignore a single point of an inanimate object's Durability when attempting to break it, or gains a single bonus die when making physical attacks against the reanimated dead.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Breaking Point

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts (for objects) or Occult (for the animate dead) + Matter

Rob an enemy of his arms and armor, and the fight is already half over. So goes the philosophy behind this Adamantine Arrow spell.

Knowing In-Story

Knowing magics can be strange and even frightening to a newly Awakened person. Such spells can flood an undisciplined mage's mind with unwelcome awareness, making her detect every living thing nearby (or every thinking mind) or even behold how a given individual died. Thus, the mentors of these willworkers usually try to help them to take the magics of this Practice firmly in hand as quickly as possible. Still, horror stories circulate of those who could not assimilate this knowledge fast enough, and who were broken by what they saw—terrible perceptions that they lacked the training to block out.

As mages grow in power and understanding, most mages continue to fall back upon the trusty magics of the Practice of Knowing. Even the most jaded and self-important mage knows, on some level, that she doesn't possess all of the answers, and Knowing spells supplement the most expansive bank of knowledge, helping Apprentice and Master alike to learn the answers to even the most elusive of riddles. Knowing magic tends to be more useful when a mage has time to consider and plan. Knowing magic is perhaps a bit less useful on, say, the field of battle than Unveiling spells, but the Practice of Knowing is a cerebral Practice, more intellectual than the intuitive effects of Unveiling.

Some particularly studious, paranoid or eccentric masters make a point of casting Knowing magics rather extensively. These willworkers reason that knowledge is always superior to ignorance, and such extensive cognizance of one's circumstances and surroundings can only benefit the prepared mind. Of course, there are times when it is better *not* to know, and so some of these mages have been known to slip into madness, whether born of Paradox, the revelation of some forbidden lore or even just an obsessive over-reliance on being possessed of all the facts. In certain extreme cases, mages have died because of "things man was not meant to know."

Many sages of Awakened lore contend that Knowing was the last of the most elementary Practices to be formally codified. Because Compelling spells are active magics, and Unveiling effects specifically impart sensory information, these scholars believe that the somewhat more rarified and ephemeral qualities discerned by the Practice of Knowing made it a slightly more difficult Practice to perfect. Others believe that the drive to learn led the Awakened of Atlantis to develop the Practice of Knowing *first*, later creating the Practices of Unveiling and Compelling to refine what the Awakened learned with Knowing and then to act upon it, respectively.



First Dot — The Practice of Unveiling

Unveiling, almost always of covert Aspect, is one of the simplest classifications for new spells. If a mystic effect imparts sensory perception of the phenomenon in question to the mage, then it is an Unveiling effect. These magics include the revelation of Resonance (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 277–280 for more information), the ability to communicate directly with otherworldly beings and the like. Some Unveiling effects can be scaled up to second-dot Abilities, allowing them to be cast upon others.

This facet of Unveiling magic, the ability to extend perceptions to others, is perhaps one of the most useful found at any level of any Arcanum. Mages need not merely explain what they can see and understand; they can *show* one another. This direct sharing of perceptions allows the Awakened to potentially avoid a lot of dangerous misunderstandings. (Sadly, this does not always, or even often, end up being the case.)

Given the fact that Unveiling magics reveal Resonance to mages, the spells of this Practice are probably some of the most useful in any mage's repertoire. The importance of being able to perceive Resonance cannot be overstated. Such a sense enables a mage to detect the passing of other willworkers, to learn the specific "signature" of a spell and to otherwise discern the presence of otherworldly phenomena (or even just exceptional occurrences of mundane ones). And, as each Arcanum's Mage Sight imparts a different sense for Resonance, there is a reason to learn each of them.

An example of an Unveiling spell:

Chronicle Resonance (Prime ●+ Time ●●)

The willworker discerns local sources of Resonance over time. These include sources that are currently present, but have grown less intense, as well as those that have disappeared completely. She can track the progress of the dispersing Resonance over time, as well as any sudden changes that took place during the time period studied (such as magical alterations to a given source of Resonance). She is not able to learn who did these things, or how (not without making use of other magics, at any rate), but can use this magic to get a feel for the local pattern of Resonance.

Practice: Unveiling
Action: Instant
Duration: Concentration
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

This spell's Potency is used to determine how far back the mage can look, as well as to contest any temporal or Resonance occlusion that might have been used in the mage's immediate vicinity.

Potency	Past Time Viewed
1	24 hours
2	Two days
3	One week
4	One month
5	Three months*

* Each additional success adds three months to how far back the mage can look.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Piercing the Shroud of Days

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Prime

Not even the passage of time enables a fugitive to evade the scrutiny of a dedicated and capable Guardian. This rote helps such mages to piece together the trails of Resonance that might otherwise go cold and allow their quarries to escape justice.

Unveiling In-Story

Some Awakened mentors see the Practice of Unveiling as perhaps the most central to a mage's enlightened state. To see the truth of things, to look through the lie of the Exarchs, is to know creation for what it is. While Unveiling magics don't actually lead to universal understanding, or any other such lofty objective, they do help to reveal basic truths about the world and the people, places and things in it. Unveiling magics are practical magics, which help the Awakened to discern fact from fiction.

Mages who favor the Practice of Unveiling tend to be down-to-earth and detail-oriented. Many are more interested in "what" or "how" than "why"; they like to get inside the workings of things and make sense of them. Not a few of the Awakened world's most prominent researchers and scientists are skilled practitioners of the arts of Unveiling. Because the Practice of Unveiling reveals Resonance, most Awakened teachers push the knowledge of this Practice mercilessly upon their students, encouraging them to cast, and re-cast, such magics, even when unnecessary. In many ways, the sense for Resonance is a sense all its own, as valuable to the willworker as sight, hearing or her ability to instinctively perceive mystic phenomena.

Some mentors cast various Mage Sights upon their students during their apprenticeships, so that they can experience the Fallen World in as many different ways as possible. Such willworkers reason that the greatest possible breadth of understanding, more so than almost any other factor, contributes to the education of a responsible mage. While uncommon, some Consilii actually occasionally punish criminals by forcibly placing Unveiling spells upon them, so that they might truly experience the fruits of their transgressions (compelling a torturer of the unquiet dead, for instance, to be attuned to the Resonance of death, or making an incorrigible psychic manipulator to see the emotions of those he has harmed). As time goes on, however, and modern mages come up in a world increasingly desensitized to the victimization of others, this sentence has gradually fallen out of use.

No matter how experienced a mage becomes, there is always a reason to return to magics of Unveiling. Human beings are creatures of the senses, arguably far more than they are creatures of reason and intellect. To see magic, to hear it and touch it, is to connect in a real and meaningful way with the Supernal. The importance of this connection cannot be overstated. It is one of the surest ways through which willworkers know themselves to be something other than Sleepers, and through which even the most jaded of the Awakened can rekindle a sense of wonderment at the beauty and splendor of magic.

Several Awakened historians believe that the Practice of Unveiling was the most crucial for mages after the fall of Atlantis and the severing of the worlds. At that time, the scattered surviving willworkers were trying to make sense of what had become of the universe that they had long taken for granted. Unveiling magics would have helped them to decipher the changes that had taken place, and shown them the ways in which the Fallen World was different from a creation in which profane matter was as one with the Supernal. A few scholarly accounts tell of how devastating a time that must have been, as willworkers came to terms with just how far the world had fallen.

Two Dots — The Practice of Ruling

Ruling magics are typically elementary manipulations that do not necessarily stray into the realm of obvious magic. Even the vulgar effects within the Practice of Ruling can usually be readily concealed from Sleepers, even when cast in their presence. (Provided, of course, that the casting willworker is able to exercise a bit of forethought and restraint.) With Ruling spells, a mage can accomplish basic feats that fall under the purview of an Arcanum: subtly sculpting basic forms of energy, imparting a few quick telepathic words of warning, nudging probability a few degrees in a desired direction. While a few Ruling spells create somewhat grander effects, these are the exception, rather than the rule.

Spells of the Practice of Ruling often assist a mage with mundane tasks, creating a foundation on which she can build using her natural abilities, rather than any paranormal talent — effectively, a small "boost" that facilitates the use of normal Attribute + Skill rolls. These can be more potent than the one- or (at most) two-dice bonuses imparted by Compelling spells, and begin to bridge the gap between the miniscule alterations of the Practice of Compelling and the obvious paranormal manipulations of the Practice of Weaving. Other Ruling spells actually create outright supernatural effects, though these are small and almost always, in and of themselves, harmless. (Which is not to say that an insightful willworker couldn't use them to set up a dangerous situation for an enemy; rather, they're not usually *inherently* dangerous.) When Ruling spells are used to directly cause harm, the damage they inflict is *always* bashing damage, and never more than a point or two of it.

Ruling spells can sometimes be a bit difficult to categorize. (This is actually the case, across the board, with all of the Practices that involve direct magical interaction with the mage's environment, but the issues of distinction really begin with Ruling.) Perhaps the best way to discern if a given spell should belong to the Practice of Ruling is to ask if the spell's effects manipulate a person, place or thing in some small way. Does the spell suggest, rather than force? Does the spell affect cosmetic change, rather than any true alteration or act of creation? If so, then the spell probably belongs to the Practice of Ruling.

An example of a Ruling spell:

Inconspicuous Object (Matter ●● + Mind ●●)

By using this magic, a mage can render an object unnoticed, even if it rests in plain view. Observers' gazes simply pass over the item in question.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

This spell bestows the effects of the "Incognito Presence" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 208) upon an object equal to or smaller in Size than the lowest of the mage's Matter, Mind or Gnosis scores. As with "Incognito Presence," any kind of attention-grabbing activity undertaken with the object in question (or by one openly possessing the item) automatically terminates the effects of this spell.

Mysterium Rote: The Purloined Letter
Dice Pool: Resolve + Larceny + Mind

Scholars of the Mysterium don't always have sufficient time to carefully secret away their acquisitions. This spell enables such a willworker to conceal an object without really hiding it at all.

Ruling In-Story

Many young willworkers consider their early castings within the Practice of Ruling to be their first "real" experiences with magic. This error is easy to make; the feeling of power that comes from being able to so directly affect the world around oneself, even if only in small ways, can be truly intoxicating. Such inexperienced Awakened cite that it's all well and good to see things that others can't, or to gently nudge one's environment, here and there, but, for them, the gravity of their gift doesn't set in until they can make fire dance on their fingertips, or peer through the threads of space, to gaze upon places miles away.

Naturally, this attitude is precisely what makes the Practice of Ruling such a dangerous one. Most willworkers, before they become experienced and powerful enough to make use of Ruling magics, don't have any appreciable access to vulgar effects, and so are largely forced by their ignorance to preserve the integrity of the Veil and the secrecy of the Mysteries. Thus, most wise mentors begin their students' instruction in the Practice of Ruling well away from the eyes of Sleepers (and, if at all possible, away from things that could be damaged or destroyed by an incidence of Paradox or two). Those who have access to Demesnes often make use of them, though few teachers (and even fewer students) possess such valuable resources.

As time goes on, some willworkers see themselves as "outgrowing" the elementary manipulations offered by the Practice of Ruling, but those with perhaps better handle on their abilities and a greater appreciation for the gift of magic remember that sometimes the best tool for the job is the simplest one. The mages reason that there is no reason to conjure up lightning when a spark would suffice or to crush another's will when a powerful suggestion is all that's required. Many of the magics of the Practice of Ruling are among the subtlest of the vulgar spells, so a cautious willworker can use Ruling spells near or even (if he is exceptionally careful and clever) in front of Sleeping eyes and get away with it.

The Practice of Ruling, because of its status of the "second tier" of Practices aimed at manipulation of the Fallen World, often gets overlooked by mages of greater power. To many willworkers, something can either be gently nudged with Compelling or forced with Weaving. To such Awakened, Ruling becomes a nebulous middle ground. Wiser mages, on the other hand, remember the utility of Ruling spells, and their tendency toward

covertness, and do not automatically cast them aside in favor of more potent magics.

Two Dots — The Practice of Shielding

The Practice of Shielding, which is almost always covert in its Aspect, is also quite simple and straightforward. If a magical effect bestows points of Armor, of whatever sort, or otherwise subtracts dice or Potency from an incoming hostile effect (such as the Mind 2 "Mental Shield" or Prime 2 "Counterspell Prime"), then the spell belongs to the Practice of Shielding. Spells from the Practice of Shielding that are applied passively, subtracting dice from the hostile spell without any targeted effort on the mage's part, subtract a number of dice equal to the mage's dot rating in the appropriate Arcanum. With the expenditure of a point of Mana, most Shielding effects can be made to last for a day. As a third-dot spell, a Shielding effect can be cast upon another target.

Any mage who engages in combat on a regular basis (or who, because of position or even just paranoia, fears being attacked) has a use for Shielding spells. In fact, it's doubtful that the Adamantine Arrow as an order could have survived to the modern day without the existence of the Practice of Shielding. Some of the most treasured of Artifacts and Imbued Items are enchanted with Shielding magics. Quite simply, no willworker with an ounce of good sense turns up her nose at the idea of a little extra protection.

For the sake of play balance, Shielding spells are almost always covert. Note that Shielding spells *do* "stack" with mundane, or even enhanced, Imbued or Artifact armor, though not with one another. This means that a mage with a well-crafted suit of armor and a powerful Shielding enchantment is virtually untouchable in combat, save by those magics that ignore or otherwise circumvent Armor. Also be aware, though, that particularly astronomical magical Armor ratings can invoke Disbelief in Sleepers. (There is, after all, just no sound explanation for how a mage could be shot four times, point-blank, with .10-gauge buckshot, and emerge unscathed. Even the most advanced body armor known to man simply cannot do that.)

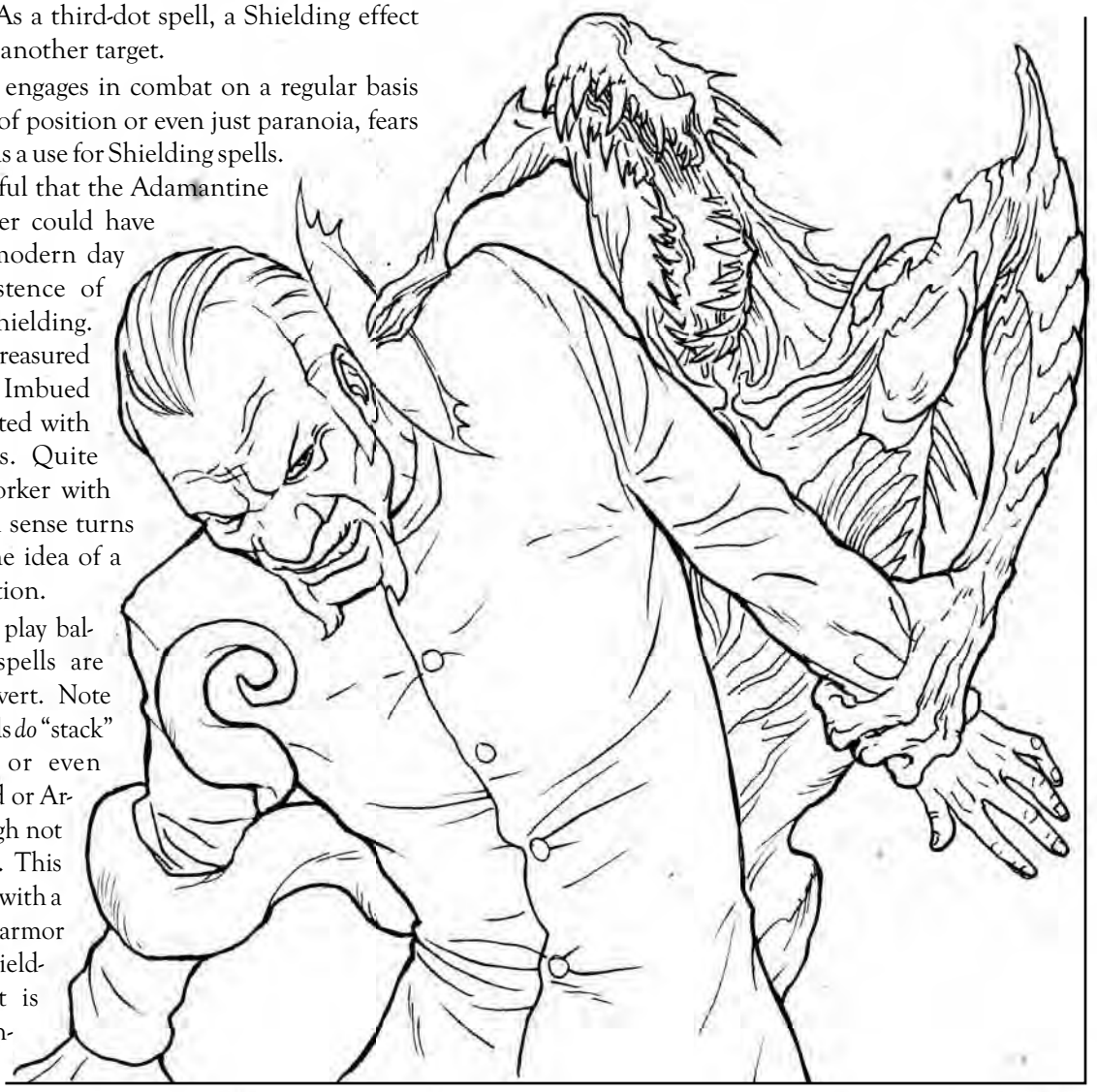
An example of a Shielding spell:

Spiritual Bulwark (Spirit ●●)

By means of this spell, the mage reduces the efficacy of undesirable non-attack-based Numina targeting him.

Practice: Shielding
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana (optional)

The willworker subtracts one die per dot she possesses in the Spirit Arcanum from all non-attack-based



Numina (such as "Possession" or "Terrify") targeting her. By spending one point of Mana, the Duration can be made to last for one day.

Silver Ladder Rote: Resplendent Diadem

Dice Pool: Composure + Occult + Spirit

Just as a well-made crown is a symbol of authority, so, too, can a crown serve as armor against harm. This rote defends a Ladder mage against undue influence by the denizens of both Twilight and the Shadow. Guardians of the Veil have their own variant of the rote (Resolve + Occult + Spirit), which they use to resist the strange powers of the entities of the Abyss.

Shielding In-Story

Many self-proclaimed Atlantean scholars believe that Shielding was one of the first Practices to be developed by the Awakened. Reading minds, soaring on the wind and distilling tass are all well and good, but one of the first and most pressing human drives is the desire to possess the means to defend oneself. Some scholars maintain that Shielding magics were not always as subtle as they are, for the most part, today, and that some great willworkers of old conjured up armor of writhing flame, fragmented space and ferocious gales. Still, what accounts there are of such things now are unclear at best, and may be nothing more than rumor and legend.

As in ancient days, most modern mentors will not send their students out into the world until they have demonstrated the ability to make use of the Practice of Shielding for at least one Arcanum. For the most part, it is considered criminally irresponsible for an Awakened teacher to allow a new willworker to face the perils of her new life undefended by the auspices of this Practice. In fact, there are those of all five orders who will assist a prematurely released newly Awakened mage in learning at least one Arcanum's Practice of Shielding, should she not know one, without asking for any favor in return, so basic an obligation is it considered. There are, if rumors are to be believed, even Seers of the Throne who will do so.

As a mage grows more comfortable in her Awakened existence, the Practice of Shielding helps her to feel confident in her dealings with others. She has less need for fear of casual violence and can treat with even considerably more experienced (and, thus, dangerous) willworkers with an increased feeling of safety. When she is sufficiently skilled in an Arcanum, she can go about her business, knowing that most Sleepers are virtually incapable of causing her harm at all. Of course, overconfidence in this (or any) regard can be deadly, but Shielding magics, and the promise of safety that they offer, are part of what allows Awakened society to carry on.

Masters, who (in their own minds, at any rate) have so much more to live for and so much more to lose truly grow to love and appreciate all of the nuances of the Practice of Shielding. Elder Arrow mages never go anywhere without Shielding magics in place, and even the most pacifistic Mysterium scholar or courteous thearch finds himself feeling safer and more confident with some form of magical protection in place. Also noteworthy in all of this is the fact that only the dullest of the Awakened enemies of the five orders go about their business without a Shielding spell. While the willworkers of the orders can occasionally let down their guard, no sensible Tremere lich or Scelestus *ever* does.

Two Dots — The Practice of Veiling

Veiling effects conceal the phenomena encompassed by a given Arcanum, or use such phenomena to grant camouflage or concealment. At this level, the mage's scope of effect is small and/or otherwise limited (for instance, a willworker using Forces 2 can render an inanimate object invisible, but needs Forces 3 to cast the same effect on herself, and Forces 4 to bestow it upon another). In general, the larger or more complex the creature, place or thing to be affected, the more dots the mage needs in the appropriate Arcanum. In other words, it's usually harder to cast Veiling spells on a moving car than on a stationary chair, and easier to cast them on a houseplant than on a human being.

Some magics from the Practice of Veiling are vulgar in Aspect, but this is uncommon, as the very purpose of Veiling is secrecy. Only the more blatant effects (such as vanishing from sight) are vulgar, while the majority of the rest are covert. This twofold subtlety serves to make Veiling effects especially popular among spies, thieves and even assassins. Such subtlety also makes the Practice of Veiling a fantastic toolkit for performing otherwise dangerously blatant magic in the vicinity of Sleepers without (as much) fear of Paradoxes or Disbelief. A cunning willworker with time to prepare can, in theory, disguise even the most obvious acts of mystic prowess from Sleeping eyes by using Veiling spells.

Important to note for the purposes of spell design is the fact that *any* magical effect intended primarily for concealment of any sort properly belongs to the Practice of Veiling. While a number of spells stray out of the second dot of their respective Arcana, the fundamental nature of the Practice does not change. So long as a clouding of perception or manifestation of some falsehood doesn't

directly fall under the purview of another Practice (such as the Mind Arcanum's ability to alter memories, or certain advanced forms of Prime Arcanum phantasms, for example), then the spell is a Veiling spell.

An example of a Veiling spell:

False Speech (Forces ●● + Mind ●● or Forces ●●● + Mind ●●●)

With this magic, a willworker causes spoken words within the radius of effect to be heard as whatever he desires.

Practice: Veiling

Action: Instant and contested; targets roll Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Concentration

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The lesser variant of this spell is cast on an area and is stationary, while the greater variant can be cast on an individual or object, and moves with its target. In both versions of the spell, the mage needs to be able to multitask (through the casting of different spells of the Mind Arcanum) in order to make different people seem to say different things if more than one is talking at the same time. Otherwise, all the words come out the same. Every subject who rolls fewer successes than the caster hears whatever the mage wants her to hear whenever anyone in the radius of effect speaks. Subjects who succeed in contesting the magic instead hear garbled words while within the effected area (since Forces magic still mangles the sounds).

Silver Ladder Rote: Miscommunication

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Mind

Without understanding, there is no such thing as cooperation. Théarchs who learn this magic use it when necessary to deny their enemies, rivals, underlings and pawns alike the free and open exchange of information.

Veiling In-Story

The Practice of Veiling is believed to have been little used in the days of ancient Atlantis. It was not a place of subtle sorcery, and, it is said, mages reveled in the wonders that they could craft, wonders that awed, delighted and, often, terrified those who did not share in the Atlanteans' gifts. Since the breaking of Creation, however, and the rise of the gulf between the Profane and the Supernal, the Practice of Veiling has been greatly refined and expanded.

Now, the secrecy of the Mysteries demands such magics of concealment and misdirection. Many Guardians stress the importance of Veiling magic even more so than Shielding spells: one life is unimportant next to the integrity of the Veil itself. Even the most retiring Mysterium willworkers and most flamboyant théarchs can find many practical uses for the Practice of Veiling. There are times for secrecy and stealth in research, just as there are times when what a politician conceals is more important than what she shows.

In fact, given the popularity of the Practice of Veiling among Guardians and other secretive sorts, there are those who find themselves distrustful of mages who specialize in such magics. They wonder if such willworkers have something to hide. To be fair, those who make a habit of going about continually shrouded in Veiling spells usually *are* hiding something, or else are simply paranoid, neither of which is apt to contribute to their popularity around the Consilium.

Irrespective of whatever stigma may fall upon the Practice of Veiling, however, it remains a popular practice among those mages who understand the importance of stealth and secrecy, or even just the occasional measure of privacy. Young willworkers trying to establish a place for themselves within the Consilium sometimes find that walking silent and unseen is better for their progress within local Awakened society than any amount of known public service. Likewise, all save the most honest of masters (a rare breed at best) have at least one or two things they'd rather conceal, every now and again.

Three Dots — The Practice of Fraying

The Practice of Fraying is where the offensive magics truly begin. While some lesser hurts can be caused by magic before this point, Fraying is the least refined Practice almost wholly dedicated to the art of destruction. When used to directly inflict harm, Fraying spells always inflict bashing damage. (Indirect harm, however, can come in other forms; a mage using a Fraying effect to erode the welds holding part of a large jagged metal sculpture together, dropping it into the head of an attacker, will likely cause lethal damage, instead.) Of course, Fraying magics need not directly hurt anyone or anything. They can also be used to damage less tangible things (such as by hindering a subject's chances of success at an endeavor or dissolving tass).

Only rarely are Fraying spells covert in Aspect, since they usually involve some rather spectacular effects. A few Fraying spells, however, may be cast with some degree of subtlety, and these spells are often prized by militant willworkers for both the spells' lethality and their ability to be cast with reduced risk of a Paradox. For the most

part, Fraying attacks that actually create some kind catalyst for the damage they inflict cost a point of Mana, but this isn't necessarily universal. Also, some Fraying spells can be scaled up, causing lethal damage with an appropriate Arcanum at four dots, and aggravated damage (which always costs Mana) at five dots.

Although Fraying spells inflict only bashing damage when used to cause direct injury, they rank among the most useful of offensive magics. Certainly, an Unraveling effect will bring an enemy down faster, as will an Unmaking spell, but such magics, used indiscriminately, can kill with alarming swiftness. In addition to the grievous harm this sort of thing can do to a mage's Wisdom, there are times when death isn't the desired goal. If a malevolent spirit possesses a willworker's friend, the mage probably isn't willing to tear the victim's body asunder to expel the entity. Likewise, it's difficult at best to interrogate a corpse for all the details of a Seers of the Throne sanctum, even with a Master of Death on hand.

An example of a Fraying spell:

Dissipate Unreal Construct (Death ●●● + Prime ●●●)

By casting this spell, a mage can dissolve a Prime Arcanum phantasm, or other object crafted out of "unreal" matter (such as one sculpted out of ephemera and then drawn through the Gauntlet or one perhaps made by unusual Numina or the magics of other supernatural creatures).

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert (though subject to Disbelief if the object in question disintegrates in front of Sleepers)

Cost: None

Successes accrued during the casting of this spell inflict levels of bashing damage on an "unreal" construct (as defined above) on a one-for-one basis, circumventing Durability. If the object's Structure is exceeded, the object disintegrates instantly.

Free Council Rote: Supernal Vitriol

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Death

This rote enables a Libertine to dissipate phantasms and other such constructs, without resorting to more vulgar magics.

Fraying In-Story

The Practice of Fraying has always been a popular one. Disciples are just knowledgeable enough to really use some spectacular magics and typically just young enough and sufficiently inexperienced to occasionally want to cut loose with them. Add to this the long, bloody history of the Awakened: the battles between the Atlantean orders and the Seers of the Throne, the attacks by Tremere liches, the depredations of the Scelesti and the like and a pattern of conflict highly conducive to martial studies makes Fraying a popular subject of research.

As the proliferation of the Sleepers, the eyes of the Fallen World, increases, growing exponentially, most Fraying magics (which tend to be vulgar in their Aspect) become less practical, save under the most dire or most extraordinary of circumstances. Also, since most mages, regardless of order (or lack thereof) recognize the validity of the Duel Arcane to one degree or another, Fraying magics are likely less popular now than they have been at any point in the past. Still, tradition, married to the good old-fashioned instinct to shoot the other guy before he shoots you, ensures that the Practice of Fraying will not stop being taught anytime soon.

Discerning mages maintain uses for the Practice of Fraying throughout their lives. Such spells are subtler than most Unraveling or Unmaking magics and, if used properly, don't necessarily leave any obvious traces of injury. Some of the most successful and respected of Sentinels first attempt to fulfill their duties through the use of Fraying spells, before resorting to more destructive powers. A well-prepared mage with a solid command of Fraying magics is more than the equal of even the most skilled hand-to-hand Sleeper combatant.

Philosophically speaking, some mages dislike Fraying magic on a metaphysical level. The connotation of the word "fraying" implies damage to a piece of cloth. Some willworkers take this to mean a fraying of the threads holding the Fallen World together (or, perhaps, those keeping the Abyss from flooding in). Most mages, however, dismiss this perspective as an extreme view, unconvinced by the sparse and often questionable materials that the doomsayers use to back up their stance. Thus far, no credible evidence exists to suggest that a Fraying spell has any deleterious consequences on anything other than the person or thing on the wrong end of it. The more common view by far, however, is that "Fraying" refers to fraying the threads of the Pattern targeted.



Three Dots — The Practice of Perfecting

Perfecting effects are used in the process of refinement and, often, of mending. Essentially, spells intended to make a thing better (whether in terms of improving functionality or in terms of repair)

usually belong to the Practice of Perfecting. While some Perfecting spells restore health (whether to corporeal entities or those of a more ephemeral nature), others mend broken objects, and still others expand upon the natural capabilities of creatures or things. In some respects, Perfecting magic is the opposite of that learned within the Practice of Fraying.

Perfecting spells can be covert or vulgar in Aspect, depending upon the blatancy of the improvements being affected. Some Perfecting spells cost Mana while others do not. Perfecting is a relatively intuitive Practice when it comes to classifying spells but tends to be a bit erratic in terms of overarching qualities. This is especially true of Perfecting magics cast upon non-material phenomena (such as luck, consciousness or Mana-based constructs). Perfecting spells to be cast on potentially unwilling subjects (in the rare event that an individual resists the notion of having herself or her things improved in some way) are almost always resisted reflexively, with one of the target's Resistance Attributes (Composure, Resolve or Stamina) subtracted from the spellcasting roll.

An example of a Perfecting spell:

Fortify Phantasmal Item (Prime ●●●)

Through the casting of this spell, a mage can augment a piece of non-weapon phantasmal equipment.

Practice: Perfecting
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

Successes accrued during the casting of this spell add to the equipment bonus granted by non-weapon objects made out of tass. (For weapons crafted through the use of the Prime Arcanum, see the "Phantasmal Weapon" spell on pp. 228–229 of **Mage: The Awakening**.) Though covert in Aspect, the spell suffers Disbelief if the granted bonus is greater than the base equipment bonus conveyed by the item in question.

Mysterium Rote: Phantasmal Fortification
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Prime

By means of this rote, a mystagogue can enhance the efficiency of his phantasmal tools, so as to craft better equipment than that available to even the wealthiest and most well connected of Sleepers.

Perfecting In-Story

Knowledge of the Supernal ability to hone substances and refine phenomena is so ingrained in human consciousness as to survive, after a fashion, in the popular legends of the Fallen World. Such tales as the legendary Excalibur, to say nothing of the lore of alchemy, remind Sleepers that there were once means of elevating base and crude materials, whether living, unliving or ephemeral, and elevating them to loftier, more advanced states. Among the Awakened, such means still exist, albeit in lesser forms than in those days.

Some willworkers speculate that *all* substances in Atlantis were perfected to levels beyond those that Perfecting magics are capable of creating. Other mages are skeptical of this sort of baseless revisionist history, however, and instead reflect upon the usefulness of the Practice of Perfecting according to its own merits. The critics point to the dearth of Atlantean relics in the modern world as proof of the preposterousness of the notion. Supporters, however, maintain that the ancients might have used great magics to keep Sleepers from stumbling across these great feats of artifice, even millennia later.

Mages who focus on Perfecting magics often tend to be far-thinking and/or supportive types. They see the value in shoring up what exists, and in crafting better building blocks for the future. Some, however, do so because they're paranoid and untrusting, disdainful of the works of Sleepers and unwilling to entrust their safety (or even comfort) to such "profane artifice." Others just know a good thing when they see it. Such mages reason that the enhanced substances and purified phenomena offered by the Practice of Perfecting are reward enough on their own, and don't go looking for any fancier justification than that.

Younger mages skilled in the Practice of Perfecting are often sought out by elder willworkers of their Consilii, and given tasks using Perfecting magics that can eventually translate into official Consilium offices. At first, this sort of thing can seem like drudgery, but it has its practical side; continual practice prepares these mages for the more advanced Practices of manipulation (Patterning and Making) and helps older Awakened to get a handle on their ability to function within a support role (an important quality for any would-be leader to possess).

Three Dots — The Practice of Weaving

The Practice of Weaving tends to be the catchall for third-dot effects that don't fit into either Fraying or Perfecting, or a more advanced application of a lower-dot Practice. In terms of mechanics, spells that alter capabilities or somehow otherwise change the function of a thing without fundamentally transforming the nature of that thing are Weaving spells. This is a broad definition, and can be a bit hard to adequately categorize, since there are so many things that Weaving effects can conceivably do.

As befits such an eclectic Practice, Weaving effects run the gamut when it comes to covert versus vulgar and Mana cost versus none. Because of the wide scope of potential Weaving effects, it is a versatile Practice, allowing for all sorts of mid-range magical manipulations, some of them quite strong. Some spells make inert materials pliant, while other spells bestow the ability to strike ephemeral entities, and still others create thinking servants composed of telekinetic force alone.

Because of the wide scope of Weaving's effects, Weaving is a favorite mid-level Practice for almost any mage. An intelligent mage can find a multitude of uses for almost every Weaving spell in his repertoire. Because of Weaving catchall nature, many newly researched spells end up being classed within the Practice of Weaving.

An example of a Weaving spell:

Prophetic Dream (Mind ●●● + Time ●●●)

This spell causes a chosen subject, even a Sleeper, to experience a precognitive dream.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The subject simply *knows* that she is experiencing (and has experienced) a dream about the future, though she might choose to disregard this awareness if she is morally or intellectually opposed to the idea of divinations, psychic phenomena or magic. (This spell does not, however, invoke Disbelief under any circumstances.) Note that the mage does not have any control over what the subject perceives in such a dream, and he doesn't possess any special insight into it, beyond that which might be gleaned through other uses of his Arcana. Subjects of this spell tend to experience visions based upon their own circumstances and experiences, though especially significant impending phenomena might take a subject outside of the cares and experiences of her own life. The effects are similar to those of Time 3 "Divination," centered on the dreamer herself.

Silver Ladder Rote: Naming the Prophet

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + Time

With this rote, a Ladder willworker can bestow the gift (or curse) of prophecy upon another, willing or otherwise.

Weaving In-Story

Some mages describe the Practice of Weaving as the most central to the Awakened state: the art of touching one's environment with will alone and leaving the environment changed by one's passing. In many ways, this is the primordial dream of magic, the idea that a person can change the world, in ways both great and small, simply by wishing it so.

Awakened mentors pay close heed to how their students make use of Weaving magics, since this is the first time that the less experienced willworkers are able to express themselves *directly* using magic, as opposed to through the changes that they create with magic. In other words, while the student could previously use magic to set up conditions that could influence her environment, she can now do so without the benefit of a "middleman," as it were. Thus, her mystic style becomes manifest through the magic that she creates.

In terms of the mid- to higher-end Arcana effects, Weaving spells are probably the most commonly used. They're powerful enough (especially in the hands of a skilled and clever mage) to accomplish many tasks, and are often covert in Aspect, meaning that a willworker is opening himself, and those around him, to fewer risks by casting such magics. Despite the greater scope of effect available at higher levels, spells of the Practice of Weaving tend to have decently broad utility and allow the Awakened to perform most mundane tasks with a preternatural aplomb, while still allowing for a considerable degree of competency with purely supernatural works.

No matter how powerful most mages become, they tend to fall back on Weaving spells when the situation warrants. They're overall less risky to use than the more potent Patterning and Making magics, while still retaining a level of power and flexibility completely beyond the purview of Compelling or Ruling spells. When executed properly, many Weaving magics, even the vulgar ones, can be performed subtly enough to elude the senses of Sleepers, and the covert ones don't give up much in the way of effectiveness for the sake of subtlety.



Four Dots — The Practice of Patterning

Patterning is probably the most versatile of all of the 13 Practices. The effects of Patterning span a broad scope of possibilities. Odds are better than average that any given fourth-dot Arcanum effect belongs to the Practice of Patterning. Patterning magics run the gamut: if a spell doesn't create, destroy or influence a phenomenon, then the spell is probably a Patterning effect. This can, of course, make it a little difficult to accurately place spells into the Practice, since

the temptation exists to make the call that almost any vaguely ambiguous classification should default to Patterning. Or, conversely, to deliberately *avoid* placing in the Practice spells whose categorizations are uncertain, so as to avoid an inundation of Patterning magics.

Patterning spells can alter phenomena between roughly related types, or redefine the parameters of said phenomena, sometime even into configurations not normally found within the Fallen World. Memories can be altered, inert materials changed in shape or quality or the flow of time itself made to skip forward suddenly or to cling to an individual, causing her to temporarily "lag" behind its normal flow. Such spells represent the greatest possible degree of facility in manipulating objects, entities or other phenomena without actually being able to create such things out of nothingness, or to reduce them to the same.

Due to the amazing scope of the Practice of Patterning, setting down any hard set of rules regarding covert effects versus vulgar ones, as well as cost, if any, in Mana, is impossible. These magics are just too diverse for that sort of categorization. The best guides in those respects are common sense and precedent. If an effect feels as if it should be vulgar, then it probably should (see the guidelines on Aspect later in this chapter). Likewise, if a spell has a number of characteristics in common with other Patterning magics that have no cost in Mana to cast, then the spell should likely also be cast without any such cost.

An example of a Patterning spell:

Bestow Ghostly Sight (Death ●● + Prime ●●●●)

By altering the Pattern of a Sleeper's perceptual capabilities, this spell enables the Sleeper to gaze into Twilight and perceive the shades of the dead.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Although covert in Aspect, this spell *will* invoke Disbelief if the Sleeper is in any way resistant to, or becomes especially terrified by, what he perceives (and most will be either one or the other, given the horror inherent in beholding the unquiet dead).

Mysterium Rote: Eyes of the Grave

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Death

By means of this rote, mages of the Mysterium can enable Sleeper associates to perceive the goings-on of the disincarnate dead. Alternately, a Sleeper who has somehow earned the wrath of the willworker might be *compelled* to gaze into the ghostly realm, whether the Sleeper likes it or not.

Patterning In-Story

Given the tremendous range of effects available to a mage with knowledge of the Practice of Pattering, this Practice is seen as a supremely utilitarian one. Willworkers who make good use of their Patterning magics are often looked well upon within their Consilii, since such skilled mages can help out in many different ways, both in peacetime and in war. In many Consilii, a mage won't even be considered for office (save perhaps that of Sentinel) until he demonstrates facility with the Practice of Patterning for at least one Arcanum. Before that, a willworker may be seen as too inexperienced, or simply not useful enough.

Some sages of Atlantean lore believe that the Practice of Patterning (whether yet fully codified by that time or not) was essential to not only the construction of that legendary nation but also to its maintenance. Furthermore, after the Fall of Atlantis, these scholars contend, Patterning magics helped to keep alive the traditions, ideas and even aesthetics of Atlantis. Some of the oldest relics of the Awakened world, those that constitute some link, no matter how faint, to those elder days, were in part conceived of, created, protected and preserved by Patterning spells.

Because Patterning magics are so diverse, getting any kind of universal opinion on them, save to say that they are among the most useful of all magics, is difficult at best. Some willworkers believe that the Awakened of Atlantis could have stopped at 11 Practices (all save for Making and Unmaking) and, so long as the Atlanteans had developed the Practice of Patterning, no one would have complained. By the time a mage is sufficiently well trained to develop facility with Patterning arts, she is often well and truly out from under her teacher's shadow, so few mages learn these spells at the feet of mentors. Likewise, many Awakened educators don't go far out of their way to teach their students about the specifics of the Practice of Patterning; by the time the youths learn enough about magic to develop such powers, they will already understand just how useful Patterning spells can be.

Even those mages who master an Arcanum regularly return to the well of the Practice of Patterning. These magics are, quite simply, far too useful to forego. While Making and Unmaking spells are superior, in terms of raw power, to those cast under the auspices of Patterning, Patterning effects are more helpful under a greater range

of circumstances. Why make an object out of nothing when it's usually just as easy to transform another item into the one that you need? Whereas Making and Unmaking spells are considered by most wise willworkers as magics of last resort (given the vulgar Aspect of many such spells, as well as the overwhelming power that they bring to bear), Patterning spells are almost never inappropriate for use.

Four Dots — The Practice of Unraveling

Unraveling magic is more than merely destructive—that is the province of the Practice of Fraying. What Fraying does with a blunt instrument, Unraveling does with a scalpel. Unraveling can work on a finer scale, creating nuanced forms of harm that don't necessarily rely purely upon pure stopping power. Unraveling spells can hurt the knowledge or ability of others, or the capacity of a phenomenon, as well as simply inflict damage.

For the most part, if an Unraveling spell creates an effect that would be perceptibly impossible without magic, the spell is vulgar in Aspect. Otherwise (and this is part of why the Practice of Unraveling is prized by many clever willworkers), the spell tends to be covert. Unraveling spells tend not to cost Mana, as well, which is an added bonus for mages looking to diversify their offensive capabilities.

Because of the lethality, several Unraveling spells often take the place of mundane arms among mages with sufficient skill to possess them. Why go to the trouble of carrying a knife or another, even more cumbersome weapon when the Practice of Unraveling is just as deadly, can't be anywhere as easily disarmed and leaves less evidence for Sleeper authorities to follow up on? Also, unlike Unmaking spells, what evidence *is* left behind tends to have at least mildly plausible explanations. While fire-scarring on the brick walls of an alley is unusual and may earn some raised eyebrows, it is nowhere near as unnatural (and, thus, a threat to the Veil) as, say, finding brick walls that have run like water or have shadows seared onto them by radiation.

An example of an Unraveling spell:

Ghastly Metamorphosis (Life ●●●●●)

Armed with this gruesome spell, a willworker can inflict a hideous transformation upon another human being (Awakened or otherwise), causing her new form to shred its way out of her current body in an agonizing shower of gore.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Stamina + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

In addition to forcing a subject into a new shape, which must be a natural animal, including a human being, of Size 4–6, this spell inflicts one level of lethal damage on the subject per success of Potency. This horrific display can easily require reflexive Resolve + Composure rolls from onlookers unfamiliar with this magic to resist gaining a temporary mild derangement. Similar to almost all other Life Arcanum spells, this spell cannot be given an indefinite Duration. If the subject is successfully transformed, she must check for becoming "lost" to her new form (per the Life Arcanum spell, "Shapechanging" on p. 190 of **Mage: The Awakening**), but she retains her Awakened abilities, if any. Sleepers subjected to the spell who do not manage to destroy it with Disbelief will probably later write the whole experience off as the result of drugs, a nightmare or a nervous breakdown.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Whipping the Dog

Dice Pool: Strength + Animal Ken + Life

There are many animals in this world far less dangerous than a human being. Arrow mages use this rote to transform their enemies into such forms, and inflict terrible hurts upon them in the process. Silver Ladder willworkers have their own variant of the rote (Presence + Animal Ken + Life), which they use to punish disobedient servants, treating them as the uncouth animals that they are (in the Ladder mages' eyes, at any rate).

Unraveling In-Story

Some willworkers think of the Practice of Unraveling as the "thinking man's Fraying," since using Unraveling magics to their greatest possible effectiveness takes a degree of wit and discernment. Fraying spells rarely involve meaningful choices in their implementation. They're usually much more a case of "point and click," whereas the Practice of Unraveling offers options. Instead of attempting to directly harm a physically resilient foe, the mage could make the enemy less robust. Rather than trying to psychically attack an iron-willed enemy, the mage could erode the enemy's resolve. Instead of trying to match a master swordsman blow for blow, the mage could simply disintegrate the swordsman's weapon.

For the most part, mages who can make use of Unraveling spells no longer need to worry about the counsel of their mentors. Most teachers, however, instill in their students a healthy respect for the power and versatility



of the Practice of Unraveling, even in the earliest days of their education. Some mentors actually subject their Apprentices to Unraveling magics (those that don't actually inflict any physical, spiritual or psychic harm, at any rate), just so as to conclusively demonstrate to the younger willworkers what to expect from enemies down the road. Because of the variety of effects available under the Practice of Unraveling, teachers can erode the mental capabilities of their students or rob their limbs of all vigor. Those who are kinder and a bit gentler can instead confound their Apprentices by continually dispelling any magics they attempt to cast. In many ways, one could think of Unraveling as a sort of reverse Perfecting — a Practice of Degrading.

Given the broader focus of Unraveling magics, many mages continue to favor them even after attaining mastery of an Arcanum. Unmaking spells are often crude, without any kind of room for finesse. Unraveling effects, on the other hand, can *selectively* destroy, damage or even just inhibit people or things. In many cases, the ability to limit another individual's effectiveness at a given endeavor is more useful than the power to obliterate her utterly. Likewise, the incidental casualties of, say, creating lethal levels of radioactivity (via Unmaking) in a place are usually not worth the potential gains for doing so. Far better to beget a controlled conflagration, harming only those whom a willworker truly intends to hurt.

Almost every successful Sentinel has at least a few Unraveling spells in her arsenal. While Fraying magics may be far more merciful, there are times in every Sentinel's career when mercy is more a weakness than a virtue. In addition, most mages of the Adamantine Arrow aspire to master as many Unraveling magics as possible. The best warriors like to have as many choices as possible when the time comes for the battle to be joined. These spells are also popular among the more martial Guardians of the Veil, since, in skilled hands, such spells can end a violent encounter (whether initiated by the Guardian herself or not) before it truly begins.

Five Dots — The Practice of Making

Spells from the Practice of Making give a willworker nearly godlike power. Such mages can craft phenomena out of nothing, and can generate things that otherwise cannot exist within the rude confines of the Fallen World. Few Awakened in this age manage to attain this degree of knowledge and comprehension for any Arcanum. This sort of power

has been known to lead mages astray, far off of the path of Wisdom, though many manage to balance the great authority conveyed by such understanding with a sense of responsibility.

Making magics often (but not always) cost Mana, particularly if the mage is creating something that will have physical or even ephemeral substance, using the Mana as the skeleton around which the phenomenon in question will be constructed. If the substance to be created is physical in nature (and is thus blatantly created out of nothingness), then the spell is usually vulgar. Otherwise, if being used to fabricate materials of an immaterial nature or those otherwise too rarified to bend the laws of physics much, then the magic can be covert in its Aspect.

In designing spells for the Practice of Making, it is important to keep in mind the vast potential for the abuse of such magics. Making effects are, in many ways, limited only by the imagination of the caster, unless other limitations are deliberately placed upon them. Most commonly, this takes the form of a brief Duration and/or having a large number of factors that must all be fortified by casting successes (such as any kind of creation that requires the assignment of successes to add to its Attributes, Structure, Size, paranormal abilities, etc.) Without these checks and balances, Making spells could rapidly unbalance almost any game.

An example of a Making spell:

Stone Servitor (Matter ●●●● + Mind ●●●●●)

This spell creates a self-aware servant of animate stone from out of nearby substances, even the air itself.

Practice: Making

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The servant's base Strength, Durability and Size are equal to the lesser of the mage's Matter or Gnosis. The servant possesses no Stamina rating, and has one dot in Dexterity, as well as all of the Mental and Social Attributes. Successes of Potency may be assigned to any of the factors above (excluding Stamina; for effects that test against such, substitute the servant's Durability) on a one-for-one basis. The construct cannot possess Skills or Merits. The servant weighs about 50 pounds at Size 1 and each dot of Size thereafter doubles the previous weight (100 pounds at size 2, 200 pounds at Size 3 and so on). Since the servant's consciousness dissipates at the end of the Duration of the spell, creating the servant without an inherent acceptance of the inevitability of its own end can easily constitute a sin against Wisdom. (This spell, however, may be re-cast before its Duration ends, enabling the Duration to be extended; this is an exception to normal spellcasting rules.) As stone, the construct can be modified by the Matter Arcanum in all the same ways as ordinary rock.

Silver Ladder Rote: Juggernaut

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Matter

Sometimes, you just can't entrust your safety to another human being, no matter how well-meaning or loyal. Sometimes, you need a creature incapable of treachery or even the smallest forms of disobedience. For mages of the Silver Ladder, this is a rote for those sorts of times.

Making In-Story

The Practice of Making has historically been one of the most hotly disputed in the history of the Awakened. Some mages believe that Making spells actually call down a small measure of the substance of the Supernal, which is then filtered through the Abyss, thereby becoming profane Fallen matter and ephemera. Many dismiss this theory, but no concrete proof exists either way, since Making spells certainly *do* seem to generate substances out of nothing.

In some cases, the Practice of Making enables mages to generate phenomena (such as thaumium; see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 203–204) that simply do not otherwise exist within the Fallen World. Such creations generate even greater speculation and wilder theories. A few Moros, for instance, claim that thaumium is actually drawn from the substance of the Watchtower of Stygia. Likewise, a handful of Mastigos believe that new minds created with the "Psychic Genesis" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 218) are, in reality, pools of raw psychic energy drawn out of Pandemonium, and briefly given cohesion within the Fallen World.

Most Awakened mentors, just as they do with the Practice of Unmaking, attempt to instill in their students a profound respect for the sheer power of the Practice of Making. The ability to create a thing from nothingness is not one to be taken lightly, and never to be used without thorough forethought and a full appreciation of the consequences of doing so. At least, so goes the reasoning of many of the wisest and the most learned among willworkers.

Mages who demonstrate great proficiency in the arts of Making are often treated with a kind of reverence by lesser willworkers. Some are inclined to see skilled mages as a bridge to the Supernal, while more pragmatic sorts simply understand these mages to be exceptionally talented and powerful Awakened. Some who demonstrate

exceptional talent for the Practice of Making come to see themselves as sublime and perhaps even godlike beings. Needless to say, this attitude, coupled with what is arguably nigh-divine power, conspires to erode the Wisdom and essential humanity of even the most temperate willworker.

Those mages skilled in the Practice of Making who manage to avoid the siren song of adoration usually take care to use such magics as infrequently as possible. There is a danger in creation, a desire to remake the world that is less and less apparent to those who treat this amazing power with anything other than the utmost respect and caution. Furthermore, those who display great facility with the arts of Making and a willingness to use them are often hard-pressed to find a moment's peace. Other, less powerful willworkers tend to flock around these skilled mages, imploring them for potent enchantments, items of power and other favors.

Five Dots — The Practice of Unmaking

Spells from the Practice of Unmaking are terrifying to behold. They eradicate matter, dissolve flesh and rend asunder the very threads of space and time. More destructive in a way than even the most powerful nuclear bomb, Unmaking effects cause things to completely *cease to exist*.

These frightening magics are almost always vulgar in their Aspect, since the physics and metaphysics of the Fallen World abhor the utter destruction created by such spells. More often than not, they cost Mana, as the caster is attempting to push something out of existence by the force of his will alone. More dangerous still is the fact that most Unmaking spells can be cast upon a target at range, meaning that the willworker can devastate his foe without ever exposing himself to the threat of hand-to-hand or melee combat.

The directly offensive spells of the Practice of Unmaking are numbered among the most lethal supernatural powers in the World of Darkness. However, not all such spells target people or other sentient entities. Some attack lifeless matter, while others are used to damage or destroy less tangible phenomena. The crucial distinction, in terms of spell design, is that the purpose of Unmaking magics is absolute dissolution. While they don't always accomplish this objective (if, say, the caster rolls poorly, or the person or thing resisting such a spell rolls particularly well), utter annihilation is the goal of such an effect.

An example of an Unmaking spell:

Infectious Curse (Fate ●●●●● + Space ●●)

By way of this spell, a willworker spreads the effects of the "Great Curse" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 160–161) through contagion, effectively, an infectious plague of ill fortune that not only affects its initial target but also all those with whom he comes in contact.

Practice: Unmaking
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 1 Mana

This spell cannot be cast with indefinite Duration (unlike the basic "Great Curse" effect), so as to prevent an outbreak of evil luck that eventually grows to encompass the world. While the spell's initial target is not allowed active resistance to the curse, subsequent potential targets contest the spell's effect with a roll of Composure + Gnosis.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: A Plague on Your House
Dice Pool: Resolve + Intimidation + Fate

Some persistent Sleepers just don't respond well to threats against their own health, but, when you add in a threat to the well-being of their family and friends, many change their tunes. Guardians use this magic to curse those outsiders that delve too deeply into the Mysteries, making them a source of pain and misfortune for their loved ones and, indeed, *everyone* they associate with.

Unmaking In-Story

Many mages are hesitant to use or teach the Practice of Unraveling. After all, these magics are nothing but destructive, even down to the most fundamental level. Things broken by Fraying spells are still present in the world, albeit in a changed (often badly damaged) form. Those subjected to Unmaking effects are often literally obliterated, in violation of the very laws of nature; such things literally cease to exist. Mages with a lack of discretion and a flawed sense of subtlety can wreak havoc with the Practice of Unmaking on such a level as to necessitate every mage in a Consilium hunting them down.

Some mages believe that the Practice of Unmaking was, despite being codified the same as any other, a forbidden (or perhaps just severely restricted) art in the days of Atlantis. Some willworkers maintain that anything destroyed by Unmaking magics is spat out into the Abyss and that the finite quantity of substance and ephemera in creation *can* eventually be depleted, negating existence and casting all being into nothingness. One theory propounds the notion that the shattering of worlds during the Celestial War was made possible by every Unmaking spell that had been cast before then,

each of which contributed to the strength of the nascent Abyss. Certainly, the frequency with which many of the most powerful Scelesti wield Unmaking spells when they are in a position to get away with such lends a bit of credence to that theory. Of course, such vicious magics might also simply be nothing more than a reflection of the twisted souls of the Wicked.

Whatever the case, mages capable of wielding magics from the Practice of Unmaking are often given a wide berth, and treated as objects of awe and no small measure of fear. As most less experienced Awakened see things, a willworker skilled in Fraying or Unraveling spells can kill you; with the Practice of Unmaking, he can make it so that the Fallen World basically forgets that you ever existed at all. Some of the more powerful Awakened mentors give their students firsthand experience with the horrors of what Unmaking magics are capable of, to teach them to respect this dread Practice, and not to pursue it until they are not only of sufficient power but also of sufficient understanding and maturity.

In the vast majority of cases, even the most coarse and jaded Sentinel, brutal Arrow mage or callous Guardian hesitates before resorting to the use of the Practice of Unmaking. Those who don't are often lost to the way of Wisdom and quickly become a danger to themselves and others. Many Consilii carefully monitor the use of Unmaking spells within their geographic boundaries and sometimes in the surrounding areas. Some Hierarchs actually forbid the use of such magics to those not specifically permitted by the will of the Council to cast them, and place harsh punishments upon those who break such laws, save under the most exceptional of circumstances. While some complain of this sort of treatment as cruel and authoritarian, many Hierarchs reply that it is crueler by far to allow unchecked use of such spells, and that a little more authority is a good thing if it keeps the irresponsible use of these destructive magics to a bare minimum.

Opening the Gates of Hell

Why, if the creation of radiation is, indeed, an act of creation, is doing so considered to belong to the Practice of Unmaking? The answer to this question is found in radioactive matter itself, material that, by its very nature, destroys organic cells and is among the most dense and "Fallen" of substances.

In a sort of "reverse alchemy," materials such as plutonium and uranium live out their lives irradiating everything around them until at last they become lead, a heavy, lifeless, poisonous substance — too soft to create anything of value with, a material associated with death and the Underworld. Just as Atlantean cosmology considers the presence of shadow to be indicative of more than merely the absence of light, so, too, does the cosmology perceive the presence of radiation to be a force antithetical to Supernal being, a thing that destroys, unmakes, by its very existence.

Hurting People and Breaking Stuff

Beyond the systems represented by the 13 Practices, a formula based purely upon the needs of game balance determines the power levels of damaging spell effects. Almost without exception, this formula holds true for any offensive spell effect. The formula breaks down as follows:

• At any level below the third dot of an Arcanum, a spell can inflict one point, maybe two, of bashing damage, and usually at very limited range, perhaps even touch. Generally speaking, a mage with recourse only to such magics in combat is better off using a mundane weapon or her fists. Such spells can potentially belong to the Practices of Compelling or Ruling. Compelling spells might assist a mage on the offensive, creating a one- or two-dice bonus to a mundane attack, while Ruling spells can produce a minor offensive effect on their own.

• At the third dot of an Arcanum, a mage can inflict bashing damage. This may or may not involve physically making contact with the subject. Generally, spells that are contested by a roll of a Resistance Attribute + Gnosis (or Blood Potency, or Primal Urge) need not involve direct contact, while those that subtract the target's Resistance Attribute from the casting pool do. (Touching also means that the character must first perform an instant action grapple. On the following turn, he can cast the spell, so long as the target doesn't first escape his grip. Some spells might allow the casting to be reflexive, but those are rare and the only reasonable guideline here is game balance. Also, at this and all subsequent levels, game balance is a major reason why some spells need to involve physical contact until advanced dot ranks are learned.) These spells belong to the Practice of Fraying.

• At the fourth dot of an Arcanum, a mage can inflict lethal damage. Again, this may or may not involve physical contact with the intended subject. And, again, spells that are contested by a roll of a Resistance Attribute + Gnosis (or Blood Potency, or Primal Urge) usually need not involve direct contact, while those that only subtract a Resistance Attribute do. Such spells belong to the Practices of Fraying or Unraveling.

• At the fifth dot of an Arcanum, a mage can inflict aggravated damage. Such an attack almost always involves the expenditure of a point of Mana and is, likewise, almost always vulgar. These spells don't typically necessitate physical contact with the intended target since they are usually advanced castings of lower-ranked versions of the spell; an Unmaking spell with no lower-ranked antecedents might require physical contact (with ranged casting available to archmasters), at the Storyteller's discretion. Such spells belong to the Practices of Fraying, Unraveling or Unmaking.

The main guidelines for which form of defense to use for a spell are as follows:

• When the spell's effect is either "on" or "off" (with no half-measures in between), the spell should be contested with a roll, and either the caster "wins" (by having more successes than the target) or the target "wins" (by equaling or exceeding the casting successes).

• If the spell's effect is graduated, such as in the case of damage or a spell that drains Attribute dots (the target can be affected a little or a lot), use Resisted Defense (subtract a Resistance Attribute). If it's an effect that would be particularly bad for the target even in small doses, the Storyteller might consider allowing a contested roll (as above) instead.

Also, damaging magics primarily intended to be cast upon inanimate materials are generally more potent and effective that those that can be directly targeted at sentient things. This is because, from a game balance scenario, it's almost always easier to replace a thing than it is to replace a person. Breaking that Seer of the Throne's prized Artifact will surely piss him off and could result in a richer, more rewarding story. Blasting him to hell during the initial encounter (if such isn't also the climatic final confrontation), however, quite probably ruins the game. The theory also holds true for things such as zombies (which are really just mobile equipment to a willworker with sufficient skill in the Death Arcanum); destroying them is the equivalent of taking away the enemy's weapons. Doing so causes them to be inconvenienced, perhaps badly, and may allow the characters to win the day, but isn't *directly* hurtful to the antagonists.

Lastly, anything that's good for the goose is good for the gander. If you wouldn't allow a player to have a given magical effect at a certain dot level, then don't allow Storyteller characters to. Any shooting match between the Storyteller and the players generally has only one outcome, which is as predictable as it is unfortunate. Balance needs to be enforced across the board to truly be fair, and players will expect their characters to be able to



do whatever you allow other characters to do, provided that they can come up with the proper combination of dots. (This is actually a good rejoinder to players who complain about not being able to do X at level X: "Do you want your antagonists to have that power, too?")

In-story, the most common explanation used by the Awakened as to why damaging spells work the way they do is as follows:

Fraying magics do just that, picking apart the weave or Patterns of things in the Fallen World. While it is certainly possible to destroy a piece of cloth by pulling out individual strands of thread, doing so is certainly not the most efficient way of going about the process, and the damage done will be relatively easy to fix. Unraveling magics, on the other hand, target those certain threads that hold the whole thing together, and rip them out. The piece of cloth, without those anchoring constants, begins to fall apart. Again, however, a skilled weaver can repair the thing, provided that it hasn't been completely destroyed by this process. Unmaking spells are the metaphysical equivalent of tossing the piece of cloth into a bonfire. There is no elegance about the process, simply destruction. The mage obviates the need to understand the composition of the piece of cloth, and instead just obliterates it through a more brutally efficient means. Even if a skilled weaver managed to pick some remnant of the cloth out of the fire, he would need to remake entire parts of it, maybe even the majority of it, and it might never end up being quite the same.

Mages in-story recognize that Unraveling damage is more telling than Fraying damage, and that Unmaking damage is more telling still. They don't know that one inflicts bashing damage, while another inflicts lethal, and the last inflicts aggravated, but they do have a rough sense that being hit with a Fraying attack is a lot like being roughed up with fists. Further, they are aware that an Unraveling attack is more like being stabbed with a knife, and an Unmaking attack literally defies the destructive means to which most Sleepers have recourse; being on the wrong end of such an attack is like receiving high-intensity radiation burns, or being doused in hydrofluoric acid. A sufficiently skilled and experienced willworker can often look at the results of a magical attack after the fact and determine what sort of Practice was likely used to produce it. Even within similar modes of attack, for instance, there are subtle differences that allow a practiced mage to discern that a fire-based magical assault was likely cast out of the Practice of Fraying, rather than Unraveling.

(Since damaging spells are, in general, far less subtle that most other magics, such spells may, at the Storyteller's discretion, be scrutinized for their Resonance according to the following scale: one success for a Fraying spell, two successes for an Unraveling spell and three for Unmaking.)

Common Sense

More so than any other single rule, let the rule of common sense dictate where you, as a Storyteller, will place spell effects among the 13 Practices and, just as importantly, within the five dots of the Arcana. No matter how compelling a reason a player comes up with, no matter how elegantly and forcefully she argues her point, no matter how many "canonical" examples she can cite, go with what feels right. Based upon a read-through of Death, Mind and Spirit Arcana spells, for instance, common sense would seem to make clear that truly robbing another sentient being, corporeal or otherwise, of free will is *not* a second-dot spell effect. This is the case whether or not a player can show you how such would "legitimately" be accomplished within the framework of the rules.

The 13 Practices were intentionally designed with a lot of potential for overlap in this regard. That way, a Storyteller could decide that a given spell seemed like more of a Patterning effect, rather than a Weaving one, despite the fact that the two accomplish very similar (though not identical) things, simply because said spell is too powerful to be a third-dot effect. The metaphysics of the "in-story" world must bow to the balance of out-of-game rules mechanics. Without that rule (perhaps the one hard rule in the design process of the 10 Arcana), all you get is chaos.

But, remember, there's also interesting potential for roleplay to be found in these limitations. If a player *does* manage to find the loophole that would, if unchecked, allow for a tremendous abuse of the rules, and you, as a Storyteller, put your foot down, perhaps her character is forced to ask why this seeming inconsistency within the 13 Practices exists. As with the other exceptions to the rule, is there some yet-undiscovered universal constant that puts this magical effect out of line with others of its type? If she discusses her difficulties with others, some will likely put forth theories ranging from the sublime to the inane. Some mages might be willing to help her study the phenomenon, while others wouldn't care. What if she was to be offered help with the problem by a Scelestus or a Tremere lich? Would she be so eager to possess the knowledge then?

When the 13 Practices were codified, they were intended to stand not just as laws in name but in spirit as well. If a thing were *possible* within the letter of what qualified as a given Practice, but ultimately violated the essence of what that Practice was meant to do, and what it was supposed

to be capable of, then such a spell was classified (and cast) under a different Practice. In that sense, the 13 Practices existed not just as rules to be exploited but also as rules deliberately designed to provide a stable, consistent framework for the Awakened. And also bear in mind that the 13 Practices aren't *merely* conceptual frameworks — most mages should believe that they are indeed metaphysical constants, 13 "laws of Supernal physics." (Or at least, laws of how Supernal physics work in the Fallen World.) Any misunderstandings of which category a spell belongs in are human mistakes, based on incomplete understanding of these metaphysical constants.

Higher-Level Effects

After due consideration, perhaps you've concluded that your new Matter spell properly belongs to the Practice of Shielding but seems a bit strong for a second-dot effect. Maybe your Matter spell protects a targeted individual other than the caster or protects multiple people at once. In such a case, it's easy enough to scale the spell up by a dot (or even two, if necessary). Some calls aren't quite so easy to make, however.

Again, the first and most important consideration in such a circumstance, far more significant than any dissection of the capabilities and intentions of the Awakened of Atlantis, is play balance. If the spell fits the description of the Practice of Weaving and, yet, is too powerful for a third-dot effect, bump the spell up to the fourth dot, or even the fifth, and keep the spell within the Practice of Weaving. It's that simple.

You can look over the various "exceptions to the rule" listed in **Mage: The Awakening** (the spells that don't conform to the normal dot levels for their respective Practices) to get an idea of what kinds of magics generally get scaled up. For instance, most Fraying magics don't get bumped up to more powerful dot levels; such spells generally just become Unraveling or Unmaking effects. (There are exceptions, though, such as the Prime 3 "Celestial Fire" spell, which simply becomes a lethal Fraying attack at Prime 4 and an aggravated Fraying attack at Prime 5). Conversely, Shielding spells *always* have more powerful variants, since there is a simple logical progression for such: extending magical protection to another person is always more complicated than protecting oneself.

One possible avenue to explore: if an imagined spell seems like a Weaving effect, but is powerful enough to be a Patterning effect, maybe it's really a more advanced version of a more limited, lower-ranking effect. Reverse-engineer the spell and see if it yields a more basic, fundamental effect of lower rank. If the spell doesn't, oh well — game balance must still prevail. They're not called the *Mysteries* for nothing!

Other Balancing Factors

If you're almost happy with a given spell, but feel that it might be a little too powerful for a given dot level, but isn't quite powerful enough to be staged up to the next dot level, then there are four simple fixes that could work for you.

The first is to make the spell vulgar in Aspect. This gives the spell an inherent drawback that will make mages hesitate before casting, and will virtually ensure that no one will be slinging the spell around cavalierly. This fix is especially suitable for spells with flashy and/or damaging effects, but any spell whose nature runs counter to the laws of the Fallen World can conceivably be of vulgar Aspect. This category, more than the others, however, should strive for an in-setting excuse as to why the spell is covert or vulgar.

The second possibility is to assign a Mana cost to the spell. This makes the spell bite into a precious resource, and reduces a mage's potential pool of expendable Mana for a given turn. She has to choose whether or not the expense is worth the potential return. If she is in dire straits and out of Mana, she cannot cast the spell at all. Spells that create or destroy, rather than influence, things often require the expenditure of a point of Mana.

The third fix is to make the casting of the spell instant action only, meaning that a willworker cannot cast it as an extended casting, spending long periods of time accruing large numbers of successes He gets what he gets in a single roll of the dice, and that's it. This means that the spell's maximum efficiency is limited by however many dice the mage gets to roll for the spell in one turn. Most spells that inflict damage or harm, directly or otherwise, are cast as instant actions, as is any spell that could prove game-breakingly powerful if allowed to be built with dozens of successes.

A fourth option is range: begin at touch and expand to higher-dot levels from there. Unless the spell is reflexive (and think twice before declaring that!), then it essentially takes two turns to cast: one in which a willworker grabs her target and then one in which she casts her spell on him. The contingencies of melee combat thus modify a mage's ability to target someone.

A quick read-through of the Arcana reveals the different spells that have had their relative power levels modified in these ways. Some of the most powerful spells, especially those intended to cause harm, have been de-powered with all four of these measures, so as to make the spells suitable for play. By removing any of these factors from such spells, they simply become too powerful and end up unbalancing the game to exclusively favor those characters that have access to them.

Conversely, a spell that seems a bit weak compared to other, roughly equivalent effects can be made a bit more competitive by removing these drawbacks. If given the choice between a slightly more powerful vulgar spell and a slightly less powerful covert one, a mage has to make an important choice. What are his current circumstances? Can he afford to run the risk that a Sleeper is nearby? The same sorts of choices are inherent in a Mana cost versus a lack of one, or in an extended casting, as opposed to an instant one, as well as committing a turn to grappling a foe.

Assessing Aptitude

When a mage walks in the door and announces herself as a second-degree master, who's to know if she's telling the truth or not? People like to receive recognition for their accomplishments, and mages are no exception. (Indeed, given their natural tendencies toward hubris, mages are likely more inclined to seek out these sorts of accolades.) Sadly, there are those who will settle for receiving acclaim for things that they have not actually accomplished, and there are also Awakened all too willing to fall into that trap. So, how do willworkers keep one another honest?

There are, of course, auguries and simple spells meant to discern truth from lies, but these can be fooled by a cunning con artist. Likewise, gauging the power and grandeur of a mage's Resonance can give a rough idea of how mystically skilled she is, though a determined deceiver can also fabricate a potent aura. Letters of introduction can be forged (quite convincingly, when one adds magic to the counterfeiter's arsenal), and signet rings copied or stolen. And all of these factors contribute to the profound difficulty of knowing that a willworker is as skilled as she claims to be: an important piece of information in a society in which power is the only true currency.

Thus, tests of mystic aptitude came into vogue in centuries long past, trials that compel a mage to complete certain tasks that quantifiably demonstrate her knowledge of a given Practice for a given Arcanum. To prove that she is, for instance, a Disciple of the Arcanum of Death, a willworker might be made to animate a corpse and command it to perform several simple activities, followed by a repetitive chore that is to be continued, even after the caster departs its presence. To be certain that, say, Forces Arcanum spells aren't being used to grant the ambulatory cadaver some semblance of life, various applications of Mage Sight are used, and dispellations cast. If the zombie continues to go about the task set to it, then it can be reasonably concluded that the mage in question is indeed what she claims to be.

These tests are still in use in a number of old, traditional, paranoid and/or goal-oriented Consilii around the world. In such Consilii, mages who wish to be recognized and perhaps given responsibilities and honors must pass these trials, demonstrating their skill with the 13 Practices. Most such trials actually test the willworker's knowledge of each Practice within a given dot level of the Arcanum in question, so as to minimize the risk of fraud. Of course, those who seem to gain power in excess of their experience in such Consilii are often viewed with equal measures of approval and trepidation, and some such Councils have in place harsh measures to deal with younger sorts who seem to be getting too big for their britches. (Beware the potential consequences of spending experience points exclusively on Arcana!)

Of course, some Consilii simply don't care what a mage claims to be able to do. This is especially common in Consilii dominated by the Free Council, or those Consilii that are home to a significant number of apostates. Under those circumstances, many local willworkers don't really pay much heed to fancy titles. This is also sometimes the case in Consilii controlled by the Adamantine Arrow, since many such mages are inclined to see talk as cheap, and won't recognize any claim to power that hasn't been backed up by action. Whether that means pulling one's weight in battle, or demonstrating aptitude in the Duel Arcane is immaterial; it is the quality of one's deeds that count.

Many of the Consilii that continue to uphold this practice have traditional tests that they use for each Practice within each Arcanum. Depending upon how understanding or progressive the Council is, the Consilium might be willing to alter a given test, based upon a religious, cultural or ethical objection on the part of the tested (such as the example above, of animating a corpse), but some Consilii simply will not. Such Consilii reason that mages seeking recognition there should put the esteem of the Consilium above personal qualms, or else be content to accept lesser station in the eyes of their fellow mages.

Cheating

Whenever someone devises a test, someone else will inevitably devise a means for cheating at said test. That said, it can be hellishly difficult to deceive tests of mystical aptitude without actually possessing a great deal of magical knowledge and power. It can be done, naturally (especially with the use of bound ghosts or spirits, Imbued Items and/or Artifacts), but the mage who would attempt such a thing is walking a dangerous line. Many of the Consilii that continue to practice this tradition can be deadly serious about the sincerity of the

willworker submitting to the test and the dependability of the results. Nobody likes to be fooled, and mages, certainly not a whole Council of them, are no exception. And willworkers, as a rule, have many terrifying ways of expressing their displeasure at such a thing.

To get away with cheating at a trial of magical prowess, the mage probably needs to be skilled in a number of different Arcana, so as to best replicate any feat under the purview of the appropriate Practice for the Arcanum in question. Of course, tests tend to be unambiguous: conjure a fire from thin air, read a given individual's surface thoughts, transform raw Mana into tass. Some trials allow for slightly more wiggle room, though. While a dog can be made to act in ways contrary to its behavior with the Mind Arcanum, such a result can also be accomplished with the Life Arcanum, using gross bodily control and even, if the mage has a tremendous sense of finesse, with the Forces Arcanum, through telekinesis. Ultimately, though, few Consilii that use these trials advertise what they are ahead of time, meaning that the would-be cheater needs to be quick-thinking and crafty in order to pull it off.

The 13 Practices Within the Game

Remember, mages actually have to shell out experience points to purchase rotes, meaning that almost no willworker is equally proficient at all of the magics at her command. Some mages choose to concentrate on Fate rotes, for instance, trusting in their raw Gnosis + Arcanum for other spell effects. You can, however, take this one step further, bringing the out-of-game mechanic into the story in a meaningful way that serves to illustrate the importance of the 13 Practices, and the ways in which the Awakened see them and those that develop great proficiency with them.

Perhaps a willworker in your game is particularly talented at Perfecting magics of the Arcanum of Space. Player characters who want to learn such magics (perhaps secret, personal tricks that the mage in question knows exclusively) would have to go to her and bargain for her tutelage. Conversely, a player character who devotes himself to, say, the Veiling magics of the Death Arcanum might find his services in demand, as other willworkers, younger and older alike, come to him to benefit by his expertise. Some may be seeking education from a locally renowned practitioner of Veiling, while others may be looking for advice or lore, whether in a general or specific sense.

If a mage's fame as a student of a given Practice ranges far enough, others might be enticed to travel in order to meet her. Perhaps the player characters have run afoul of a powerful Seer of the Throne, whose command of Patterning spells for the Mind Arcanum is far and away beyond their ability to cope with. If they hear tales of a Master of that Arcanum, however, who is rumored to be as skilled, if not more so, with the Practice of Patterning, they might be able to get some pointers from him (and perhaps a situational bonus, at the Storyteller's discretion) if they are willing to chance a journey to a foreign Consilium.

Likewise, a player character who develops a reputation as a formidable practitioner of a given Practice within an Arcanum might herself be the subject of a visit from willworkers from outside of the Consilium. Maybe a young mage has left his Consilium specifically for the purposes of training under the character, because of her skill with a Practice the would-be apprentice wishes to learn. How does the character deal with such a thing? If she turns the other willworker away, some might come to question the true extent of the character's prowess, but if she allows him to remain, what complications might come of his sudden (and perhaps unexplained) departure from his city of origin?

Certain ancient sites, perhaps even dating back to the Atlantean exodus, are believed to have been sealed up or otherwise protected with puzzles that used the 13 Practices as a guide. Imagine a tense journey through a cyclopean ruin, in which the characters are forced to riddle their way through deadly traps and past nightmarish guardians using their command of the Practices, sometimes in very counterintuitive ways. Such dangers serve to demonstrate that the 13 Practices are not just a pointless intellectual exercise for the Awakened; to them, the Practices are a set of universal axioms, establishing a hierarchy that assists in making sense of phenomena alien to the Fallen World. Any seeming flaw in the 13 Practices is a failing on the part of the Awakened, and not the Practices themselves. Without the 13 Practices, all mages have is a mishmash of various spells, completely without any kind of order or structure.

Wisdom and Practice

Mages who maintain the path of Wisdom tend to use whatever magics are most appropriate for the task at hand, if any. (Bearing in mind, of course, the fact that even the wisest willworkers occasionally make mistakes.) They usually use the power of the Arcana sparingly, and often use spells of the least powerful Practice necessary to get the job done right. If they need a plague of flies while out in the wilderness, they use the Life Arcanum magics of the Practice of Ruling, rather than those of Making. Both Practices, in such a case, can accomplish the same effect, but the use of the latter is simply a gross display of power.

Among willworkers who abandon Wisdom for the way of hubris, however, there are no universally abused Practices. Some, less subtle, Awakened turn to the brutal magics of Fraying, Unraveling and Unmaking, raining down destruction, where once they used their powers to mend and create. Others come to see themselves as demigods upon the Fallen World, and shamelessly indulge themselves through the Practices of Patterning and Making, reshaping their environments in ways pleasing to them, heedless of the consequences. Some vanish from the sight of the Sleepers and the Awakened alike, concealing themselves behind layers of paranoia and Veiling enchantments, becoming things halfway between urban myth and forgotten legends.

The most important thing to keep in mind as a willworker falls away from the tenets of Wisdom is that she tends to begin to use her magics *indiscriminately*. When a wise mage casts a vulgar Patterning spell, she usually tries to do so away from the eyes of Sleepers, and in such a way that minimizes the risk to herself and others. A mage who has embraced hubris might instead cast the same Patterning spell without regard for who is present, and heedless of the consequences of doing so, confident in her power and her ability to deal with anything that might come of her careless use of magic. Likewise, a willworker capable of using Veiling magics to vanish from sight may try to create a distraction or otherwise move away from others before doing so, if he is wise. If not, it is likely that he will use his power to disappear whenever he feels it necessary, or even convenient, to do so. In the extreme, mages who have fallen far into the trap of hubris use magics of all Practices to accomplish nearly any task, at any time. They stop seeing the Sleepers around them and, thrilling to the sensations of the Supernal World coursing through them as they cast, unconsciously attempting to become a microcosm of that world — to eventual and inevitable disastrous effect.

Also important to note is the effect that Virtue and Vice have on mages of varying levels of Wisdom. A low-Wisdom mage tends to use magics that reinforce his Vice. Thus, a mage given to displays of Wrath might turn to Unraveling magics of the Forces Arcanum in order to display his displeasure, while one given to Greed uses Patterning and even Making magics of the Matter Arcanum to create beautiful things, swindle others and otherwise make herself wealthy. Conversely, a high-Wisdom willworker often uses magics that demonstrate her dedication to her Virtue. A mage devoted to the principles of Charity, for instance, may use Ruling and Perfecting effects of the Life Arcanum to mend the hurts of others and cure them of illness.

Spell Aspect

The distinction between covert and vulgar magic is, on the surface, an easy one. As one peels back the layers, however, the situation grows more complex. An easy (and almost universally applicable) explanation would be to say that anything that can plausibly happen without the aid of magic is covert, while obviously supernatural effects are vulgar. While this generalization doesn't always apply, it *usually* does.

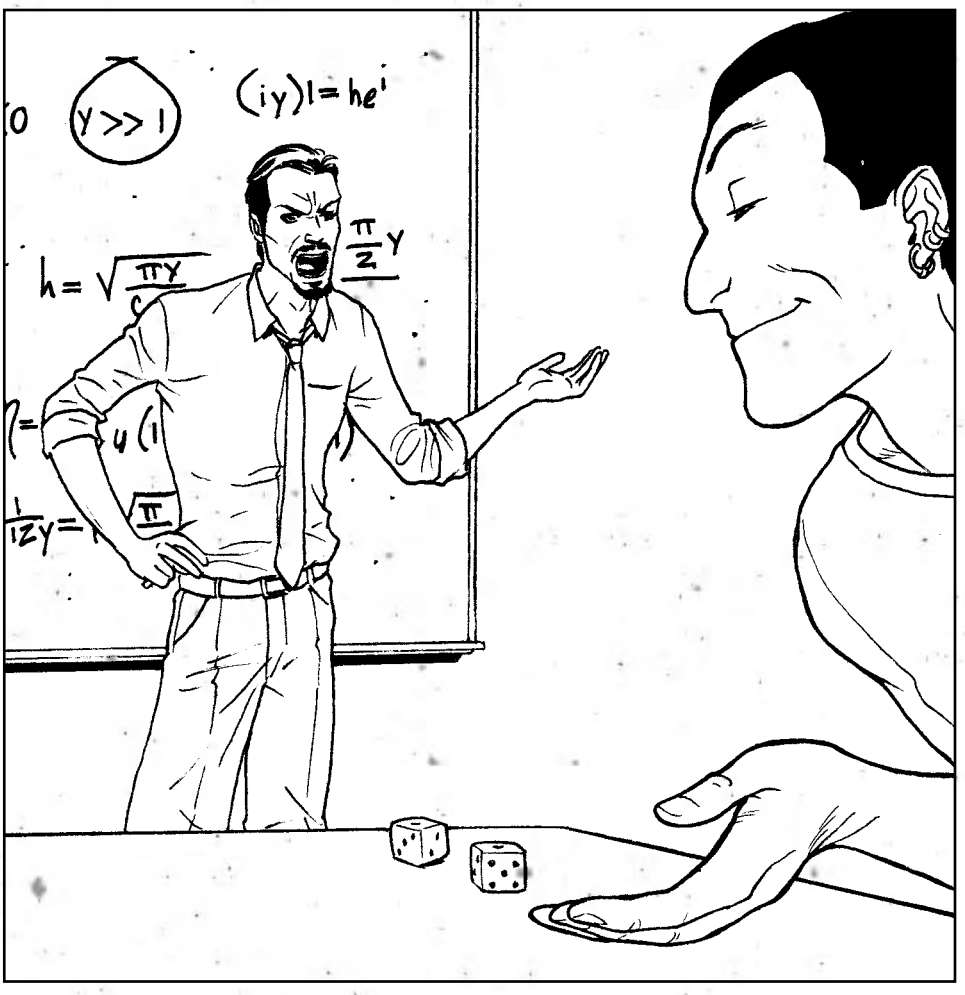
As an example of the exception, however, the Life Arcanum allows for seemingly miraculously swift healing as a covert effect. From a rules mechanics perspective, this was done primarily to allow characters to mend their wounds in an efficient manner that didn't force them to choose between tapping out more than a dozen points of Mana or being laid up in traction for weeks on end. But these out-of-game decisions also have an in-game reality. And, so, willworkers have for ages disputed the reasons behind why the use of magical healing seems to defy the normal classifications of covert versus vulgar spells. Some hold that the natural state of creation is wholeness and that all things in the universe thus naturally gravitate toward health and wellness, while others believe that this was a parting gift from the Oracles, and still others cleave to different theories.

Just as mages refer to the 13 Practices and ranks of magical proficiency so, too, do they speak to one another of "covert magic" and "vulgar spells." For some, the nomenclature is so firmly ingrained that they no longer consider the implications of the words, while others, those obsessed with secrecy or who consider themselves particularly subtle and graceful, have been known to practically spit the word "vulgar" when referencing magic. Some mages use the terms improperly (whether due to improper education, imperceptiveness or some other reason) and refer to *any* spell that doesn't invoke a Paradox as "covert" and any that does as "vulgar." Others believe that any spell that is cast away from the eyes of Sleepers is covert. For the purposes of game systems, though, the delineation between covert and vulgar Aspect is outlined under each spell description.

The most pervasive theory among mages of the Atlantean orders (and not a few among the Free Council) regarding the distinction between covert and vulgar magic is that the Fallen World's "template of possibility" was set by the Exarchs as one of their first acts upon storming the heavens and usurping the thrones of the gods. This, they did deliberately, so as to render exceedingly perilous any act of mystic will that could eventually be used to cause them harm or otherwise threaten their he-

gemony. The underlying axioms of what was and was not normally possible within creation were established (meaning that, without recourse to exceptional means, a vulgar spell is *always* vulgar, whether or not Sleepers witness it). Naturally, most Seers of the Throne also favor this interpretation of events, since it implies that their masters are nearly omnipotent.

Some scientifically minded Awakened, such as members of the Free Council and a few apostates, prefer to see the distinction between covert and vulgar magic as a question of probability, and natural physical laws versus supernatural physical laws. In other words: under most circumstances, things fall down, toward the center of the most massive object in their vicinity. While certain processes in the Sleeping world can change this, they are all induced by chains of events explainable by ordinary science. Vulgar magic jumps right in to the middle of those processes, so to speak, creating effect without rational cause.



Of course, the exceptions to the rule (such as magical healing) beg the question of whether or not there exist other "loopholes," yet undiscovered, within the metaphysics of the Fallen World. Mages debate the possibilities of such, and a few wonder if there might not be some hidden series of flawed (or perhaps just deliberately obfuscated) natural laws that, taken together, constitute a clear path through the Abyss, back to the Supernal World. Others, perhaps more realistic (or pessimistic), dismiss such a notion as hogwash, and argue that, instead of looking to "hit the cosmic lottery," as it were, the Awakened should instead set about the practical task of categorizing these exceptions for their own sake, as any advantage is better than none. In the end, no universal principle to explain the incidences of these loopholes has been discerned by even the most erudite of willworkers, and it is likely that no such unifying theory will *ever* emerge, making the entire debate an endless one, an argument that, like so many others in the world of the Awakened, will never be resolved.

Within the Game

Covert spells are the solid foundation of Awakened magic. Any mage who's managed not to destroy herself with Paradoxes can tell you as much. But, beyond that, covert magic is viewed in many Consilii as being somehow more dignified or "worthy" than vulgar magic: the difference between defeating an enemy with style and flair and pummeling him into submission. Most Guardians of the Veil and mages of the Mysterium are especially fond of such understated magics, as they demonstrate discernment and a respect for secrecy.

On the other hand, there are those who argue the notion that too much reliance upon "hidden sorceries" serves to magnify the power of the Fallen World. Effectively, by buying into the Exarchs' lie, the Awakened are denying their birthright and failing to take the risks that eventually lead back to the Realms Supernal. Of course, a lot of these sorts end up burning out, rather than fading away, so the merits of their arguments are certainly open to debate.

In legend, wizards and other wise folk were often thought of and referred to as "subtle" or "cunning," and

modern Awakened, for the most part, should be no exception. In almost every case, it is far better to accomplish an objective through a low-key feat of mystic prowess (if, indeed, magic must be used at all) than to do so with blatant works of Awakened will. In fact, mages who use vulgar magic on any kind of regular basis, even if they somehow manage not to destroy themselves in doing so, are often scorned and sometimes even hunted by more sensible members of their Consilii. Such willworkers are seen by their peers to be an almost constant threat to the secrecy of the Mysteries, and, unless these mages are simply too powerful to be dealt with directly, tend to be either exiled, imprisoned or killed in short order.

In some cases, when a dedicated vulgar caster proves to be too much trouble to handle, mages are known to turn to strange, sometimes even dangerous, alliances in order to stop the vulgar casters' ability to compromise the secrecy of the hidden world. Some tragic tales tell of treaties with Seers of the Throne, Banishers and even Scelesti. Other, perhaps wiser, mages, turn to outside members of their orders or Legacies (for those Legacies with any kind of internal unity). While such inter-Consilium cooperation is uncommon, threats to the secrecy of the Awakened as a whole are among the few reasons that mages generally violate their isolationist mindsets.

When mentors teach their students the first few spells of their Arcana, all save the most irresponsible teachers are adamant in their insistence that their charges learn the distinction between covert and vulgar magic. Not only does doing so protect the student but it also protects the sanctity and secrecy of the Mysteries (saving the apprentice and the teacher alike an unpleasant visit from the Guardians of the Veil, if nothing else). Those would-be educators who do not take pains to impart such understanding upon their students are almost always divested of their apprentices by officers of the Consilium (for the good of the Consilium as a whole, as well as that of the younger willworkers) and handed off to more sensible teachers. In the most extreme cases, in which older mages specifically omit lessons regarding the appropriateness of vulgar magic, or who downplay or even outright lie about the dangers of such (for whatever mad reasons), such willworkers might be hunted down by the Sentinels and punished.

Those teachers who have access to a Demesne attuned to the appropriate Arcana often teach the first vulgar magics descending from that Watchtower to their students there, thus minimizing the risk to life and limb and mitigating substantially the threat of potential Paradoxes. For those without recourse to such, however (which includes the majority of even the most experienced willworkers), an apprentice's first vulgar castings are usually undertaken deep within the confines of a sanctum, preferably in a laboratory, practice room or other chamber specifically set aside for this purpose. Some powerful Mastigos bring their students outside of the confines of space to properly teach them to cast vulgar magic for the first time. Likewise, some especially potent Acanthus draw their apprentices outside of the normal flow of time.

Wisdom and Spell Aspect

As mages degenerate, they forsake the path of Wisdom for hubris. Part of that fall often includes a gradual embracing of vulgar magics. After all, who are the Exarchs to define what can and cannot be freely done in the Fallen World? How dare the Sleepers presume to impede their betters by simple dint of their pathetic existences? This attitude can become a vicious cycle for the mage in question, causing her to invoke more and greater Paradoxes, which, in turn, "force her" (according to her now very much skewed worldview) to fall back on ever more potent and dangerous magics.

Certainly, not all low-Wisdom mages end up wandering down this perilous road, but it is something to keep in mind, both as a player and as a Storyteller. Casual magic use, of whatever variety, often begins to take the place of actually performing mundane tasks, and it can at times be quite difficult for even the most temperate of degenerating willworkers to avoid the use of vulgar magics that indulge her Vice. Thus, those prone to Wrath might not just beat a problematic Sleeper into compliance but instead burn her with magic, or thrust her into Twilight and allow the unquiet dead to do harm to her. Likewise, one given to Sloth may use vulgar magic to perform even the most trivial of tasks when they prove to be in any way inconvenient.

Likewise, a low-Wisdom mage might see herself as being especially noble or even self-sacrificing when she performs such blatant magics in ways that uphold her Virtue. Perhaps an especially devout Christian willworker, with a Virtue of Faith, fakes an angelic manifestation for the benefit of a Sleeper priest whose devotion is waning. (This is especially appropriate if her Vice is, say, Pride, as she deprives him of choice and instead effectively determines herself to be the direct intermediary between the individual in question and the divine.) Even if others try to point out the wrongfulness of her actions to her, all she sees is that she has risked her own well-being, casting vulgar magics to make someone's life better.

Conversely, experienced high-Wisdom willworkers usually work their magic so subtly as to leave some question as to whether or not they've cast any spells at all. As a rule, such mages eschew the use of vulgar magic, save in times of dire necessity. Even inexperienced Awakened

dedicated to the path of Wisdom often do their best to refrain from the unnecessary use of blatant magics. Most high-Wisdom mages avoid resorting to magic, of *whatever* sort, whenever possible, but they are especially careful about their use of more obvious magics, since Paradoxes can easily lead even the wisest Awakened into ruin.

Systems

A few simple guidelines are used to determine what constitutes a covert spell versus a vulgar one. This system is, of course, subject to a number of exceptions, but it stands true most of the time.

If it can plausibly happen without the aid of magic, it's probably covert. Likewise, if there is no possible way for a Sleeper to determine that magic is used (even if there are no Sleepers to witness the spell), a spell is in all likelihood covert. If a spell helps to keep mages from falling "behind the curve" set by the powers of vampires and werewolves, then the spell is usually designed as covert.

If a spell does things that can't happen without magic, the spell is usually designed as vulgar (effects that interact with Twilight or the Shadow Realm can be an exception). If the spell's effects can happen without magic, but are *extraordinarily* improbable (such as being hit by a bolt of lightning), the spell is designated as vulgar. If a spell has the potential to inflict considerable harm and/or aggravated damage, the spell is vulgar. If a spell interacts solely with Supernal phenomena (which trumps the "if Sleepers can't perceive its impossibility" clause for covert spells), the spell is probably vulgar. (This is partly for the sake of play balance, and partly because of the difficulty of interacting with the Supernal World, even in so indirect a fashion; something of a parting shot on the part of the Exarchs, as it were, for those who believe in such things.)

A number of spells break this mold, of course, because balancing rules is as much an art as it is a science, and art isn't always neat and ordered. Some Arcana are designed as just flat-out better at staying covert when creating effects or (especially) imparting mechanical benefits that other Arcana granted as vulgar. Generally, the Arcana found at the points of the Atlantean Pentagram (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 129–130) are subtler than those that constitute the connecting lines, and so a greater percentage of their spells tend to be of covert Aspect, save when being used to blatantly create implausible or impossible Supernal effects within the Fallen World. (Which is also something to keep in mind as you design spell effects of your own.)

Rules Calls

Although great attention has been devoted to making the magic rules mechanics for **Mage: The Awakening** as clear and unambiguous as possible, there will always be nagging little questions that crop up around the edges of any dynamic system. The comparative handful of people involved in designing a roleplaying game are simply unable to conceive of all of the potential uses of the game mechanics (and magic itself!) that the entire eventual player base can, and sometimes even seemingly elementary ideas slip through the cracks. There will be times when you, as a Storyteller, will have to make a spot judgment call. Conversely, there will be times when you, as a player, will have to be open to your Storyteller's interpretation of the rules, whether you agree with said interpretation or not. However, Storytellers should also be open to discussion and players should be willing to oppose what they believe is a bad rules call (both of these preferably *after* a game session is concluded).

The most important part of a rules discussion is that all involved parties be willing to go with whatever is best for the game as a whole, whatever preserves and perhaps even improves the story for everyone. While "official rulings" are good to have, and can be very helpful, the needs of your game, more so than any other factor, should determine how you settle any question of systems and mechanics. This is doubly true for the custom spell effects that you and your players will develop over the course of time.

Play Balance

In terms of mechanics (though not story, which *always* trumps systems in Storytelling games), nothing is more important, to this or any roleplaying game, than the balance of the rules. Don't be afraid to make a call primarily, or even entirely, predicated upon what you believe to be the fairest interpretation of the rules, and the one likeliest to preserve the mechanical flow of the game. Sure, the guy who plays that Acanthus Adamantine Arrow mage might have come up with some entirely plausible way (by way of an extreme example) to use Time 2 to kill all six of those Scelesti with a single spell, and the text does *seem* to support his interpretation of the rules, but that's probably not what's best for your game. (After all, even if those six characters aren't absolutely vital to your story, you'd be setting a dangerous precedent, allowing a loophole in the rules that could later be exploited to disastrous effect.) In such cases, you are well within your rights as a Storyteller to simply say, "What you're trying to do is unbalancing to the game, and so I'm going to disallow it."

Reasonable players will see your perspective (though they may grumble a bit, especially if their ideas were particularly clever) and be willing to run with whatever is best for the game as a whole, however. And, if you do let something slip by that, in retrospect, seems questionable, don't hesitate to tell your players at the next session,

"Upon reflection, I'm not happy with the call I made in allowing Tyche to use Matter to circumvent the old apostate's wards. From now on, I'm not going to allow Matter to be used in that manner." You're human, and you're occasionally going to make mistakes. It's always better to amend a bad rules call sooner, rather than later, or not at all. Also, remember that the Storyteller doesn't have to give an in-setting metaphysical reason why she says "no" at the moment in which she makes the call. She might need some time to think about it later, between game sessions, and rationalize a good in-setting reason why her ruling was sound, even if it was purely a game balance issue when she made the ruling.

Progression of Effects

If all of the best spell effects were available to characters right out of the gate, then there wouldn't be much point in their aspiring to still greater mystic prowess, and one of the core themes of the game would be rendered a moot point. When designing your own spells, then, it also pays to look at effects in terms of a linear progression, allowing willworkers to accomplish a given feat with, say, two dots in an Arcanum, to refine such a feat at three or four dots and, at last, to perfect that understanding at five dots.

When player characters are able to develop these capabilities during the course of an entire story, they can come to really feel that they're learning something, and if they're the ones actually pioneering such research, they can add something valuable to your group's envisioning of the World of Darkness. This also allows you, as a Storyteller, to keep the most dangerous abilities out of players' hands until you're ready to allow them to really blow the lid off the toy chest, as it were. A lot of players would rather hear, "I don't think that spell works well as a second-dot Prime effect, but why don't we develop a lesser variant for now and then maybe revisit the issue when your character buys Prime 4?" than, "That just won't work."

When combined with a thorough study of the 13 Practices, this approach can make the Atlantean system of magic feel like a more realistic discipline, the sort of thing that one has to work at in order to master. And the rewards of enjoyable roleplay will be there when a player character stands before the caucus of the local Mysterium to reveal her new progression of spells within the Practices of Ruling, Weaving and Patterning and earns far-reaching acclaim for her discoveries.

Crossover Issues

The World of Darkness is designed with the potential for crossover in mind, but different supernatural creatures manifest their abilities in different ways. For instance, vampires can acquire the power to inflict "all-purpose" aggravated damage with the third dot of a Discipline, while werewolves gain such an ability with a fourth-dot Gift. Mages, on the other hand, cannot inflict such generalized aggravated damage until attaining the fifth dot of an Arcanum.

Vampires and werewolves, however, are creatures of inherently more violent and bestial natures than mages, who are really just ordinary humans with unique insight and an ability to interface with the hidden powers of the cosmos. Unlike the undead, for instance, there is no intrinsic change to a mage's physical state, and no crazed, bloodthirsty monster sudden grafted onto the spirit. Werewolves are, in many ways, likewise both more and less than human, born into a primal and savage race. Thus, it makes sense that the Awakened have to progress that much further in their knowledge and understanding of the workings of magic before being able to inflict the kind of grievous harm on another that a vampire can with Protean 3 or a werewolf with the Father Wolf four-dot Gift "Savage Rending." In terms of systems, vampires and werewolves can't, without resorting to particularly rare powers, or else indirect effects, inflict aggravated damage at range, which also plays significantly into why mages have to wait for the fifth dot of an Arcanum before acquiring the ability to inflict such damage.

Balance in Crossover Play

In order to keep things fair in a game in which mages coexist with vampires, werewolves or both, analyzing the particular strengths and weaknesses of the Awakened helps: what they are and why they exist.

A mage's strengths include the following:

- She is versatile. For every dot of every Arcanum she possesses, there are at least four different things that she is capable of doing, and often more.
- She can act at range. A number of spells can be targeted at comparatively long distances, and with the use of Space 2, the mage gains the ability to cast sympathetic spells, meaning that *she doesn't even need to be physically present* to target a person, place or thing.
- She can prepare her spells in advance. A mage can, for example, create mystic armor that lasts all day, with nothing more than a successful casting and the expenditure of a single point of Mana. When given time to (whether figuratively or literally) gird herself for battle, a clever mage can seriously alter the odds of any encounter in her favor.
- She has many potential avenues of escape from a bad situation. Vampires may be able to run like the wind, and werewolves can flee into Shadow. A mage potentially has recourse to both of these options (though not all choose

to obtain such capabilities), and several others, besides. Save under perhaps the rarest of circumstances, vampires can't move into Shadow and werewolves can't fly.

• A mage is better at learning most things than either a vampire or a werewolf. The Arcana are simply a better avenue for discerning information than most Disciplines or Gifts. The Awakened receive more and more detailed information with the first dot of any given Arcanum than Kindred or Uratha can with many of their highest-level supernatural abilities. And, if knowledge is power, then willworkers have the capacity for power in abundance.

A mage's weaknesses include the following:

• She is comparatively fragile. A vampire or werewolf heals one level of lethal damage per point of Vitae/Essence spent, as a reflexive action, versus the mage's one per three Mana. The mage *could* use the Life Arcanum to heal, but that takes up her action for a turn. (Which is, in great part, why armor spells were made relatively easy and rather potent — to prevent mages from sustaining serious harm in the first place under most situations.)

• She is less effective without time to prepare. While some Kindred rites and Uratha rituals take time to enact, most of the supernatural capabilities of these creatures are designed for use "on the fly." A considerable number of Arcanum effects are better used with considerable preparation and some *cannot* be used without it.

• She is susceptible to Paradoxes. Vampires and werewolves each have their respective codes of secrecy, but neither of these is so harsh a taskmaster as the very forces of the Fallen World or the Abyss that scourge a willworker who pushes too forcefully with her magic. Thus, a mage is forced to choose between subtler effects (which can often fail to pass muster in a violent encounter) and more dangerous vulgar magics.

• She is still human. Though some particularly self-important or dangerously deluded Awakened claim to be other than human, the fact is that, without magic, they must still eat, breathe and sleep, just like Sleepers. Further, mages are likelier than either vampires or werewolves to attempt to maintain some semblance of a normal life, which provides potential enemies with a job, family and friends to threaten. Mages' emotions are quintessentially human (unlike vampires, who feel only the fading echoes of true passions, or werewolves, who are as much creatures of animal instinct as human feelings), and these can be used to manipulate willworkers.

Outside of these broad strokes, mages have their own individual "flavor," compared to vampires and werewolves. The focus of the Awakened tends to be more lofty and cerebral, compared to, say, the predatory civilization of the Kindred or the primal, savage physicality of the Forsaken. While individuals certainly can (and should) break these molds, the overarching categorizations stand. Thus, mages probably won't, by and large, be able to stand up to a werewolf in a blow-for-blow, tooth and nail combat or readily outmaneuver a master social climber among the Damned. Conversely, in matters of occult intellectualism, the Awakened should stand tall and be able to shine.

Certainly, there are circumstances under which a mage could, for instance, be able to defeat a werewolf in battle, but the mage should do so by playing to the strengths of his type, rather than by ignoring them. Likewise, the Awakened might find themselves cheated out of a potent mystic relic by an elder vampire with an elaborate network of occultists and academics at her beck and call. The limitations of a given type of character not only serve to define what she cannot do but also to set the tone for that character type. The joys of playing mages (or any other character, for that matter) are not only found in their succeeding at what they do well but also in their failing that which they do poorly. And, when a willworker *does* manage to overcome the natural drawbacks of her nature and triumph over an adverse situation or enemy who exploits the weaknesses of the Awakened, then her victory is all the sweeter.

Clash of Powers

If you choose to make use of crossover in your game, some difficult questions are bound to crop up. For instance, can a mage resist vampiric Dominate through any means other than a Resolve + Gnosis roll? Is it, say, possible, to use some sort of reflexive Mind Arcanum casting to effectively dispel the Discipline?

Two of the greatest strengths of the Arcana are that they are versatile, and they can augment resistance to the supernatural abilities of others. A mage with even one or two dots in many Arcana is capable of a great many feats. A high-Potency Mind 2 "Alter Aura" spell, for instance, can render a mage virtually immune to the Auspex 2 power of "Aura Perception." Likewise, a Mind 2 "Mental Shield" spell serves to counter the Kindred Disciplines of Dominate, Majesty and Nightmare, as well as various werewolf Gifts, such as the Evasion Gift of "Loose Tongue" or the Father Wolf Gift: Primal Howl. To say nothing of a mage using Mind 3 to bolster her Composure or Resolve (and, thus, her resistance to most supernatural Social or Mental powers).

Given this level of utility, it is probably unfair to allow mages to create spells that allow them to reflexively attempt to counter the powers of other supernatural types. Mages already have means for reflexively dispelling the

magic of other mages (an ability, it should be noted, that is not shared by either vampires or werewolves toward their own respective kinds). Put simply, mages are already very good at resisting hostile incoming supernatural effects. This was one of their designed strengths, balanced out by their relative physical fragility and the danger that they face when going into a situation unprepared and having to use improvised magics.

To be clear, then: no Kindred Discipline or Uratha Gift is sufficiently analogous to Awakened magic to be reflexively countered by the spells that mages use to do so among their own. While some of these powers are mechanically similar to (nearly identical, in a few cases) they are *metaphysically* significantly different. A vampire's powers are fueled by the stolen Vitae in his veins, and by the unnatural Curse that sustains him. A werewolf derives her mystic talents from her half-spirit nature, and from the denizens of the Shadow from whom she learns how to channel that nature in specific ways. While a few rare mages (the handful who possess enough knowledge of the Kindred or the Uratha to do so on any meaningful level) theorize that the origin of the Curse may be Supernal in nature, or the tale of Pangaea date back to a time before the dividing of the worlds, these notions are nothing more than fanciful tales, hypotheses that have never (and likely *will* never) be supported by any compelling evidence. This also means (in the unlikely event that any willworker thinks of it) that there exists no magic whatsoever that can ever make a Kindred Discipline or an Uratha Gift invoke a Paradox, or be in any way directly affected by one. Thus, while a vampire might be in the wrong place at the wrong time and end up fighting for his life when a mage's Paradox creates a Manifestation (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 273), he will never be affected by an Anomaly, or will any of his supernatural abilities.

In most cases of crossover interaction (excepting the specifics given below), compare a Discipline or Gift's successes against the Potency of the spell being cast. If, for instance, a vampire possesses some Discipline that allows for her to control the actions of a ghost and a mage knowledgeable in the Death Arcanum wishes to contest that control, then any spell the mage uses to do so would compare its Potency against the vampire's roll in activating her Discipline. Victory goes to whichever character's power received the superior roll. Because mages often need to "build" their spells (using successes for Duration, Potency and the like), willworkers will sometimes be at a disadvantage when attempting to contest other supernatural beings' powers, but such is the benefit of specialization; these beings sacrifice flexibility for the sake of raw, focused power.

Magic Versus Kindred

No magic can undo the Kindred Curse. Period. A vampire is what he is due to powers alien to the Awakened state. Perhaps the Curse descends from the Abyssal Watchtowers (see p. 181), a "gift" of the acamoth, but, if so, no Scelestus or other twisted willworker has ever come forward with such knowledge. Or maybe the Curse was the result of some hoary old spirit's displeasure. Regardless, as the Curse is something that likely comes well after the severing of the worlds, the possibility that any ancient rite exists to unmake the vampiric state is slim to none. Some things were beyond the ken of even the ancients.

This means that all of the fundamental facets of a vampire's nature are, likewise, immutable, in terms of the Arcana. A vampire's vulnerability to sunlight cannot be removed, or the raging Beast within him be silenced. He may be shielded from sunlight by magic, or have his Beast soothed by it, but these vulnerabilities are a part of him, and will remain such unless he finds a wholly vampiric means of overcoming them.

Important to note is the fact that blood created by Awakened magic is useless to Kindred, unless the mage also creates it as tass (requiring Life 3 + Prime 3 for animal blood or Life 5 + Prime 3 for human blood, as well as an expenditure of Mana). With sufficient time and research, it is *possible*, though highly unlikely, that a mage could use Death 5 + Prime 3 (plus Mana expenditure) to create functional Vitae, *solely* for the purposes of consumption by those vampires too old to slake their thirst on the Vitae of humans or beasts. Such blood would still require blood addiction tests, as found on p. 158 of **Vampire: The Requiem**, but, as "inert" Kindred Vitae, would not carry the risk of a Vinculum. Perhaps the Duration of such a creation would be lasting but would more likely default to prolonged, meaning that only an archmaster could make the blood's effects last for very long or permanently.

This blood would be unable to create or sustain a ghoul, or to be used in the Embrace of a new vampire. Likewise, this blood could not be used to fuel any vampiric power that requires an outside source of blood. Lastly, such "false Vitae" would probably carry with it certain drawbacks and might even lead to truly disastrous unforeseen complications — such are the perils of meddling with the Curse itself. The consumption of this "blood tass" necessarily involves the assimilation of the expended Mana into the vampire, whereupon it becomes Vitae. There is a final price to be paid, as well: any such creation of false blood probably requires the casting mage to suffer wounds, perhaps one Health level of resistant lethal damage that must be healed with time, rather than magic, per point of Mana spent (one per point of Vitae). In all things, Kindred must feed on life, and the Curse will have its due, whether directly or otherwise.

A mage cannot interact with a vampire's fundamental nature, in the form of his clan or bloodline. The weaknesses inherent to such are immutable (as far as the Arcana go, anyway), as are the strength that they impart. Archmastery, of course, *might* allow some temporary changes, but such is beyond the scope of this book. A vampire may not have his clan identity altered by magic, or erased, even temporarily, and the same goes for one who has undergone the transformation of the blood needed to realize a bloodline. (It is possible, however, that magical experimentation could result, intentionally or not, in the creation of a bloodline, though such would be a process as time-consuming as it is both arduous and perilous, for willworker and Kindred alike.) Also, Awakened magic in no way directly interacts with any form of vampiric sorcery, such as Crúac or Theban Sorcery, or even more rare and esoteric practices, such as the Gilded Cage Discipline of the Architects of the Monolith. Again, these abilities are not predicated upon Supernal knowledge and do not draw upon the power of the Watchtowers. Furthermore, the effects of any Kindred power of self-transformation (such as the Protean Discipline or the Crúac ritual "Feeding the Crone") cannot be directly reversed by any known combination of Arcana. (Though indirect means, such as mental control, may be exercised, effectively compelling such a change by proxy, even if such involves the expenditure of Vitae.)

Conversely, magic cannot interfere with a vampire's ability to expend Vitae. The two phenomena simply do not interact with one another in that way. Likewise, no vampiric Discipline will directly stop a mage from expending Mana or counter a spell in mid-casting. (Dominate, for instance, can cause her to *not* act — but this works on the mage, not her magic.) This is not, however, to say that a vampire can't stymie a mage's powers, or vice-versa. For example, a willworker could use the Death Arcanum to leech away the strength of a vampire with the Discipline of Vigor, reducing him to his normal physical prowess, or perhaps even less (though the mage could only reduce his Strength Attribute in this manner, and not his Vigor). Or, the vampire could use his unnatural strength to shatter a weapon conjured up with the Matter Arcanum, same as any other normal object, provided he is capable of overcoming its Durability.



Magic Versus Uratha

These rules also extend to werewolves. Mages cannot prevent Uratha from expending Essence, or vice-versa. No Awakened magic exists to remove from a werewolf or suppress in her either half of her nature, that native to the world of flesh or that which has its origins in the Shadow. The natural "fight or flight" instinct in every Uratha can be manipulated, but not undone, and no willworker can prevent Essence bleed (see p. 76 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**) in werewolves with especially high Primal Urge scores without bringing them across the Gauntlet, into Shadow. (Though, in the latter case, it is certainly possible to use other magics to simply replace that lost Essence before the werewolf in question falls into slumber.)

A mage cannot *directly* induce the Change in a werewolf. The mage can attempt (either with or without magic) to enrage an Uratha to the point that he instinctively shifts into his Gauru form, or she could assume control of his mind and thereby indirectly compel him to shift into a desired form, but there exists, and can exist, no spell that can reliably directly force a werewolf to assume one of his given shapes. (Life 5 "Greater Shapechanging" can force a Uratha into a different shape, with a transitory Duration, but this is a Supernal magic shape, not one of the Uratha's native shapes, and so the trait changes aren't the same.) Further, willworkers can in no way interact with a werewolf's relationship with Mother Luna. They cannot alter or suppress a Uratha's auspice for any length of time, or grant an auspice to a werewolf without one (such as one of the Pure). Likewise, a werewolf's tribal identity (or lack thereof) cannot be changed by magic. A tribal Ban remains firm, no matter what a mage tries to do to it, and a werewolf's connection to her tribe's totem is inviolate. For that matter, no Arcanum short of Spirit archmastery, perhaps, can sever an Uratha's connection to her pack's totem, or even briefly suppress such (and even Spirit 6 would likely only be able to suppress such a tie); the spiritual bonds that a werewolf shares with her totem function on a different level than even the abilities granted by the Spirit Arcanum. The Abilities granted by a werewolf's lodge (if any) are also immune to manipulation by the magic of the Arcana; these are changes wrought by a different relationship with the Shadow than that known to even the most puissant of Thyrsus.

Magic Versus Ghouls and Wolf-Blooded

A mage can detect a vampiric ghoul or a wolf-blooded human through the use of sensory magics, if she possesses the proper education to decipher what she's seeing. She cannot, however, remove the mystic properties that make such beings what they are, short of killing them. Awakened magic may allow her to learn the circumstances under which a wolf-blooded individual will undergo the Change and become Uratha, if such is his destiny, and she can work toward this end, or attempt to stop it, but there are no guarantees. In addition, just as the Awakening itself cannot be forced, a mage cannot transform a ghoul into a full Kindred, or a wolf-blooded person into Uratha, not even temporarily. (Needless to say, a mage can't force either state on a fully normal Sleeper, either, or even make one into a ghoul or one of the wolf-blooded.) With the proper application of Arcana, a mage could create the *seeming* of these supernatural states in a person, but cannot actually do so. (Some Life and Mind Arcana manipulations, for example, could yield a life-threatening vulnerability to sunlight and a gnawing thirst for blood, but these changes are, metaphysically speaking, purely cosmetic.)

A mage *might* be able to retard the rapid aging of a ghoul who has gone a month without a source of Vitae, but such a feat would require extensive research and regular upkeep. Note that this wouldn't entail keeping the ghoul's aging static, as it was while she was regularly ingesting Vitae, but, rather, allowing her to age at a normal human rate. If such a thing could be done, the process might also be usable upon a ghoul who is well beyond the allotted span of her natural years, allowing her to grow old normally, instead of aging unto death within a matter of weeks. None of this, however addresses the ghoul's lust for Kindred blood and her love for her absent (and possibly destroyed) master, or allows her to maintain the powers once granted to her by her former regnant's gift of stolen life.

Likewise, no vampiric Discipline or werewolf Gift can undo a Sleepwalker's half-Awakened nature, or make a Proximus anything other than what he is; short of the Embrace, the transformation into Uratha, the Awakening or death, he is what he is. Even the most thorough psychic reprogramming, involving days if not weeks of the use of Dominate, will not cause a Sleepwalker to fall fully back into the Lie. Just as mages cannot force a ghoul to "forget" the love engendered by the Vinculum, Kindred cannot "reset" an individual's metaphysical perceptions to the default setting of a Sleeper. Note, however, that Sleepwalkers and Proximi are still human, though, and thus subject to all of the same reactions to supernatural phenomena as anyone else. Thus, for example, a Sleepwalker is affected as normal by Lunacy when a werewolf assumes her Gauru form in his presence.

Magic Versus Prometheans

The Created are alive — sort of. It's an artificial life sustained by a mysterious type of energy that defies

even the Prime Arcanum's ability to fully perceive and manipulate. As stated in the **Promethean: The Created** rulebook, a mage can detect a Promethean with the Prime "Supernal Vision" spell, reading his fiery aura. He can also utilize the Death "Grim Sight" or Life "Pulse of the Living World" spells, although these require more careful scrutiny before a Promethean's unnatural life is revealed. (The target number for scrutiny actions is 10 successes – the Promethean's Azoth. It would take seven successes to identify a Promethean with an Azoth of 3.) If the Promethean's disfigurements are ever revealed, such as when he spends Pyros, then these spells automatically reveal the Promethean's nature, even if his disfigurement was clear for only a brief moment.

Being able to identify a Promethean by the strange fire burning within him is not the same thing as understanding that fire. Pyros eludes the scant scrutiny most mages have been able to apply to it, and so remains a curious exception to the array of forces, Essence or Mana-based energies cataloged by mages.

As with vampires and werewolves, certain basic features of a Promethean cannot be altered by Awakened magic. A Promethean's Lineage cannot be changed, nor can its Refinement be affected, although mind-control spells might be able to make a Promethean switch Refinements for a while. The Promethean's Azoth, the inner fire that animates him, cannot be targeted by Supernal magic, and so cannot be directly manipulated or altered by mages.

Life Arcanum spells might or might not affect a Promethean; if their effects involve fatigue, disease or poison, Prometheans gain superlative resistance against them. In general, features of the "Promethean condition" cannot be changed by magic. Disquiet cannot be allayed, or the Wasteland effect Prometheans cause wherever they bed down. A Created's disfigurements can be hidden behind magical spells but cannot be removed.

Vitae, Essence and Mana

While mages can make use of spirit Essence, they cannot directly steal it from a werewolf. (In theory, in the highly improbable event that a willworker and an Uratha were to work together on such a project, it might be possible to allow such an exchange to occur between two willing parties.) Further, a mage cannot make use of vampiric Vitae for anything, whether it is within the vampire or during the brief period during which it can normally be outside of the undead form without decomposing. Although various Mage Sights (most especially Death and Prime senses) can detect the power locked away within the blood, Kindred Vitae remains an unresolved conundrum for the Awakened, a source of energy that cannot be tapped — a state of affairs that is probably for the best.

Neither vampires nor werewolves can use Mana in its raw state. If tass is formed into something that an ordinary person could use (such as a wrench or a chair), then a Kindred or Uratha could use said tass for all of the same tasks that he normally could, were he a Sleeper. Under certain limited circumstances (outlined above in "Magic versus Kindred"), a vampire *might* be able to use tass specifically transformed into blood. In no case can a werewolf do anything supernatural with tass. An object created with tass, no matter its level of quality, cannot be made into an Uratha fetish; the object is a fabrication, a thing not truly meant to exist within the Fallen World, and has no spiritual substance within which a Shadow Realm entity might reside. Any Uratha Gift meant to interact with mundane objects however, can be used to affect tass formed into such shapes. Thus, a werewolf using the Technology Gift: Iron Treachery could cause a screwdriver made of tass to malfunction. If a werewolf Gift would fundamentally alter the shape of an item made of tass, however, compare the Uratha's successes with the Potency of the tass spell; if the werewolf's successes exceed those of the casting mage, then the tass in question simply collapses back into the Tapestry, becoming formless Mana. Note that, short of the subtle tells illustrated above, werewolves have no means of discerning that an object is made of Mana, and vampires have no means for doing so, at all.

The Souls of Monsters

A willworker cannot interact with the soul of a vampire (if indeed such creatures still possess souls; Death and Spirit Arcana perceptions always reveal inconclusive information when used in an attempt to discern whether or not Kindred are ensouled beings). Likewise, the Awakened have no power to do anything to the soul of a werewolf. The spiritual component of an Uratha may well be nothing more than the substance that makes up any Shadow Realm entity, blended with flesh in a manner unknown to even the wisest and most ancient of mages. Since the time when the precursors of the Tremere became what they now are, no vampire has possessed the knowledge of how to meddle with the souls of the Awakened, and such lore is likely now lost forever, buried deep within the nightmares of the deathless thing that imparted that unclean wisdom in the first place. Surely, other Kindred since that time have attempted to deal in the power of souls, and perhaps some, somewhere, have discerned such secrets, but none that could in any way affect the spiritual component of a living mage. Both the Forsaken and the Pure, on the other hand, have little interest as peoples in the possibility of manipulating souls. Some particularly heinous Bale Hounds may seek knowledge of that sort, but none have learned any means by which their dark Gifts can affect an Awakened spirit.



CHAPTER TWO: THE WAY OF AIR — SPELL LORE

"Hurry up, man!"

"You're not helping, Darryl." I ran my hand over the lock again. I should just be able to open this, I thought. I should be able to force it to unlock, to command the matter. It's not that hard. The sirens got louder. I had no idea what exactly the police would charge us with for sneaking into an impound lot carrying a human skull, but I didn't really want to find out.

Darryl pulled out his gun. I cringed. "Put that shit away, you idiot! They'll shoot you!"

"Well, open the damn gate, then!"

I turned back to the lock and touched it again, willing the steel to move, the tumblers to unfasten. Nothing. "All right, fuck it," I muttered. I rolled up my sleeve and chanted in High Speech. I felt my skin get colder, like all the blood was rushing away, trying to escape what was coming. I called down the blackness, the entropy of Stygia, and sent that hurtling toward the lock.

It cracked, then fell off. The chain link fence around the lock looked blackened, as if burned. I suspected the hair on my arms was singed again, too. I took a step forward and cursed — all the muscles in my legs were cramped up again, but that was better than letting the spell go wild.

"Let's go," whispered Darryl. "Whine later. We've got work to do."

"It wasn't magic," said Spider, offended. "It was a miracle."
— Neil Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*

The element of air is associated with knowledge, reason and discrimination, an intellect that cuts through confusion like a sword, parting truth from untruth. The old adage that knowledge is power is perhaps in no discipline more true than in magic. The content of that knowledge is, of course, *spells*. This chapter examines the body of spell lore, beginning with an essay about the sensation of casting magic — how it looks and feels — and then presenting a host of new spells with which to fill a mage's mental repertoire or occult library. The chapter ends with an essay on rotecraft, the art of building tried-and-true spell formulae.

The Sensation of Spellcasting

What does the process of casting a spell feel like? How does an observer perceive a mage performing a spell, whether vulgar or covert? Likewise, what does a mage experience when calling upon her magic successfully, and how does this change when a Paradox disrupts her attempt?

This section examines these questions, and endeavors to help players and Storytellers to describe what **Mage** characters feel when working their magic. Parts of this essay are written in the form of fiction, focusing on the issues raised in the preceding sections.

This essay occasionally refers to a particular magical working or process being "easier" or "more difficult" than usual. Whether that actually affects the dice pool is up to the Storyteller, but for the most part, such modifiers are already factored into the game as written. We're simply providing possible explanations for why certain effects and permutations do make a difference to game mechanics.

Preparing a Spell

The first step in casting a spell, from the mage's perspective, is to determine the Imago. Although a mage can do so in a matter of seconds, the Imago is actually a complicated process. It includes to what extent the mage is drawing down the laws of the Supernal World and how they interact with the Fallen World, what effect this will have upon the target(s) of the spell, how long the spell is meant to last and how potent the spell is meant to be.

The less complex a spell is, the more quickly a mage can conceive an Imago. For instance, if a mage wishes to cast Mage Sight upon herself, she has relatively few factors to consider. The spell affects only her and her perceptions of the world, bestowing the senses common to the Supernal. This doesn't cause a major change in the Fallen World, and so the caster doesn't need to worry about long-ranging ramifications of the spell. Normally, the spell only lasts an hour or so, and only has two degrees to consider: either the spell works or it doesn't. Therefore, a mage casting, for instance, "Third Eye," doesn't need to spend more than a few seconds forming the Imago for the spell.

Consider, though, what happens when a mage decides to bestow Mage Sight on another person. Factors such as the spell's Duration and Potency don't change — again, the spell only lasts an hour and either works or fails. But now the mage needs to consider drawing down her Supernal "filter" over another's perceptions. Is that person a mage, used to seeing through the lens of magic, or a Sleeper? If the target is a Sleeper, the spell might freak him out enough to cause Disbelief, which can then work to dispel the magic.

If the mage knows a spell as a rote, the Imago is even simpler because it has been codified and refined by the rote's creator. The mage isn't so much imagining the spell herself as reciting it, replaying the Imago in her mind's eye instead of making it up as she goes. This may mean, though, that a mage used to casting a spell by rote has a harder time making variations (in game mechanics terms, adding factors such as Targets or Duration) than she would with an improvised spell because she is so familiar with the version she has learned. Likewise, though, rotes for complicated spells are easier to cast under stressful conditions because the mage already has a mental map to the spell's effect.

"Creating the Imago" is a fancy way to say that the mage visualizes the spell's effects. There is more to this, though, than simply imagining what she wants to happen. The mage must visualize the process from start to finish. If she wishes to cast Forces 2 "Influence Electricity" to cause electricity to arc out from a wall socket and shock an enemy, for instance, she needs to start by focusing on her control over the Arcanum of Forces and how that control translates to changing the path of the energy running through the wires in the wall. She needs to picture that energy changing course, forcing its way out of the socket, traveling in a predetermined arc and striking her enemy. A waver in Imago can cause disastrous results

— the spell might misfire and hit the wrong person, or it might simply deliver a painful shock to the next person to use the socket but not have any immediate effect. Add to this the fact the mage might have only a few seconds (that is, one turn) to create the spell, and it's easy to see why even "simple" spells can be exhausting.

The process of visualizing a spell might not trigger any sensation in the mage. It might be a purely internal matter, no more likely to trigger a physical perception than a daydream. Some mages, though, perceive subtle changes in themselves and the world around them when they begin to cast a spell. Light may play at the corners of their eyes, their palms or fingertips might feel pinpricks or they might hear faraway sounds appropriate to their Paths. These sensations aren't perceptible to anyone around the mage (at least not until the spell is actually cast, at which point her nimbus might be uncloaked), but externally, many mages exhibit a subtle change in body language when they are about to cast a spell. Skilled mages and even Sleepwalkers can learn to recognize these cues, which, at the Storyteller's discretion, might grant a bonus to Initiative against the mage. (The observer rolls Wits + Empathy – the mage's Composure; success adds one to the observer's Initiative for that scene.)

Mongoose, Mastigos of the Adamantine Arrow

Mongoose stood near the bar, watching her. She didn't know she had his protection, and that was just as well. He was ugly, rough and dirty, while she was pristine and untouched. She would be soiled by the very knowledge of him, and that thought saddened him, but there were cobras here and he needed to keep them away.

One approached. The cobra wore leather pants and a tight black shirt, and Mongoose saw the lust in his walk and his smile without even bothering to look at his mind. Better just to dissuade him now, *thought the mage. He drummed a rhythm on the bar, setting a beat in motion that echoed throughout the room, even if no Sleeper could hear it. Mongoose saw the cobra's steps fall into time with that beat, and he watched as the cobra walked right past Mongoose's charge to another, less pristine woman who had just come into his view.* Perfect, *thought Mongoose.* But how many other snakes must I repel tonight?



Casting

If the "default" is an instant and improvised spell — a quick Imago, little or no movement or gestures — then the next section of this essay concerns the permutations of spellcasting. This includes extended spells, spending Mana and using magical tools, hand mudras and High Speech. While mentioned occasionally, cultural influence on magic isn't discussed extensively here. See the "Magic and Culture" essay beginning on p. 86 for a detailed exploration of this topic.

Extended Spells

A spell that can be conceptualized and cast in seconds is very different from one that takes hours or days to complete. Instant spells require a mage to create her Imago, summon her power and release it in one smooth action, while extended spells involve meticulously building each component of the spell up over time. To relate both of these to musical skills, think of casting an instant spell as singing a particular note without a guiding pitch and casting an extended spell as composing a song. The former has an immediate effect, but mistakes are easier to make. The latter is a much more laborious process, but can yield more lasting results.

Extended magic gives the mage the benefit of setting up each individual part of the Imago, changing the spell's factors as she casts. The major enemy of the mage involved in a ritual casting, of course, is time. Inexperienced mages can easily spend 12 hours or more on a relatively simple spell, and eventually fatigue sets in (see the rules for "Fatigue" on p. 179 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Although the mage can magically mitigate these effects, of course, she can only have so many spells active at once, and many mages find it's better to rest, meditate or otherwise prepare for a complicated extended casting through mundane means rather than distract themselves by splitting their mystical attention.

Casting an extended spell can take a number of different forms, depending on the mage in question and the type of spell being cast. An Obrimos summoning up a benevolent spirit might think in terms of an angel (recalling her Awakening in the Aether), and thus draw a summoning circle and spend hours chanting the name of her intended target in some forgotten tongue. A Thyrsus mage attempting the same spell might find an appropriate sacrifice for the spirit in question, and burn this offering slowly over a small fire. Some mages view extended spellcasting as surgery. Every magical tool must be accounted for, every sacrament meticulously prepared and in its place before the casting begins.

Whatever method the mage uses, it must be something that she can maintain over time. Physically strenuous activity is difficult to include in an extended casting, because if the mage burns herself out before the spell is complete, all her effort is for naught. Some mages, particularly of the Mastigos Path or the Adamantine Arrow, use self-inflicted pain as part of their extended spells, and sometimes a mage bleeds herself into unconsciousness trying to empower a difficult spell. An extended spell can have different components, of course. A mage creating an Imbued Item involves several steps — the mage needs to prepare the object, cast the spell to be imbued, encode that spell into the item and then check the whole thing over to make sure it's going to work properly. Depending on the nature of the spell, this might involve dousing a blade in blood, holding a pair of glasses up to certain kinds of energy, reinforcing a garment with tiny threads of brass or boiling various pieces of the final product in different liquids. Some mages take short breaks in the midst of casting, but others feel (correctly) that this is a dangerous practice — if the mage falls asleep during a rest, the spell might falter and die out or it might run wild. Summoning spells in particular demand great care, because they involve sentient and sometimes malicious beings.

Some mages choose to cast instant spells in a ritual fashion. The advantages are obvious; the mage doesn't have to trust in her ability to shape the Imago of the spell and release it in the space of a few seconds. Mages are often instructed to use this technique when using newly learned Arcana or when casting spells they haven't previously used, since this gives them time to consider their approaches, make mistakes that can be easily corrected and see how a simple spell works over a long period of time. A mage who wishes her cabal to benefit from a spell or who wishes a normally short-lived spell to last longer might use a ritual casting as well, and a few mages even shun "fast casting" entirely, fearing what might happen if magic is used too recklessly.

Vulcan, Thyrsus of the Silver Ladder

Vulcan adjusted the cup of his earphone. The noise of his workshop would have left his ears ringing for days without the protection. He ran a hand over the smooth metal of the blade — the spirit within was not only awake, but hungry for blood.

One step done, then, *he thought.* Now I just need to give it a target. *He pulled off his thick gloves and opened a fireproof box full of photos. His enemy's face leered up at him from the top picture. Vulcan scowled and snatched the photo from the box.*

He set it down on the wooden worktable and slammed the blade of the knife through the face on the photo. "That's your target," he growled in the spirit tongue. "His blood — only his blood — is yours to take." Sweat dripped into his eyes, and he wiped his brow with his wrist, marveling at how difficult it was simply to raise his arm.

I can sleep soon, *he thought.* Justice first, then rest.

Spending Mana

Mana expenditure can trigger any of the mage's senses. Spending Mana might feel like a rush of wind on his face, a sudden change in temperature, or even a burst of sexual arousal if the resonance of the Mana warrants it. Mana expenditure can also be perceived as sound, be it a whistled melody or the grating of metal, or visually, as the target of the spell shimmers with light or darkens in hue.

Mana can be used in one of four main fashions when casting a spell: to mitigate a Paradox, to enable sympathetic magic, to aid when using a non-Ruling Arcana in an improvised spell or to increase the raw power of the magic in some way. Using Mana to cause a spell to inflict aggravated damage falls into this latter category, as does using Mana for spells such as "Glimpsing the Future" and other spells that require it. From a game mechanics perspective, there isn't any difference among these uses — the player simply marks off the point of Mana. To the mage, however, the difference is quite clear.

Using Mana to mitigate a Paradox can be part of the Imago from the beginning. A mage casting a spell she knows is vulgar might build in this "step" in the casting (even if the casting only takes seconds), using her own magical energy to smooth the disruption of the Fallen World. In this case, the expenditure is painless, though not effortless. One might compare it to lifting a box of heavy books — the lifter knows it will be heavy, and thus uses her legs to lift, bracing herself for the effort. If the mage doesn't realize that a Paradox might intrude on her (perhaps she is casting a particular vulgar spell for the first time, or perhaps a Sleeper witness pushes a normally covert spell into the range of "Improbable"), the expenditure of Mana is hasty, a self-preservation reflex meant to shield the mage from the Abyss. Using the same metaphor, the person lifting the box of books might not have realized what it contained, and tried to pick it up hastily only to feel her muscles start to strain. In response, she leans back against a wall, partially drops the box or otherwise tries to alleviate the damage to her body. The results might not be pretty, but hopefully the desired result is still achieved.

The resonance of the Mana doesn't usually matter when it is used to mitigate a Paradox, since the yawning maw of the Abyss consumes the energy almost immediately. The mage simply feels her energy draining away, hopefully providing a buffer between her magic and the Paradox it creates.

When Mana is used to fuel sympathetic magic, the sensation is much the same as for mitigating a Paradox, except that the Mana doesn't drain away to nothing so much as become stretched wire-thin, providing a connection between the mage and his target. Some mages state that Mana provides a kind of magical "static," shutting out the stimuli of their immediate surroundings and allowing them to focus on the sympathetic connection. Others feel that Mana provides the extra energy needed to propel the spell over the distance (similar to putting change in a pay phone, to use a somewhat gross analogy). Unlike Paradox mitigation, resonance can make a difference, but only if the desired result of the spell is opposed to the resonance of the Mana in question. If the Mana comes from the mage, then any conflicting feeling would occur whether or not the spell was sympathetic or not. For instance, a vengeful Obrimos accustomed to calling down the wrath of the Heavens on the unworthy would have difficulty casting a Forces spell to gently warm an area at either sensory or sympathetic range. The Mana expenditure required for a sympathetic casting might exacerbate this dichotomy, though, as the mage is forced to put more of himself into the casting, thus underlining the difference between the spell's effect and the mage's temperament.

When a mage casts an improvised spell outside her Ruling Arcana, she is on unfamiliar ground. How unfamiliar depends, of course, on the degree of skill the mage has with the Arcanum in question and, to a lesser degree, whether that Arcanum is Common or Inferior to the Supernal Realm to which the mage is bound. Common Arcana don't cause much strain on the mage, but Inferior Arcana are difficult — the mage is drawing down the laws of the Supernal, but is imposing laws upon the Fallen World that are not only in conflict with the Fallen World's natural laws but also her Supernal Realm's. Is it any wonder that a Moros, for instance, casting her first Spirit spell feels like a child told to make a sandcastle out of a bowl of water?

Mana, in this case, is used to stabilize the mage's spell, making sure that it stays within the purview of the appropriate Arcanum. Each of the Arcana can be used in each of the Supernal Realms, but the non-Ruling Arcana need to be buoyed, given a magical guideline. If a mage tried to cast an improvised spell with such an Arcanum *without* using Mana, the spell would either fail with no effect or the mage would find the Imago shifting subtly, without her conscious control, to something that conforms to the laws of her Path's Realm.

Mana spent on powerful or complicated spells is part of the spell's Imago. Such spells rewrite the fabric of the Fallen World to such an extent that the mage must expend more energy to make them work correctly. Some mages think of this as magically smoothing the rough edges of reality after the casting, in much the same way that one might paint over a wall after repairing a crack.

Others feel that the energy is required to simply power the spell, that no human being has enough force of sheer will to (for instance) force bullet wounds to close in seconds. In any case, the resonance of the Mana can make a significant difference in the mage's experience of casting the spell. A healing spell, for example, comes much easier from a Thyrsus mage who understands the process of knitting flesh than from a Moros mage who normally uses Life magic as a diagnostic tool.

One particular class of spell that commonly uses Mana is Shielding spells, also called armor spells. A mage who does not cast such a spell at the first sign of danger is foolish, and most mages cast a protective spell as part of a daily routine. Armor spells are unique in that their duration can be extended not only by additional effort on the Imago (that is, dice penalties or extra successes) but also by adding a bit of Mana to the casting. Mages theorize that this is because the notion of self-protection is so basic to any living creature that these spells are easier to enhance. Other willworkers argue that "living creatures" are only native to one of the Supernal Realms, and that all spells can be extended in this manner — it's just a matter of figuring out at what point in the casting to release the energy. In any case, the act of spending Mana to extend an armor spell varies depending on the Arcanum used. The spending of Mana might be subtle, barely changing the mage's perception of the spell at all, or could make what she perceives as a subtle spell into an obvious and even uncomfortable part of her Pattern.

The source of the Mana can make a difference as well. If the mage gained the Mana by performing an oblation at a Hallow, then that Hallow's resonance qualities might color the mage's spells for a few hours after. If the mage scoured her own body for the Mana, though, the Mana is intrinsically part of the mage and spending it feels as natural as breathing. Blood sacrifice, of course, is a vicious way of gaining Mana, and the energy thus obtained carries the stain of the act and sometimes a lingering reminder of the victim, such as an odor of blood or an echo of his death rattle. To what degree this bothers the mage, of course, depends on how much Wisdom she has already lost engaging in such practices.

Dade, Mastigos of the Mysterium

Dade finished the casting and, remembering that he was to meet the city's new cabal later that day, decided to fix the spell in place. He inhaled deeply, held the breath in until it was infused with power and exhaled magic into the shield he'd created.

Walking down the street, he found he had to look twice at objects around him to get a sense of their position. Leaves falling from the trees veered off before landing on him, and even puddles seemed to curl around his feet. His clothes sat uncomfortably on his body, and he found himself hoping that this new cabal would be amenable to the non-aggression pact under which the Consilium operated. Dade didn't want to go through every day like this.

Casting at a Hallow

A mage with access to a Hallow has a decided advantage in spellcasting, particularly if he makes frequent use of sympathetic magic. At a Hallow, a mage can tap into the natural Mana of the area to fuel his spells without exhausting his own supply. How does this affect spellcasting on a sensory level, though?

What the mage feels when she draws on the ambient energy of a Hallow depends greatly on the Hallow in question. A Hallow situated in a dark forest in the center of a gnarled copse of trees has a resonance much different from one atop a lofty mountain peak. In the former case, a mage casting a sympathetic spell probably feels as though she is looking at her target as a predator stalks its prey, about to leap in and strike, even if the spell itself isn't malicious at all. The mage casting the same spell on the mountain might feel as though she is looking at her target through a telescope, touching him via externally controlled hands. She can affect him, but feels distanced from the result.

If the mage is using the area's Mana to cast an improvised spell from outside her Ruling Arcana, the results are even more varied. The mage is already on unfamiliar ground, improvising a magical working using laws peripheral or (in the case of Inferior Arcana) anathema to those of her Path's Supernal Realm. The Mana spent eases this discomfort somewhat (as discussed previously), but the resonance of the Hallow can color the spell in ways that the mage never intended.

Jaya, Acanthus Apostate

Jaya didn't know if it was the altitude or the oddly lulling quality of the rock formation, but she had to fight to stay awake. The wolf-creatures were hot on her trail, though, and the bite wound on her wrist was throbbing terribly. Tears streamed down her face as she wondered what she had done to draw their ire, but all she could remember was their faces as they changed into beasts . . . .

Shaking off these thoughts, she tried to close the wounds. The spell wasn't familiar to her, but she had done it once before. She saw, in her mind's eye, her wounds closing, her skin knitting again without so much as a scar. She pulled in the power of the stones, the energy held in this ancient place, and released it into her flesh.

The wound closed, and she felt her body relax. She slumped to the ground, a strange smile on her face. Her mind screamed to shake off the feeling, to stand and run, to prepare herself, but even the howls of her pursuers seemed unimportant and distant somehow.

High Speech

Different mages have different opinions on when using High Speech is appropriate. Because it raises the risk of creating a Paradox if Sleepers are present, some mages only use High Speech when they are alone or when the stakes are great enough to justify such a risk. Other mages use it whenever they have enough time, reasoning that the consequences of a spell gone wrong outweigh the remote possibility that a few hoarse whispers will trigger a Paradox.

High Speech often feels strange in the mouths of the Awakened, like chanting out mathematical formulae rather than using an actual language. And yet, if the stories of Atlantis are true, High Speech *was* used for communication at one point, and every now and then a mage has a moment of clarity while using High Speech. She realizes exactly how these strange syllables correspond to her intent in casting, and sees how words can provide the means to make thought into reality. This kind of breakthrough happens, in game terms, when the player rolls an exceptional success on a spell in which the character used High Speech. This epiphany doesn't have any direct effect on game Traits, but might be a trigger for learning (or creating) a new rote or precipitate regaining Willpower (depending on the mage's Virtue or Vice and upon the spell being cast).

While High Speech sounds like gibberish or nothing to Sleepers, to other mages it has a highly subjective sound. The words are distinct enough, but when spoken during casting the voice almost always takes on a timbre unlike the mage's normal speaking voice. This can be musical, cacophonous, sibilant or booming, depending on the mage in question. A mage's nimbus can usually provide a road map to how High Speech might change his voice.

Charybdis, Moros of the Guardians of the Veil

Charybdis ran his hand along the man's comatose body. The drugs were stopping his heart, and now the Necromancer could take his soul. He spoke slowly, deliberately, in High Speech, and marveled at how his usually thin and reedy voice took on a strange echo. He opened his mouth and let out a prolonged sound, feeling his voice harmonize with the man's final breath. The soul rose and tried to flee, but the sound pulled it down, into the mage's gaping maw.

Rote Mudras

Not necessary for improvised casting, but essential for unlocking the full potential of rotes, hand formations and bodily gestures vex many mages. Mentors often have a hard time teaching young mages that the mudras in themselves don't contain any mystical power. That is, a gesture that one might use in everyday life doesn't run the risk of accidentally setting off a spell, even if the gesture does happen to be identical to a mudra. The mudras are simply mnemonic devices, meant to help a mage form the Imago of the rote spell.

That said, when used correctly, mudras do indeed *feel* powerful. A mage using even a subtle hand gesture might see a trail of light follow his palm or hear a crackling fire as he crooks his fingers. He might feel her hand pass through water or a sudden cold spot. More grandiose gestures, such as those used for vulgar rotes, bring commensurately impressive displays, sometimes even becoming perceptible to others.

Riley, Thyrsus of the Free Council

Riley stood up, glaring at the small pack of drunks. Students at the college, most like, *he thought.* I shouldn't hurt them. *He glanced down at his lover, struggling to stop the blood gushing from his nose.* But they've got to learn something about hate tonight. *He glanced at the stone wall next to him, overgrown with ivy. The biggest of the punks took a step forward, but stopped when Riley brought his hands together.*

Riley's fingers interlocked, and then opened, symbolizing the inherent fragility of every living thing. His left hand covered his right, indicating his intent to bring harm to others. Then his right hand shot out to the wall and traced a large circle in the ivy.

His assailants were laughing nervously, but then one of them squinted at the ivy and noticed it was squirming. The horseflies took flight and swarmed at the assailants, and Riley and his lover left the drunks swatting at the stinging insects and trying vainly to stumble away.

Magical Tools

The orders have, over time, developed methods for grounding magic in the Fallen World, while each of the Supernal Realms mystically corresponds to it through ideas, substances and objects. Any given mage can use her own unique understanding of the Arcana to create an appropriate magical tool, as well. Whatever the method, the effect is the same — the tool helps to anchor the Supernal in the Fallen, or, perhaps, raise the Fallen to the Supernal, thus avoiding the worst effects of a Paradox.

When using a magical tool in a spell, the mage works the tool into the Imago. Any object with a point, be it wand, staff or bladed weapon, provides an easy way to do this for magic aimed at others, as the tip of the tool becomes a kind of "emission point" for the spell. A cup works especially well for perceptive or sympathetic magic, since the mage can look into it and "see" in the manner she needs to. A mirror is ideal for defensive magic, while a pentacle or coin works nicely for manipulative spells.

The order tools work a little differently. Instead of reinforcing the Supernal with the Fallen World, they reinforce the Atlantean methods of magic. The sympathy created is between the longstanding magical traditions of the Pentacle, rather than a direct correspondence to the Realms. To most mages, the difference is academic, since the end result is the same, but mages who feel more comfortable using improvised magic rather than rotes aren't likely to use an order tool over a Path tool.

Arcana tools are as many and varied as the mages who use them. What might seem appropriate for the Death Arcanum to one mage might resonate more with Life to another. The mage's particular philosophy and magical style are the only determiners of appropriate Arcana tools.

Father Banning, Obrimos of the Silver Ladder

Father Banning looked helplessly at his panicking congregation. He needed to calm them, but they'd never hear him over their own screams. His cabal-mates were holding back the spirits, but the unholy creatures were feeding on the Sleepers' fears.

Father Banning focused on his priest collar, grounding the spell within the authority granted him by the Church and by the Silver Ladder. His voice grew in volume, echoing through the church and drowning out the screams of the parishioners and the howls of the spirits. "Be not afraid," he said, and more than 100 faces turned to him. "We will protect you."

Vulgar Spells

A mage casting a covert spell is secure in the knowledge that the Fallen World "agrees" with what he is doing. A mage using a vulgar spell, though, is taking a risk, and he knows it immediately.

A Paradox actually takes hold as soon as the Imago is complete. Because Paradoxes are so unpredictable, though, a mage can't incorporate one into the Imago. Therefore, even a "small" Paradox can flummox a spell beyond recognition, which is why many mages choose to work a bit of Mana into the casting to avoid a Paradox (see above for a discussion on this).

If the mage chooses to trust her luck and hope that a Paradox passes her by, she'll know the result before the spell takes effect. After she forms the Imago, she releases it, and hopes for a simple pause as the world changes. Often, though, what she gets is a sudden feeling of nausea, a sound of discord or even the scent of ozone, rot or soot. At that point, the mage knows she has caused a Paradox.

Spells often feel weaker in the face of a Paradox, even if the result is what the mage desired. The disjoint in



reality caused by channeling the Supernal across the Abyss causes even (especially!) skillful mages' control of their magic to slip. The mage needs to exert more concentration on making sure the spell even takes effect, and cannot worry too much about the fine details. Many mages feel as though they are being watched by thousands of people (or simply *beings*) in the instant before a Paradox hits.

The mage has a choice in this instant. She can choose to contain the Paradox within herself, letting it damage her body rather than her spell, or she can choose to let the Paradox run its course. This isn't an all-or-nothing proposal, of course. A mage knows if a Paradox is going to be minor or disastrous, and can contain part of one and accept a lesser punishment. Many mages feel that this adds insult to injury; the spell goes wrong *and* the mage suffers bodily, but those Awakened who have undergone the horror of a Branding or Manifestation Paradox would usually prefer to take a few moments of insanity and suffer a splitting headache than go through such an experience again.

When a mage chooses to suffer Backlash, the damage isn't usually visible to others. Paradox doesn't often leave bruises. The damage manifests as muscle cramps, headaches, nausea and, sometimes, nosebleeds. Alternately, though, old wounds can reopen or flare up. The damage is painful, but not in itself devastating, and most mages recover from it with a short rest. Of course, an already wounded mage who chooses to absorb a Paradox might be signing her own death warrant, since Paradox damage can "piggyback" on pre-existing wounds. A mage suffering from a gunshot, for instance, might find the bullet burrowing deeper into her flesh if she chooses to absorb a Paradox.

If the mage chooses to let a Paradox run its course, the effects are of course varied. The Paradoxes are described in detail on pp. 268–273 of **Mage: The Awakening**, but some brief notes on how the various forms of Paradox might feel to the mage follow:

• **Havoc:** The mage feels control of the spell slip away from him. He struggles to regain it, but feels as if he is trying to keep hold of a flopping fish. The magic leaps from his soul to a random target — sometimes right back to him.

• **Bedlam:** Some mages don't notice when Bedlam strikes. They think the spell succeeded or failed as normal and that no Paradox hit, even though it certainly *felt* like a Paradox happened. Experienced mages, interestingly, tend to be worse at recognizing when Bedlam hits them than neophytes.

• **Anomaly:** As with everything about this form of Paradox, what a mage feels when an Anomaly hits depends entirely upon the mage, her Path and the spell.

• **Branding:** A Branding can feel horrifically painful, as though the mage is being turned inside out, or it can be completely devoid of sensation. Sometimes a Branding even feels oddly pleasant (though that tends to fade when the mage discovers his new tail, horns or what-have-you).

• **Manifestation:** The mage experiences a moment of slowed time, and perceives the Abyss (again, this can take sensory form). Sometimes she feels something pass her, as though a snake brushed her leg in a lake, and sometimes all she feels is a passing sense of dread. How long the Abyssal spirit goes before revealing itself depends on the power and goals of the spirit, of course.

Orcus, Moros of the Mysterium

Orcus looked down at the unfortunate woman's corpse. "Sorry if this offends anyone," he said to the cabal, "but we're going to need some help to get out this." He chanted in High Speech and waved his hands in slow, smooth gestures over her body, willing her to rise up and fight for them.

He felt the spell going wrong almost as soon as he'd finished the last syllable. The magic left his control and searched for another viable target, but found nothing. He reached out, trying to regain it, but it was like trying to grab a shadow. Helplessly, Orcus watched as the spell simply reversed itself, crumbling the body to dust as the cabal's enemies closed in.

Rules Clarifications

There are a few points about the spellcasting rules for **Mage** that could use some clarification:

• **Extended Action Roll Limitations:** The rule for extended actions presented in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** calls for the maximum number of rolls a character is allowed to make for the completion of the action to be capped by the character's dice pool. In other words, a character who has a dice pool of five dice can make five rolls to acquire the target number needed; if he fails to collect enough successes in five rolls, he can't complete the task. This guideline also applies to extended action spellcasting. A mage's maximum number of allowed rolls equals his dice pool. The Storyteller can choose when to relax this rule, but it is assumed to be the standard for most extended spells, except item creation spells (see Chapter Four).

• **Conceptual Targets:** Mages cannot target concepts with their spells; willworkers can target only people, places or things. A Death Unmaking spell, for instance, cannot be cast against the concept of law and order, to "kill" the idea and cause chaos in a populace. However, arch-

masters might be able to target concepts, thus manipulating cultural paradigms and belief systems. As with anything involving archmastery, no lesser mage can say with surety whether this rumor is true.

• **Ritualized Attacks:** As a general guideline, Storytellers should not allow instant action Fraying, Unraveling and Unmaking spells to be cast as extended spells. To convert such a spell to allow for extended ritual casting, add one dot to its minimum dot-rank requirement. Hence, a three-dot Fraying spell such as Mind "Psychic Assault" becomes a four-dot spell when cast as an extended action.



Death Spells

●● Apprentice of Death

Lighten Anchor (Death ●●)

The mage increases a ghost's ability to stray from its anchor.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The ghost adds the spell's Potency to its Power for the purpose of determining the range the ghost can roam from its anchors. (See the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 209.)

Free Council Rote: Nothing To Lose But Your Chains

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Death

Though this rote is especially popular with mages who bind ghosts to Enchanted Items, mages of the Free Council often cast it for philosophical reasons, providing precious inches of liberty to their life-challenged brethren.



Fate Spells

● Initiate of Fate

Synchronicity (Fate ●)

The mage gains cryptic guidance from meaningful exercises of apparently random chance.

Best used when the willworker has reached some sort of impasse or has no idea what to do next, Synchronicity requires the user to open herself up to some sort of random input, allowing the forces of apparent coincidence to point a way forward. The user might turn on a television and flip quickly through the channels, let an encyclopedia fall open to a random page or toss a dart at a map. Other willworkers will stake out a spot on a busy sidewalk or get in a car and follow an arbitrarily chosen vehicle. More homebound types might allow a random MP3 to play on their portable music devices or use a randomizing program to call up a serendipitous web page.

Whether a television program, snippet of song lyric, address or street encounter is used, the result of the random input suggests a course of action or an answer to a thorny question.

Practice: Knowing

Action: Instant

Duration: Transitory (one turn)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

When Synchronicity is used, the player chooses the random input, and the Storyteller provides an oblique hint or opportunity to act that will either move the mage out of a static situation or alleviate a state of confusion, if interpreted with sufficient creativity.

For example, let's say that the mage has been assigned to protect a young Sleeper, but, after a series of humiliating disasters, has lost all track of him. The mage casts Synchronicity and turns on the television. The current channel is running a documentary about chess. Knowing that this is somehow significant, she heads down to the local chess club, where she finds the kid sitting in on a game.

Answers become clearer at a Potency of 3 or higher. For example, the chess documentary might include footage of the very chess club where the kid is playing.

On an exceptional success, an answer suggests an obvious course of action. Here the willworker might see a live interview between the kid and a local news personality.

Free Council Rote: Lost and Found

Dice Pool: Wits + Streetwise + Fate

When heading into an unknown situation, the willworker seeks out the nearest facility with a Lost and Found department, and lays claim to the oddest and most unusual item left behind there. This item will then prove instrumental in overcoming a crucial obstacle in the trial ahead.

●● Apprentice of Fate

Zone of Extremity (Fate ●●)

The mage alters probability, so that all mundane actions with uncertain outcomes resolve themselves as either triumphs or disasters.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Transitory (one turn)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

The spell affects actions undertaken by any and all characters within its area of effect, centered on a targeted spot:

Successes	Area-Affected
1	One-yard radius
2	Two-yard radius
3	Four-yard radius
4	Eight-yard radius
5	16-yard radius

Within the Zone of Extremity, all failures become dramatic failures. All standard successes are treated as exceptional successes. This effect applies only to mundane actions, not spellcasting.

With Fate 3 and a cost of one Mana during casting, the default Duration becomes prolonged (one scene).

Free Council Rote: Hail Mary Pass
Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Fate

Risk-takers of the Free Council resort to this rote in situations in which the need for an over-the-top success outweighs the potential for devastating failure.

●●● Disciple of Fate

Blessing (Fate ●●●)

The mage shields a target from harm for a short time. The target doesn't avoid harm through obvious magical intervention but through lucky coincidence. For instance, the target might suddenly decide to drive home by a different route, thus avoiding a traffic accident that might otherwise have claimed his life.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Extended
Duration: Prolonged (one hour)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

The number of successes required for this spell depends on what the mage wishes the target to avoid:

Danger	Successes
Embarrassment	1
Inconvenience	3
Injury	5
Death	10

If the spell succeeds, the target is protected from the specified danger for the duration of the spell (one hour or one scene, unless additional Duration factors are included in the spell). This spell does *not* function on other mages, as they take on entirely too much responsibility for their own destinies for such manipulation. Anyone with an active Blessing spell stands out to Fate 1 "The Sybil's Sight."

Once the specified danger has been avoided, the spell ends, regardless of how much Duration remains. All such protections take the form of coincidence and happenstance that remove the target from harm's way, rather than making harm actually miss the target. If the target seeks out danger of the appropriate type, the spell still protects him once, but offers no further benefit. For instance, a Blessed target enters a burning building. The floor gives way under the weight of a couch before the character steps on it (thus avoiding injury or death for the target). If the person continues on into the house, though, the spell no longer aids him.

If the target is nursing a death wish or is hell-bent on getting into trouble, then he can (unconsciously) contest the magic with a Composure roll.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Protecting the Home Front
Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge + Fate

Although many mages sever ties with Sleeper society upon Awakening (as best they can), some willworkers attempt to have a family as well as perform their duties to the Wise. The soldiers of the Adamantine Arrow use their rote to keep their loved ones safe in times of danger. The Silver Ladder sometimes uses this rote to keep those they have earmarked for eventual Awakening safe as well.

5 Forces

●● Apprentice of Forces

Control Traffic (Forces ●●)

Through a careful manipulation of electrical current, the mage can cause traffic lights to spontaneously change. The mage may choose to simply induce a random change in the lights or try to specify which lights will change to which color. This can be useful for more than just cutting down the length of the mage's morning commute; at least one cabal is known to use this spell to trap their enemies in massive traffic jams, then assassinate them while they sit, vulnerable, in their car.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

The mage can affect one traffic light (or any similar electronic signaling device) per success. If he simply wishes all targeted traffic lights to change randomly, no further roll is required. Specifying a change, however, requires an Intelligence + Science roll, with a –1 penalty per light beyond the first. The mage may continue to change all affected lights for the duration of the spell, as a simple reflexive action to cause a random change or with another Wits + Academics roll (also a reflexive action) to specify the change.

Free Council Rote: Drag Race

Dice Pool: Wits + Science + Forces

Sometimes, you just need to get the hell away. Free Council mages use this rote to clear the road ahead and make sure nothing gets in the way when sundry unpleasant folk are on their tails.

Friction Reduction (Forces ●●)

The mage reduces the friction (static or kinetic) between two solid objects. A book on a table will appear to slide effortlessly across the surface with little resistance. A walker will have a hard time maintaining a foothold. Objects on an incline will move downward.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The mage reduces the friction in a given area according to her successes:

Successes	Area Affected
1	5 cu. yards
2	10 cu. yards
3	20 cu. yards
4	40 cu. yards
5	80 cu. yards

Any person walking on that area suffers a –1 penalty to any action that might have required normal friction to be present, whether it's a Drive roll to keep control of a car or an Athletics roll to walk across the frictionless surface (other rolls may apply per situation). This penalty can be increased by raising the spell's Potency factors during casting.

Characters who fall into objects take damage accordingly (see "Falling," p. 179 in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Vehicle crashes can be found on pp. 144–145 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Free Council Rote: Black Ice

Dice Pool: Wits + Science + Forces

Free Council mages cast this rote on a patch of ground — pursuers in a car or in other vehicles hit the patch of "black ice" (or, if not in winter, a hard-to-see "oil slick") and likely lose control of the vehicle. Best to use this on an area of ground around a curve or near obstacles, thus requiring an already-difficult Drive roll — Black Ice only makes the maneuver tougher.

Forces: Magnetism

Basically a more complex use of electricity, magnetism is a phenomenon that falls under the Forces Arcanum. A mage can influence magnetism with three dots in Forces, control magnetism with four and create it with five. In general, follow the guidelines set by "Influence Electricity."

Magnets

How magnets work in the World of Darkness hasn't received a lot of press, so here are a few guidelines. Magnets have a magnetic Strength rating, about the equivalent of a character's Strength. The toys and educational magnets that one finds around the house or school are Strength 0, as are the magnetic hooks that one can attach to the fridge to hold, say, potholders. People occasionally come across magnets of Strength 1 to 3, generally used as tools for various occupations. Normal permanent magnets rarely rise above that Strength; to find stronger magnets in the mundane world, one must turn to electromagnets, which have many industrial functions. An electromagnet can go far beyond a human's possible Strength, as evidenced by the big junkyard magnets everyone's seen in movies. As a general rule, a magnet can shift an object whose Size is no greater than twice the magnet's Strength.

A magnet can attract or repel (depending on its polarity) an appropriately magnetic object within one yard per point of Strength. Each yard of distance from the magnet decreases its effective Strength at that range by one. When trying to move a magnetic object that's stuck to something, a character must roll Strength + Stamina – the magnet's Strength. A similar roll is necessary to push a repulsing magnet closer into the range of its repulsion, though each step closer makes the resistance worse. If the magnet is quite large or otherwise massive, further subtract a factor for the magnet's Size. Subtracting (Size – 3) is a good guideline. When two magnets are attracting or repelling each other, add their Strengths together to determine the range at which they affect each other and how hard they are to separate or push together. Without a character trying to force the magnets together or apart, they will simply attract each other until they are touching or repel each other until they are out of range.

●●●● Adept of Forces

Influence Magnet (Forces ●●●●)

The mage can strengthen or weaken any natural magnet or magnetic substance.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

Using this spell on a magnetized object, each success on the spell can increase or decrease the magnet's Strength by one. An object reduced to Strength 0 is still mildly magnetic, but probably not strong enough to support the object's own weight. One additional success can then reduce a Strength 0 magnet to a completely non-magnetized state.

This spell can also be cast on objects that are not magnetized but can naturally be magnets. The first success then gives the object magnetic Strength 0, and additional successes allow the mage to increase that Strength.

Objects generally return to their old state of magnetization once the spell ends. With Forces 5 and the expenditure of a point of Mana, the mage may make the change in Strength lasting as long as the material can naturally hold that Strength of magnetization. Any object can be permanently made non-magnetic; most magnetic materials have a maximum Strength they can hold, generally 2 or 3. Such a material increased to Strength 5 would naturally weaken to its maximum magnetic Strength after the spell's normal Duration expired.

This spell may also be used to reverse a magnet's polarization, but the mage must use successes to make the magnet completely non-magnetized before she can apply any toward strengthening the reverse polarization.

Free Council Rote: Commanding Polarization

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Forces

This rote is excellent for creating powerful magnets for scientific or occult experiments, or just for boosting the power from existing magnets. Using this spell on a computer hard drive is an excellent way to wipe the memory completely, leaving no evidence of electronic data or the attempt to destroy it.

Sensory Deprivation (Forces ●●●●; optional Life ●●● or Mind ●●)

The mage uses Forces to cut a target off from three of his senses: speaking, hearing and seeing. The target's voice and hearing capabilities are dampened through a silencing of all sound around the mouth and ears. Sight is removed by diminishing all light that reaches the target's eyes. The addition of Life can stimulate the subject's biological fear responses (increased heartbeat, sweat, hyperventilating). The addition of Mind can emotionally urge the subject to feel whatever the caster desires during this time of deprivation.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Each success on the casting roll reduces any Composure-based rolls (including, obviously, Perception rolls) by one. A success also reduces any Manipulation-based rolls (i.e., attempts to communicate) by one die per success, as well. The victim cannot speak, hear or see (though spellcasting may inadvertently allow for some light or sound to escape, but this usually comes across as muffled white noise or gray, filtered light).

Note that if the target is a mage with at least Forces 1 or Mind 1, he might recognize (via Unseen Senses) that he is being manipulated.

At the Storyteller's discretion, prolonged use of this spell (or if the caster gains an exceptional success) might cause the victim of the casting to gain a temporary derangement. This derangement grants either a mild version or upgrades a mild version to severe. This derangement lasts for 12 hours. Resultant derangements are usually Depression (or Melancholia), Phobia (or Hysteria), Inferiority Complex (or Anxiety).

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Interrogation

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation + Forces

Using this rote, a Guardian can more affectively interrogate a victim through use of magical torture.

●●●●● Master of Forces

Magnetize (Forces ●●●●●)

By manipulating an object's magnetic properties, the mage can turn non-magnetic objects into temporary magnets.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

Any object affected by this spell temporarily becomes a magnet. It begins with a Strength of zero; the object is mildly magnetic, but it cannot provide effective resistance



against a creature that wants to move the object and may not be able to magnetically support its own weight. The Strength is increased by one per additional success.

Note that some objects, even when strongly magnetized, cannot effectively use their Strength in all situations. Magnetizing a sheet of paper to Strength 5 may make it impossible to remove from the fridge, but the sheet will still rip if you slap it over the door to the fridge *and* the freezer and only open one of them.

Free Council Rote: Primagnet

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Forces

Libertines use this rote to create powerful magnets out of anything that is at hand. One might use the result to hide a note under a metal table, while another might use one to "lock" a metal door closed.

Life Spells

●● Apprentice of Life

Bread Alone (Life ●●)

With the right magic, no mage need ever go hungry, no matter how inhospitable the terrain he might find himself in. With this spell, a magician can turn the handfuls of creepy-crawlies and otherwise inedible plant matter he might find around him into plain and yet nutritious and easily stored blocks of food matter. The food created is tasty, but just as with any food, too much of it can get boring.

The spell requires base life matter to be available and in hand. In a forest, the mage might be able to find tree leaves, slugs, snails, beetles, worms and the like. In the desert, cacti, beetles and scorpions might fit the bill. On the open sea, the mage may have to scoop up algae and plankton.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage needs to kill the animals (or pick the plant matter) he's going to use as ingredients before he casts this spell. Successes are allocated to Potency: each point of Potency creates enough food for one meal for one person.

Free Council Rote: Crabsticks

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival + Life

There are stories of Free Council sailors found adrift on lifeboats for weeks on end without any food. They never seem to starve, although quite a few lose their taste for seafood after they find their way to shore.

Evidence Shroud (Life ●●+ Matter ●●)

The mage erases all forensic evidence of any activities already undertaken during the current scene. This includes hairs, body fluids, fingerprints as well as inorganic evidence such as footprints and fibers. The mage leaves an unusably blurry or distorted image on security camera videotapes or other recorded media. If the willworker's activity is the destruction of existing evidence — for example, the cleanup of blood and tissues from a murder scene — the spell ensures that all incriminating materials are completely removed.

Practice: Veiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

If Sleepers are present, the spontaneous disappearance of bloodstains and other obvious evidence can strain credulity and provoke Disbelief. The willworker can prevent this by making a show of cleaning up the evidence by mundane means immediately before casting this spell. This can be cast as a Life-only spell, in which case only organic evidence is eliminated, or as a Matter-only spell, wherein only inorganic evidence vanishes.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Mop Up

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Life or Matter

Corpses, notorious for exuding an assortment of messy and aggressively sticky excretions, conspire to incriminate those responsible for the bodies' deaths. Assassins of the Adamantine Arrow counter their victims' tendency to leave behind inconvenient residues with this widely useful rote. Despite its name, the rote's general applicability to infiltration and burglary missions should not be overlooked.

●●●Disciple of Life

Chemical Imbalance (Life ●●●)

The mage can disrupt the chemical balance of the brain, thus affecting the target's motor skills and emotions.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant; subtract target's Stamina

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

At this level, the spell is somewhat imprecise. The mage does not have the deftness to precisely alter a target's brain chemistry and achieve a specific emotional result. (Though, at Life 4, specific emotions can be created through the manipulation of brain and body chemistry.) The results of this spell may cause effects similar to that of intoxication, manic depression, high or low testosterone levels or general unruliness paired with vertigo.

The specific effects depend on the caster's successes:

Successes	Penalty (Social)	Penalty (Other Rolls)
1	–1	None
2	–2	–1
3	–3	–2
4	–4	–3
5	–5	–4

Mysterium Rote: Social Lubrication

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Life – Stamina

So many secrets to uncover, so little time. Many of the secrets are kept by various threshold guardians — and some of these guardians are normal (security guards, archaeologists, librarians). This spell helps to stimulate general drunkenness, whether or not a target has had a sip of alcohol. With the target's Social rolls reduced, prying information from the target is easier for the Mysterium mage.

Mind Spells

●●●Disciple of Mind

Enforce Paradigm (Mind ●●●)

The mage causes a Sleeper to interpret any supernatural phenomena he may witness as a mundane, scientifically explicable event. The spell reinforces the human mind's tendency to interpret unexpected sensory input according to familiar patterns. The spell is most often used to reduce the chances of a Paradox.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Wits + Science reflexively

Duration: Transitory (one turn)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The Sleeping witness interprets any overtly supernatural occurrence, whether generated by magic or by unnatural beings such as vampires or werewolves, as perfectly ordinary, if perhaps unlikely. Bizarre coincidences are written off to the vagaries of statistical chance. Lights in the sky become weather balloons. That car didn't rise up from the highway and take flight on its own; they must be filming a movie nearby or something.

Sleepers under the influence of this spell cannot trigger Disbelief. They're not seeing a crazy, credulity-straining event; they're perceiving an equivalent occurrence that fits snugly within a materialist, logical worldview.

When checking for Paradox, if all Sleepers who witness a display of vulgar magic are under the influence of this spell, no bonus is applied to the Paradox roll. Covert spells are never seen as Improbable.

A dramatic failure on the casting leaves the targeted Sleeper more attuned to the supernatural, increasing the likelihood and severity of potential Paradoxes. A +3 dice modifier is applied to each Paradox roll for the duration of the current scene.

Each additional blatantly supernatural event after the first allows the Sleeper a new chance to perceive these events accurately. A new contested roll occurs; if the Sleeper breaks the spell, the Sleeper not only sees the new event accurately, but reinterprets all previous ones as supernatural.

With Mind 4, the default duration is prolonged (one scene).

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Blanket of Slumber

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Mind

Although Guardians of the Veil can cast the spell in advance, as explained above, they often find this rote useful in retrospect, to prevent rumors of the supernatural spreading among the great unwashed. This rote, which requires Mind 4, can be cast as a lasting spell long after the occult incident. The subject then revises her memories to fit a mundane explanation proposed by the mage, who casts the spell while engaging her in conversation.

False Fame (Mind ●●●)

In this day and age, in the culture we live in, celebrity matters. People want the status of celebrity for its own sake, divorced from any merit or achievement. There are so many celebrities now, in so many fields, that it's impossible to keep track of them. A clever magician can use this to his own advantage, creating in the people he meets the rather unsettling sensation that the man standing before them is famous, and they know him — if only they could remember what his name was.

The mage gets preferential treatment. The best table in the restaurant. Front-of-the-line entry into the club without being on the guest list. He gets to misbehave — within reason — and given a lot more slack than a nobody would get. They indulge his eccentric behavior. He receives the perks of being famous without any of the trouble.

Having said that, overuse of this spell can be risky. Conning the world into thinking you're famous is one thing, but having your picture taken while you're about your mystic business is quite another.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Part of the effect of this spell is to make the target slightly star-struck. A target who's less likely to be impressed by a minor celebrity — a cynical Hollywood agent, for example — might get a bonus to his contesting dice pool of one to three dice. Likewise, casting False Fame on someone from a culture in which celebrity isn't a big deal — a tribal culture in the developing world, for example — would also give the targets similar bonuses to their dice pools, although in a world where subsistence farmers in rural India own DVD players, people who aren't impressed by celebrities are getting very rare indeed.

Dots in the Fame Merit increase the Potency or Target factors of the spell, by one factor for each dot. Dots in the Occultation Merit subtract from the mage's dice pool.

Free Council Rote: VIP

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize + Mind

Sometimes, schmoozing is the only way to get by, and sometimes you have to cheat. This rote is fairly popular among some of those Free Council mages who practice their art among the doyennes of the entertainment industry. It's often useful in some circles to *look* more impressive than you *are*.

Transfer Will (Mind ●●●)

The mage effects a transaction between two individuals, the recipient and the donor, permanently shifting a Willpower dot from the latter to the former.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The recipient must have recently sacrificed a dot of Willpower to relinquish control of a spell or to contribute to some other magical working, such as the animation of a homunculus (see p. 151). The recipient regains the lost Willpower dot, and the donor loses a dot.

The spell only works in the case of an entirely willing donor, who may not be in any way coerced, tricked or mentally influenced.

Silver Ladder Rote: Spreading the Burden

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Mind

The Silver Ladder finds this useful when one of its members has the capacity to work a taxing spell that will

mostly benefit someone else. The former mage completes the spell, and the latter pays the toll.

●●●● Adept of Mind

Autopilot (Matter ●●● + Mind ●●●●)

The subject of innumerable *Knight Rider* jokes, this nevertheless useful spell allows the mage to create an artificial mind in an automobile (or any other vehicle the mage knows how to drive or pilot) that is capable of controlling the vehicle, leaving the caster free for other tasks.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The autopilot is a simplified version of the Mind 5 "Psychic Genesis" spell, and is usually created with only the bare minimum of the creator's personality — generally no more than a knowledge of traffic laws and the creator's own knowledge of the geography and roadways of the region. When created, the autopilot has the following Traits: Intelligence 1, Wits 1, Resolve 1, Drive 1. The autopilot is not truly sentient, and thus does not have any Social Attributes. Treat the vehicle's Handling as the autopilot's Dexterity (and do not add the Handling bonus on top of any Dexterity + Drive dice pools). The autopilot's Attributes and Drive Skill may be increased by extra successes on the casting roll on a one-for-one basis.

The autopilot cannot communicate with the caster or anyone else, but it understands and obeys the caster and anyone the caster designates when the spell is cast. The autopilot can obey directions based on destination (e.g. "Go to Louie's Pizza") if the caster knows the destination's location, or the autopilot can follow basic commands (e.g., "Drive North to Warner and take a right," "Accelerate and ram that blue sedan"). Most commands can be delivered reflexively, but some complex commands might require one or more instant actions to convey, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Automatic Drive-By

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Drive + Mind

The Adamantine Arrow recognizes that not all battles take place in ideal circumstances, and trying to split your attention between rush-hour traffic on the freeway and the gun-toting Banishers coming up in the left lane can be a fatal distraction. Arrow mages use this rote to devote their full attention to any potential threats and leave the driving to the autopilot.

Love Spell (Mind ●●●●)

Everybody needs to be loved. Most people want a significant other. Many people just want to get laid.

With the classic love spell, being in love becomes easy, if temporary. The spell makes its target become romantically and/or sexually attracted to the mage who casts the spell. The mage is irresistible. The object of the magician's affection gets sweaty, or feels flutterings in his stomach. He experiences — for a brief period — all the physical and emotional sensations of being madly in love.

In the end, the Love Spell forces someone to want love — and probably to want and have sex — against that person's natural will. Although no mortal court could ever return a conviction, many mages see no real difference between forcing someone to *want* to have sex with you and simply forcing someone to have sex.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The Striking Looks Merit adds one factor to the Potency or Duration of the spell for every two dots possessed in the Merit (that is, Striking Looks 2 adds one factor; Striking Looks 4 adds two factors).

An unlikely match might inflict penalties of –1 dice or more to the mage's dice pool. If the attraction is particular unlikely (for example, in the case of a homophobic heterosexual man of strong religious convictions who is made to fall in love with another man and spend the night with him), the Aspect of the spell becomes Improbable, and the mage must spend a point of Mana to cast it.

Depending on its results, casting this spell might require a Wisdom degeneration check.

Silver Ladder Rote: Gift of Venus

Dice Pool: Presence + Socialize + Mind

Thedë, Provost of Carmarthen, was the inheritor of a centuries-long Silver Ladder breeding program, designed to isolate an "Awakened gene" in human beings. Years of tracking family trees led her to find a likely inheritor of the Awakened bloodline, and this rote allowed the Thrice-Great sorceress to become impregnated by the unknowing Sleeper she chose as the father of her child. Thedë's son, now a teenager, hasn't Awakened yet, but the Provost still holds out hope that he might some day.

Shape Soul Stone (Mind ●●●●)

Soul stones can take any shape, from the fang of a beast to a silver bell. Whether to make the soul stone conceal-

able, transportable or simply beautiful, a mage can use this spell to change the shape of her soul stone.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The mage must touch her soul stone in order to affect it with this spell. She requires only one success on the casting, after which the stone changes to whatever form she desires. Simple shapes are easiest — stones, blocks, things that appear to be plants or parts of a creature. If she wants to make the soul stone appear as something strongly contradictory to the nature of her Path, she loses two dice from her roll. Making a Moros' stone appear as any living thing or an Acanthus' as a shard of bone would qualify.

Forcing the soul stone to hold the form of something more complex, such as a pistol or a light bulb, is harder. Doing so requires an extended Intelligence + Crafts roll to build the Imago, because the mage must fully understand the target object, before a successful casting of the spell. The target number might be three successes for a light bulb but five for an automatic rifle, and each roll takes 15 minutes. If she insists on changing her soul stone's form without crafting the Imago carefully beforehand, she subtracts a number of dice from her roll equal to what would have been the target number on the Intelligence + Crafts roll.

Such an involved process is only necessary if the mage wishes her soul stone to be a *functioning* tool. She can make it *appear* to be a gun or a yo-yo while sparing the complexity with much greater ease.

With five dots in Mind, a mage may use this spell on another mage's soul stone. Unless the other mage is present and willing, his soul stone naturally resists the change by subtracting its creator's Gnosis from the casting roll.

Silver Ladder Rote: Secret Key

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Mind

A soul stone is a mighty thing, and the Silver Ladder appreciates power. There are many reasons to carve a stone from one's own soul, but none to be careless about it. Members of the Silver Ladder who possess their own soul stones and do not bind them into secure Demesnes often use this spell to conceal and protect their soul stones, or even the fact that they possess one.

Suppress Wisdom (Mind ●●●●)

This spell enables a mage to temporarily confound her moral center, allowing her to perform a single, specified act counter to the dictates of Wisdom without fear of degeneration.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Extended (target number = 10 – character's current Wisdom rating)

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

While this spell is in effect, the willworker can perform a single, specific act (declared during casting) that would be considered a transgression for a Wisdom rating of up to three dots lower than her current rating without checking for Wisdom degeneration. (In this case, a "specific act" must be just that: "Killing the Acanthus, Oberon, with a spell," or even, "Beating the leader of the Seers of the Throne pylon to within an inch of his life,"; "Committing murder," or, "Hurting someone," on the other hand, is not a specific act.) Casting this spell more than once per chapter, though, whether upon oneself or another, is cause for immediate Wisdom degeneration, regardless of circumstances or the mage's current Wisdom.

With Mind 5, this spell can be cast upon a willing subject, who must be either a Sleeper or another mage. (In the case of a Sleeper, the transgression specified must be a sin against Morality, rather than Wisdom.)

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Shroud of Tears

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult (for casting on oneself) or Empathy (for another) + Mind

Sometimes, a Guardian's work is accompanied by the flashing of long knives in the dark or the tormented screams of an unwilling subject. This rote enables such a willworker to maintain some semblance of sanity in the face of such grim duties.

Prime Spells

●●● Disciple of Prime

Disguise Spell (Prime ●●●)

As with the Prime 3 "Disguise Resonance" spell, the mage changes the appearance of resonance, but instead of affecting an area, he casts Disguise Spell upon a spell, to make it appear to occult investigators to be a different type of spell than it really is. He cannot change the actual effects of the spell this way, only its resonance and appearance to Mage Sight.

Practice: Veiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

A basic success completely disguises the identity, Gnosis

rating and mastery of the caster. The caster can create fictional Traits to stand in for these, or he can try to replicate those of another mage. The caster must be familiar with the resonance signature of the mage to be mimicked and might need to make an instant Intelligence + Occult roll to get it right (the Storyteller should roll, keeping the result secret).

The mage can disguise one additional quality of the spell's resonance per success: Arcanum composition (making the spell seem to be the product of a different Arcanum and of a higher or lower rank of his choice), Potency (making the spell seem more or less Potent than it is), Targets (making the spell seem to affect more or less people or area than it does) or Duration (making the spell seem to last longer or shorter than it will).

This spell cannot be detected except by a Mage Sight spell with a higher Potency. Even once Disguise Spell is detected, the true resonance of the spell cannot be perceived until it expires.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: J'Accuse

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Investigation + Prime

The Guardians use this spell to plant "evidence" of another willworker's misdeeds, making their own spells seem to have been cast by him — especially when they affect inappropriate targets or places, such as those declared off-limits by the Consilium. The Guardians are the first to call for immediate reprisal against the lawbreaking spellcaster.

Energetic Tass (Forces ●●● + Prime ●●●)

By means of this spell, a mage can craft tass that does not take the shape of a solid material object but, rather, the form of some kind of simple energy (light, heat, electricity or sound). Such tass might be a fire that burns without the need for fuel, or a pattern of shifting lights, crawling arcs of electricity or an otherworldly sound with no discernable source.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert (if cast in an unbelievable way, such as a green flame that burns harmlessly on the mage's fingertips, the spell invokes Disbelief in Sleeper witnesses)

Cost: 1 Mana (minimum)

Successes are allocated between Size and Potency. The Potency of the spell determines how complex the phenomenon created can be.

Successes	Effect
1 success	Fixed white light, ordinary fire, intermittent electrical arcs, monotonous sound
2 successes	Colored light or moving white light, strange but natural fire (blue or red), constant, random electrical arcs, modulating sound
3 successes	Moving multicolored light, unnatural fire (violet or silver), patterned electrical arcs, multilayered complex sound

Mana must be channeled into the tass, and can be withdrawn by a mage skilled in the Prime Arcanum, as normal (see the "Create Tass" spell on pp. 224–225 of **Mage: The Awakening**). This energetic tass can inflict only bashing damage, and then only if in the form of electricity or fire. With Forces 4, and by adding an extra success to the spell's Potency, however, the tass can be made to inflict lethal damage when in such forms.

Note that fire created by this spell does not automatically burn flammable items. Such fire must be made to inflict lethal damage, and the mage must will it to burn like a normal fire. The tass will then burn as normal for as long as the mage actively concentrates on making it do so.

Free Council Rote: Light of Creation

Dice Pool: Wits + Science + Prime

Energy is nothing more than another form of matter, and so a skilled willworker can will into being tass that takes on such immaterial shapes.

Path in the Skin (Prime ●●● + Life ●● or ●●●)

Mages use this spell to imbue their bodies with the properties of a magical tool. See "Body Art, Tattoos and Scarification," p. 100, for the effects of the tool. The caster requires Life 2 to use the spell on herself and Life 3 to use it on another person.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Mages with Prime 4 normally cast this as a permanent spell (using the advanced prolongation factors), but this is not strictly necessary. Unlike most permanent spells, the recipient may cancel the spell at will, as long as the tool to be imbued is one of her own. When the spell is cast upon an unwilling recipient, the target contests with a roll of Resolve + Gnosis.

Note that this spell may be used to inscribe a sorcerer's magical tool on someone *else's* body. Thus, a mage may use her apprentice, companion or animal familiar as a "pentacle" or "sword." The recipient must then be no more than a yard away or at touch range (these are not the same thing, as some mages may use Space to touch their tool-bearer at a distance)

from the spellcaster for him to be able to use his tool.

The mage intending to use the embodied tool must dedicate it before the spell is cast.

Free Council Rote: Tribal Art

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Crafts + Prime

Free Council mages value magic centered in Fallen culture. They use this rote to proclaim this by choosing traditional tribal body art to hone their magical wills. Some Libertines use body art from the "new tribes" of alternative subcultures and even plastic surgery. All orders have equivalents that emphasize imbuing a body with distinctly Atlantean symbols, though what is purely Atlantean is, of course, a matter of debate.



Spells Cloaks (Prime ••• + conjunctional Arcanum)

Cost: 1 Mana

A mage with Prime 2 can add a cloaking effect to his spells when he casts them, making them invisible to a mage's Unseen Senses and making it harder for those with Mage Sight to notice the spell. He spends one Mana upon casting (in addition to any other Mana required for the spell).

Those with Mage Sight can make reflexive Wits + Occult rolls to notice the spell; otherwise, it remains undetected. Targets suffer a –1 dice penalty to this roll per point of Potency of the cloaked spell. If they have some reason to believe there is a cloaked spell nearby, or are scouring the area for supernatural clues anyway, they can see through the spell cloak by exceeding twice its Potency with their scrutiny successes.

•••• Adept of Prime

Scour Other's Pattern (Prime •••• + Life •••)

The mage can scour another person's Pattern just as she can scour her own, changing flesh and blood into Mana. This causes Resistant Damage to the target (see p. 124 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant; subtract target's Stamina

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage must touch her target (with Prime 5, this spell can be cast at sensory range). The target experiences searing pain as flesh boils away into magical energy. Each success inflicts one point of lethal Resistant Damage and gives the caster one point of Mana.

If Scour Other's Pattern is cast upon a mage, however, the target can reap one benefit from this attack. The mage can attempt to take the Mana freed by

the attack into her pool. The target makes a reflexive Stamina + Gnosis roll. If this roll succeeds, the target mage adds one point of Mana to her pool per two successes, up to her usual maximum. The caster is thus denied these points.

This spell cannot be successfully cast more than once on the same target per scene. Use of the spell requires a degeneration roll for mages of Wisdom 4 or more (roll three dice).

Silver Ladder Rote: Lash of the Aether

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Prime – Stamina

Sometimes a Sleeper needs to learn that mages aren't to be trifled with, and sometimes a mage needs to learn his place. The mages of the Silver Ladder don't relish using this spell — it's painful and the wounds take days to heal. But that is sometimes exactly what a hubristic spellcaster needs to realize that magic *cannot* solve all his problems.

●●●●● Master of Prime

Supernal Sense (Prime ●●●●● + Space ●●●)

The mage expands his sense of the Supernal until he can sense the presence and rough location of all active spells within a certain radius.

Practice: Knowing

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage successfully senses all active Supernal magic within one mile of his current location. Each additional success on the roll adds one mile to the spell's range. Currently active spells register, as do any spells activated during this spell's Duration. As the mage knows constantly where these effects are located, he can try to find them. Locating a specific active spell requires an instant Wits + Occult roll. When a spell the caster has detected ends, he loses his sense of where it was. If he still wishes to navigate toward it, he must do so by memory.

This awareness provides only the basic information that a spell is active. In order to learn more about it, the mage must examine it, either in person or through scrying. Additionally, covert magic is significantly more difficult to pinpoint; though the mage can sense it, trying to locate a covert spell well enough to find it applies a –3 dice penalty on the Wits + Occult roll.

The mage notices spell effects performed behind wards only if the Potency of his spell exceeds that of the ward. Consider wards to be behind their own shields for the purposes of avoiding detection. Since the spell's range is its primary factor, a mage must choose to increase its Potency specifically if he wants it to bypass any wards.

Imbued Items and Artifacts do not reveal themselves to the mage unless they are currently in use. Legacy Attainments do not register whatsoever.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Supernal Radar

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy + Prime

The Guardians of the Veil take it upon themselves to police the Awakened—a usually unwilling and unappreciative populace. This rote serves the Guardians well. Using it to sense any active magic, a Guardian can locate and investigate any potential breaches of the Veil, or she can track fleeing mages who don't realize that their personal shielding spells might give them away.

7 Space Spells

●● Apprentice of Space

Astral Beacon (Space ●● + Mind ●●)

Mages use this spell to mark locations in Astral Space so that they can easily be found by allies. The caster marks the location with a specific emotional "signature." Once the caster transmits this signature to another individual using "Voice From Afar" (or another Mind spell that transmits emotions), that individual can travel to the desired astral location once she visits its particular Astral plane (Oneiros, Temenos or Dreamtime).

Practice: Ruling

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The target number depends on the "depth" of the Astral plane in which the beacon is set:

Target Number	Astral Plane
1 successes	Caster's own personal Oneiros
3 successes	Another person's Oneiros
5 successes	Temenos
7 successes	Dreamtime

Following the beacon, the Astral traveler can instantly reach the marked location after reaching the correct plane, unless an Astral entity (or other mage) specifically bars direct access. Such is the case with certain Astral entities, who do not want mages to breach their homes without following the proper protocols. If the Astral location disappears (as is often the case in dreams), the spell ends.

Mysterium Rote: Brand the Worldsoul

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Mind

Mystagogues study the lore of souls with "field research" in the Astral Reaches. When they find a particularly interesting bit of Astral lore, they use Brand of the Worldsoul so that other scholars can find and study these evocative dreams. Other orders have their Astral voyagers, and variations of this rote find use among them all.

Optional Rule: Spatial Command

As an optional rule, the Storyteller can decree that a mage with Space 3 does not need to add one dot to a spell when he casts it as an area-affecting spell. So strong is his command of space and extension that he can manipulate area-affecting factors without requiring increased knowledge of the other Arcana. He must still, however, account for any penalties (for instant castings) or additional successes (for extended castings) levied for increasing the area-affecting spell factors (to grow the area or radius affected) beyond that provided with a basic success.

Implementing this rule makes Space, which is already a very useful Arcanum, even more versatile. Storytellers should think carefully before implementing it into their chronicles.

●●●● Adept of Space

Shatter Space (Space ●●●● + Fate ●●)

This bizarre spell divides an area into "cells" that cease to be geographically contiguous with one another; their spatial interaction is determined randomly. The most common use of the spell is to hinder targets caught in the cells from easily traveling to other cells within the spell's area.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Transitory

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

With one success, the spell effects a five-cubic yard area, and can affect a greater area with each additional success; see the "Area-Affecting" chart on p. 118 of **Mage: The Awakening**. This area is sectioned off into cells by the caster; he can create one division per dot of his Intelligence.

Fortunately, this effect cannot cut objects or living things into pieces when it sections them off into cells. It may, however, wreak indirect havoc with people and objects outside of the spell's area, as they no longer have any spatial relationship with objects inside the spell's area. This might cause buildings to lean (but not collapse), vehicles to make strange detours and other chaotic events (most of which are left to player cleverness and Storyteller discretion).

A target can leave his or her cell by stepping into another, randomly selected cell, even if it is not geographically contiguous. The caster can designate cells in three dimensions, so that a target may step from ground level to a cell in the air. He will then fall, but he might not suffer injury: as he falls from his cell into another, his destination is again randomly determined; if the new cell is on the ground level, he'll only suffer a short fall of a few feet at best. The targets' movements are not hindered, so he might move through several cells of space in a single turn.

In addition, a cell's orientation is randomly shifted, so that a person running forward might suddenly find himself in a cell in which he is running in the opposite or a sideways direction. He can control his orientation and movement *within a cell*, but has no control over the orientation of his randomly chosen destination cell.

In all cases, the Storyteller determines where each cell leads, either randomly (roll dice or use some other method based on the number of cells) or to fit the course of the story.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Shadow Maze

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Subterfuge + Space

In extremis, Guardians use Shadow Maze to cover an escape, because the rote can hinder pursuit most effectively. The rote is cast upon an area occupied by the pursuers, and they are then subject to the area's shifting space and orientations. Mages of all orders have developed similar rotes, though in many cases, they have only been used as a meditation aid or to demonstrate some obscure facet of Space magic.

3. Spirit Spells

● Initiate of Spirit

Gremlins (Spirit ●)

Pilots during World War II told stories about "gremlins," capricious little imps that caused inexplicable mechanical failures that could be traced to no other source. This spell may not conjure gremlins, but a similar result can be had by subtly whispering to a spirit that slumbers in a material object, coercing it to betray its owner and fail to function properly at a critical moment.

Practice: Compelling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The mage must first touch the object to be affected (with Spirit 2, he can cast this spell upon objects at range). Each success incurs a –1 penalty on a single roll to use the target object within the spell's scene long Duration. This penalty only applies to an action over which the object itself might exert some control, such as a gun's ability to shoot straight, but not a sword's ability to be swung accurately (that's a property of the sword's wielder). Obviously, this spell is more effective when cast on objects with complex or moving parts than on simple tools like melee weapons or shovels.

Silver Ladder Rote: Unassailable Regency

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Spirit

When Silver Ladder mages invoke this spell, even the weapons of their enemies recognize the Ladder's rightful authority, betraying their owners and refusing to attack the keepers of the Imperium Mysteriorum.

●●● Disciple of Spirit

Create Fetish Tattoo
(Life ●● or ●●● + Spirit ●●●)

The willworker tattoos his flesh (with Life 2), or that of another (with Life 3), with specially prepared ink suitable to serve as the housing for a spirit. While this spell does not actually bind a spirit, when a spirit is eventually bound into the spell, it enters the ink and not the person. Most mages who make use of this spell create the marks as glyphs in High Speech, so as to be usable for a wide variety of spirits. Otherwise, each such being is apt to require a tattoo that specifically honors the being's nature and purpose (writhing flames for a fire-spirit, or an image of a medicinal plant for one of healing, for example).

Practice: Patterning

Action: Extended (target number = highest Rank spirit that the tattoo can contain)

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The creation of the tattoo itself normally requires an Intelligence + Crafts roll to design and a Dexterity + Crafts roll to render; most self-respecting spirits will refuse to inhabit an aesthetically displeasing image. Other than that, this spell will create out of the substance of the tattoo a housing that can be used in the casting of a "Create Fetish" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 252). Note that such a tattoo is *not* reusable (though, with Spirit 5, the spell may be created with an indefinite Duration, allowing the mage to free one spirit and subsequently bind another in the same tattoo, so long as this spell's Potency meets or exceeds the Rank of the new spirit to be bound. The "Create Fetish" spell would need to be cast upon the new spirit, however.) A spirit bound in the tattoo may be called upon as normal for a fetish. Destroying a significant portion of the tattoo (which usually entails destroying the flesh onto which it is inked) will free the spirit, casting it into Twilight, as with any other ruined fetish.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Otherworldly Brand

Dice Pool: Stamina + Crafts + Spirit

Arrow mages often wear the price of their dedication upon their flesh, and, to many of them, this rote is no different from the scars that they accept as a part of their duties. By binding a spirit under the skin, such willworkers gain yet another armament, one that cannot easily be taken away.

Time Spells

● Initiate of Time

Time's Mark
(Time ● + Matter or Life ●)

The mage can tell the age of a living being or an object.

Practice: Knowing

Action: Instant

Duration: Concentration

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The mage stares intently at the object or target of the spell. She does not need to touch the target. If the spell is successfully cast, the mage knows how much time has passed since the target was born (for a living being, which requires Life 1) or worked into its present form (for an object, which requires Matter 1). Using this spell on unworked natural matter, such as a simple stone, tends to produce a disorienting rush of images as the mage's mind tries to process the sheer onslaught of years bombarding her brain; as such, Time's Mark is much more useful on crafted objects such as works of art or weapons. Using this spell on a book or a piece of paper with writing on it doesn't tell how long ago the words were written (or conceived), only how long ago the book or paper was created. No information about the object or target of this spell is conveyed other than age.

This spell can be used to discern how much time has elapsed since a ghost or vampire's death, but requires the mage to have Death 1.

If the mage has Time 2, she can cast this spell without use of a conjunctional Arcanum.

If the object or being has been artificially aged or its age has been retarded somehow (for instance, a vampire's ghoul doesn't age as long as he continues to drink vampiric blood), this spell detects an anomaly but does not automatically tell the mage how old the being or object is. In this case, the caster can perform an extended scrutiny action, with each roll taking one turn. The number of success required is equal to the target's Resolve (if a living being) or 5 (if an object). The spell's Duration is still concentration, so if the caster is interrupted during this extended examination, the spell expires.

Mysterium Rote: Rings of the Oak

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Investigation + Time

The mages of the Alae Draconis find that, while it's possible to discern a relic's age through scientific or scholarly means, using magic is much more precise.

Optional Rule: Temporal Command

As an optional rule, the Storyteller can decree that a mage with Time 3 does not need to add one dot to a spell to be able to use the advanced prolongation factors. So strong is his command of time that he can manipulate Duration factors without requiring increased knowledge of the other Arcana. He must still, however, account for any penalties (for instant castings) or additional successes (for extended castings) levied for increasing the Duration beyond that provided with a basic success.

Implementing this rule makes the Time Arcanum even more versatile. Storytellers should think carefully before implementing it into their chronicles.

Optional Merit: Ritual Synergy (••• or •••••)

Prerequisite: Gnosis 3 (for •••) or Gnosis 5 (for •••••)

Effect: Some mages learn the techniques of ritual synergy, a form of group ritual that allows those involved to contribute individual parts of a magical working to form a greater whole than any of them can manage alone. Normally, each of the participants of a group ritual must have the ability to cast the spell on his own; mages with this Merit can break those rules.

With Ritual Synergy •••, the mage leading the ritual must have the ability to cast the spell, but those participants who also possess this Merit do not need to know how to cast the spell themselves. The leader rolls his normal dice pool, but each participant's dice pool is equal to his own Gnosis. Any mages who know the primary Arcanum used in the spell can add their dots to this dice pool. (The spell might require Death 3, but one of the participants knows only Death 1; he can still add his Death dot to the dice pool.) Each of the participants, including the leader, must also spend a point of Mana at the beginning of the ritual.

Example: *A cabal wishes to join together into a group ritual casting of Space 2 "Scrying." However, only one member of the cabal knows Space 2. Luckily, the mages have all learned this Merit at three dots, allowing the mage with the requisite Arcanum lore to act as the group leader while the others assist, even though they do not themselves know how to cast the spell.*

With Ritual Synergy •••••, the mage leading the ritual need not know how to cast the entirety of the spell; other participants with this Merit can contribute their personal Arcanum knowledge to conjunctional or combined spells. All participants roll their relevant dice pools (using the Arcanum they are contributing) and spend a point of Mana.

Example: *Adept Solis wishes to cast a conjunctional Fate 4 + Space 2 "Gift of Fortune" spell (see p. 157 in Mage: The Awakening). He knows Fate 4 but not Space 2. He teams with a fellow mage who does know Space 2. They each know the Ritual Synergy Merit at five dots, so each can contribute his personal Arcanum knowledge to the whole of the casting.*

Rotecraft

So many stylistic differences among mages become apparent in the use of rotes. Improvised magic does not require the trappings of mortal occultism or anything else in order to function; though a mage may use one of his tools to help reduce the chance of a Paradox while performing improvised magic, ultimately, improvised magic is about drawing upon the sheer power of the mage's enlightenment and knowledge of the workings of reality to transform the world around him.

Not so, rotes.

Rotes tap into the symbolism of the Supernal World reflected in the Fallen World. Rotes use the skills of the Fallen World — knowledge, aptitudes and social

engineering — as a means of drawing power down from a Watchtower. *As Above, So Below* goes the occult aphorism, and the use of rotes exemplifies this. While the unAwakened may technically learn the outward form of rotes, they do not experience the duality of enlightenment inherent in being a mage. They themselves are not a conduit between Supernal and Fallen Worlds.

This is also the reason why the use of rotes reduces the chance of a Paradox. Essentially, the mage fools the Abyss into thinking that what he is doing is of the Fallen World by using the trappings of that world. It's isn't the raw exertion of an Awakened will; it is a clever ruse, a connecting of Supernal and Fallen Worlds that relies on not just the mage himself, but on connecting symbolism that transcends the mage.

In many ways, rotes allow the use of real-world cultural practices and beliefs as tools for manifesting Supernal energy more solidly. A rote draws on the encoded power of the Supernal already present in the Fallen World: magical, mythical, scientific and societal symbols and actions that all have greater meaning in the Supernal World.

The Imago

Essential to the successful use and teaching of rotes is the Imago of the spell. In improvised spellcasting, the Imago is simply an expression of creative, enlightened imagination: the mage imagines an outcome, tapping into the symbolism of his Path, and makes the outcome real through drawing power down from his Watchtower into that thought-form.

The Imago of a rote works the same way, except that the mental image never changes. The hardest part of learning a spell rote is in the mastery of the rote's Imago, which must be imagined the same way every time. The Imago is the idealized, symbolic rendering of that link between the Supernal and the Fallen Worlds.

The better this rendering is acted out in the real world, the more solidly the link is formed. The use of mudras facilitates this, though the use of actual rote equipment — items that are part of the Imago of the spell — can as well.

Mudras

Mudras are the hand signs and bodily gestures of rote spellcasting. There are certain concepts intrinsic to a rote's Imago that cannot be expressed in standard symbolism. Such ideas are symbolized by gestures unique to the order that originally taught the rote. (Hand signs are not the only form a mudra can take; see "Mudras and the Art of Gesture," p. 92.)

Each order has different sets of gestures to symbolize the Arcana, the Practices, the Paths and a thousand other things that have no easy translation into worldly symbolism. Using a part to symbolize the whole is not enough: a leaf is not a sufficient symbol for the Arcanum of Life, and a skull is not a symbol for the essence of the Moros. The more completely a given symbol conveys a concept, the more solidly Supernal power can be channeled through that symbol to ground out in the Fallen World.

Improvised magic does not have this requirement, for the symbolic element isn't necessary in the face of the sheer enlightened will of the mage. He need not communicate "this thing that shall represent the sum total of the Force Arcanum" — he simply embodies it in his knowledge.

A rote, however, does require this symbol — thus the mudras. Each gesture represents a Supernal concept. Each order has different mudras for each of the Paths, each of the Arcana, and for all of the potential factors involved in a spell. There are also other mudras that are only used in certain Skill-based paradigms of rote-building.

For instance, ideas of preservation of knowledge, transmission of information and destruction of ordered systems are all inherent in a Computer-based paradigm,



so there are mudras that communicate these. Thus, a Forces Computer-based rote meant to cause electricity to leap out and harm someone may include the mudras for Forces, for the Target factors involved and the mudra for the destruction of an ordered system (in this case, the body of the target).

Adamantine Arrow Mudras

The mystic hand symbols of the Adamantine Arrow all represent aspects of defense, attack or the preparation for such. They are strengthening and empowering hand signs. The Adamantine Arrow teaches that its hand signs are themselves weapons, tools through which sufficient, enlightened will might work order — or violence — upon an unruly reality. Adamantine Arrow mudras include particularly threatening gestures, such as the upraised fist or the imperiously pointing finger. They also incorporate the hand postures of various martial arts fists. Other bodily gestures include martial arts katas, kicks, stomps or similar athletic movements.

Free Council Mudras

The mudras of the Free Council are unique, and have a distinctly culturally specific feel to them. Normal, mundane hand signs from the modern age, such as the American sign for "Okay" (the thumb and forefinger touching to form a circle, and the other fingers upraised) and hand signs that are considered rude have all found their way into rotes in one shape or another. Some unique forms of sign language also act as rotes in Free Council rotes.

Guardians of the Veil Mudras

Secretive hand signs have been a part of secret societies for as far back as such organizations go. The Guardians of the Veil sometimes allow their own hand signs to be used by such parts of their Labyrinth; other times, the Guardians may absorb secret societies and discover some diluted Supernal resonance in the hand signs its members use. Guardians of the Veil rotes include secret signs used to communicate between spies and the *kuji-kiri* hand signs of certain cults of Japanese assassins. Bodily gestures might include pantomimes that somehow express the rote's effect.

Mysterium Mudras

The communication of concepts lies at the core of mudras as a whole, and as such, the Mysterium boasts an extensive variety. The Mysterium is said to maintain a variety of secret mudra systems, including one that the order members claim incorporates a hand symbol for each of the known sigils of High Speech. If this is true, the Mysterium had perhaps the only example of an Awakened sign language. The Mysterium claims that, just as Supernal secrets bleed into the cultural paradigms of the world, this mudra system is the basis for all the world's known mudras, especially those depicted in Vedic holy statuary. The truth of this boast, however, is unverifiable.

Silver Ladder Mudras

The mudras of the Silver Ladder express concepts of authority and duty. Hand symbols have been used to identify members of royal and imperial bloodlines, fraternal organizations among members of nobility and the upper-crust and by those in positions of authority down the ages. All of these are found in the imperious mudras of the Silver Ladder. Many paintings and statues of gods and leaders of mortals have depicted them making strange hand signs: many of these are recollections of the mudras used by members of the Silver Ladder. Body movement mudras might include grand poses or tilting of the head so that the mage seems to be looking down his nose at the rote's target.

Factor Bonuses

Mages create a specific scenario — often one that draws on symbolism appropriate to the Skill in use — in the Imago of a rote. Canny mages are capable of taking this symbolism one step further, by actually using items or undertaking actions integral to the rotes in question. This assists the rote in carrying out its essential purpose: the grounding out of Supernal energy into the Fallen World.

In game terms, certain rotes can include factor bonuses. These are expressed as bonuses, similar to the way normal equipment dice bonuses are expressed, with one difference: these are not dice, and they are applied only toward the allocation of additional spell factors (Potency, Target or Duration) during the casting of the rote.

Thus, a Death rote that draws on Greek Persephonean symbolism might grant a +1 factor bonus for the donning of a veil and a +2 factor bonus for the eating of three pomegranate seeds. If the spellcasting roll fails, these factor bonuses obviously do not come into play — they only benefit a successful casting.

These bonuses are not always due simply to items or substances used in the casting. Factor bonuses can also be introduced by a specific action (or actions; multiple factors can stack together) taken right before the spell is cast, as well as to specific times, dates or locations in which the rote is cast.

See "Sample Rotes," below, for examples of factor bonuses. Some bonuses apply only to specific factors, while others can be allocated to any factor.

Rote Skills

The Skills used in the performance of rotes are essential to the performance of that rote. With improvised magic, the

simple exertion of an enlightened will is all that is necessary to accomplish the effect. Rotes actually involve *doing* something besides willing changes into the world; indeed, rotes are methods by which the performance of some action or endeavor brings magic into being. The act itself is magical.

As a result, doing something while using a rote Skill is sometimes necessary. Many modern rotes are built on fairly subtle skills, in accordance with the requirement for secrecy. This has not always been so, however; many historical rotes, particularly from primal or shamanic cultures, may involve noticeable displays of skill at arms, dramatic feats of endurance or loud threatening of spirits.

However, the will necessary to simultaneously accomplish both Supernal and mundane ends with a single use of a Skill eludes most mages — the focus necessary for the magic is so intense that the mage is unable to direct that effort to accomplishing a significant end in the mortal sphere as well. Many Adamantine Arrows study the martial arts and have rotes based on the Brawl Skill but making the Skill roll to cast the rote does not allow the Adamantine Arrow to also kick a foe.

Despite this fact, doing both simultaneously is possible, for those mages who train themselves in the Law of Embodiment Merit

Optional Merit: Law of Embodiment (●●●●●)

Prerequisite: Gnosis 3, knowledge of at least five rotes

Effect: The mage who has studied the occult Law of Embodiment understands the deep secrets of the point of manifestation, where the Supernal macrocosm connects with the Fallen microcosm and true magic happens. These magicians are very skilled with rotes, and capable of performing mundane and magical actions nearly simultaneously.

First, the mage must adapt a rote he knows to this purpose. Even if he cannot normally create the rote, he can adjust any rote that he learns by spending one experience point per rote. Once he has done this, he can Embody that rote in action.

The process is relatively simple: the Embodied rote's Imago is created in the Awakened will first, and then with only a slight pause, the action is carried out in the physical world. When dealing with instant actions, there is some measure of delay; to outsiders, it appears as though the mage spends one turn focusing, and then acts, his action having both physical and magical purpose. (In game terms, the mage loses his place in the Initiative roster. He now acts last in the turn, after everybody else has taken an action.)

In such an instant, an Adamantine Arrow might focus his will and then lash out with an eagle-claw fist at his opponent, inflicting both punching damage and casting the spell "Life Force Assault."

The mage rolls the rote's Attribute + Skill dice pool (Dexterity + Athletics, in the case of the "Life Force Assault" rote). If it is successful, he then rolls his Arcanum dice for the spell (Life, in the case of "Life Force Assault"). The successes from the two rolls do not mix — the mundane action is resolved separately from the spellcasting action, even though they take place simultaneously. If the mundane roll fails, the spellcasting portion of the action cannot be performed (the Arcanum dice are not rolled).

A target's defense is considered separately for both rolls. First, the mundane dice roll is affected by any condition that would normally affect such an action — the target's Defense against melee attacks, any modifiers for cover or concealment, range penalties, etc. Second, the spellcasting roll is affected by any defense the target is normally allowed (a contested roll, or subtracting a Resistance Attribute from the casting dice pool).

An Embodied casting might not be as effective as a normal casting if the caster's mundane dice pool isn't very good, but since a mundane action is accomplished at the same time, it can prove worthwhile for certain spells — especially those that require the caster to touch the target (so long as the rote Skill used is Athletics, Brawl or Weaponry).

Mental Skills

Among mages, knowledge is indeed power. Knowledge unlocks the secrets of the universe, but also turns those secrets into potent tools at the beck and call of the Awakened mind.

Academics

Wizards are attributed with great knowledge in legends, not simply of the occult, but of mathematics, history and the like. Rotes that are Academics based usually involve the mental solving of ciphers, or the use of bibliomancy, numerology or gematria.

Computer

Computer rotes are quite powerful, as most techgnostic mages would attest. The computer is an excellent symbol for interaction with reality with the intent of transforming, or "reprogramming," it. Many technomancers load graphic representations of aspects of reality and then change them, literally hacking reality.

Crafts

Most often used with rotes intended to be cast with extended spellcasting, the idea of magic being inherent in human handicrafts is found in nearly every culture. These include the sorceries of blacksmiths who hammer spells into their foes as they work their forges, poppet dolls sewn to look like the target of the spell and the avant-garde folding of origami using paper that represents the patterns of reality.

The Free Council makes extensive use of the Crafts skill, as part of their magical system of techné. Free Council magic focuses not on power ripped from elsewhere, but on the inherent creativity and innovation of the human spirit. The Crafts Skill is an excellent symbolic representation of that Supernal ideal.

Investigation

Reality is revealed in the world around the mage as though he were Sherlock Holmes. The mage takes it one step further, however. An Investigation rote may involve the understanding that if one finds a proof of something in the world, that something automatically may exist; the mage who finds a clue that indicates a target has taken an electric shock may, through the use of Supernal will and the Forces Arcanum, make it so. Investigation rotes are favored for Unveiling, Knowing and similar Practices.

The Guardians of the Veil, Mysterium and the Seers of the Throne all incorporate the techniques of Investigation in their rote magics. Magic is, at its core, the search for understanding and knowledge; ergo, the mundane applications of seeking information reflect this Supernal concept well. All three orders know that through their use of discovery of things in the Fallen World, they might make manifest things from the Supernal.

Medicine

The practices of medicine are not limited to the healing of the body: "The body makes the poison," said Theophrastus. All of the world — even reality itself — might be said to have a body. If this is so, the Awakened healer can use the same techniques for changing it. If the land reflects the king's health, then what one does to the king is likewise reflected in the land.

Adamantine Arrows understand this well — the body is the greatest weapon, so many of their magics begin with a body as a symbol of their magical intentions.

Occult

When most Sleepers think of magic, this is what they think of. Of all the skills in the world, there are more rotes based on Occult themes, for cultures tend to store their vaguest memories of Atlantean lore in mysticism and occultism. Cabalist sigils, the use of crystals and herbs, and all manner of mystical trappings associated with witchcraft and wizardry are the domain of Occult rotes.

The Mysterium and the Seers of the Throne are those orders most likely to utilize the occult trappings of the mundane world, seeing the Supernal resonance. Both orders seek to hide such arcane secrets from the world around them, for they are powerful — and one uses such secrets for oneself.

Politics

Conspiracies among the rich and powerful, who arrange *sub rosa* changes, are a staple of all cultures. Indeed, those with political power are the ones most likely to be attributed with occult or divine power — thus, the canny political mage is willing to use the trappings and techniques of statescraft. If the mage is expected to command reality with Awakened power, many mages — particularly those of the Silver Ladder — elect to do so by means of mortal politics as well.

Science

There was a time in the world when magic and science were one and the same. Both were the results of a strong, knowledgeable mind viewing the way the world worked, learning its secrets and applying them to his purposes. So, it should come as no surprise that though many mages favor the trappings of occultism, some prefer to delve into the Supernal symbolism that can be found in science.

The foremost pioneers in this direction are the mages of the Free Council, who delve into the sciences of every era for their secrets. Alchemists sit at Assembly with biological chemists, and astrologers discuss the magic of techné with theoretical astrophysicists. To all of them, the pursuit of science — indeed, the evolution of science — is the foremost example of humankind's innately magical nature. So, these mages look to humankind's advancements for the echoes of the Supernal.

Physical Skills

The body is capable of amazing things, and more than one mage has worked his magic through the use of his body as the ultimate magical tool. Martial magi, *shinobi* sorcerers, those who pursue the perfection of the body as a symbol of the perfection of spirit: all of these incorporate these skills as their magical techniques.

Athletics

The exertion of the body has, in many points of history, represented other forces at work. Through Supernal sympathy, the mage-athlete may represent the pure actions of the mind affecting the world through the symbolism of his body. Many athletics rotes involve martial arts katas, impressive and intricate gymnastics and displays of tremendous power or grace.

Of all the orders, the Adamantine Arrow understands this fact best. Arrow mages have incorporated all manner of athletic prowess and its symbolism into their workings, from the motions of the Aztec head-ball games as symbolic of sacrifice to the emulation of gods and heroes in the Olympics to the precision of moving meditation in many of the world's martial arts.

Brawl

Whether as a symbol of defense, or the imposition of a strong will over a weaker one, the fighting arts have long held a mystical significance. Many cultures attribute

tremendous magical powers to their mightiest warriors, and the higher arts of unarmed combat seem magical to those who view them.

Drive

In ancient times, many of the greatest gods were known for their conveyances: the goat-pulled cart of Thor, the celestial chariots of Helios and Apollo, the barge of Ra. Magics of travel and geomancy have often been performed through the use of chariots and wagons in history, and even today, a truly skillful driver is admired. Is it any wonder, then, that a few mages have managed to incorporate these traits as Supernal symbolism in their own magic, manifesting luck in driving, the ability to lose those who follow them and travel great distances while behind the wheel?

Firearms

In modern times, the firearm holds much of the symbolic power that the sword did in times past: firearms are a symbol of tyranny and liberation, a symbol of protection and predation. Ultimately, this weapon is the imposition of will upon the world around one. Thus, those mages who are inclined to find magical relevance in modern symbols have found that the use of gun-play as a magical skill is not only possible, but quite useful — particularly in violent situations.

Larceny

Theft has often played an important role in legendry, from the theft by Prometheus, bringing gifts to humankind, to Hermes' willful theft of the sacred herd of Apollo. Many magicians understand the Supernal relevance of thievery: it is the willful change of the world around one, the re-appropriation of the "way things should be." It is an act of rebellion against the so-called natural order, and a few mages point out that this stagnant, mundane "natural order" is aligned with the Abyss, claiming that the very use of magic is the highest criminal act.

Stealth

Moving unseen and remaining shrouded in mystery — these are the tools of a mage. In nearly every culture, magicians are accorded roles of secret-keepers, considered to be lurkers and stalkers, and known for their powers of invisibility. The act of moving without being detected may represent the movement of inevitable Fate, or the motions of secret forces behind the world.

None understand this better than the Guardians of the Veil, who work diligently to maintain the veil of secrecy that protects the Awakened. Magics of remaining unseen are in their repertoire, certainly, but there is more to the Guardians' mastery of Stealth as a rote Skill than this: they understand that the very act of placing oneself in the ranks of the unseen forces of the world grants one the ability to influence that world — every culture has acknowledged that, whether as gods or laws of physics, the unseen forces of the world exert the most control over it.

Survival

Understanding the ways of the wilderness has always been viewed with a certain type of mystery by those who consider themselves "civilized." From the strange powers superstitious Roman troops attributed to the Picts north of Hadrian's Wall to the romantic notion of the "noble savage" by Western Europeans for nearly every other culture they met, humans seem to somehow intrinsically understand that knowledge of the land is magical.

None understand these secrets quite so well as the Mysterium. Despite their reputation as library-bound academics, a significant portion of the Mysterium believes not in finding secrets in books but in living the experiences that get written down. Mysterium explorers, archaeologists and tomb-raiders explore the secrets of Survival rotes and use them to ensure their success.

Weaponry

Every culture has its heroes, and the majority of those heroes are warriors of some kind or another, capable of incredible feats of arms. Many societies believed that those who approached the most potent extremes of martial skill were capable of wielding magical powers. Rotes that draw on the Weaponry Skill hearken back to these pieces of Supernal truth found in the cultures of the world. Many magical traditions of the world use a weapon as a tool of sorcery, as a symbol of will, change or authority.

Social Skills

Magic is about interactions — the interaction between the Supernal Realm and the Fallen World, the interaction between reality and the Awakened will, the interaction between spirit world and physical. Interaction among people is another example of this powerful liminal property.

Animal Ken

Comprehending the ways of animals takes more than academic knowledge. There is a deeper property involved, one that many shamanic cultures understand. Those who are truly skilled at this art seem to hold almost magical powers, and those who excel at it all agree — the best technique for dealing with animals is to do so on their own level. To interact with an animal, it is best to be as close to an animal as possible — understanding it, reacting to it the way it expects. Many magics that derive from Animal Ken are highly totemic in nature, with the mage assuming the traits or attitudes of animals in order to accomplish his ends.

Empathy

Many mages possess a deep intuitive understanding of the people and world around them. This intuition allows a mage to not only comprehend those with whom he deals but to tailor his magics accordingly. The merging of Supernal power with human empathy results in powerful rotes, especially those of the Unveiling or Knowing practices. Wisdom does not come from doing; wisdom comes from knowing, and those who turn their magic to those ends begin to understand that.

Expression

All cultures have valued the arts of Expression for their ability to communicate deep meanings in ways that can be understood. Religious drama, shamanic dances, hymns and psalms—all of these have been used to communicate in symbol and suggestion, using the forms of the Fallen World to most closely approximate Supernal truths. Many of these practices are still used by mages today.

As those who act as shepherds of Sleepers, the Silver Ladder excel at the magics of Expression, encoding magic in forms readily accessible to the masses. Many Silver Ladder mages are excellent public speakers, but others are powerful and moving writers, or even performers of some kind. Into all of their acts of creation and expression can be woven Supernal power.

Intimidation

Fear is a very potent weapon, causing lizard-brain reactions in even normally very logical people. Human beings spend their entire lives fleeing from one fear or another, seeking to avoid the things that terrify them: being alone, conforming, growing old, being a child, having power, being powerless. A mage capable of wielding the very essence of fear is able to use it not just against living creatures, but with the proper magics, against all of reality. He can cow spirits with a look and threaten dire imprecations against the invisible forces of nature if they do not do his will.

The defenders of the Atlantean orders, the Adamantine Arrows, are masters of these kinds of magics. Though they are competent warriors, Arrow theories also teach that fear can end a conflict as easily as it can cause it. Seeming to be sufficiently dangerous can often provide the safety that even knowing how to fight effectively cannot.

Persuasion

Getting others to do what you want is not enough— any tyrant can use threats to coerce others. Subtlety is the essence of persuasion, however, and mages excel at subtlety. The ability to not only get others to do what one wishes but to make them do so with a willing heart might indeed be called magical. Certainly, many of those who are skilled at this are called "silver tongued," and "devils." Magic that draws upon the arts of persuasion is similarly subtle, convincing not just people, but entire aspects of reality, from spirits to the weather to the very stones.

It should come as no surprise, then, that several of the orders embrace Persuasion as a tool for the working of magic. Ideas are the core of Free Council magic, and the ability to convince others of one's theories is highly prized among them. Likewise, the Silver Ladder and Seers of the Throne use these techniques to exert control over the world that they claim as their own.

Socialize

The graceful arts of society hold a magic all their own. In the situations in which such etiquette is expected, real power is wielded. Political careers are destroyed or assured, businesses grow or collapse and entire dynasties are made or ruined at dinner parties, cocktail gatherings and formal occasions. A skillful mage can tap into the centuries of accumulated assumed power in these little rituals of etiquette to make her will manifest in the world. A turn of phrase, a choice of whom to speak with — even something as innocuous as choosing a particular piece of jewelry or style of clothing — can exert an influence.

Streetwise

Similar to Survival, those who are canny in the ways of the urban sprawl acquire some kind of glamour to them. Those capable of navigating the darkened parts of the city's underworld and not only surviving but thriving have an indefinable allure to those who cannot. Mages who utilize Streetwise-based rotes understand this concept, and take it to the next level: they know not just the folk on the streets but the very streets themselves.

Subterfuge

Deceit and lies shroud mysteries of all kind — most especially the Mysteries of the Supernal. Secrets naturally excite the imagination, and those with the ability to lie effectively can almost be said to rewrite history and personalities. Mages take this to the next level, literally using this Skill to do just that.

The Guardians of the Veil utilize Subterfuge rotes in the protection of the Mysteries, creating layer after layer of falsehood that must be navigated past before finding the truth. For many Guardians, this deception becomes instinctive. Silver Ladder mages find the necessity of this Skill unpleasant but real in their dealings with Sleepers, as well. A skillfully woven lie allows Sleepers to continue living their lives unaffected by the goings-on behind the curtain before which the Silver Ladder stands as the guardian.

Sample Rotes

The following rotes are samples that use the descriptions above, including factor bonuses. The rotes are presented by order.



Adamantine Arrow

Heavenly Wrath Fist (Forces ●●●)

Spell: "Call Lightning" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 168)

Dice Pool: Strength + Athletics + Forces

Making the mudra-fist of Heavenly Wrath, the Adamantine Arrow gathers to himself the aspect of the avenging heavens, smiting that which is base and unenlightened, that it may be purified — either in enlightenment, or in destruction. The Imago of this spell involves the target standing upon a copper dais inscribed with the Atlantean symbols for "justice," "punishment" and "righteousness."

Factor Bonuses:

— Wearing the traditional three copper rings of the Heavenly Wrath Fist: +1 factor.

— Physically striking someone in punishment for hurting another or breaking the law: +1 Potency factor if cast within two turns of the strike.

Long Hand Technique (Space ●●●)

Spell: "Ranged Blow" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 238–239)

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Investigation + Space

This technique allows the magus to channel his *qi* into the same patterns used to strike an opponent. The only difference is, the opponent need not be standing next to the martial artist to be struck by that *qi*. In the Imago, the mage sees himself send forth his Supernal mastery as an image of himself standing before the foe.

Factor Bonuses:

— Performing tai chi movements while casting the spell: +1 factor if performed right before or during casting.

Paralyzed With Fear (Life ●●●)

Spell: "Degrading the Form" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 186)



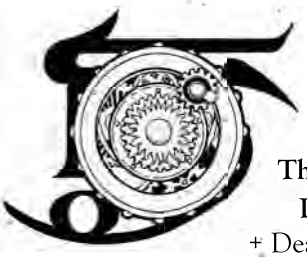
Dice Pool: Presence + Athletics + Life – Stamina

It is said that the mighty war cries of a powerful warrior can turn the bowels of his foes to cold water, and set his knees to quaking. With this rote, the Arrow can literally paralyze his foe with fear. The precise manifestation of this is up to the mage himself: he may cause his foe's strength to abandon him from fear, or set his hands and feet to quaking or cause his enemy's breath and very constitution to abandon him. The Imago of this spell involves the mighty shout from the Heavens utterly wracking his foe, cracking bones and blasting him with Supernal power drawn down from the Watchtower of the Stone Book.

Factor Bonuses:

— Bellowing a powerful war-cry: +1 Potency or Target factor.

— Striking down an ally of the target's within the past two turns: +2 Potency or Duration factors.



Free Council

P0lt3rg3ist (Death ●●●●)

Spell: "Haunting" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 143)

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Persuasion + Death versus ghost's Resistance

There are Internet legends of a virus so potent that it wreaks terrible havoc on the system and surroundings of the computer that is infected by it. In truth, this is the P0lt3rg3ist (Internet slang for "poltergeist") virus, a component of a "Haunting" rote devised by a Free Council hacker in the early '90s. The resulting ghost haunts targets that come near its anchor (a computer system).

Factor Bonuses:

— Actually infecting a target computer with the P0lt3rg3ist virus code: +2 factors

Prayer to San Cipriano (Prime ●)

Spell: "Dispel Magic" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 220)

Dice Pool: Composure + Occult + Prime versus target spell's Potency

This rote was created by an Obrimos Catholic priest, who considered Atlantean ideas to be heresy, sometime in the 1800s. He ended up among the Nameless, training a few apprentices in the service of San Cipriano, the patron saint of magic and those who needed protection against witchcraft. Similar to many other cultural expressions of magic that eschew the legend of Atlantis, this prayer ended up among Free Council mages, who value it for its ability to remove magics. The Imago of the spell involves an image of the saint laying hands on the magic, and then taking it with him when he climbs back up the Watchtower to the Aether.

Factor Bonuses:

— Medallion of San Cipriano: +1 factor.

— Burning a candle dedicated to San Cipriano: +1 factor.

— Sprinkling target of spell with holy water: +1 factor

Ultimate Overload (Forces ●●●●●)

Spell: "Electromagnetic Pulse" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 177)

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Forces

In the Imago, the mage crosses the vital flow of power within a machine into a terrible pulse of electromagnetic energy, forming the Atlantean rune for "cessation." Most Free Council mages find it very helpful to actually use this rote on a machine in the area.

Factor Bonuses:

— Centering the spell on an electrical or electronic machine in sensory range: +1 factor.

— Actually opening up such a machine and crossing wires physically: +3 factors.

Guardians of the Veil

Dance of the Sure Knife (Matter ●●)

Spell: "Alter Accuracy" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 196)

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Occult + Matter

Sword- and knife-dances can be found in many cultures; many performances are intended to exalt the weapon as a symbol of peace, power or authority. With this rote, the mage taps into the Supernal symbolism in these dances, empowering her weapon to strike fast and true. The Imago of this rote is a flowing dance that symbolically "writes" the Atlantean rune for "surety" in the four directions with the weapon.

Factor Bonuses:

— Using a weapon consecrated as an Atlantean tool: +1 factor.

— Actually performing the minute-long full dance before casting the spell: +2 factors.

Spatial Burglary (Space ●●)

Spell: "Follow Through" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 234–235)

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Investigation + Space

All things in the physical world may serve as a symbol of some action or activity in the magical realms. Even something as mundane as picking a lock to a door might serve in this function — a knowledgeable lockpick who discovers where a spatial rift has recently been opened might be able to pry that portal back open, given sufficient time and skill, as well as magical prowess. In the Imago, the mage pulls power down the Pandemonaic Watchtower and directs it through his lockpicking instruments, which rip open the doorway with a demonic shriek.

Factor Bonuses:

— Using a set of lockpicks: +1 factor.

Mask of Mediocrity (Mind ●●)

Spell: "Incognito Presence" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 208)

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge + Mind

With the mudra of *salheyia* ("unimpressiveness"), the mage using this rote may sneak about unnoticed, carefully placing himself where those who see him regard him as simply another part of the faceless crowd through which the mage stalks. In the Imago, the mage pulls a silk mask over his face and disappears utterly.

Factor Bonuses:

— Wearing clothing that blends in with those in the environment: +1 factor.

Mysterium

Circle and Triangle (Spirit ●●)

Spell: "Lesser Spirit Summons" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 247)

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Persuasion + Spirit versus Resistance

A simple circle and triangle may be used to compel angels and other spirits into the presence of the magus. A simple design in chalk or etched in dirt will suffice, but most take the

time to use the proper cabalist names of God and the names of angels in Hebrew. The truly desperate mage can simply visualize these designs in the Imago of the spell, however. This spell is often worked ritually (as an extended action).

Factor Bonuses:

— Using a full cabalist summoning circle, which takes 10 minutes to prepare: +2 factors.

— Speaking the holy names in Hebrew and Enochian: +1 factor.

History Repeats Itself (Time ●●)

Spell: "Augury" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 258–259)

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Time

Through the practice of bibliomancy, the mage using this rote flips through a book, calming his mind and allowing him to pick out seemingly random passages that form an answer to a question about the future. A book of some kind must be used for this rote, though the Imago uses a book of history.

Factor Bonuses:

— History book: +1 factor.

Supernal Immanence (Prime ●●●●●)

Spell: "Create Hallow" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 230)

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult + Prime

All of the Fallen World was, at one point, in connection with the Supernal Realms. Some places — Hallows — maintain this connection naturally, but all things in the mundane world still resonate with that power. Through the seeking of Supernal symbolism in a given location, the mage may "remind" a piece of the Fallen World of that sympathy, and thus awaken the Supernal there. The Imago of this spell is quite powerful, as the power that is pulled down from the Watchtower grounds out with a great boom, and shafts of light erupt from the ground, awakening it.

Factor Bonuses:

— The site is considered taboo or sacred: +1 to +3 factors, depending on what part of the population holds that belief.

Silver Ladder

Noblesse Oblige (Mind ●●●●)

Spell: "Telepathic Control" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 216)

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion + Mind versus Resolve + Gnosis

Those in positions of authority are owed obedience in return for the sacrifices they make and the protection they give to those below them. This rote, the Imago of which involves the mage placing an orichalcum crown upon his head and all bowing to him, invokes that power.

Factor Bonuses:

— Wearing the symbol of a gold crown (often a ring or lapel pin in the shape of a simple crown): +1 factor.

— The target of the spell is someone over whom the mage has actual, direct authority: +1 factor.

Smear Campaign (Fate ●●)

Spell: "The Evil Eye" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 151–152)

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Fate – Composure

A word whispered in the right ear can destroy the credibility and reputation of a political foe — how is this any different from a curse meant to do the same? The mages of the Silver Ladder know that there is no difference, and thus find a Supernal resonance in the old-fashioned political smear campaign. The Imago of this spell involves the speaking of imprecational words about the target; of course, the spell is usually more powerful if this is done in the very presence of the target (or by sympathetic magic). Most often, though, the Silver Ladder mages speak against their enemies just before they see them. The penalties inflicted by this Evil Eye effect usually manifest in situations dealing with politics, interpersonal relationships or at moments when the target is in the public's eye.

Factor Bonuses:

— Having spoken ill of a political foe in the last 24 hours to someone who was neutral or allied to that foe: +1 factor.

— Having undertaken a full-fledged, relatively public smear campaign against that foe of at least a week's duration: +2 factors.

Song of Orpheus (Death ●)

Spell: "Speak With the Dead" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 135)

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Death

As Orpheus' music could move even the dead to weep and speak with him, the mage using this rote calls upon that precedent to compel the dead to speak with him. The Imago incorporates the use of stringed music, and the spell itself is augmented if the mage plays the Imago's tune on a stringed instrument while he casts.

Factor Bonuses:

— Playing stringed instrument: factor bonus equal to equipment bonus.



CHAPTER THREE: THE WAY OF WATER — MAGIC AND BEING

Dressed in loose red, the acrobats spun from hand to foot. They reminded Michael of autumn leaves, tumbling in the wind. All four carried the narrow straight sword called the jian, and thrust them at imaginary targets in intricate patterns. Michael's training let him trace the movements back to their martial applications. Masters in the Adamantine Arrow once told him that the fighting arts of Atlantis held the original battle forms. All others were shadows.

Nevertheless, he sensed power in this place. Someone had thrown up a spell to mask the magic, but he'd felt the thinnest thread of power. It was enough to take him off the tour route, into the crowded streets of workaday Shanghai and finally, here: to a stage festooned with bloody red Chinese characters, portraits of Taoist sages, incense and the acrobats. He called the Cloak of Rain to hide himself and stepped closer to the stage.

Someone banged a tin drum in a rapid report. The four tumblers froze in fighting poses, swords extended to stab the air.

And so the air stabbed Michael from a dozen feet away. Of the four wounds, one rent his throat; he couldn't scream. Two drove through his knees, so he fell. The last took his heart through the chest. He landed face up.

Now there was a man standing above him. He wore a traditional robe and toyed with an old coin.

"No Atlantis here," said the man. The accent was British. He gave his forehead a short rap with his fingertip while Michael's last blood flowed into the yellow earth.

HE SENSED POWER IN THIS PLACE

Words are an artificial creation; there are Buddha-lands where there are no words. In some Buddha-lands ideas are indicated by looking steadily, in other Buddha-lands by gestures, in still other Buddha-lands by a frown, by a movement of the eyes, by laughing, by yawning, by the clearing of the throat or by trembling. For instance, in the Buddha-land of the Tathagata Samantabhadra, Bodhisattvas, by a meditation transcending words and ideas, attain the recognition of all things as un-born, and they, also, experience various most excellent Samadhis that transcend words. Even in this world, such specialized beings as ants and bees carry on their activities very well without recourse to words. No, Mahamati, the validity of things is independent of the validity of words.

— Lankavatara Sutra

The element of water is associated with emotions and feelings, but also with depths and conformity to the mold into which water is poured. Mages associate it with culture and ways of being, and with the course a mage steers for himself through the rapids of life in the Fallen World.

Magic and Culture

Awakened magic is the art of harnessing universal truth. The Supernal Realms and their Watchtowers represent hidden knowledge that transcends culture, as codified by the sages of Atlantis. This is the position of the Atlantean Diamond in the West, supposed inheritors of the Mysteries of old.

The story of Atlantis and the myths of the Diamond (the four Atlantean orders) have forged mages into communities for centuries. Mages hold their secret nation above and apart from the Sleepers the Awakened live among, but the truth of the matter is that their rites, names and values are indeed informed by the very society that they pretend to transcend. Even the common name of "Atlantis" is borrowed from Sleepers. Mages adopted a name out of myth for their Awakened City: a name that sprung from Plato's parable. Over centuries, the name flowered within the philosophies and writings of sages. Most of them didn't possess a shred of Awakening themselves. The Diamond would tell you that what Plato called Atlantis was their ancient nation, half-remembered and sketchily described, and that they are only appropriating a term that belonged to them through association.

And what of mudras? Glyphs? High Speech? Don't they point to a common truth? The answer is that they do, but there more variations of all of these than the Western myths and Arts might admit. There *is* one truth to magic, but many voices interpret it. Thanks to colonialism and conspiracy, voices grounded in the Western Mysteries are the loudest, but all cultures have touched the Supernal. They have their own stories to tell.

Your **Mage** character can come from any culture. She views Awakened truth through the lens of her upbringing, desires and magical talents. It's up to you whether or not your mage rejects all her previous beliefs to embrace the doctrines of an order, merges the two or suborns it all to a model of her own devising. Thus, everything that follows is *optional*; in the end, mages have their own Awakening to guide them. Belief is powerful, but in **Mage: The Awakening**, knowledge of a singular truth — even one masked by culture — is the essence of the Mysteries.

Mythos

To give an Awakened character a cultural magical practice, create a mythology that explains why her chosen beliefs work. While it cannot be denied that there are Supernal Realms, an Abyss and 10 Arcana at the roots of magic, mages are wholly isolated by their lore. They use their cultural and personal beliefs to seek out the Mysteries, forging them into coherent theories about the nature of things. Most of these *mythoi* have been handed down through the centuries, but a few are new creations, inspired by visions at the moment of Awakening or devised by a like-minded few.

Everyone has an inherited and self-invented view of the world, but mages have the opportunity to either integrate it into their Mysteries or adhere to the mythic narrative espoused by their mentors, cabal-mates and the great orders. In-between the extremes, mages combine the myths of many cultures with their own ideas.

Mages don't always consciously choose a mythos. Many are compelled to believe in one based on deep personal convictions. Awakening can let mages escape the burdens of their past, but this doesn't always happen. In fact, some mages hate the fact that their cultural ties influence their magic so strongly.

Antinomianism

Mages who chafe at the constraints of their culture but believe in them all the same often indulge in antinomianism. An antinomian mage consciously defies the values of his culture. He chooses the unclean over the pure and the profane over the sacred to gain power. Satanists, Left-Handed Tantrists and other antinomians can come into the fold consciously or unconsciously. The former see their culture's taboos and values as barriers to a true understanding of the Mysteries. The latter are unwilling to admit that they value their cultural ancestry. They believe that their affectation is an expression of independence, but in truth, they are consumed with defiling their own traditions to the point of ironic reverence. If they didn't care, they wouldn't bother.

Mages who don't value their own cultures take up antinomian practices to better understand the original Mysteries. They reason that if they tear at the veil of their traditions strongly enough, they'll be able to see through and know the true story of the Awakened people, the true nature of Atlantis and all the other secrets that have been covered with a dark patina of time.

Antinomianism affects both a mage's personal behavior and his magical methods. His oblations consist of anything that would pervert "pure" Mana: he spatters offal on the altars his ancestors revere, spits in holy water and eats the animal flesh forbidden to the holy.

Mage: The Awakening presents the core mythos of the game. Atlantis, Greek and Latin and the tale of a fallen empire compose the most common modern telling of the game's metaphysical truths. There are other mythoi with just as ancient a pedigree, but no other has as much widespread adherence. Atlantean orthodoxy has become the *lingua franca* of the Awakened world thanks to its association with European culture, spreading throughout the world on the back of colonialism to the point that Atlantis is the accepted name for the first nation of the Awakened.

Different mythoi might come into existence after diverging from Atlantean lore, representing a fusion of the Atlantean tradition and other ancient cultures, or they might stand apart completely. Some may descend from the "barbarians" who practiced the Art outside of the Awakened City. All mythoi describe the same basic truths and share some similarities, but not all of them are simple retellings of the conventional tale of Atlantis.

When you design a mythos, you should take its origin into consideration. The biggest mistake you can make is to simply add cultural color to the Atlantis story. While you can do this in the case of a mythos that has mixed with the Atlantean tradition, a mythos that developed separately will construct its stories from its own perspective. They see the same Supernal truths, but interpret them without any inspiration from the dominant Awakened culture.

Nevertheless, don't worry about making the mythoi *too* similar. There *is* an ultimate truth. Awakening exposes mages to the surface of it; their humanity and ingenuity fill in the rest.

Mythic Origins

A mythos explains the structure of magic, its origins and the rise of the orders. It answers the following questions.

What are the ancient origins of Awakened magic?

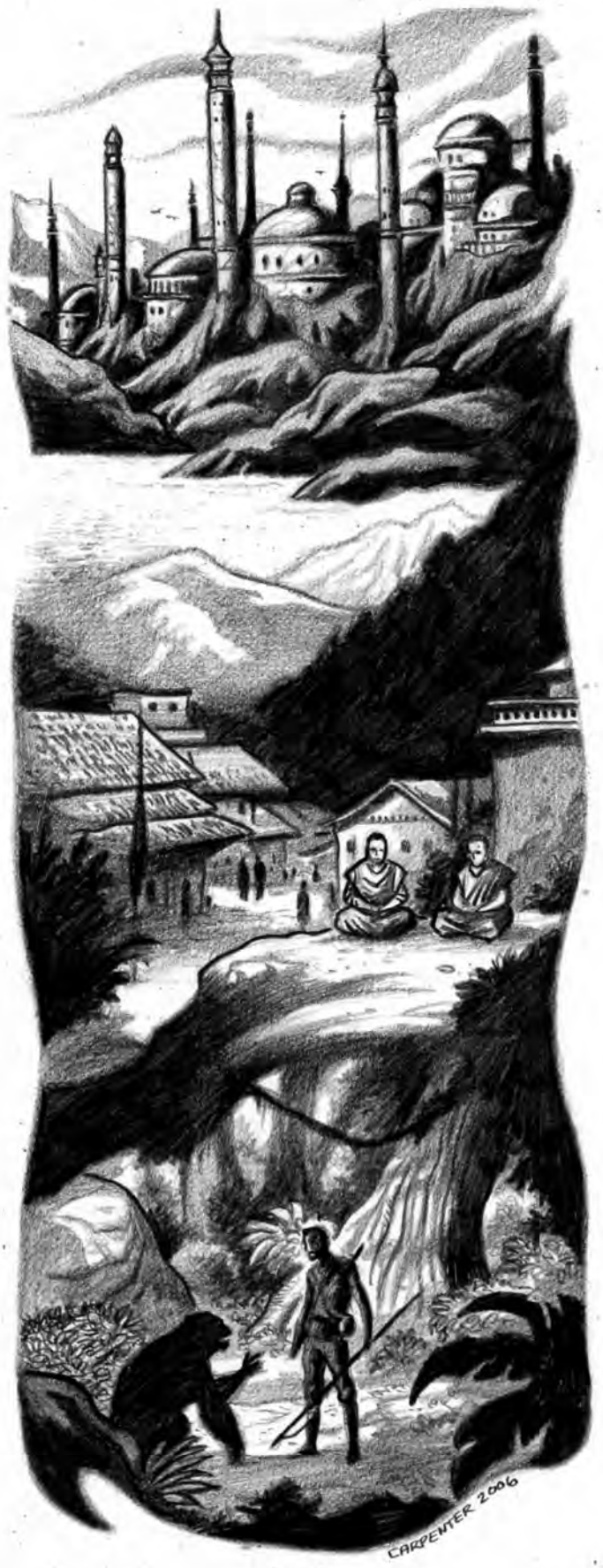
Among the Awakened, all mythoi tell the tale of magic's origin. The most common story tells of dragons leading men and women to the Mysteries. Other myths feature different creatures, ancestors, ancient heroes or even internal revelations.

In all mythoi, ancient mages built a society. While most modern mages believe it to be a city-state on an island, other visions and stories have portrayed the ur-culture as nomads traveling through monster-infested steppes and thick jungles shared with sagacious animal spirits. Some mythoi even reduce the story to a single, enlightened individual. The Awakened Nation uncovers the secrets of magic: mudras, runes and the Arcana. They develop High Speech.

With so many contradictory accounts, mages wonder if the Awakened have several roots, and Atlantis is simply a dominant myth that ties them together. Mages who believe in Tibetan spirituality find little to argue with in the idea of an Awakened Nation; they have their Shambhala, where the Buddha taught the secrets of enlightenment.

The dominant mythos describes the Awakened society as a historical entity, existing in the distant past. Yet even this is not a constant. Atlantis and its mythological cousins are sometimes described as eternal, spiritual realms, memories from another cycle of Creation or even emanations from the future. Tales of the Dreamtime are less compatible with the Western vision, but are held by their adherents to be more accurate than the dominant legendry.

More radical scholars believe that many mythoi have an equal claim to the truth. It might be because the Awakened Nation existed in many "layers" of reality. It



might even be because of magical societies that were never conquered by the followers of the "dragon dreams," and survived into the Fallen age.

Finally, just as all stories tell of an ancient revelation and an Awakened culture, they tell of its Fall.

Gnosticism, Atlantis and the Limits of Belief

The Atlantean Diamond's shared mythos is similar to historical writings about the Gnostics, Neoplatonists and other esoteric movements. The tradition of naming the Awakened City Atlantis comes from such sources, and mages who identify strongly with roots in Africa, Asia and elsewhere often take strong exception to the central similarities of Western esoterica to the Diamond's "party line."

Even so, it's important to remember that the Diamond orders are not "pure" Gnostics or "authentic" representatives of any known Western tradition. Orders have seen enough of the Supernal to know the flaws in some of the Western metaphors. Furthermore, order mages do accept other cultural influences, oracular visions and worldwide archeology into their internal culture. Similarly, mages of any culture will never be truly "authentic" sorcerers or priests — at least, not by the standards of Sleepers. Sleeper beliefs are formed in ignorance, after all. They do have truth to them, but it is often the truth of dream logic and distorted intuition. That is, after all, all the Supernal Realms are to its quiescent prisoners. Storytellers shouldn't be afraid to let an interesting idea trump what their research says about a real-world belief.

One element that's present in Awakened mythoi but is often absent from Sleeper counterparts is the way that humanity is responsible for its own fall. Where all Awakened mythoi place the blame for the loss of the Supernal World on mages' shoulders, mundane counterparts (including Gnosticism) will often transfer the responsibility to an evil god, a trickster or a mythic accident.

Why is magic a hidden, dangerous art?

In the time of the Awakened Nation, magic was a potent force. Mages used it openly, spawning stories of enchanted treasures and incredible destruction. The time of wonders did not last, however. Every myth features stories of corruption and disaster. The Awakened Nation's wisdom was not as great as the Awakened Nation's raw power. The mages misused magic; deadly witchcraft and mythic tragedies enter the tale, until the Fall occurs.

The Abyss rises. In mythoi in which the Awakened Nation is an eternal ideal, the Fall is part of the journey of an Awakened soul before it finds its Path. In mythoi in which "Atlantis" is a promised future kingdom, the narrative is even reversed; humanity begins in chaos and darkness and returns to its birthright. If the "nation" is an individual, it may die and be reborn in the potential Awakening of other men and women.

The Fall created enemies. In the dominant myth, the Exarchs and Scelesti arise in the Fallen World. These have their counterparts in other cultures. In some traditional societies, these are witch cults that spread disease and disunity in the community. Satanic conspiracies, aliens and secret masters are other manifestations of these enemies.

What is the nature of Creation?

A magical mythos interprets the nature of the Supernal World, the Abyss, the Astral Planes, the Shadow Realm and the Material Realm.

The Supernal World is not always divided into five Realms. Sometimes mythoi conceive of 10 metaphysical worlds: one for each Arcanum. Other beliefs merge them into a single Realm with multiple domains. The nature of the Supernal World is a constant, but attitudes about its characteristics change. Western mages often associate the Realm they call the Primal Wild with savage, primitive conditions: nature run rampant over human works. But ask a mage who follows different traditions, and she might talk about cooperation between predator and prey, mutual respect and oathbonds between the species.

As for the Abyss, it retains an alien, dangerous character across all cultures. This is one point on which, mages, regardless of their backgrounds, are forced to confront something that is not a part of the true reality. Nevertheless, interpretations of the Abyss are diverse. For instance, the Qlippoth (the "shells" of corrupted creation in Kabbalah) inspire many attempts to comprehend the Abyss. Some mythoi say the Abyss is the darkness in human souls. Others claim the Abyss is the spearhead of an alien invasion.

The Astral and Shadow Realms are not always considered to be separate entities. Although the means to explore them differ, both planes feature entities that wear familiar masks. Just because there is a difference in technique does not necessarily imply that these are completely separate parts of Creation. Cultures with an animistic view of the cosmos tend to view the Astral Planes as a manifestation of Shadow, while cultures that favor meditation and contemplation usually hold the opposite. Otherwise, the Realms' respective roles as manifestations of dreams and primal nature filter through the beliefs of each mythos.

Finally: What of the Fallen World? Why do we die? Why does evil exist? Each mythos has its own stories to explain material reality's physical, spiritual and moral dimensions.

What is the nature of Awakening?

Regardless of culture, mages recognize differences in ability and temperament. While the capabilities of the five Paths are consistent across cultures, different mythoi recognize the Watchtowers in very different ways.

Awakening is an act that is so heavily influenced by a mage's life experiences that it almost always reflects her cultural background. Awakening sometimes represents the period in which a mage forms a personal mythos. Confronted with Supernal truths, she evaluates them based on her beliefs. Others struggle to make sense of everything after they've encountered their Watchtower, because the encounter turns their assumptions upside down.

Not all mythoi accept the legends of the Oracles or the Watchtowers that the dominant Awakened culture claims as its gift. Some believe that their gods provided the Path. Others believe that they are reunited with a missing part of their souls — or an alien intelligence with its own powers and agenda. The way to a mage's Path is not even necessarily conceived of as an edifice. The instruments could be sacred mountains, clouds, constellations or mandalas.

Paths describe magical skills and the attitudes of mages themselves. Of the two, the former is constant across the world, while the latter can radically change according to a mage's personal and cultural convictions. A mage known as a Mastigos in the West is someone known for confronting his inner demons. His Tibetan counterpart doesn't have the same conception of sin and corruption, and may view his Awakening as an encounter with gods of peace and wrath. One walks a path tinged with darkness; the other looks for peace inside the turmoil of raging emotions.

Nevertheless, you shouldn't let culture overshadow each Watchtower's special niche. Each of the five Paths represents a special perspective on the Mysteries.

Right and Wrong Mythoi

There are many, many mythoi in the world. They can't all be right, can they?

There are mages who do not acknowledge the core legends of the Awakened. Many of these mages are Banishers, content to view the "curse" through nothing more than the impressions granted them by their traumatic Awakenings. Otherwise, isolated individuals and cults may reject the idea of a mythic Awakened Nation, but for the most part, mages recognize the roots of the Mysteries. Even so, the exceptions aren't

to be discounted. There were mages who lived outside of Atlantis, developing their own magic in the wilderness. The Diamond supposes that most of them were conquered or incorporated into the orders but has no evidence to prove it.

What's more complex is the question of which of ancient mythoi is the most accurate. This question may not even be answerable. The sparse physical remnants of Atlantis include objects that are similar to those from cultures from all over the world as well as those with strange enough features to set them apart from any known group. Radical Mysterium scholars posit that Atlantis may have existed in several metaphysical dimensions, so that it could be a great walled city and a wild savannah at the same time, depending on an inhabitant's perspective and Path. If the ancients were indeed capable of comprehending several layers of reality simultaneously, the old ones have not left the full secret to their descendants.

Of course, more conservative elements believe that there is only the truth of their culture; all else is a part of the Lie. There are even mages who believe that one's own stories and symbols are far more important than the details of some bit of ancient lore. Instead of looking on high, they say that mages ought to deal with the here and now, including all the signs and stories that move the contemporary psyche.

Orders

While a mage's beliefs can affect his personal mythology, magical theories and even his approach to his own Path, individual sentiment isn't enough to affect the orders. Orders are global social institutions; four of them date from prehistory and the fifth may well be the resurgence of an eternal ideology.

Still, even though most of the orders have ancient origins, they are not exactly the same in every culture. For an order to have a distinct manifestation in a given region, the order must have a large number of people who adhere to one particular mythos. Thus, really distinct orders only thrive in areas where a distinct traditional culture is deeply rooted among mages and Sleepers.

No matter the culture, order mages can most often recognize fellow adherents from other cultures, but that doesn't mean they approve of them. A Chinese warrior-sorcerer whose comrades believe that they are descended from the Yellow Emperor's Dragon Claw bodyguard could decide that an "Adamantine Arrow" comes from a degenerate offshoot of his original, pure order. The Dragon Claw and an American Arrow could even share common points of view and order-specific magical lore, but it would not make them natural allies.

A notable exception is the Free Council. This order is a product of recent history. Founded against the backdrop of movements such as British Imperialism and Manifest Destiny, the Council's *raison d'être* is the search for magic and meaning in the works of Fallen humanity. Thus, the Free Council readily adapted to local customs and sacred ways. The Council used the spirit of the age to spread across the globe, but the order's antiauthoritarian ethos prevented it from becoming a pawn of the Empire. Thus, the order can be found anywhere, under many banners, using many myths.

That said, the view presented in **Mage: The Awakening** is the most common cultural expression of the orders. This isn't just the fruits of Sleeper history at work, but the fact that mages around the world can and do recognize an underlying truth beneath their differences. The orthodox orders have a strong Western influence but are still undeniably multicultural in nature. Guardians of the Veil express their beliefs in ways that would be familiar to Gnostics, Tibetan Buddhists and the elders of tribal secret societies.

Designing Order Subcultures

New order subcultures should be a rare event in your chronicle. For one thing, there are only so many mages in the world, and they are all aware of a common connection to the truth. Mages are often forced to ally with an order that has nothing to do with their deeply held beliefs. If they adhere to an uncommon mythos, they must either adapt to a different approach to the Mysteries or strike out on their own. There are mages who relish the former and reconstruct their order from the ground up, interpreting everything through a personal lens of belief. These mages might pass this on to their disciples. Awakened historians argue about how often this has actually happened, and how much it has influenced the beliefs of the most common, Atlantis-rooted mythos.

If you do decide to adapt the orders to a particular society, remember the advice we've already given about individual mythoi. Don't just rip out the Greek and Latin and plug in a new language. Instead, you should outline a complete history and set of customs from the ground up, remembering to account for the traditional roles of each order and the requirements we've already outlined for Awakened mythoi.

Each order can be stripped down to its basic role. What follows from there is a political stance that adapts each role to a style of leadership. If we reduce the orders to these basics, we have:

The Scholars: The Mysterium is the Scholar order. Every culture assigns certain values to its learned members. The order absorbs them and makes them their own. In some cultures, scholars are desert survivors who keep a nomad people's oral traditions and secret signs. In others, the learned are natural courtiers interested in bending affairs of state to conform to an ideal, but rarely possessed of power themselves. There are even fierce warrior-monks who protect secret scriptures.

The Secret-Keepers: Bogeymen legends, executioners and secret police are all elements of the way a society exerts control over its members. Every culture has invented methods to deal with the problem of dissent. The Guardians of the Veil are the Awakened counterpart to that solution. Witch rumors among the tribe and the unblinking eye of state intelligence rely on the same paranoia and fear of one's comrades. The Secret-Keepers root themselves in these myths and consciously elaborate on them to increase their own control.

The Viziers: Any large culture eventually produces a political culture complex enough to sustain a caste of experts. These advisors hold forth on theories of power and who should be worthy to hold it. Naturally, all such concepts include the role of the advisor as a central figure. Ultimately, the Silver Ladder is one name for the Vizier order that wants to fuse knowledge and power into a society of rule by the wisest. Rationales differ; one culture's Mandate of Heaven is replaced by another's Philosopher Kings.

The Warriors: Some societies put warriors into an army of citizen soldiers or make war part of a hunter's duties. Other societies make war a noble pursuit, fought between blue-blooded champions. Regardless of ideal, though, violence touches all. In its chaos, violence produces skilled fighters without obeying society's rules about who ought to fight. The Adamantine Arrow is an example of a Warrior order that cleaves to an ideal of honor between soldiers. In some cultures, impartial codes may be less important than passionate vendettas. Manifestations of the Warriors may believe in keeping the peace through strict rules of engagement or total war that cares nothing for its innocent bystanders.

Signs of Power

More than sets of stories, mythoi are comprehensible human ideas that contain hints of the Supernal — just enough to guide Fallen humanity to Awakened heights. When a mage bridges the Abyss with her will and soul, she does so within a mental structure. The more she knows about the secret world, the stronger her reach becomes, bulwarked by knowledge that applies to both the Supernal and Fallen worlds. Such truths are expressed through a mythos' tales and philosophies.

The details of these stories are not objective truths in of themselves, but they can grant a sincere seeker an understanding of the Mysteries and humanity's secret, glorious history. Just as *The Iliad* is rooted in the story of a real city and a real war, long distorted by legend, a mythos' stories are shadows of the truth distinct enough to point the way to its full form.

Meditation upon the truth is what helps a mage reach greater magical understanding, and as such, she'll tend to use methods that reflect the way she understands the Mysteries. This, perhaps, reveals the chief value of historical occult, religious and even scientific traditions. All have fragments of a grand narrative that an Awakened sorcerer can reconstruct into mystic lore and rising Gnosis.

But a tale isn't told without a medium to tell it in, be it words, art, movement or writing. Magic is a tale told about the truth — one of the few absolutely true things that can exist in the Fallen World. Metaphysically speaking, deceit is an iron law. Even the most mundane perceptions are dull versions of authentic experience, but generations of Sleep have convinced humanity that, outside of dreams and visions, these surface impressions are all that exist.

Thus, it is a powerful thing to tell the truth with a spell, even if the limits of the Fallen World force mages to use allegories and symbols. These are a mage's magical tools, mudras and High Speech forms. They are runes of power, oblations and even an overarching structure that binds them all together.

In this section, we'll talk about how a mage's beliefs — her attitude to Supernal truth — affect everything from her chosen magical tools to how she speaks High Speech itself.

High Speech

Sleepers cannot understand High Speech, but even though mages can no longer speak it well enough for free conversation, they can discern differences in pronunciation and usage.

Adherents of various beliefs prefer different forms of High Speech. Some mages do not really think of it as a separate form of speech at all but a way of speaking that conveys innate wisdom. Other mages practice High Speech as a form of poetry; certain phrases and images comprise the language of the Mysteries. Mages of the Mysterium have studied these variations and boiled them down to three forms of oral High Speech. Regardless of culture or preference, every mage can use and understand every form.

Accented: The Accented form is superimposed on normal speech. The mage speaks a chosen language with particular inflections so that it acts as an occult "carrier wave" for the hidden "code" of High Speech. Mages using this form appear to be speaking normal words in a strange accent. The cadence, tone and associated body language convey the magical import of the language. This makes it seem strangely accented (and often archaic) to Sleepers. Sleepers can repeat these speech patterns to repeat the "secret codes," and other mages and beings who look for High Speech (such as ancient Artifacts, spirits and tomb guardians) will understand.

The speech in the carrier language does not have the same meaning as that conveyed through High Speech accent, but Awakened witnesses can easily discern the secrets so conveyed. Mages who come from cultures that especially honor a living language prefer this form. It is sometimes called the Awakened version of a language ("Awakened Japanese," for instance). Users often believe that it is the true form of High Speech.

Classical: Classical High Speech is the form favored by those who call the Awakened City "Atlantis" — that is, the largest share of the world's mages. This is well described in **Mage: The Awakening** (pp. 54 and 117). It's an exotic language with its own vocabulary that sounds like babble to Sleepers. Literate cultures with an ancient heritage tend to promote this form, especially if the early languages of their traditions (such as ancient Greek and Latin) are no longer spoken as common tongues.

Poetic: Neither a matter of pronunciation or accent, Poetic High Speech is a matter of imagery and enigmas. The Poetic form is a vocabulary of images and symbols that can be expressed in any language, along with a meter that binds it into memorable performance. These signs and phrases evoke the necessary meanings in a mage's mind, but not a Sleeper's. Only mages have the necessary backgrounds to recognize a metaphor for the High Speech word for a magical operation. Furthermore, similar to Accented High Speech, Poetic High Speech recalls distinct rhythms and tones, binding the Poetic form into a cohesive form of magic and communication. Cultures with a powerful oral tradition tend to produce mages who use this form. They are more than willing to embrace the rhythmic conventions and the thousands of symbols that they must use.

Even if an Awakened sorcerer is exposed to a form for the first time, she gains instant proficiency in it within seconds of exposure, as if she suddenly remembers a long life lived in a land where the form was the native tongue. Otherwise, regardless of form, all spoken High Speech conforms to the rules in **Mage: The Awakening**.

The Sound of High Speech

Given the properties of any form of High Speech, mages sometimes ask themselves: what does it actually sound like? The Awakened note consistencies in the various forms — enough to work magic by, at least — but the fact that Sleepers perceive the language so differently begs the question of whether mages are just as influenced by High Speech.

Mages do learn set tones and vocabularies in any form, and mages can draw parallels between what they perceive to be literal manifestations. Mages must study High Speech, but once they understand it, they seem to have an inherent ability to comprehend forms other than the ones they learned. This understanding is not always immediate, and might require a Research roll (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 55). Furthermore, extended High Speech (which covers non-magical topics; see **Secrets of the Ruined Temple**) is not covered by this broad understanding, and requires even more study.

Perhaps High Speech is nothing but babble, odd inflections and strange verse that mean nothing in and of themselves, but is a wholly symbolic form of communication. In this case, the form is less important than the act of speaking. The "Awakened tongue" may be nothing more than speech communication, willed into its highest form by an enlightened mind.

For more speculation on High Speech, see **Secrets of the Ruined Temple**.

Mudras and the Art of Gesture

Rotes invoke a carefully refined Imago (see "The Sensation of Spellcasting," p. 52). Bringing it to life exercises the mind, body and spirit. Cultures from around the world use body movement to invoke power. These signs are often called "mudras" — a term derived from the sacred hand gestures of Indian spirituality.

Even though Atlantean slang uses the term to describe any rote gesture, dedicated occult scholars prefer to use the term more precisely, as one of a family of techniques. The Sanskrit terms for each are still the most common. For game mechanics purposes, each of these use the same rules as the rote mudras described in **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 125–126. Unlike standard mudras, these techniques have unique drawbacks related to what, exactly, the mage needs to do to evoke the rote's Imago.

Asana: An asana is a static body posture. Unlike mudras, asanas leave the hands free (they do not require the hands to be in an exact position) but otherwise prevent free movement. Characters using asanas cannot run or apply their Defense to attacks. The classic asana is a yoga posture, but functional asanas can be found in Chinese *qigong,* still moments in Javanese theatre and the poses of ancient Greek and Egyptian statues. For practical reasons, these are usually limited to extended castings.

Darshana: Darshanas are particular gazes and facial expressions. In **Mage: The Awakening** (p. 126), these expressions are described as "facial mudras," and they can be understood as such (though in conversation, scholarly mages prefer a more precise term). The role of facial expressions in Polynesian societies is discussed in **Mage: The Awakening**, but stylized face gestures are common to Japanese martial and theatrical traditions as well. Expressions might imitate ancient masks, such as those found in African or Greek rituals.

Mudra: For the purpose of this section, a mudra is a gesture that occupies one or both hands, as described in **Mage: The Awakening**. Mudras can be as simple as a sincere genuflection or as complex as the *kuji-kiri* ("nine cuts") practiced by Japanese priests and hermits.

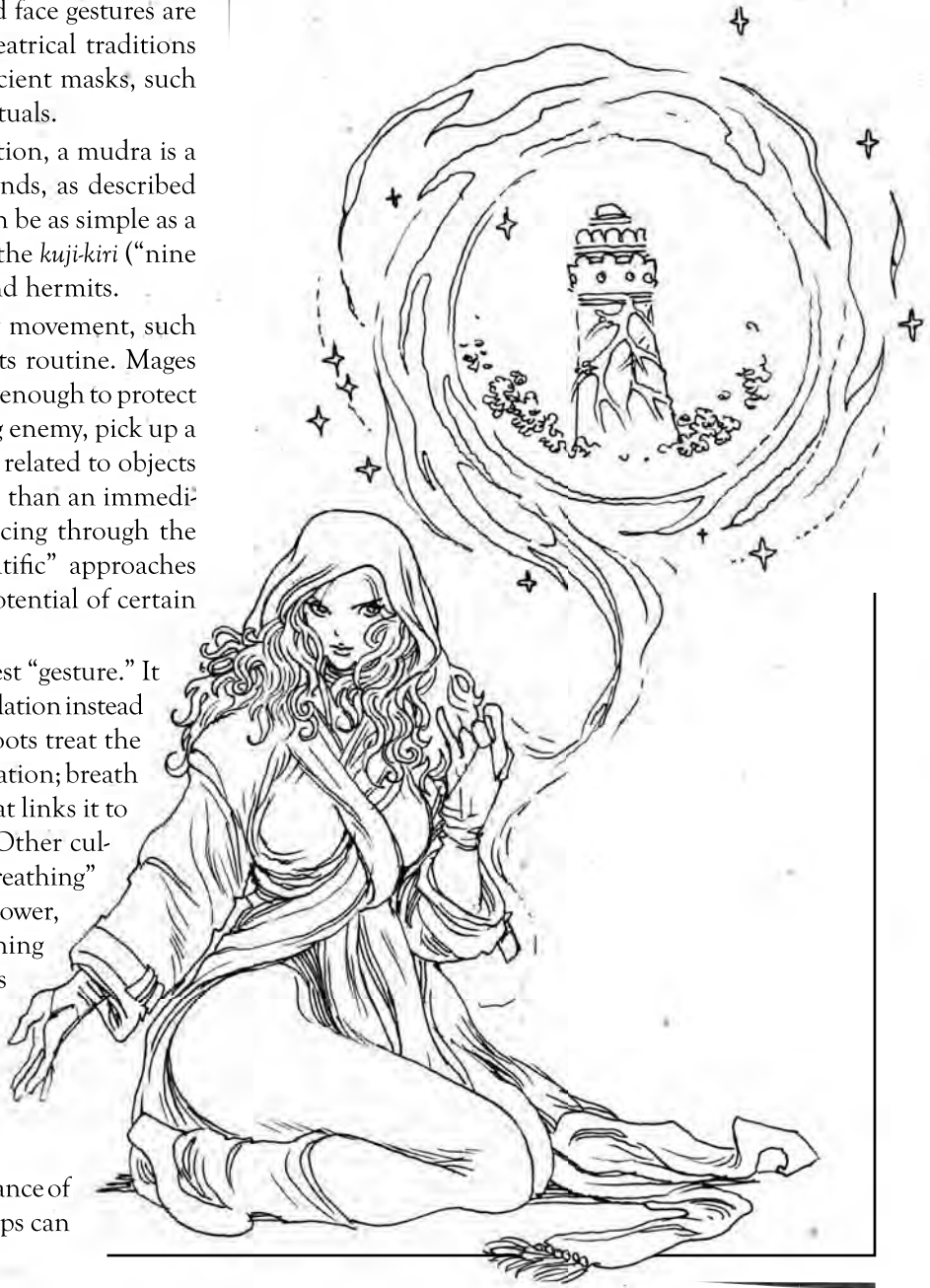
Nata: Nata is a form of ritual body movement, such as a devotional dance or a martial arts routine. Mages using nata can usually vary the routine enough to protect themselves, but not to pursue a fleeing enemy, pick up a weapon or perform other free actions related to objects or moving in reaction to anything less than an immediate threat to life and limb. Rote dancing through the nata is almost universal; even "scientific" approaches to a rote recognize the biofeedback potential of certain movements.

Pranayama: Pranayama is the subtlest "gesture." It focuses on breath and internal contemplation instead of an outward form. Taoist cultural roots treat the body as a microcosmic model of all Creation; breath is a pulse of power through the self that links it to stars, planets, mountains and rivers. Other cultures admonish students to "return to breathing" to remember the original source of power, while some cultures link specific breathing techniques to complex images, colors and occult achievements. Pranayama can be used while moving, but not be used in conjunction with any form of speech. While pranayama is subtle, it's incompatible with High Speech.

Different cultures vary on the significance of various gestures or body parts. Footsteps can trace a sacred path in some cultures — and in others, feet defile whatever they touch. These signs make their way into rotes as embellishments on an order's core techniques or special methods, limited to a cabal, region or a set of texts that strongly adhere to a particular mythos.

Option: Difficult Gestures

Training and practice quickly teach mages the coordination needed to practice the gestures for almost every rote, but there are some versions of rotes with exceptionally difficult companion gestures. As far as the Awakened know, rotes never *require* such gestures, but there are Masters who design them into rotes as either part of their own occult theories, or to keep the secret



of a rote away from mages the creator considers to be unworthy.

Storytellers may allow the rote's creator to mandate that anyone who wishes to learn or cast his version possess Ranks in any Physical Skill he knows, up to either his own Rank in that Skill or one Rank higher than the rote's primary Arcanum — whichever is lower. Even though the master might aspire for his students to become as skilled as he is, he can only make the rote so difficult to learn. Students tend to find the easy way, despite his standards.

Gestures and Rotes

Masters design each rote with a particular gesture set. The hand mudras described in **Mage: The Awakening** are the most common gestures, but each of the categories above can be found in variants of the most common rotes. Some rare rotes only use one type of gesture, but this doesn't usually inhibit a mage's ability to learn the rote. Mages can learn rotes using any kind of gesture, but all mudras, asanas and other gestures are the ancient secret of the orders. Every order uses every kind of gesture, but cultural preferences usually determine which rote gestures are common in a given community. Polynesian mages are known for their darshanas ("facial mudras"). Nata is common to both indigenous American dance rites and the *katas* practiced by Okinawan Perfected Adepts. Some suggested gestures are presented in "Rotecraft," p. 74.

Optional Merit: Gesture Lore (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Awakened, Dexterity 3, Occult 3

Effect: Mages are usually forced to use the gestures that are "coded" into a particular rote. Once willworkers learn one version, it's impossible to learn another by any method short of relearning the rote entirely. On the other hand, some mages might be adept at translating one set of gestures into another. These mages can see how an asana might replace the mudras or nata they originally learned. This is a useful skill because each type of gesture has its own inherent limitations. Mages using mudras must devote at least one hand to them instead of carrying an object, for example. Use the following Merit to simulate this ability.

For each dot in this Merit, a mage can substitute one other gesture type for that mandated by a rote that she learns. For example, a mage who knows a version of "Numinous Shield" that requires mudras could cast a version that uses asanas (or pranayama as well, if she had two dots in this Merit). Choose one type of gesture (from asana, darshana, mudra, nata and pranayama) for each dot purchased. The mage can substitute the gesture inherent to a given rote for any of those selected.

In addition, the mage can pass on the rotes she knows using one of the alternate gesture forms she has studied instead of the form she learned it in.

Drawback: This is only effective for rotes the mage knows, and only for personal castings of these rotes. Furthermore, no matter how many gesture sets she knows, a mage can only pass on one of them while teaching a given rote.

The Ways of Mana

Every occult tradition has its own explanation for Mana. Although the term itself is borrowed from Polynesian traditions, Western mages use Platonist and Gnostic traditions as a guide. The Fallen World is a distorted reflection of the Supernal. Mana is literally the power of truth. Sleepers see the shadows in the cave of reality. Mana is the original light that both casts Fallen Shadows and reveals the pure forms.

Other mythoi have their own stories about Mana: what it is, how it came to be and its place in the whole of reality. All mythoi acknowledge Mana as a power source for potent spells and as a resource that ebbs and flows. This is inescapable because Mana is tied into the observable nature of magic. In Polynesian culture (from where the modern term derived), Mana is the spiritual manifestation of respect and authority. Mages who adhere to a traditional Chinese mythos identify Mana with *qi*, the cosmic breath. (There is some dissent from Chinese Perfected Adepts, who classify *qi* as the energy of the human body, and believe that Supernal power should be identified with *li*: the refined energy of Heaven.)

Cultural views of Mana influence how mages harvest it with oblations, scourging and sacrifice.

Oblations are more heavily influenced by cultural beliefs than any other Awakened method. At the root of every oblation is a mage's desire to join his soul to the Supernal ideals. Mana is the Supernal power left in the Fallen World. To gather Mana, a mage builds upon the fragments of truth that remain within the Lie — truths coded in the world's spiritual traditions. Accordingly, oblations are an expression of a sorcerer's beliefs and values. The mage's soul pares away the distortions of the Fallen World to reveal a pure truth. Prime power

follows, rising from Hallows and other wonders. **Mage: The Awakening** and **Tome of the Watchtowers** explore how mages of various Paths use cultural trappings to perform their oblations.

The influence of a mage's culture on scouring is less obvious but still pervasive. While a mage may scour his Pattern without any outward manifestation, some sorcerers do prefer to harm themselves using a number of different methods. Mages who follow Norse skald traditions may cut themselves open to rub the blood on a wound. This needn't be physical suffering; Tantric mages may use muscle-tearing yoga postures. Furthermore, since many mages believe that the mind, body and spirit are a single entity, they need not use a method that inflicts obvious physical harm. Some mages symbolically abase themselves before a greater power by covering themselves in filth or tearing their clothes into rags.

Even if a mage doesn't choose an outward display to accompany scouring, he usually visualizes a method with his mind's eye. A shaman might draw Mana from an imaginative struggle with spirits; his wounds come from this secret battle. Contemplative mages from Asian mythoi might visualize scoured Mana as the fruits of self-destructive *qigong* meditations.

No matter the method, mages suffer Attribute or Health damage normally, even if the method they employ would not normally be so injurious.

Finally, cultures from around the world practice various forms of sacrifice. Some anthropologists believe that every civilization in its antiquity practiced human sacrifice, leading to some disturbing questions about Atlantis' sacrificial customs. After all, if the Awakened City is the root of them all, does it mean that sacrifice was a common practice among the Awakened who lived before its Fall? Some mages adopt special practices taken from faiths that practice ritual sacrifice or holiness codes that require followers to prepare foods in certain ways. In addition to the cultural meaning, many of these practices are relatively humane, offering an animal instant death at a trained hand. Such practices are unlikely to force a Wisdom degeneration roll.

The Ethics of Sacrifice

Here's a touchy issue: at what point does sacrifice threaten a mage's Wisdom? Explore the issue deeply enough, and you're likely to encounter serious questions about how animals ought to be treated and what constitutes a humane slaughter.

Obviously, we can't answer these questions for you, but we can say that in the context of the **World of Darkness** and **Mage: The Awakening**'s game rules, slaughtering animals in a fashion intended to minimize their pain does not incur a degeneration roll. Remember that Morality and Wisdom checks are not always indicators of whether an act is actually right or wrong but of how performing it affects a character's moral resolve. Therefore, even if you believe a certain practice might be wrong, that doesn't need to have a game effect.

That said, some things definitely erode a mage's Wisdom. Killing an animal using intentional torture or killing even a willing human being both force degeneration rolls. Furthermore, in your game, you may wish to mandate a single, objective moral code of your own invention, superseding the rules completely.

Glyphs

Similar to spoken High Speech, Atlantean glyphs (also called "runes") can also absorb cultural influences to the point where debate exists as to what constitutes the Pure written form of the Awakened language. Adding to this confusion is the way mages who come from non-literate cultures perceive it. Awakening gives them the gift of understanding, but it does not mean that they recognize the characters in the same way as a mage whose culture tells him the written word carries occult power.

The Mysterium has studied such phenomena as intensely as it has the nature of spoken High Speech, and classifies variant glyphs within the following categories. Regardless of culture or belief, any mage can understand any form as far as her Awakened understanding allows, though some unfamiliar forms may require study. This usually takes the form of an Intelligence + Occult roll; the target number is related to how foreign the concept is to the mage's Path, order and culture. Apply a –1 penalty if the glyphs refer to a rote the mage doesn't know, a –1 penalty for an unfamiliar culture and a –1 penalty if the glyphs involve non-magical concepts.

The Secret of Thoth

Similar to spoken High Speech, the written form may not be as absolute as some mages imagine it to be. Members of the Free Council believe that learning the Awakened craft of scribing the glyphs is a matter of focusing intent, and not the end result. They are very interested in the countless variations that exist in written High Speech, from the radical variety to the subtle similarities.

Some radical scholars believe that it doesn't actually matter what a mage writes, but that her will forms the particular "shape" the rune demands. What frustrates researchers is that two mages can write forms of the "Death" rune so differently that no Sleeper could possibly connect them, and that one mage can teach her variation to the other, but no mage can shape her will into the intent to create the rune while writing a random symbol. No mage can *force* meaning into a symbol, but symbols have no end in variants. Why is this so?

Socrates told a story about invention of writing that some believe hold the key. Thoth, god of scholarship and magic, invents writing and offers it to the Egyptian king, Thamus. Thoth tells Thamus that writing will preserve knowledge, but Thamus counters that writing will, in fact, conceal knowledge, because writing will eliminate the need to experience and remember the truth. Therefore, Free Council mages believe that the Awakened once had the ability to impart Supernal meaning about anything they chose, so that its secret significance would be obvious to any enlightened person who happened upon it. But at some point, the ability was forgotten. Why learn secret truths for yourself when you can read about them? The signs became the shorthand for sublime secrets, but the greatest secret of all — *how* to capture and preserve Supernal knowledge for the ages — could not be recorded with any sign.

Classical: To the Diamond orders, this represents Pure written Atlantean (and consequently, the runes that decorate **Mage: The Awakening**). The runes look strangely similar to many languages and mystical symbols, but do not match any of them precisely. Some rare runes have an appearance so alien that human eyes have difficulty fully perceiving them, but mages sometimes distrust such examples for fear that they are designs born of the Abyss.

Illuminated: The Illuminated category includes pictograms and even actual illustrations whose lines draw the eye to follow them to their hidden meaning. Classical runes often have pictographic elements; the sign of the Death Arcanum resembles a skull, for example.

Beyond Classical variations are pictograms that, to Sleepers, look nothing like their Classical counterparts. Mages see the hidden meaning instantly in the pictogram's curves, shading and negative space. Obscure Mayan codices sometimes display examples of the form. So do Renaissance paintings that (thanks to the influence of Seers of the Throne and Guardians of the Veil) usually hang in private collections or behind vault doors. These pictures reveal the runes' meanings using the geometry of their composition and their symbolism.

The Illuminated form is commonly used by mages from non-literate cultures and thus is held in low esteem by mages who believe the Awakened Nation possessed a truly literate society. Unfortunately, this has caused mages to discount the Illuminated form when it could have led them to forgotten magical secrets. Mages who hunt for strange writing ignore the language of images at their peril. The form is obvious to mages who have a native understanding of the symbols. Otherwise, a successful Intelligence + Occult roll is required.

Palimpsest: The Palimpsest form takes its name from an ancient practice in which used papyri are scraped enough to allow scribes to use the pages again. While this recycling is supposed to leave "blank" space for the new writer, the original characters can often be recovered.

The Palimpsest style refers to a style of writing in which runes are inscribed in an overlapping pattern. Scribes take stylistic liberties with the supposed Pure form of the rune to create complex occult sigils, geometric patterns and even illustrations. Some of these have been compared to the geometric artwork found in the Islamic world. There is some overlap among the Palimpsest style and others. For example, the most common runes for the Paths use the Palimpsest style but have been in existence for so long that they are thought to be the standard, Classical usage. (Compare the Path and Arcana runes in **Mage: The Awakening.**)

Palimpsests are commonly used to strengthen conjunctional spells, but some mages simply prefer the style, and others hold that it is the "true" way to write the Atlantean language. There is enough stylistic variation to make it unlikely that Sleepers would recognize the relationship between Palimpsest and Classical forms, but an Awakened eye spots the runes in either case. Palimpsests are difficult for neophytes to decode; apply an additional –1 penalty to Intelligence + Occult rolls.

Vulgar: What constitutes Vulgar High Speech runes is largely a matter of taste, with the Diamond holding that their script is pure and other forms are ignorant variations. But the fact of the matter is that there are several ways to write the runes for magical purposes. Many of these alternate forms are actually integrated into other written languages, such as Classical Chinese, Aramaic or Sanskrit. While the alternate forms always differ from the standard versions of each language, the shape of the lines and subtle variations on key characters carry the power and messages of the runes.

Some mages call this these types Vulgar script because it utilizes languages developed in the Fallen World, but some adherents reply that the so-called Classical form is a recent invention designed to create a "pure" Atlantean that never really existed, distilled down from the sacred marks of many examples. A few bold mages hold that their particular version *is* the primordial tongue — not the Classical runes. They have the advantage of observation, since Atlantean glyphs replicate the patterns mages observe when using various forms of Mage Sight. On the other hand, Vulgar forms display the *same* patterns, though writers sometimes use unusual variations. For example, a calligrapher might rotate the "perspective" of a glyph a few degrees to alter the curve of a stroke. Nevertheless, the core pattern remains constant.

Glyph Lore (• to ••••)

Prerequisites: High Speech Merit, Awakened, Intelligence 3, Occult 3

Effect: For each dot in this Merit, a mage automatically comprehends one type of High Speech glyph from any culture. The categories are: Classical (normally only selected by mages who do not hail from Western Diamond orders), Illuminated, Palimpsest and Vulgar. No matter the selected form's cultural origin, the mage's player doesn't need to roll dice to comprehend it.

In addition, the mage can use runes to extend duration and inscribe the rotes she knows using any form she has selected for this Merit instead of the form she learned it in.

Drawback: This is only effective for rotes the mage knows, and only for personal castings of these rotes. Furthermore, no matter how many types of High Speech she knows, a mage can only pass on one of them while recording a given rote.

Tools

When a sorcerer uses a dedicated magical tool, she is linking her magic to a symbol that exists in both the Fallen and Supernal Realms. This shortens the gulf between worlds, giving the Abyss less of a chance to seep in through the flaws in the mage's soul. This means fewer Paradoxes, so mages come to be known by the tools they favor.

Despite the Quiescence, humanity has an enduring memory of the Supernal: one that expresses itself in all human societies. This has persisted even when disasters have destroyed a cultural lineage completely. The same symbols rise again, in new art, folktales, superstitions and sciences. Some mages believe that some imprints of the Realms Supernal persist in the Astral Reaches. From there, the symbols might seep into human dreams.

Even if this is just an unsupported fancy, the fact remains that every culture has tools of power that have a special sympathetic bond with the Supernal World.

Expanding Path Tools

Path tools might originate within the earliest magical techniques of the Awakened, but nowadays these tools are best known as the keys to the Watchtowers. The legendary Oracles gave these tools this power so that they might guide humanity back to the Mysteries, but it is just as likely that these tools were already mighty; the Oracles merely took them as signs of the Paths.

Different cultures have distinct interpretations of each Path tool. Western mythoi tend to link Path tools to the symbols of the Tarot, but these ideas are not necessarily preferred by mages with differing beliefs.

Cups — Life, Female Power

Cups are associated with water for the simple reason that they hold it, giving the liquid shape and the power to quench thirst and douse flame. With the ability to contain the gift of life, cups are sometimes associated with motherhood. Accordingly, other symbols of motherhood can fulfill the role of the cup. Ancient fertility figures such as the Venus of Willendorf are examples of alternatives to the cup. Mages who use cups claim that the cup itself is an incomplete descendant of such symbols. Eggs, the distaff (a forked stick), spheres and ovals are all relevant counterparts to the traditional cup — and in truth, have an equal claim to tradition, too.

Mirrors — Reflections

Mirrors are such ubiquitous versions of a single type of tool that many mages have confused the tool with the method used to create it. In fact, mirrors are one example of a family of tools that create reflections. These are usually associated with the senses; scrying and illusions seem particularly suited to reflections. Mages can use any means to create reflections, though the specific materials are sometimes biased toward one Path or another.

Truth be told, most contemporary sorcerers use glass mirrors of one kind of another, but reflecting pools, bowls, crystals and polished sheets of stone and metal can all generate enough of a reflection to count as a tool.

Pentacles and Coins — The World, Cycles of Power

Regardless of culture, the pentagram has special significance among all mages. This seems appropriate, because the sign is known to have become a sacred sign in both Europe and Asia. The pentacle typically represents the component energies of reality, from the Western elements (and the spirit or ether) to the Chinese *wuxing* of fire, earth, wood, water and metal.



In addition, the pentacle may be deconstructed by conceptualizing it in different shapes and dimensions. In India and Asia, the *stupa* unfolds the elemental powers into a tower composed of component shapes, and the *mandala* extends elemental principles into precise occult diagrams. The pentacle's association with the cycles of magical power leads to being represented with a knot. Each of these variations encompasses five areas and thus, Five Paths.

In the modern period, the coin is the most common version of the disk, a symbol associated with the sun and the passage of time. Invariably, civilizations that create coin currency combine disk signs with coins, which have the extra symbolic strength of buying power in the Fallen World. The disk alone still has power, though. Jewelry and art using the disk can be dedicated as "coin" tools.

Mage: The Awakening states that mages must use the pentacle and coin together. While it is true that the disk must suggest the power of the Watchtowers, it is possible to do so with a variation on the classic pentacle.

Wands and Staves — Male Power, Aiming

The wand or staff is one of the most universal of symbols, simply because it is a hallowed version of a mere stick (and allegedly, a symbol for "male" power). This does not necessarily mean the wand always takes the form of a fantasy sorcerer's walking stick or magic wand. Some "staves" are actually monuments such as menhirs, obelisks and linga. Most of these have been erected at Hallows to provide an enduring focus for mages across generations. Utilitarian cultures combine the wand with a practical tool, such as a digging stick or arrow, or paint the wand symbol on a different shape or even a mage's bare flesh. In all cases, the long shape represents directed power, aimed and concentrated into action.

Materials

Mage: The Awakening lists some suggested materials for each Path. These are by no means the only materials possible; they simply represent those with proven sympathetic connections to the Paths, and so those used most often by modern mages. Indeed, some of these materials were unknown to various cultures in the past — glass, plastic and steel, for example.

Mages sometimes look for archaic materials that steel and plastic rendered "obsolete" and test their magical worth. The results of their experiments are for the Storyteller to determine, but if culture is more central to magical practice, then it is best to rule that a mythos that uses medieval or hunter-gatherer technologies have equivalents to the modern materials with equally potent Supernal ties.

Remember, though, that traditional cultures (and magical mythoi), do adapt to the present day. In the 21st century, Inuit sacred hunts use bolt-action rifles. Magic is a symbol of eternal truth, but creating that symbol is an Art; there is room to evolve and improvise.

Weapons — Command and Control

Because weapons can protect life and bring death, they are highly valued magical tools. **Mage: The Awakening** lists the weapons associated with various Paths, but Storytellers can expand this list if they wish. In addition to the listed weapons, each Path favors one category of weapons. Sometimes, these categories are strongly affected by a mage's culture. Various cultures esteem particular objects as special vessels of suffering, which

in turn influences the Weapons of Agony assigned to the Mastigos Path.

It should be noted that the short blade — stone knife, hand ax or metal dagger — is common to all Paths.

Acanthus: The Weapons of Precision especially rely on hand-eye coordination. They tend to be light impaling tools. Western Acanthus prefer rapiers, small swords and bows. Members of the Path have been known to favor darts, atlatls, light spears, crossbows and Chinese straight swords.

Mastigos: Weapons of Agony are known for the horrific, painful injuries they inflict. A Weapon of Agony leaves ragged, open wounds or packs a sting that bruises deeper than it seems. Mastigos blades are either curved, as a saber, or wavy, as an Indonesian kris. Thorns and spikes often enhance the mage's chosen weapon. The Path adopts various forms of the lash as well: the thorny branch, the chain and the whip.

Moros: Aside from the short blades universal to all Paths, the Moros' Weapons that Break and Unite are usually blunt. They symbolize the twin crafts of creation and destruction. A warrior-alchemist uses a smith's maul or mortar. Hammers are also associated with the lands of the dead. Other maces and clubs also find favor, but there is no small number of Moros who find the symbolism of Breaking and Uniting in simple stones, and sharp adzes and axes.

Obrimos: Weapons of the Legion are military arms, including long and straight swords, spears, tridents, bladed shields, crossbows and longbows. All of these weapons are expressions of military power, implying that the mage is one small part of a great crusade or secret order of warriors.

Thyrsus: Weapons of the Hunt and Hearth are above all, practical. Killing human beings is not their primary use. The Thyrsus bow is a hunting tool, and his ax splits wood. The Path's weapons are designed as if the Thyrsus lived in the Primal Wild. They are tools that a hunter might use to survive in the wild. Implements include the sling, atlatl, hunting spear and club.

Modern Weapons, Paths and Orders

Persistent rumors hold that mages have turned modern weapons into Path tools. Mastigos claim that they use Tasers through the grace of their Watchtower. Acanthus mages should be able to use light rifles as Weapons of Precision, shouldn't they?

In fact, it's difficult to tell whether these claims are true simply because Adamantine Arrows are so skilled at turning weapons into order tools. If a mage declares neither Path nor order, it's hard to tell why she can use a weapon as a magical tool. As it stands (and what **Mage** assumes), Path weapons can only comprise hand weapons and simple human-powered machines such as bows, slings and atlatls. Any firearms, explosives or electricity-based weapons can only be turned into tools by the Adamantine Arrow and Free Council. Only these orders know how sophisticated weapons connect to the Supernal Realms.

Naturally, you can ignore this in your game, but keep in mind that if mages can use their Paths to dedicate modern weapons, doing so reduces the distinctive role of the Arrow.

Expanding Order Tools

Just as the orders themselves, an order's standard tools can be heavily affected by the prevailing occult mythology. Order members everywhere accept a cultural mélange to one extent or another. No local traditions exactly match prevailing Sleeper beliefs and most mages come to realize that there are certain, universal aspects of sorcery. Thus order tools are already rather general in nature. Still, different mythoi can present even more variations.

The Adamantine Arrow — Attack and Defense

Whatever local slang calls the Warrior order, its members' ability to dedicate weapons, armor and protective gear are a constant. However, different cultures can stretch the definition of all of these. For instance, many cultures employ charms (amulets, medicine bags, etc.) that are supposed to guard the wearer from physical harm. As long as there is a standing Sleeper tradition of using such charms, an Arrow can dedicate them. These only apply to charms intended to protect the user from certain kinds of physical harm. Poison- and disease-warding amulets do not qualify. Because these must come from Sleeper cultures, other mages can identify these as potential order tools.

Weapons are somewhat more formally categorized, but a tool that can also be used as a weapon by an average person (such as a kitchen cleaver), can be dedicated by an Arrow mage. Some mages even find a way to define their own bodies as arms and armor (see "Body Art, Tattoos and Scarification," below).

The Free Council — Techné

Even though the Free Council is a modern order, it treats the Fallen World's occult traditions as potential sources of inspiration. Therefore, the Free Council's complex mechanisms need not be limited to conventional technologies. For instance, mnemonic, mathematical and

astronomical tools have existed in one form or another since before recorded history. Potential examples include sites such as Stonehenge (as a timekeeping device aligned with the sun's movements), Aztec calendars and gematria using the Platonic solids. In addition, Council members explore legendary ancient technologies, from supposed ancient Egyptian batteries to Greek Fire projectors.

The Guardians of the Veil — Conceal Identity

In essence, Guardian tools exist to conceal identities. Masks, cloaks and veils are examples of these tools, but Guardians of the Veil can dedicate others. Guardians have been known to dedicate snipers' ghillie suits instead of cloaks, and makeup kits instead of masks.

The Mysterium — Knowledge

Mysterium mages dedicate tools that keep knowledge. Beyond books and scrolls, this includes any art object that contains detailed symbolic messages. These are more than mere artistic statements; they speak in a hidden code. The artist must have intentionally crafted the message into the object. Thus, a Mysterium mage could dedicate a building that illustrates the meaning of 32nd-degree Masonic rites or a cave painting that reveals the magical art of the hunt. Many of these objects contain Illuminated runes in the contours of the work.

In every case, the primary purpose of a Mysterium tool is to preserve and communicate complex information. A mystagogue can't just dissect a statue's history to justify dedicating it. On the other hand, certain monuments serve as excellent tools. Well-preserved Egyptian tombs are prime examples of this, because they contain detailed information about the interred noble's life, death and supposed life to come.

The Silver Ladder — Authority

The Silver Ladder's global outlook has served it well. All branches of the order recognize symbols of authority from any culture. This open-minded attitude stems from the order's dream of one Awakened nation. The Silver Ladder sees all crowns, mantles, cards and seals as forerunners of the scepter of a revived Atlantis and dedicates them all as its tools.

Seers of the Throne — The Word

Seers of the Throne also use tools that easily transcend cultural boundaries. The only fact of note is that that a Seer can inscribes his word or phrase of command using High Speech rune styles outlines earlier in this chapter. Even if the inscription takes the form of a heavily illuminated picture, however, the command might reveal itself to someone who sees it.

Arcana Tools

The Arcana tools listed on p. 90 of **Mage: The Awakening** are merely starting points. Storytellers should feel free to allow mages to dedicate any tool that one culture or another links to the Arcanum's area of influence. Death is in bones, but a Zoroastrian mage also knows it in the flight of carnivorous birds, just as he knows Prime lies in a burning brazier. Mages don't know whether the dreams of millions of Sleepers make these tools sacred or whether the Sleepers weave such symbols from their unconscious memory of the Truth.

Body Art, Tattoos and Scarification

Some mages never want to lose their tools and furthermore, don't care if a trained eye can spot that they are men and women of power. Taking this step requires confidence (or foolishness). Such mages use tattoos and scarification to mark their bodies with the sign of a magical tool. This requires four steps.

For the first step, a mage must dedicate the tool she wishes to reproduce on her own body. This is accomplished as usual (see p. 90 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

The second step is to design the tattoo or scar. Mages may design each other's body art for this purpose if they have dedicated the same tool that they plan to depict. Such a design requires a successful Intelligence or Composure + Crafts roll. The design needs to symbolize the tool, but not literally. For example, concentric half-moon brands can represent a cup.

For the third step, the dedicated tool must be used in some fashion to mark the mage's body. The tool might be ground into tattoo ink, heated to become the brand or used to cut or pierce a design into her skin.

Finally, the mage or an ally casts "Path in the Skin" (see p. 69) on the subject. She can now use the "tool" (in the form of a scar or tattoo) by exposing it or touching it while casting the spell. This not only consumes one of the mage's active spell slots, but adds a +2 bonus to attempts to sense resonance attached to the mage's person. Furthermore, while the spell is active, the mage can no longer dedicate the same kind of tool as she uses in the form of a body marking. Thus, a mage with a Path tool scar can no longer use Path tools of any kind. Awakened observers can guess the body marking's function by sight, and even Sleepers can understand something of its mystical symbolism by succeeding at a Wits + Occult roll. Mages who succeed know which Path tool the marking represents, while Sleepers learn what Fallen World occult equivalent the marking most resembles.

Sample Mythos: The New Thunder Society

The Xingleihui (Mandarin for New Thunder Society) is an ideal example of how mages' cultural ties can influence everything from the way they treat each other to the spells they cast. Members of the cabal follow a mythos rooted in Chinese tradition. They don't necessarily believe in every detail of that culture's legendry. The most experienced members learned the Mysteries according to deep tradition, but younger members deride these as "off the boat" anachronisms and prefer multicultural praxes.

History and Mythology

The New Thunder Society formed shortly after the end of World War II. The war thinned the ranks of Chinese mages, but left enough chaos in its wake for talented survivors to occupy the vacuum. The resulting duels and maneuvers left Shanghai unprepared for an influx of undesirables such as foreign Banishers, angry ghosts and enterprising vampires. The Xingleihui formed to secure the city against these intruders and leave Shanghai's other mages to form a new Consilium.

The cabal's founders were considered ideal protectors because they were not urbane Shanghai residents, but northerners who learned the Art from the wily hermits and ancient spirits of sacred mountains. Furthermore, the founders were dedicated to an order of mystic soldiers. Foreigners called that order the Adamantine Arrow, but the cabal founders knew it as the Shenglongpai, or Academy of the Victorious Dragon. They soon learned to recognize counterparts from Europe. This helped diplomacy somewhat, but no more guaranteed an alliance than when Japanese Kongoyumi (Diamond-Thunder Bow) claimed a similar kinship throughout the war.

The founders knew little of "Atlantis." They believed that culture heroes called the Three August Ones founded an enlightened state after discovering writing, fire, medicine, farming and the magical secrets of these crafts. These existed in their highest form in the Supernal Prior Heaven, among the stars.

One of these Three August Ones became the Yellow Emperor. Under the banner of the dragon, he defeated the demon ruler Chiyou and was the first in a line of five perfect emperors. Each of these rulers mastered one of the primal Paths of magic. Unfortunately, the Xia dynasty was not the equal of the Five Emperors. Emperor Gao shattered the sky, bringing a terrible flood composed of the waters of original chaos and the black dragon of the Abyss. His son, Emperor Yu, petitioned the goddess Nuwa to repair the sky. The goddess banished the waters and the dragon, and made a five-colored stone to support the rebuilt heavens.

The stone's five colors mark the Paths that lead to Heaven and the wisdom of the Five Emperors. The great flood still weakened the world, though, and the survivors forgot many secrets. Now, mages climb one Path along the stone and contend with the dragons of the Abyss.

The New Thunder Society's founders believed this, but as the years pass, members have learned to take a broad view, reconciling their mythos with those of mages from around the world. Some even use the term "Atlantis" in conversation! Accelerating the process is the fact that, with the original disputes over Shanghai long vanished, the current cabal has turned to the import/export business and immigration. These days, members are just as likely to be in San Francisco as Shanghai.

Only Cai *laoshi* resists the mix of cultures. The young ones may frown, but Cai's pretty sure he knows a few tricks from the mother country that no amount of punk experimentation will match.

Symbols and Tools

Xingleihui mages base their magic in old traditional teachings. Even so, Cai is the only "pure" practitioner of these arts in the cabal. The others like to explore other mythoi, but they do not neglect studying with Cai, the only Master among them. Thus, they view the traditional style as their root and use it to grow in any direction desired.

Cai teaches Accented High Speech as a form of Classical Chinese, with a smattering of Poetic High Speech integrated into everyday speech. Cabal members also use Chinese glyphs written in such a way as to contain a Palimpsest form of High Speech. The cabal does not treat High Speech as if it is "hidden" in the speech and writing; the mages simply believe that the magical form is being written and spoken properly.

Cai encourages the all kinds of magical gestures, especially the asanas and natas of health *qigong* and martial arts routines. These resemble the internal martial arts of *baguazhang* and *xingyiquan*, modified to obey the occult laws of motion. Combined with the *jian* sword, New Thunder mages adopt a highly kinetic style of magic, raising power with operatic leaps and thrusts, but discharging it to unexpected ends. *Qi* (or Mana) can be raised one way, but used in another. Cai makes sure his juniors learn the value of such surprises.

Many Banners

Just to prevent any misunderstanding: the Chinese mythoi and alternative order names described in this section are not the definitive stories and customs of the region. China's *huge*; its cultural sphere of influence is even larger.

Although Chinese written language and certain traditions have been disseminated across Asia, every community, religious group and population center contains variations. Chinese mages have many different myths and practices.

These variations spring from regional cultures and from contact with the rest of the world. Remember that geography does not determine a character's mythos. There are Asian mages as steadfastly Christian as Boston's White Putnams or so stringently Buddhist that they reject folk traditions for the sake of a pure religious ideology.

Cai (Master of the New Thunder Society)

Quote: *My cabal only wants a modest amount of privacy – enough to practice the Art that we know in different forms. I tire of your purposeless apprentices bothering me with their thirst for the exotic.*

Path: Acanthus (*Fenghuang*: "Phoenix")

Order: Adamantine Arrow (*Shenglongpai*: "Victorious Dragon Academy")

Background: Locals in Shanghai believe that Cai's a *feng shui* or martial arts master because of his antiquated dress, habits and obscure source of income. In a way, they're right.

Cai is starting to slow down with age. Even though he's still a formidable and unorthodox fighter, he prefers to train the rest of his cabal. He directs grueling workouts and study periods for the other five New Thunder mages. He has become more conservative in recent years, but at the same time encourages his juniors to adopt San Francisco as their new home. He wants them to remember China, but secretly believes that the cabal has outlived its usefulness there. Even though he himself hates San Francisco and its Awakened customs, New Thunder business is more successful there than in the crony-filled, entrenched establishments of Awakened Shanghai. All the same, Cai wants the cabal to retain a strong core of Chinese magic and culture.

Aside from his role in the Xingleihui, Cai teaches martial arts and calligraphy to children. He also reads fortunes for a few connected businessmen in Shanghai and San Francisco.

Description: Cai ("Fortune") is a slender man whose androgynous appearance is starting to get compromised by age. When he's in Shanghai, he wears traditional robes. In San Francisco, he wears a single-breasted, dark green suit that is beautiful but wasted in the warehouse where he normally spends his time managing his cabal's modest business. When he rolls up his sleeves to fight, his enemies notice powerful hands and defined forearms. He moves with trained natural grace.



Storytelling Hints: Cai is alternately stern to cabal members and kind to children. He is not especially racist, but is highly suspicious of people who try to adopt foreign customs. He's not sure whether his beliefs are more accurate or that each culture has its own path to truth, but he does believe that the Mysteries that he knows are especially potent. Cai does not disregard his own studies, either. He has only recently found the time to consider learning a Legacy and is interested in the way of the Perfected Adept. A non-Chinese Perfected Adept might be able to trade her teachings for his.

Abilities:

Improvised Fate Magic (dice pool 10): Cai is a master of Fate magic. Although he knows dozens of rotes, he now prefers to improvise his spells in accord with Taoist doctrines of spontaneity.

Martial Arts Master (dice pool 8): Cai is a master of the *baguazhang* (Eight Trigram Palm) and *xingyiquan* (Mind Shape Fist) martial arts. The former uses the trigrams of the *I Ching*; the latter, the five Taoist elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Both of these are "internal" martial arts that stress relaxation and proper joint alignment instead of raw strength. Cai knows both the forms practiced by Sleepers and the "real" versions he uses to enhance his magic. Cai also knows how to use an array of weapons — especially the straight sword and spear.

Teacher (dice pool 7): Cai is an excellent teacher. He uses his skills to pass on the disciplines of sorcery and Chinese culture.

Ars Nova: The Magic of the Modern Age

Mages have always been associated with the ancient and the arcane. Since long before Shakespeare's witches conjured sorcery with eye of newt and toe of frog, witches and wizards were thought of as sequestering themselves in ancient towers, poring over moldering tomes of ancient wisdom. Even mages themselves came to be depicted as aged and bent by long years of study. This folkloric depiction has fully integrated into popular culture's depictions of spellcasters, to the point that the snowy-bearded, robed wizard and the withered, pointy-hat-wearing old crone of a witch have become as ubiquitous as Santa Claus.

Certainly, the Awakened value the wisdom of the ancients. Atlantis, after all, was the height of their power, and that island city rose, reigned and sank long before the modern concept of recorded history began. But the modern willworker is not a walking anachronism, speaking in "thees" and "thous" and attempting to contact the little men inside the television. (At least, the sane ones don't. Usually.) Mages were born and raised in the modern world as most everyone else, and they are every bit as comfortable with its conveniences and vagaries as any mortal. Why, then, should they be expected to cling to magical praxes handed down from thousands of years ago? Why should they wave their hands about in arcane gestures and chant in High Speech when the rest of the world has moved on to bigger and better things? Sure, the Atlantean method works, but if science, art and politics have advanced by quantum leaps since those ancient days, why can't the Art do the same?

For many mages, the question never even comes up. The cultural assumptions about magic and those who wield it are strong enough that many newly Awakened mages simply take it for granted that ancient tomes, magic wands and chanting in forgotten tongues is simply How It's Done. For others, the simple answer that the Atlantean way has *always* been the way is enough. Some mages aren't sated by such glib explanations, and set out to prove that magic can be brought up into the modern era just as well as any other human endeavor. Those with a scholarly inclination dub this style of magic *Ars Nova*, the New Art, but it has become colloquially known as technomancy, techgnosticism or, more crudely, technomagic. All three of these terms are somewhat inaccurate; practitioners of the Ars Nova incorporate modern ideas from all fields of knowledge into their magic, not simply technology.

Ars Nova and the Orders

It's easy to assume that the Free Council is the be-all and end-all of the Ars Nova movement, and that the Atlantean orders look on those young upstarts with a mixture of amusement, contempt and pity, but that is both a vast oversimplification of the views of the orders and patently untrue in any case. Mages are individuals first and foremost, and the Free Council has more to its philosophy than just a new way of practicing magic. Technomancers can be found in the Atlantean orders, and traditionalist practitioners dot the Free Council as well.



The Adamantine Arrow

The Adamantine Arrow, as in most matters, tends to take a pragmatic view of technomancy's place in the Awakened world: if technomancy can be used on the battlefield, then technomancy is worthy of consideration. If not, it gets discarded. The net result sometimes appears incongruous to the outside observer, as the Arrow's mages conjure magic using ancient medallions and wands of lightning-struck oak alongside palmtop computers and incantations of quantum theory.

Not surprisingly, the Arrow's take on the Ars Nova focuses on modern military theory and equipment. Arrow mage meditate on small-unit tactics and close-quarters battle strategies, invoke modern "gods" of war such as Rommel and Oppenheimer and abjure themselves from harm with Kevlar body armor etched with symbols of arcane protection. Of all the orders, the Adamantine Arrow is the most keenly interested in using modern understanding of physics, biology and other scientific fields to minimize Paradoxes while maximizing lethality. Conjuring thunderbolts out of thin air is all well and good but does no good if the very casting of the spell is as risky for the mage as for the target. Thanks to advances in fields such as medicine, mages in tune with the modern world can kill in ways far more subtle and insidious, ways that the mages of old simply weren't aware existed. Modern psychiatry has opened up entirely new ways of using Life magic to manipulate the chemicals that regulate brain activity, and the advent of cell phones, GPS transponders and "in-vehicle safety and security systems" means that sympathetic magic is easier than ever. Sleeper armies talk about the "digital battlefield" and how information technology will change the face of warfare. The Adamantine Arrow seeks to revolutionize its own battlefields in the same way.



The Free Council

Think revolutionary magical praxes, think a discarding of Atlantean dogma, and you most likely think of the Free Council. The youngest order, for all intents and purposes, *invented* the Ars Nova, and by and large the Free Council's members are the most flexible at adapting their magic to new paradigms and applying modern science and technology to the Supernal. In many ways, techgnosticism is the highest expression of the order's philosophy, and remains one of the core teachings of the order.

Recently, a radical (and, according to some of the more conservative orders, heretical) theory has been proposed by certain hardline elements within the Council. This movement identifies itself strongly with the name Ars Nova, and rejects terms such as techgnosticism and technomagic as crude and insulting. The theory states that the ultimate cause of a Paradox is because the ever-widening gulf between Atlantean magical traditions and the way the vast majority of humankind lives has become so great that the old practices are slowly losing their Supernal sympathy. Adherents of this philosophy claim that magic must grow and evolve alongside humankind's other endeavors if magic is to continue to function. To date, no experiment has yielded conclusive results that modernizing magical praxis reduces or eliminates Paradoxes, but even the theory's staunchest opponents grudgingly admit that, if nothing else, casting a spell using a cell phone or a laptop as a magical tool is rather less likely to draw the Disbelief of Sleepers than one that involves dancing widdershins with a sacred dagger.



The Guardians of the Veil

By and large, the Guardians of the Veil embrace techgnosticism almost as heartily as the Free Council. Whereas the Council's practice of technomancy is part and parcel of their philosophy, the Guardians of the Veil pursue modernized sorcery for purely pragmatic reasons. Sleepers have very strong concepts of what "magic" is like, even if they don't believe in it in the slightest, and anything that moves actual, Awakened magic *away* from that conception makes the Veil that much easier to protect. A particular push among younger members of the order, especially in progressive urban centers, calls for a complete abandonment of what they call "Harry Potter magic." With the recent explosion of magical and supernatural elements in popular culture, they insist that mages must adopt a more innocuous appearance if they are to remain hidden in the modern world. Their opponents argue that the Atlantean traditions remain intact for damned good reason, and that the upsurge in popularity of wizards, witches and warlocks is a smokescreen of its own.

One might expect this zeal to go over well with the Free Council, but sadly the two groups clash over ideology more often than not. The Free Council sees the Guardians of the Veil as hypocrites, taking the fruits of the Council's labors and exploiting them with no care for the deeper philosophical meanings behind them, while the Guardians of the Veil look at the Free Council and see iconoclasts for iconoclasm's sake, foolishly denying the obvious truth of Atlantis in order to pursue their own agenda.



The Mysterium

The Mysterium, in its pursuit of arcane knowledge, sees the Ars Nova as an interesting footnote, but little more at this point. As far as the Mysterium has observed, the Free Council's vaunted techgnosticism is really nothing more than a fresh coat of paint on the same Atlantean traditions that have existed for thousands of years. When the technomancers discover a new Arcanum, or

a way to circumvent the power of the Abyss, then the Mysterium will take notice. Until then, the much-debated "new technique" is just that — a technique, and no more intellectually stimulating than the incorporation of elements drawn from voodoo, Kabbalah or Shinto into one's style of magic.

Where the Mysterium's interest in techgnosticism is felt the strongest is in a relatively new field of occult study dubbed the "Clarke Singularity," named for science-fiction author Arthur C. Clarke. Despite the name, with its vaguely astronomical connotations, the Clarke Singularity is a philosophical question posed by certain members of the Mysterium, particularly older mages who saw the tremendous leaps technological advancement made during the 20th century. If, as Clarke stated, any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic, what happens to magic when technology catches up to it? One hundred years ago, the only way to communicate instantaneously with someone on the other side of the globe was with powerful magic. Today, anyone with a phone and thirty-five cents a minute can do the same thing. Five hundred years ago, the only way to make a flying machine was to imbue it with Supernal energies. Today, a basic understanding of aerodynamics and a healthy supply of aluminum are sufficient. Adherents of the Clarke Singularity philosophy debate endlessly over what long-term effects this technology creep will have on Awakened magic. What will happen, they wonder, when technology reaches the point when technology can do anything magic can do? Theories range from a complete annihilation of magic as the Awakened currently know it to the dissolution of the Abyss and a restoration of the heyday of Atlantis. Predictably, the debate has its share of neo-Luddites on one side and fervent technologists on the other.

The Silver Ladder

Silver Ladder mages tend to look down on the practice of techgnosticism. This is not to say that they cling, hidebound, to outmoded practices for the sake of upholding the dream of Atlantis, but, similar to the Guardians of the Veil embrace of Ars Nova, the Silver Ladder rejects modernization of the Art on purely pragmatic grounds. Mages are meant to lead, the Silver Ladder says, and the grand ritual and mysterious execution of Atlantean magic gives the willworker an aura of power and mystery that seems somehow lacking when one discards the ancient trappings of wizardry in favor of strike-anywhere matches and portable MP3 players.

The Silver Ladder is not a collection of stupid mages, and they are quite aware that modern science and technology are both useful tools in their own right and a great boon to the working of magic. A mage with a thorough understanding of modern chemistry and physics can do more with the Matter Arcanum than a 12th-century alchemist, not because the mage's spells are more powerful but because his understanding of the medium he works in is that much greater. In this respect, the Silver Ladder are almost a mirror of the Free Council: where the Free Council attempts to update Atlantean magic to the modern world, the Silver Ladder works to update modern understanding to fit the Atlantean paradigm. The Silver Ladder also boasts a modest number of scholars studying Clarke's Singularity, but unlike Mysterium mages, who are primarily interested in the philosophical ramifications of the theory, the Silver Ladder hopes to find some practical use in the theory, specifically a way to mitigate or even negate Paradoxes altogether. No mage is known to have successfully changed a spell's Aspect from vulgar to covert, but the Silver Ladder remains hopeful. Such a discovery could be the key to winning the war against the Exarchs and restoring the glory of the Imperium Mysteriorum.

Techgnosticism in Theory and Practice

Broadly speaking, techgnosticism can be broken down into two categories: using Awakened magic to influence modern technology or concepts ("updating" spells for the modern world) and the use of modern magical tools or the incorporation of modern sciences and philosophies into one's occult praxis. The latter is considered to be the "true" Ars Nova by the most fervent of its supporters, while the former is denigrated as parlor tricks and occult novelty by those who claim to follow the true path of techgnosticism.

Modern Magic

Virtually all mages have made use of this form of techgnosticism in one way or another at some point in their careers. Whether using Matter to make a pistol more accurate or Forces to cut the electricity to an enemy's lair just before storming it, most mages use their powers to influence the modern world fairly frequently. Most mages think nothing of this, and treat magic as nothing more than a tool to be applied to any situation in which magic might be useful, while others devote themselves to a more comprehensive understanding of ways to synergize magic and modern technology to accomplish with comparative ease what would require significantly more effort or power to accomplish by magic alone. Locating and observing an enemy from a remote location, for example, requires a not

inconsiderable knowledge of the Arcanum of Space, not to mention sympathy with the target. By contrast, tuning in to the remote feed of a security camera is a Forces 1 spell, does not require sympathy and does not create a scrying window another mage might detect. With the prevalence of security cameras in modern cities growing every day (London, for example, has approximately one camera per five citizens), a mage in tune with the workings of the modern world can monitor public areas with relative ease.

The following spells from Chapter Two are just a few examples of spells specifically designed to work within the framework of the modern world: "Autopilot" (p. 67), "Chemical Imbalance" (p. 65), "Control Traffic" (pp. 61-62), "Gremlins" (pp. 72-73), "Evidence Shroud" (p. 65) and "Influence Magnet" (p. 63). Some influence technology, others manipulate the structure of modern society and still others exploit modern understanding of the sciences to make the mage's life easier.

The Magic of the Modern

Spells that make a car drive itself or alter traffic light patterns are all well and good, and while no one would seriously dispute that they are useful tools, techgnostics argue that they miss the point of the Ars Nova. Their philosophy is meant to be a radical reorganization of occult praxes, not a collection of spells and rotes that exploit technology. They seek to find new Supernal sympathies in the modern world, to understand how the urban jungle of concrete and graffiti and steel touches the Primal Wild and where the awesome power of the atom reaches out across the gulf of the Abyss to touch the Aether. They forge new magical tools, reject praxes based on ancient mystery religions, and seek instead the hidden Supernal truths in emergent fields of study like quantum theory and astrophysics. If the techgnostics have their way, ancient symbology and outdated superstition will be excised from the Awakened world, and the Exarchs will be fought with *all* the knowledge humanity has amassed through its history.

Tools of the Trade

One of the first things a disciple of the Ars Nova is taught is to look for Supernal sympathies in objects and materials beyond the traditional Atlantean tools and substances. Critics point out that this is little more than the window-dressing they decry in others, but the techgnostics counter that everyone has to start somewhere, and looking beyond the ancient, commonly-accepted traditions of the Atlantean tools is as good a place as any.

The traditional Atlantean tools — wands, weapons, cups, coins, and mirrors — have strong resonance with the Watchtowers, and their traditional forms have been dictated for centuries (see "Magic and Culture," p. 86, for ideas on how these tool forms can be expanded within different cultural contexts). Branching out into modern metaphors and symbolism can be a difficult, frustrating process of occult experimentation and trial and error, but the results, namely the early steps on the road to mastering the Ars Nova, are held to be more than worthwhile by the techgnostics.

Wands and Staves

Acanthus: The minute-hand of a clock, an aluminum baseball bat, a lava lamp, a halogen flashlight

Mastigos: A bar from a jail cell, a brass trumpet, a set of scales, a flag pole

Moros: A shovel used to bury the dead, an ivory-headed cane, a diamond stickpin

Obrimos: A radio antenna, a steel trumpet, depleted uranium

Thrysus: A wooden bat, a length of copper piping, a wooden staff decorated with bottle caps, slivers of glass and other urban detritus

Weapons

Acanthus: Switchblades, blackjacks

Mastigos: Brass knuckles, machetes

Moros: Scalpels, weapons of opportunity (claw hammers, screwdrivers, lead pipes, etc.)

Obrimos: Explosives, Tasers

Thrysus: Survival knives, poisons

Cups

Acanthus: Plastic novelty cups, whiskey glasses, pewter mugs

Mastigos: Tin cups like those used in prisons, iron cauldrons, any simple, unadorned cup of iron, brass, or leather

Moros: The cup from which a person took his last drink, china coffee mugs, crystal wine glasses

Obrimos: Fonts, chalices used in religious ceremonies, souvenir mugs from the Petrified Forest

Thrysus: Survival canteens, homemade cups, copper sinks

Coins

Acanthus: Defaced US silver dollars, arcade tokens, glass beads, CDs

Mastigos: Old Soviet coinage, pennies pressed with images of Alcatraz or other famous prisons

Moros: Coins buried with the dead, small gemstones, spent bullets (especially those that killed someone)

Obrimos: Computer processors, gold currency from various nations, pentacle-shaped circuit boards

Thrysus: Bottle caps, commemorative coins, dog tags

Mirrors

Acanthus: Make-up compacts, silver hand mirrors

Mastigos: Polished brass, two-way mirrors

Moros: Reflective surgical light fixtures, polished grave marker plaques

Obrimos: Steel shaving mirrors, electrical transformers

Thrysus: Reflective glass, polished copper plates(

Praxes in the Modern Era

Mages use the term "praxis" to refer to an individual practitioner's specific style of magic. A mage's praxis is based on what forms and invocations she has personally found to have the strongest Supernal sympathy with her Path Realm, and is usually rooted in Atlantean tradition, or in one of the later magical traditions that retains some faint glimmer of Atlantean sorcery (see "Mythos," p. 86). Techgnostics, in their pursuit of the Ars Nova, seek to cast aside the old, superstitious models of magic and integrate the tremendous strides mankind has made in understanding the world around him, finding the Supernal sympathies in modern science and philosophy. This section covers a small selection of modern scholarly disciplines and discusses the Supernal sympathies they might have.

Quantum Mechanics

The theory of quantum mechanics first emerged in the early 20th century, and its fathers include such luminaries as Einstein, Heisenberg, and Schrödinger. Quantum mechanics deals with the behavior of particles at the atomic and subatomic levels, and as such has obvious sympathetic ties with Stygia, the Realm of Matter. However, one of the primary theories of quantum mechanics is that it proves the universe is built on probability and chance, not some invisible deterministic force, which gives the theory resonance with the Arcanum of Fate, and thus Arcadia. Moros alchemists revel in quantum proofs that, at some level, lead *is* gold, while the philosophers of the Acanthus gleefully dissect Schrödinger's Cat (a paradoxical thought experiment which posits that, until an event is observed, it simultaneously exists as *all* possible outcomes) and its ramifications for the Arcana of Fate and Time. At present, quantum mechanics are in their infancy, but more than a few Awakened scientists believe that the Sleepers are on the brink of discovering the Supernal Realms. What effect that might have on the Abyss can only be guessed at.

Nuclear Physics

The raw power of the atom. The celestial inferno of the sun. The potential for limitless energy. Obviously, nuclear physics has its strongest ties with the Aether, and it is Obrimos mages who incorporate nuclear physics into their rites and practices. They fuse science and magic in a search for true cold fusion, and seek to master Forces to such a degree that they can control radiation of all kinds. Rumors have surfaced in scattered Consilii, usually those near nuclear reactors or advanced physics labs, that Obrimos scientists have attempted to induce fission in Tass. The theory goes that this will create an explosion of Mana across the Fallen World, invigorating the magical landscape and weakening the hold of the Abyss. Of course, other theories suggest that a "mage nuke" would tear the already-strained Fallen World apart like tissue paper and suck the whole thing into the Abyss, but every experiment comes with some risk.

Behavioral Science

In various forms, aspects of the behavioral sciences have been around for hundreds of years. It is only within the past century or so that a cohesive vision of cognitive and social sciences has come together, and even more recently than that that it was turned to the task most people associate with it most strongly: the profiling of serial killers and other criminals to help law enforcement catch them. Behavioral sciences, naturally, resonate strongly with Pandemonium and the Arcanum of Mind. Mastigos techgnostics often incorporate modern psychology and operations research into their personal journeys of the mind, and few mages are more at home in the Astral Realms than a Mastigos with a thorough knowledge of memetics. In recent years, the field has come to include elements of neuroscience and biological psychology, which has brought a smattering of Life adepts to incorporate the biology of the brain and endocrine system into their magic.

Computer Science

No device invented in the past 50 years has had a greater impact on the way human beings live their lives than the computer. Within the span of decades, they have gone from massive, ponderous machines used only by academia to ubiquitous items in millions of homes around the world. Computers and computer science are one of the most popular modern praxes employed by the techgnostics: Awakened hackers use them to redefine the parameters of reality, Goetian demon-summoners rely on their cold, mechanical precision to create summoning circles and protective wards, and the Obrimos see the epitome of their Path Realm: a myriad tiny pulses of electricity, harnessed and channeled to create something ephemeral and powerful that transcends the crude Forces of which it is made.

Genetics

Human beings have been using genetics since prehistory, when our ancestors domesticated plants and animals and cross-bred them for specific purposes. It wasn't until



the late 19th century that a formal science of biological inheritance was formed. In just over a century, genetics has progressed from a statistical observation of the inheritance patterns of fleas to cloned organisms, stem cells, and a dozen other controversial subjects. Mages, as a general rule, find the issues raised by genetic engineering to be rather less controversial — masters of Life, after all, have been doing similar things for centuries. Modern geneticist-mages seek to update those crude alchemical methods, creating homunculi by resequencing DNA and tinkering with the human genome on a level modern science can't even imagine yet. Curiously, many Thrysus mages in particular are interested in genetics and cloning more for its philosophical ramifications on the Arcanum of Spirit. Do cloned animals have spirits? Would a cloned human, if such a thing existed, leave a ghost behind? These questions and others are on the minds of many shamans, but the answers may have to wait until the technology has caught up with the questions.

Living Under the Mysteries

Mages thrive on knowledge. It's their chief commodity and central passion. And in the hierarchy of magical lore, secrets are the greatest prize. A mage with a new rote, tome or map to a Hallow gains a significant advantage over her peers. Therefore, the Awakened participate in an economy of secrets — one that includes dangerous games of theft, fraud and espionage for profit.

Even though there are mages who refuse to scry upon, steal from or cheat their allies, it is always tempting to do it. Sorcerers have magic at their fingertips that make it look easy, until they encounter wards, guardians and grudges. This weaves a thread of paranoia through Awakened society. A mage can spy, steal or strike with a focused thought, but targets who discover him can seek vengeance just as quickly. The temptation is compounded by the possibility of concealing the act. Mages with poor impulse control either die or learn to channel their wants into sophisticated plots — more secrets to keep and pry from their keepers. Sorcerers employ possessed proxies or Space magic to act at a distance and illusions to conceal their actions.

These situations bleed into mages' everyday lives. Awakened life exposes the mage to a new set of risks. While most Consilii forbid magical theft and espionage, only a foolish mage walks though life without taking precautions against scrying and hidden magical attacks. Let's look at the standard protections mages use — and the attacks they use, too.

A Secret Like a Pocketful of Gold

Where knowledge is currency, espionage is theft. Mages resent surveillance for all of the reasons Sleepers do and more. A mage's influence is often a function of the secrets she keeps. Furthermore, a secret's value is partly determined by how much another mage might want it. A grimoire with a rare Spirit rote is a marginal trade good for a mage with no command of that Arcanum, but is most valuable to one who specializes in it. While it is true that there are some secrets (like the locations of Hallows and unclaimed Artifacts) that any mage would want to know, a merchant of secrets does well to understand her clientele.

The danger is that these potential "customers" — those in a position to make the best out of occult knowledge and thus, willing to trade the best favors — are the ones most likely to spy on a mage.

What is a secret?

There are secrets, and there are *secrets*. Mages collect both. One never knows when another mage's real name is going to come in handy, but nobody's going to loan an Artifact for the price of a purloined driver's license. A new rote is a more reasonable offer.

The most valuable secrets help a mage better understand the Mysteries. Chief among these are rotes. The rote is a basic Awakened trade good. Mages exchange them with each other for various favors, including other rotes, but it is considered foolish to simply trade off rotes with mages outside your cabal until everyone has equally comprehensive knowledge. Today's ally might be tomorrow's enemy, and not every mage can competently protect their lore from their own rivals. It's technically forbidden to trade rotes outside of one's order, but there are times where personal bonds trump the establishment. Between loyal cabal members, the risk is minimal, but outside of that common cause, mages may risk the anger of superiors within their orders.

After rotes, the most valued secrets concern information about how to acquire occult power. This includes the location of magical items, Hallows and other "useful enigmas." To be accorded value, the information must include instructions on how to exploit it to the mage's advantage and avoid potential dangers.

Mages trade these secrets with each other for a combination of other secrets and more mundane benefits, from contacts in government to sexual favors and cold, hard cash. While a few sorcerers might always try to acquire arcane knowledge, they risk either material poverty or the risks of trying to acquire wealth and temporal power with raw magic. Naturally, this is one more temptation to steal knowledge instead. Why trade when you can hoard?

Strange Bedfellows and Familiar Foes

Atlantean tradition holds that a sorcerer's true friends are strong where she is weak, mysterious where she is forward and passionate where she is cold and rational. Those foreign to one's mindset should be siblings of the heart and soul. This is the root of traditions that give each member of a cabal a specific archetypal role. This not only enlists companions to compensate for each other's failings, but ensures that members will not compete with one another, turning to the arts of scrying and espionage to steal prestige and power.

The paranoid adage of, "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer," is not so much advice as a simple truth about Awakened alliances. Outside of their cabals, mages trade favors with those best equipped to help them. These build alliances between individuals and cabals, but to a great degree, these bonds only exist because of what such mages have in common, such as a passion for Death and Prime or deadlier battle magic. In many ways, mages from different cabals will have more in common: more to share and more to steal. Cynical sorcerers believe that the great orders are based on these bonds of affinity and exploitation, explaining why the orders have done little to stem centuries of inter-cabal intrigue. Indeed, the danger of espionage taints even the most basic student/teacher relationships.

Clouds Before Thunder: Strategic Espionage

Espionage serves another purpose: to help conquer an enemy. Mages have long known what classics such as the *Art of War* imply: that war includes subtle, social conflict as much as it does knives or lightning.

Mages do not become what they are out of mere happenstance. Each of them had a certain amount of will and inquisitiveness that drove them to question the Lie itself. Mages do not like raw violence; they prefer a more refined, precise product, aimed at the enemy's weak points. Mages spy on each other before they fight whenever it is possible to do so. Even though some Awakened might imagine that the Adamantine Arrow is the exception, their warrior sorcerers are not so blinded by the glory of personal combat that they overlook careful plans.

There are two broad approaches to this kind of espionage. The first is goal-oriented: designed to uncover

specific information about a target. For example, a mage might want to find out the enemy's real name or sanctum defenses. Otherwise, mages collect whatever information they can and do not attempt to analyze its importance until later. The Guardians of the Veil are renowned for their ability to sift through mountains of information to extract useful secrets.

While this kind of spying is often a prelude to conflict, some mages believe that it's only prudent to regular monitor neighbors. That way, they can detect danger before it strikes, and if things to come to blows, they know how to hit where it hurts.

The Paranoid Standard

How often do the Awakened use magic to spy on each other? Usually, as much as they can get away with. This isn't just because mages are ambitious and fearful. They are no more so than Sleepers — but they have opportunities that normal men and women will never know.

This is not just a temptation. It is an element of the environment in which mages live, where a lack of awareness can bring anonymous death from the other side of the world, and simple spells can uncover the identities of loved ones and secret desires. Consider the Space Arcanum. A skilled mage with a single strand of an enemy's hair can scry upon intimate moments. Using conjunctional Arcana, he can read a distant mind or cast a fatal curse.

While it is possible to detect a Space window, it is not always possible to account for every possible spy or attack. If the enemy has time, he can use an extended spell to summon a horror that an unprepared victim could never withstand.

In a world of hoarded secrets and anonymous murder, wouldn't you want to know who your potential enemies are and what they can do before they discover your vulnerabilities? Sure you would — that's the root of the Awakened culture of paranoia.

Spying Spells

There are many ways to extract secrets from another mage. The stereotypical scrying window is common enough, but experienced sorcerers don't like to rely on it.

The simplest precaution any mage can take is to employ Mage Sight whenever she deems it necessary. This is rude to do to an ally, but a certain amount of Mage Sight is expected between sorcerers who meet for the first time or due to a tenuous agreement. More proactive mages use Mage Sight as part of a larger scheme to learn more about possible rivals. They use stealth or sympathetic magic to assay the types of spells a subject habitually casts. Probing a sanctum with Mage Sight is common as such things go, but some Consilii consider it a minor breach of the Lex Magica to use even passive magic upon a mage's home.

Mental influence, telepathy and empathy are the purview of the Mind Arcanum. While reading emotions is not considered to be a serious insult, plumbing a subject's mind any deeper is. Mind control of any sort offends the Lex Magica in any situation less than a declared vendetta under the Right of Nemesis (see **Sanctum and Sigil**, pp. 30–32).

A group of Time spells give mages the ability to track others through what they will do in the past or future. These include "Postcognition," "Augury," "Divination" and "Prophecy." Like Space, Time magic benefits from sympathy. Furthermore, a mage can trade relative specificity (Time magic is more vague) and timeliness (Time magic never reveals the present moment) to overcome the weaknesses of Space magic, since enemies cannot exploit Time spells to counterspy or attack. Time senses are usually only an offense against the Lex Magica if they invade the privacy of a sanctum.

Scrying windows are as useful as they are clichéd. The "Scrying" spell employs sympathetic magic, making it the method of choice for mages who might not know where the enemy is at any given time. The Lex Magica normally only prohibits scrying into someone else's sanctum. The overall utility of "Scrying" means that mages not only use this spell with great frequency, but also employ "Spatial Awareness" and "Ward" to detect and counter attempts.

Ghosts and spirits make excellent alternatives because they hide in Twilight, spying upon targets as a Death or Spirit-practitioner wills. They can trigger a mage's Unseen Senses, but then again, it isn't easy to tell whether a mage senses an eavesdropper or some other source of weird power. Unfortunately, ghosts and spirits often have trouble remembering or relaying information. Ghosts rarely pay attention to strangers outside of their haunts and spirits have an alien point of view.

The solution is for a mage to personally sneak across Twilight using spells such as "Psychic Projection." A perceptive subject might be able to find such a mage, so this method risks attack.

Lightning from Heaven: Indirect Conflict

Gathering intelligence is only the first phase of any competition — or war — among Awakened contestants. Even though most Consilii hold that the proper thing to do is to resolve differences with the Duel Arcane, it

is understood that there are times when wizards cannot abide by such niceties and invoke the Precept of War (see **Sanctum and Sigil**, pp. 60–61). Mages who declare the right upon each other can attack each other's sanctums without sanction. If only one party makes the declaration, neither enjoys that privilege.

In these cases, Consilii usually only intervene if one side is totally unaware that they're about to be attacked or if the conflict would threaten bystanders' safety. According to law and tradition, the ideal sorcerers' war consists of polite notice and quiet murder.

If one side is ignorant of the fact that the other is about to bring the hammer down, it's considered proper form to let them know an enemy holds a grievance and that he, she or they had best be on guard. These warnings need not name the enemy or grievance.

This prevents mages from indiscriminately ambushing one another. On the other hand, it's not unheard of for mages to arrive a bit too late to warn a particularly hated party. Consilii have also ruled *caveat magus* upon victims who were suicidal, rash or unforgivably obtuse. Ambushes might be unseemly among the Awakened, but stupidity isn't tolerated either.

If a conflict threatens to reveal the existence of magic to Sleepers or endanger friendly mages, it must end. The Consilium gathers an alliance to force the feuding parties to settle by oath, duel or (in extreme cases), politically expedient executions.

These customs lead mages to employ distance, subtlety and strategy. Mages often know who their enemies are but cannot employ spectacular pyrotechnics, zombies, or other blatant methods. The element of surprise exists, but more after the fashion of a chess game where one player misses a critical move. A mage might give a "Ban" a Spirit exception to let him send invisible servants to and fro, but doesn't know that his enemy's Artifact commands war-spirits who can slip in and attack.

Deadly Rituals

Magical conflict is a two-pronged operation. Singly or in groups, mages divide their time between instant spells and extended rituals. Cabals normally dedicate members to one task or the other; a lone mage must choose between a dramatic ritual ploy and an arsenal of weaker, quick solutions.

It is a fact that if left unopposed, most mages can gather enough magical power (in game terms accumulate Potency and other spell factors) to obliterate an unprepared enemy. An instant spell weaves a bolt of flame; an extended ritual burns down a mansion. Mages take the dangers of extended spells seriously and periodically use Mage Sight to determine whether or not someone is gathering that kind of power around them. "Wards," "Bans" and magical concealment protect people and sanctums against these major assaults. One major reason why the Lex Magica protects sanctums is that otherwise, mages would use rituals to destroy each others' homes in a ruinous cycle of revenge. Of course, mutual, public nemeses can dispense with this, and kill each other wherever they stand.

Rituals have many disadvantages, however. They commit the caster to minutes, hours and even days of vulnerability as they gather power. That's why extended spells need to either affect an enemy at a distance or provide lasting protection. In this context, Space is an incredibly useful Arcanum. It can build "Wards" and "Bans" or connect an attack to a distant target. Conjunctions between Space and Forces or Life inflict physical wounds most easily, but other combinations can be just as potent, especially if they sidestep the enemy's "Bans" or other protections. (Note: In most cases, unless the Storyteller rules otherwise, the caster is limited to a maximum number of rolls equal to his base spellcasting dice pool, as is the case with mundane extended actions.)

Spirit is a popular second choice; compelled spirits can carry harm to an enemy miles away. Clever mages even enchant such servitors to make them more effective, giving them magical fire and strange fate to employ against the target. Similarly, Death's "Control Ghost" is the foundation of strategic necromancy. Shamans and necromancers who employ such methods are also the ones best able to counter them. Servitors bound by Life and Mind also have their uses, but the methods are less pervasive because most of them cannot hide in Twilight or Shadow.

The Honest Knife

Even though it's true that mages weave powerful extended spells to snuff the life out of each other, we can't forget the other half of a conflict. Instant spells and in-your-face assault is the other half of magical conflict. Ritual magicians are vulnerable; they need Mana, can't run and have to concentrate on the spell at hand (or abandon it). Smart cabals always guard their ritual mage from direct attack and try direct assaults themselves.

Frontline mages approach by stealth if possible, laden with moderate protective magic so that they can use quick rotes as the occasion demands. Even though the Adamantine Arrow and Guardians of the Veil often seem best-suited for such tasks, all orders know that there is no way to win with slow rituals alone. Direct and indirect means are part of a common strategy.

Armor of Light: Protective Magic

Mages habitually protect themselves from malefic powers, embarrassing accidents and everything in between. As we've previously noted, the Awakened usually perform some minor eavesdropping on friends and enemies alike. Knowledge is the first line of defense, but leaving aside mundane protection (which a mage should *not*, though the glory of the Realms Supernal sometimes promotes foolhardy behavior on the mortal plane), mages rarely do without a few active protective spells.

Allies are not usually offended by a moderate amount of protection. For example, an active Shielding spell isn't cause for alarm, but it's considered excessive to routinely enchant an area that isn't your own sanctum. Once a mage learns a physical Shielding rote, she might use it every day. This is not as paranoid as you might think, either; mages with no interest in politics use these spells to help them in case of car accidents, bar brawls and even slips on the ice. Storytellers should assume that mages with Shielding rotes have them active in most situations.

After that, mages concentrate on more subtle defenses. Extended versions of "Counterspell" and "Mind Shield" are two common examples. Unfortunately, a mage cannot layer on a defense for every possible attack. Spell Tolerance (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 128) forces her to strike a balance between action and protection.

Sanctums and guardians are the next line of defense. Awakened society tolerates almost any sanctum protection that doesn't expose the Mysteries or stray outside the mage's home. In practice, however, serious protection is hard to come by, since it requires Mana and Willpower to bind long-term enchantments to a sanctum. It's common to use Space, Spirit and Time magic to protect a sanctum from sympathetic intrusion, prediction and Twilight intruders. Mages consider "Ward" and "Ban" conditions very carefully, since conditions that allow or block certain phenomena work both ways. Remember that some specific conditions ("This does not affect anyone wearing the sign of the Amber Serpent") require Fate 2 (see "Target Exemption" on p. 154 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

Guardians can protect a sanctum or accompany a sorcerer, but suffer one of two limitations. Be it a ghost, spirit, or magical creation, a guardian usually either lacks the intelligence to carefully protect a mage or is intelligent enough to want to twist the conditions of its service. Loyal retainers are rare and even they are fallible. Friends have families; ghosts and spirits have inconvenient needs. Subordinates with their own supernatural powers have battles and plots of their own.

The Ethics of Magic

As someone said a very long time ago: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It seems simple and watertight. Treat your fellow human beings the same way that you would want them to treat you. Easy, right?

Maybe not. There are shades of right and wrong. Often, an accident of birth or geography can lead to a person coming to very different conclusions about what's right and wrong. Take, for example, the difference between Britain and the USA. At first glance, the two nations share a lot of common cultural cues. But often, the consensus of what makes one moral is pretty different. Among many in the USA, for example, owning a handgun is morally neutral, if not actually desirable. In the UK, most would consider it to be only one step away from actually going out and shooting someone. In the USA, many states have the death penalty, and it has wide support on a grass-roots level. On the other hand, no British government has dared to even suggest its re-institution since its abolition nearly five decades ago, for very good reasons: they'd never get voted in by a British public that looks upon the death penalty as nothing less than abhorrent. In Britain, the debate still rages over whether hunting foxes for pleasure can be morally supportable — to many Americans, the fact that fox-hunting was finally banned on moral grounds is a source of some bemusement.

At some point, however, even the most ardent relativist will have to concede that, across cultures, some things are demonstrably wrong. Like killing, perhaps. Or theft. But then, where are the lines drawn?

Mugging a passer-by or burgling a house is one thing. Pilfering stationery from the office is another. But the difference between pilfering and embezzling funds is only a matter of degree. And what about downloading MP3s?

Killing is, perhaps, more clear-cut. Even so, it's not *that* clear-cut. If you kill someone who shot at you first, or shot you, or shot and killed your brother or sister, does that make it less murder than killing your lover for their money?

Does the identity of the "other" matter, too? If a person is demonstrably bad — a proven terrorist, say — is depriving them of rights, freedom or even life, different to doing the same to an innocent, or a child? And where does punishment come into this? Can a punishment actually be said to fit the crime?

And then there's the question of who actually counts as one's fellow human being. Whole cultures have, throughout history, cultivated blind spots — sanctioning the persecution, enslavement or extermination of entire

ethnic or religious groups. Ordinary people — otherwise *good* people — have been complicit in terrible evils, simply because they could not see that the people they were abusing were people just like them. Of course, in situations like this, there *are* repercussions. The extermination of a people, no matter how inferior they might seem, leaves scars. But only on the people who are actually doing it. As for the people who don't see it happening, who tacitly accept this is happening — what of them?

The real complexity lies in the simple fact that human beings are capable of the very best and very worst, often at the same time in the same individual.

It's a minefield. For most of us, the best we can hope for is to attempt to live in harmony with the people around us and not to fall foul of the laws of our society.

For the Awakened magician, there's another level of complexity. The mage who follows the path of Wisdom has not only to take into account his society and his conscience, he has to navigate the order of reality.

Much of human life is outside of our control. Jobs, families, finance, relationships: all of these things can be in the control of forces we cannot affect. Gary in accounts gets the promotion you've been working for. Kids keep on tagging the side of your house. Cats get at your trash. Your lottery ticket doesn't win. She doesn't love you any more.

It's the human condition. Part of the hard work of day to day living lies in coming to terms with the fact that we can't have what we want. We have to play by the rules of society — and the laws of physics.

But what if you *could* have what you want? What if you *could* change the rules of physics? What if you could change things to your benefit? What if you could bend reality itself to your will?

Awaken, and the world is open to you. Suddenly, it's your plaything. You have the potential to transform the world. You don't have to face heavy traffic — you can use magic to find the right way through. You don't have to get overlooked for that promotion — you can use magic to make your work look *good*. You don't have to face rejection — you can *make her love you.* The guy who picked on you back in school — you can arrange an accident for him, and no one will ever find out.



After a while, using magic becomes easier. And it makes living easier. The temptation is to use magic to do things that you could do anyway. It often starts with the things that don't take a whole lot of effort — using magic to do chores, perhaps animating a mop and a bucket, *Sorcerer's Apprentice* style, rather than cleaning the floor, or using Forces magic to reheat a TV dinner. Gradually, the magician gains the nerve to cheat at things that perhaps he could do if he applied himself a bit more: using magic on yourself to make your work better and faster, for example, or gaining the attention of your boss. Finally, there are the things that are entirely outside of the mage's control, and which, perhaps, shouldn't be done, anyway: making her love you, or finding and getting revenge on someone who bullied you years ago and who's forgotten you've even existed.

It's easy for a mage to fall. Mages are, perhaps uniquely, bound by two codes of morality at the same time.

As human beings, their consciences still work under the constraints of their old moral codes. They can commit sins against their consciences, and fail morally. As Awakened magicians, they have to obey the rules of reality, rules which are based upon an interpretation of Supernal law, as filtered down into the Fallen World. The mage can commit an act of hubris by breaking the rules of reality. Both come into play. An act that may not be a moral sin might be an act of hubris; a magical spell might not violate the connection between Fallen and Supernal, but it might be morally reprehensible.

Among the Awakened of the Pentacle orders, magic is, ideally, to be used to bring the Supernal World in contact with the Fallen World, to open a door between the two orders of reality. Every human soul is a link between the Fallen World and the Supernal; the Awakened soul is a stronger, brighter link. The Supernal Realms and the Fallen World were originally intended to be one and the same. The aim of the mage on the path of Wisdom is to create a harmonious synthesis of the two. The philosophically enlightened mage has to recognize her limitations, and use magic without self-aggrandizement, without cheating for her own benefit, and without damaging other souls.

Cheating reality, forcing it to bow down to your personal desires, that's hubris. That isn't so much opening the door as smashing it down, imposing the Supernal World on our own world in disharmony. A mage who heals herself is not committing an act of hubris, because she's just restoring what was broken or lost. If she augments herself, she's not committing an act of hubris either, since she's reinforcing her own connection to the Supernal World, without openly altering the fabric of reality outside of her own Pattern. A mage commits an act of hubris when she uses her magic to harm others, violate a soul (her own or someone else's), or to advance herself in the Fallen World.

For a mage, living up to a moral code is doubly difficult. The magician has twice as far to fall.

Intention

The difference between an action which is sinful and an action which isn't is often governed by intention.

Driving a car along a road and running over and killing a child who ran out into the middle of the road without looking first, is vastly different from coldly pointing a gun at that same child's forehead at point-blank range and pulling the trigger. In both situations, you killed that little girl, but in the first, the intention was not there. You may, if you're particularly decent, feel the weight of an accident on your conscience, but it wasn't your fault. You weren't to know. On the other hand, if you were running over the speed limit, or had just come from a bar where you had downed five straight scotches, more of the fault might be yours. It's still an accident, but it's quite possible that it might weigh on your conscience more heavily.

In the end, for most people (as in, people with Wisdom 7), a sin is only a sin if it's either deliberate, or the accidental result of another sin — the most obvious example of this is manslaughter, the killing of a person through excessive force. The intention was there to harm, but not to kill. A drunk driver who ends up running someone down doesn't mean to hurt anyone... but it was his irresponsibility that is behind the deed (sins which are the accidental result of other sins should be usually one or two levels less severe than those which are completely intentional, so, for example, killing someone through drunk driving might be a Wisdom 6 sin, since, although no violence was intended, death was the result of your disregard for common sense).

Where magic is concerned, intention is central, since in magic, intention is focused through the power of the will. In order to harm someone using magic, you have to *really want* to cause harm, even to the extent of breaking the laws of physics, biology, chemistry and psychology to do so.

An act of hubris is at least one step worse than its mundane equivalent (so, murdering someone without magic is a sin against Wisdom 3, but using magic to kill someone is an act of hubris against Wisdom 2).

On the other hand, magic that harms others unintentionally is, by this same reckoning, not necessarily an act of hubris, even though it might trouble one's mundane conscience.

All of this assumes that there's an objective measure against which a mage can measure his actions.

Mostly, there isn't. Even though Awakened magic operates on a level slightly removed from mundane morality, its ethics are still based upon the historic teachings of the orders, combined with the magician's own conscience and social and religious background. The only matter in which the Awakened appear to be in complete agreement, across orders, Paths and cultural backgrounds, is that of the soul.

The human soul should be inviolate. It's the one connection that every living human has with the Supernal. Deliberate damage to the soul is always an act of hubris, because by damaging the soul, a mage weakens the link between the Supernal and the Fallen World.

Acts of Hubris

In game terms, mage characters check for degeneration for acts of hubris and sins against morality alike.

Using magic to do a thing that could be done more easily without is a lesser sin, which troubles few except the very noblest of mages (it's an act of hubris against Wisdom 10, rolling five dice). To boil water to make tea requires a mage to have become an Apprentice of Forces at least, which takes hard work and study. Most mages don't give it a second thought. In fact, it's quite common for teachers of Forces magic to use it as an exercise.

Magically curbing another's free will is only slightly more serious. Altering the will doesn't affect the soul, just the mind, and as such, it has little direct effect on the fabric of the world. It's an act of hubris against Wisdom 9 (five dice).

Having said that, the severity of this as an act of hubris depends very much on what the magician is coercing someone to do. Making someone do something detrimental to himself — like walking in front of a bus — counts as using magic to harm someone, requiring a degeneration roll against Wisdom 4 (three dice) or Wisdom 2 (two dice), depending on whether the spell is intended to harm or kill (see below).

Altering a person's perceptions is also an act of hubris against Wisdom 9 (five dice); so is changing one's volition, that is, making someone *want* to do something that he wouldn't normally do. Manipulating one's wants and emotions might be more subtle than direct mind control, but it's still manipulation.

A person forced by mind control to do something that affects their own conscience is still the person who did the deed, even if forced, and has to make a degeneration check.

The magician who forced them to do it also has to make a degeneration roll, against Wisdom 8 (four dice). If the thing he coerced his victim into doing was bad enough, he might have to make another roll against a more severe sin, since his is the responsibility of the action. Again, making someone want to commit a crime or an act of violence is pretty much the same thing.

The first act of hubris that worries most people lies in the creation of a curse. Curses fall into two broad categories. Some simply twist fate, damaging a victim's luck. Lady Luck might still come through for such a curse's hapless victim, but on the average things go wrong more than they go right. Fate turns against the victim.

Other curses depend on some condition or other to be fulfilled, or unfulfilled, like, for example, a curse that causes someone to crash if he drives his car on a Tuesday. Essentially, it's a malicious magic, but it's one with results that might not come about. It has a get-out clause of some kind. A mage who casts either kind of curse intends the victim to come to harm (which could just as easily be minor as it could be fatal), but doesn't guarantee that the damage is done. The ill intention is there, but the result isn't definite. Because of this, it's easier for a mage to justify this to himself. All curses (magics that intend harm but which do not guarantee harm) are acts of hubris against Wisdom 7 (four dice).

Binding a sentient being or a spirit to a place, object or task is an act of hubris against Wisdom 6 (three dice). Although spirits aren't exactly sentient, binding them violates what most mages recognize as Supernal law by tying a spirit down to somewhere it shouldn't be (see below). Binding a being with a soul to a task, through, for example, a *geas* cast with Fate magic, is a small but recognizably harmful violation of that soul. Souls should be free to exist without constraint other than their connection to the Supernal World. Creating other ties pulls against a soul's Supernal connection.

This still counts when affecting a person which *should* have a soul but who, through some unnatural occurrence, doesn't, simply because a human being who doesn't have a soul still has a place where a soul should be; this is enough.

Turning a person into a lesser being against his will is a no-brainer. Violating living Patterns is a blatant intrusion of magic into the Fallen World in a harmful, disharmonious way. Reducing a human into something less than human separates him from the Supernal. This is an act of hubris against Wisdom 5 (three dice).

Likewise, removing a human's free will altogether, turning her into a puppet or a doll (through, for example, the Mind spells "Psychic Domination" or "Psychic Reprogramming") amounts to much the same thing. This is more than the simple magical coercion mentioned above. This is total control; the act of putting on a body

like a glove and working it like a puppet, or reducing a human to the state of a mindless toy, or brainwashing — permanently altering a person's psyche beyond their control. Transforming, wiping or taking complete control of a mind is also an act of hubris against Wisdom 5.

Using magic to cause direct harm to someone is an act of hubris against Wisdom 4 (three dice). For a sin to count as an act of hubris of this magnitude, the harm caused to someone has to be the direct, intentional result of the magic. Bolts of lightning or electricity, supernatural diseases and psychic assaults are all direct magical attacks. More subtle magics which are intended to harm (causing points of bashing, lethal or aggravated damage) could also be considered directly harmful. Using telekinesis to fling rocks or hunks of scrap metal at a victim in order to cause damage counts as a directly harmful magic, since the purpose of the magic as it is cast is to cause harm. On the other hand, a mage manipulating a large rock who accidentally bashes someone he hasn't seen over the head with it as he's moving it hasn't performed an act of hubris, since it wasn't his intention to hurt the rock's hapless victim. Essentially, if the main purpose of a magic spell is to cause harm, it requires any mage with Wisdom 4 or above to make a degeneration check, rolling three dice. One possible exception to this rule is in the case of self defense — if hitting someone with a lightning bolt is the best available way to get him to stop hurting you, then it might be acceptable. A degeneration roll is probably only made in this case with Wisdom 7 or above.

Draining Mana from an unwilling person is also an act of hubris against Wisdom 4. It's a classic example of the magician gaining magical power at the expense of another's connection of the Supernal. Likewise, damaging one's own soul to create a soul stone is a comparable evil. Harming any soul's potential limits the connection of the Supernal to the Fallen World, and creates disharmony. The soul stone might not be removed from the world, but it splits a soul. A split soul is an incomplete soul, and an incomplete soul can never really ascend.

Forcing a spirit to remain in the Material Realm is, as mentioned above, an act of hubris; forcing a human (whether Awakened or not) to be trapped in the spirit world is far worse. The displacement of a spirit violates the rules of reality. The displacement of a being with a soul (or a being who should have a soul) into the world of the ephemeral violates the order of being. Any mage of Wisdom 3 or above who does this must make a degeneration check, rolling two dice.

Causing a human to be possessed by a ghost or spirit is just as much a violation. Not only is the human reduced to the puppet of an alien whim, but he becomes a means for a spirit to be tied to the Material Realm against nature. This is also an act of hubris against Wisdom 3 (rolling two dice).

Murdering someone with magic is worse still. Similar to magic used to harm someone, magic used to kill is defined as any spell whose effect is designed to end a life, and ranges from direct and obvious attacks (fireballs and the like) through to making a man walk in front of a bus. Casting a spell designed to murder someone is an act of hubris against Wisdom 2 (rolling two dice). A spell that was designed to murder but that only injures its target is no better — the intention was to kill. A spell that was designed to harm, which accidentally kills, is still an act of hubris against Wisdom 2 — the spell's intention was to harm, which is bad enough, but its result was still the ending of a life and the breaking of one more connection between the Fallen World and the Supernal.

Another, more subtle kind of murder is committed every time an Awakening is prevented or stalled. The province of the most powerful magicians, this terrible crime enforces the Quiescence, keeps a soul crippled and severs a potential future. Preventing an Awakening kills a little of the Fallen World's hope. It's a sin equal to killing someone with magic.

In Supernal terms, about the only thing worse than ending a life or stopping a soul Awaken is taking a soul. The ultimate violation, the final sin, stealing a soul condemns someone to a slow, wasting death and a sense of separation, of watching oneself die from the outside. A mage who separates a soul from a body, whether he takes it for himself or not, commits an act of hubris against Wisdom 1, and must make a degeneration check, rolling two dice.

Attaching a severed soul to the self is not in itself an act of hubris, since it reinforces the connection between the mage and the Supernal. The sin lies in the separation. Being indirectly involved in the separation of a soul, however, is only slightly less of a sin than separating the soul yourself. It's like paying a hit man, or receiving stolen goods. A mage who has a soul attached to himself which he knows is stolen commits a sin against Wisdom 2, rolling two dice, since, even though he didn't sever the soul, he's complicit in its theft.

The Conscience of the Hangman

Sometimes, doing terrible things is a political necessity. Executions happen among the Awakened, just as they happen in the real world. Sometimes, the only way to stop a mad or evil magician is to end his life.

Should the judge or the executioner feel remorse in sentencing a mass murderer to death?

Should the police marksman feel sorry for taking out the spree killer or the suicide bomber with a well-aimed shot? Should a doctor feel sorry for allowing someone to die rather than let them suffer indefinitely?

It's entirely reasonable to decide that some sins and acts of hubris are affected by mitigating factors. You might decide that killing someone who was definitely going to die slowly and painfully was an act of mercy, and let your players off from making a degeneration check, just this once. You might decide that carrying out a sentence of death passed by a magical court in accordance with all the traditional laws of Atlantis is only an act of hubris against Wisdom 6 or Wisdom 7. Or you might decide that killing is killing, and require a degeneration check against Wisdom 2. It's your call.

The worst sentence in magical law is the removal of the soul, which is, paradoxically, the worst crime. Its enormity is such that it's never going to leave the person doing it with a clean conscience. It's fair to only demand degeneration checks if the Consilium officials passing the sentence are of Wisdom 3 or above. As for the mage doing the deed, you might choose to give him a break too, depending on how just the sentence was, and depending upon whether you think that such a sentence can ever be justified. Remember, though, that mages like the Guardians of the Veil *know* their deeds cause them bad karma, and they accept it thinking they can spare others the degeneration.

Other Supernatural Beings

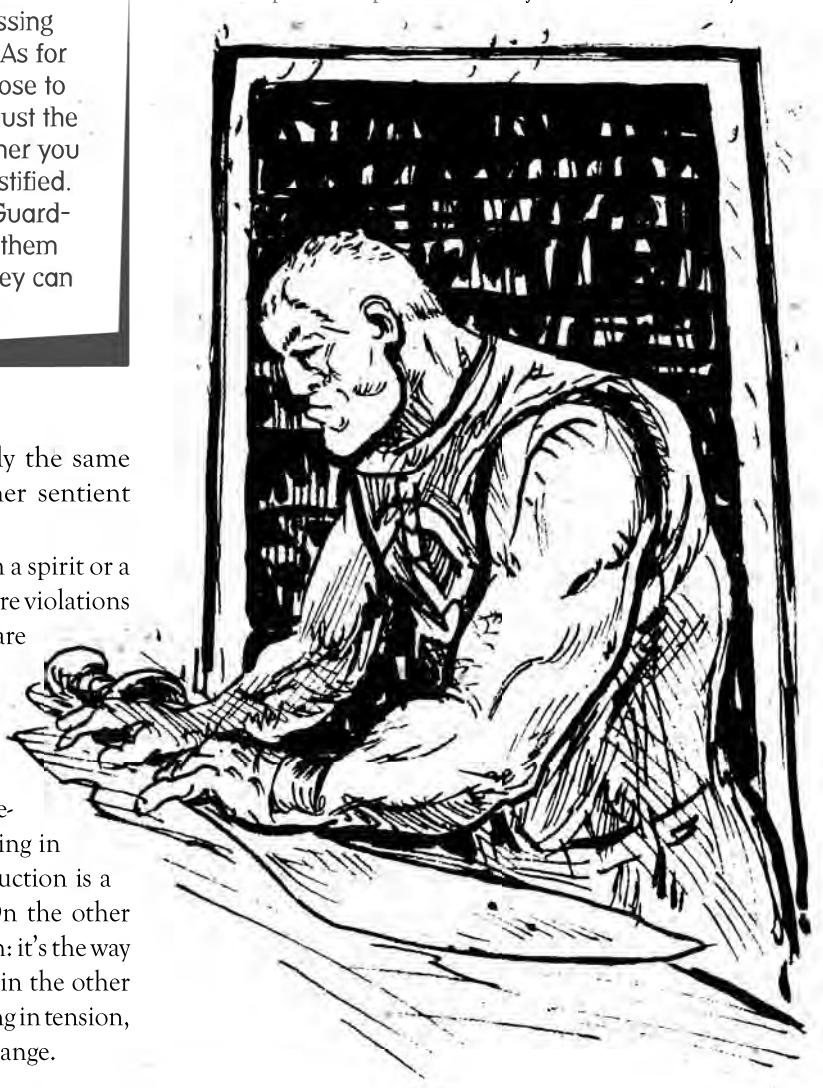
Causing harm to humans isn't necessarily the same thing as causing harm to some of the other sentient beings that mages come across.

It's not an act of hubris, for example, to harm a spirit or a ghost. In the material world, ghosts and spirits are violations of natural law. They should not exist. Ghosts are the result of an emotional and spiritual imbalance, unfinished business, pain, wrath, regret and fear bringing into being something that by rights should be at rest. Meanwhile, spirits, demons and the like have no place in the Material Realm. Some of them have no business being in Twilight, let alone manifested, and their destruction is a reasonable consequence of their intrusion. On the other hand, the Shadow follows natural laws of its own: it's the way of things for the spirits and demons that exist in the other worlds to constantly prey upon each other, existing in tension, a continual dance of destruction, birth and change.

A mage on the path of Wisdom who intrudes in the Shadow knows this law, and knows that no act of violence against a spirit can change the natural way of things. Also, spirits and demons, although sentient in a way, are not strictly alive, nor do they have souls. They have only a semblance of life, and are not complete souls in their own right.

The exception to this comes in those rare occasions where, in the distant past, a being with sentience, a soul and true life never actually died, instead crossing over into the Shadow, gaining some of the characteristics of being a spirit while still retaining a soul. For example, there are accounts of Rmoahal tribesmen from Atlantis still inhabiting Verges today, having endured for tens of thousands of years. While these beings are, on the one hand, no longer strictly alive (if they even exist!), they are still souls, and to harm them is the same as harming any being with a soul. Of course, if a magician doesn't know that this being has a soul, harming it won't harm his conscience.

While it isn't usually sinful to harm a spirit, it *is* sinful to bind a spirit to a place or an object. This is actually for the



same reason that killing a spirit is not a sin — a spirit in the Material Realm is an aberration, and in exerting her will to keep the spirit in the Material Realm, a mage is complicit in breaking the laws of reality, and keeping them broken.

Speaking of breaking the rules, the most difficult situations come when a spirit possesses or claims a human being. Often, the only way to remove the spirit from the world is to destroy its unfortunate, innocent host. Killing a possessed or claimed person is as much a sin as killing any other human being, although there may be cause to do so, and it may be merciful to do so.

Werewolves, on the other hand, although suspected as part spirit, have always been part of the Material Realm, at least as far as the historians of the Mysterium know, and are fully living creatures with complete souls — and souls which shine more brightly than many mages even realize. These wild, vital, passionate beings have as much right to the world as any human (and, given that their powers don't trigger Disbelief, possibly more right than even the Awakened). Because of their ties to the spirit realm, putting a werewolf in the spirit realm is no sin at all — on the contrary, it's more like throwing Br'er Rabbit back into the bushes.

On the other hand, this supposes that werewolves are natural. There are rumors — only rumors, mind — of shapechangers whose power takes on the nature of a disease rather than a natural condition. The grotesque creature created from the kind of supernatural infestation that corrupts the body and controls the mind would still theoretically be human. However, a soul that so damaged and altered would mean that, as in the case of possession, destroying such a pathetic creature would be a mercy.

The walking dead lie on the opposite end of the spectrum. The destruction of simple, mindless zombies is nothing less than an act of mercy. It's unpleasant and nasty, but it's necessary. Creating zombies is as much a sin as binding spirits into objects — not only is it a violation of natural laws, it's a violation of the human body (it's a sin against Wisdom 5).

The *intelligent* walking dead are another matter again. Creating a revenant — causing a dead body to be possessed by a spirit, even if it's its own spirit — isn't fundamentally all that different from causing a spirit to inhabit a human body. Although the body is dead, there's still, as with creating zombies, the moral taboo against violating the dead (meaning that creating a revenant is a sin against Wisdom 3, unless the being in question is possessing his own dead body and *wishes* to return, in which case it's still an act of hubris against Wisdom 5). Although revenants may have souls, they're still fundamentally violations of reality, and, since their natural state is non-being, *should* be destroyed.

Vampires too are violations against reality, and more than that — they're the result of a supernatural curse, although its source may be unknown. Like revenants, their souls (if they even have them — no mage is sure about this) have no business inhabiting their bodies. Add to this that the vampires' existence depends upon causing harm to human beings. They have to drink the blood of the living to remain active, and as such, no matter how noble they are, they're forced to be monsters. They seem to have souls, but to a mage, it seems obvious that their "souls" are perverted and damaged by their condition, crippled from the very beginning.

In terms of the Supernal, then, some mages might construe it as right and proper to kill vampires. From a purely mortal point of view, as sentient beings, they *might* prove themselves not to be monsters. Still, it's easy to take on the position that the killing of any vampire is a merciful act. Destroying a noble vampire puts him out of his misery; destroying one of the more common run of vampires rids the world of a monster. The destruction of vampires doesn't always weigh on the conscience of many mages; the Storyteller might decide that destroying a vampire with magic is not an act of hubris, while destroying a vampire who is demonstrably noble — that is, proven to have Humanity of 7 or above — is only a sin against Wisdom 7). On the other hand, vampires sure seem awfully human at times, at killing one might be just as taxing to one's moral center as is the killing of a human being. The Storyteller should err on the side of caution here, and surprise players with degeneration rolls when they think their characters are convinced they've done the right thing by killing bloodsucking freaks.

Prometheans are another matter. These artificial humans can evoke pity in even the hardest of hearts — so long as their aura of Disquiet hasn't poisoned people against them first. Any being — human, vampire or werewolf — who suffers from Disquiet, has little moral compunction about acting against the source of his unease. If they harm or kill the Promethean who causes their Disquiet, it is considered a lesser sin (manslaughter at Wisdom 5 and murder at Wisdom 4). This only applies if they are suffering from Disquiet of stage two or higher; otherwise, it's the same sin as if they killed a fully mortal being.

Duels: The Law of the Sword

Occult knowledge is in finite supply. The Realms Supernal barely touch the Lie and leave Wise, willful prisoners hungry for more. Mages learn, compete and eventually fight for supremacy within a given territorial, ideological or occult domain. Awakened souls are too rare to squander with indiscriminate fighting but too

ambitious to easily surrender to external authority. Thus, the Lex Magica recognizes dueling as a legitimate way to resolve disputes.

A Consilium can try and punish wrongdoers, but mages don't view it as an all-encompassing government in the fashion of Sleeper institutions. Ideally, Consilii guarantee collective security, basic decorum and a court of last resort. Unless the prevailing culture is highly formal, mages who run to the council over every offense are usually thought to be too weak to handle their own affairs.

Dueling exists to settle disputes between mages without burdening the Consilium or damaging the common courtesy of Awakened society. Nevertheless, there are those who feel that the whole affair smacks of a primitive, "gunslinging" mentality—and fight duels over delivering such slights. Why do they do it? What are the other advantages of duels?

The Duello

A combination of Western custom and Atlantean lore, the Code Duello (usually shortened to just "duello") is a set of customs that determine what constitutes proper behavior during any kind of duel. Everything that is against Lex Magica is against the duello, but the reverse is not so; there are many legal ways to violate the duello, from mocking the loser to arriving late to fight. Some Consilii mandate strict adherence to the duello, but most do not. Even though the duello is fairly consistent across the Americas, variations enough exist to prompt travelers to inquire about what customs hold sway. The following section describes elements of the duello as it exists in the Americas and most of Europe. Asian and African mages often have far different notions about how to organize ritual combat. Even in the West, there are enough variations, local traditions and quirky laws to make a full description of the Code Duello impossible.

Mages who twist the duello to their own ends are either hated or given a certain amount of grudging respect. Against expectations, Adamantine Arrows often play fast and loose with the duello. Arrows habitually prepare for unrestricted warfare; by comparison, the average duel is a petty game and treated as such.

Binding Law

First and foremost, mages must do whatever the result of a duel compels them to do. Dueling agreements are legally binding oaths. If a mage promises to gather 10,000 pawns (points) of Mana for the winner in a year or forfeit her life, it has the force of centuries old Lex Magica behind it. If she loses and subsequently breaks her promise, the victor may slay her on a whim. Mages often sanctify dueling conditions with magical oaths (combining "Squaring the Circle" with "Swearing an Oath" or "Geas"), to encourage or ensure the honesty of participants.

Consequently, mages should carefully agree upon the dueling conditions in front of sworn seconds. Confusion usually brings in the Consilium, which often rules against *both* parties to dissuade other dueling fools.

A Dueling Oath:

I, who am called Zeno, swear this oath without arcane or mysterious compulsion. Should I be victorious according to the common codes of the Duel Arcane, my opponent, called Aurem, will relinquish the apprenticeship of the mage called Arctos to me for 90 days, transferring all solemn bonds and oaths of service. Furthermore, Arctos shall be free to become my apprentice if he wishes it, without interference from Aurem. Finally, Aurem will not entreat me to perform any service by action of thought, word or deed, for a year and a day from the date of the contest.

Should Aurem achieve victory by the Duel Arcane, I vow to pursue the Unclean magus called Angrboda, seeking his irrevocable death and thwarting his desires in all ways, until 90 days have passed, I have died, or I have delivered the head of Angrboda as an assurance of his death. I further vow that I will take the mage called Morvan as my companion and witness in this endeavor. Finally, I will not communicate with the magus Arctos or entertain communications from him for a year and a day from the date of the contest.

The contest will be determined according to the common codes of the Duel Arcane, without addendum or alteration. I acknowledge that the duel is Just, and that I may not seek the Great Right of Nemesis against any participant because of its outcome.

Let all know that the oath I swear is law. If I break it, let the Awakened inflict fair judgment upon me.

Swift Justice

Any sizeable Consilium is so busy tracking local weirdness, territorial disputes, possible threats and political movements that they welcome duels as a way to offload a great deal of business to the honorable, angry people who want to go about it. Mages who appeal to the council about small matters may have to wait. If Boston suffers under a cannibal cult, why should its mages take time to listen to a petty argument over Mana rights? A duel settles matters then and there, with as much legal force as the Consilium itself can muster.

Privacy

By ancient law, dueling mages are never obligated to tell anyone else the cause of their quarrel. Mages fight

over secret love affairs and mystical enigmas that they don't want anyone else to know about. It's against the duello to pry, and some Consilii consider using magic to dig up the dirt a minor crime.

Mages who duel for privacy's sake often stipulate what they may or may not say according to different outcomes from the duel. One Mysterium scholar may silence another's theories for a month, a year or a lifetime by winning a properly conducted duel.

Reputations

There is no quicker way to gain prestige than a duelist's career. Most dueling forms rely on magical skill, so continual victory reflects a certain proficiency in the Mysteries. All the same, the Duel Arcane does not require particularly deep knowledge. A duelist can master a few Arcana and hone his will to a fine edge that cuts through enemies without knowing a host of rotes or much about the secret history of the world. Even so, mages glorify duelists because duels are newsworthy, even glamorous. Magical duels are the closest things the Awakened have to a common sport (or less charitably, a Roman circus).

Protection from Reprisal

At the core of dueling law and custom is the idea that a duel is a final settlement. The winner is under no obligation to fight again. Furthermore, no mage may invoke the Right of Nemesis (see **Sanctum and Sigil**, pp. 30–32) because of any event that proceeded from a properly sworn and witnessed duel. You cannot curse the man who beat your cabal-mate *because* he defeated her. You might do so for some other reason, but your enemy can petition the Consilium to investigate your intentions. If the council discovers that you've invoked Nemesis under a bogus pretense, it punishes you accordingly.

While this rule is taken very seriously, it doesn't completely protect mages from a cycle of reprisal. Forgetting deception and Consiliar corruption for a moment, it's a fact that many duelists enjoy vendettas. A winner might not be obligated to fight again, but his enemy may insult and cajole him into accepting another duel. Participants may enjoy protection from Nemesis, but often feel that using it is the coward's way out. There is a significant subculture of duelists that believe that outside of their oaths, most of the legal protections shield cowards. They do not report infractions and snub mages who do. Subsequently, Consilii controlled by hardcore duelists preside over a highly fractious, violent community.

Law and Custom

Even though sorcerers are well within their rights to just kill each other, following customs means that a mage claims the Pentacle orders as allies under the law. Cabals mark their emblems with a sword to communicate that they support the duello.

The Challenge

In theory, he challenge is simple: Any mage may approach any other and put forth any demand or insult. If the recipient refuses the demand or refutes the insult, the aggressor may consider it ground for a challenge. Mages who want to get right to a duel typically open with something unreasonable and/or unforgivable: "Give me that library you've been using to master soul-eating, you son of a bitch."

This sort of thing will sometimes happen when negotiations break down. Two mages might bargain over mutual aid, argue and end up challenging each other for services. Such duels are more common than those over simple insults, but such affairs of honor were very common at least a century ago.

The challenged party is under no obligation to accept a duel unless the local Ruling Council demands it (as they might to stave off an even more destructive conflict). In a perfect world, this might get rid of duels entirely, but a challenger can do any number of things to drive things to a duel. She could threaten to kill a mage who refuses to duel, intimate that she'll use theft, blackmail and other forms of skullduggery, or simply ruin a his reputation. When an occasion clearly demands a duel, Awakened society labels those who refuse cowards.

Conversely, the duello considers a mage who attacks a mage, his allies and his resources someone who has offered a duel. A beleaguered mage can put a stop to such predation by accepting the implied challenge. Of course, the type of sorcerer who simply lets loose with spells and bullets isn't always honorable enough to move to formal dueling, either.

Conditions

The challenger usually chooses the location and the challenged mage announces the form the duel will take. This can be as simple or convoluted as the participants wish. At this stage each mage should choose a second, who relays messages between the participants.

The duello forbids selecting a dueling form for which one of the participants has little or no skill (in game terms, one dot or none). It's dishonorable to demand a fencing contest from a bookworm or spirit summoning from an Obrimos. Strictly speaking, the duello advises against negotiating duels where one participant will obviously demonstrate superior skill. It is supposed to be beneath a master to duel a mere initiate, but mages have been known to hide skill in a key Arcanum or mundane field until the contest requires it. Neither participant can make any

demands that violate Lex Magica by using obvious magic in a public place or endangering non-participants.

The time of a duel is either agreed upon by participants or as a matter of local custom. Some Consilii designate a "dueling hour" and send Sentinels to oversee any quarrels that occur.

Finally, the participants negotiate the stakes, outlining the consequences of victory and defeat for each party.

Mages who are having second thoughts about dueling use negotiations as a chance to entangle the contest in impractical conditions. There is very little formal law regarding negotiations, so regardless of the duello a challenger could, for example, demand that a duel with a Shadow-blind mage take place in the Shadow Realm. The challenged can counter with an equally impractical location or demand access to an Artifact capable of transporting him — in which case the challenger must have the same Artifact. Legends exist of duels that have been negotiated over decades, to the point where they require enhanced blades, magic diamonds, armies of bound spirits and occult temples. This is an excellent way for all parties to never duel without actually conceding defeat.

Once the aggrieved parties settle the details of form, time, place and consequences, they can go about the actual duel.

Seconds

Seconds are sworn to convey messages from each side accurately, act as honest witnesses and, if possible, negotiate an honorable resolution without combat. Mages may employ seconds in all matters of Nemesis, but most often use them for duels.

Mages do not acknowledge that their seconds negotiated peace so that they cannot blame them for any shortcomings. Officially, the solution is the duelists' own, and is treated as such by law and custom. Seconds tend to be less emotionally involved in events and can develop a joint proposal for the participants. When implemented, these honorably resolve the conflict. Unfortunately, while the duello holds that the participants should not declare Nemesis against each other (just as if they had dueled), the Lex Magica does not count it as a duel. An unsatisfied party can thus break the duello to extort more concessions or overturn the whole agreement.

Finally, the second's role as "honest witness" means that they are supposed to prevent cheating and see to it that the duel is conducted according to the agreed-upon form. It is a sad fact that many seconds have tried to help their companions cheat instead, so many Consilii send a Sentinel or Interfector to bear witness as well.

Resolution

Duels end for the following reasons:

One duelist meets the victory conditions. This is an ideal, unambiguous victory. The mage scores the first "touch" dueling with Space, blasts away her opponent's Willpower in the Duel Arcane and so on.

Both duelists meet the victory conditions. A somewhat awkward conclusion, this occurs when both duelists either score victory simultaneously (mutual "touches" in Spatial duels) or (in a poorly designed duel) both accomplish a task that only one of them was supposed to be able to achieve (binding both rulers of a spirit court without knowing that there were actually two of them). This is usually thought of as an honorable conclusion. Both sides receive the customary protection from reprisal and all non-contradictory demands unless they insist on dueling again (at which point they can renegotiate the terms from the beginning, if they wish).

One duelist can no longer continue. Unless the objective of the duel is to incapacitate, this is often thought of as a lesser victory — a loss that the opponent inflicted on herself. Unconsciousness, errant Paradoxes, sudden confusion and other circumstances can force a duelist to throw in the towel, so to speak.

Both duelists can no longer continue. This is the mark of fumblers except in the case of martial duels. In such cases, combatants often have such expert timing that they can *only* strike simultaneously. Japanese mages call this by the swordfighting term, *aiuchi* ("mutual killing"), since it might spell the deaths of both fighters. Otherwise, mages have been known to knock themselves out with clumsiness and botched magic. In this case, the duel is considered to have never happened. The duelists must make new arrangements or give up their dispute.

One duelist surrenders. This is an honorable defeat. According to the duello, the victor should make at least one concession to honor the loser's good sense.

One duelist forfeits by failing to attend. Not only does the no-show automatically lose, Lex Magica entitles the victor to use all necessary means to seize his agreed-upon concessions. The loser is not protected from vendetta in the slightest; the winner can use insults, property damage and assassins to harm him at will. Attempting to prevent an enemy from showing up at a duel is cheating and against the Lex Magica.

If a duelist has a good excuse for his absence, it is customary (though not legally required) to reschedule the duel for a later date and to forbear from attacking the absent party. Some duelists refuse to accept such excuses, however, and what constitutes a good excuse varies from region to region. In many cities, it is excusable to miss

a duel due to attack, disaster, or order from the Ruling Council. Bad scheduling and magical research are usually *not* valid excuses, nor is violence that the duelist instigated herself.

If *neither* duelist shows, there is no formal result, but plenty of informal contempt. They have, after all, wasted the time of their seconds and made a mockery of Awakened customs.

The duel is halted by the Ruling Council. A Consilium's Ruling Council can halt a duel and force a settlement, but most only do so during an emergency. Consilii have, in the past, tried to intervene in every duel, but have almost always drawn the ire of their constituents. Overruling a duel is popularly thought of as a tyrannical act.

The law normally lets duelists demand that the Ruling Council settle the conflict for them or compensate them for anything wasted in preparation for the duel.

One or both duelists cheat. Whoever didn't cheat, wins and furthermore, retains right of Nemesis over the loser; she can hunt him down and kill him, if desired. Furthermore, since the cheat is effectively an oathbreaker, the winner can petition the Consilium for assistance. The Ruling Council also levies additional penalties. One common punishment is a magical oath that compels the mage to describe his crime whenever he enters into an agreement with another willworker. This lasts for at least a year and a day. Less forgiving Consilii may use mutilation, banishment and a host of other sanctions, since oathbreakers are almost universally reviled in a society where trust is so tenuous.

If both duelists cheat, then both are punished as above. The Ruling Council often resolves the dispute for the duelists by depriving them of whatever it was they were fighting over.

Of the Duel Arcane

The most common type of duel is by far the classic Duel Arcane described in **Mage: The Awakening** (pp. 286–288). While mages can theoretically agree to duel in almost any fashion, the Duel Arcane is the most preeminent form because it does not demand any particular magical skills from the duelists. One mage (typically, but not necessarily a neutral judge or a second) must be able to cast "Squaring the Circle." Mages who want a straightforward fight often prefer it, because the other forms often rely on specialized prowess that can give one participant an edge.

Optional Rules for the Duel Arcane

If you'd prefer a slightly more complex version of the Duel Arcane, apply the following rules:

Shifting Sword and Shield: Duelists may change their sword, shield or both as a reflexive action, once per turn. Duelists must still use a different Arcanum for each. Each participant reveals their choices simultaneously.

Arms of Invocation and Banishing: The power of a mage's sword and shield fluctuates according to the cycles of the Atlantean pentagram (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 129–113). If a mage's sword is one step above of the enemy's shield on the banishing cycle, she gains a +1 bonus to its dice pool, because the blade's arcane power tends to twist and cleave through weaknesses. If the enemy's shield is above of the sword, the sword suffers a –1 penalty to its roll, because the shield saps the sword's power.

If a duelist's shield is one step above the enemy's sword on the invocation cycle, the mage gains a +1 bonus to the Armor provided by the shield, as the enemy's attack actually feeds power to the duelist. If the shield is one step behind the sword on the invocation cycle, it loses a point of Armor against its attacks – the reverse happens. Modifiers are adjusted as the sword and shield of each combatant changes.

Combined Arms: If a mage possesses sword and shield Arcana that are one step away on the banishing or invoking cycle, she may command additional benefits. If the mage's arms have an *invoking* relationship between them, the mage may recoup 1 point of lost Willpower by making a successful reflexive Gnosis roll, whenever she chooses to defend without attacking. If the mage's arms have a *banishing* relationship between them, she may sacrifice her shield Arcanum to her sword. She adds the shield's Arcanum dots to her sword's dice pool, but cannot then subtract the shield from the enemy's dice pool.

If a mage uses either maneuver, it transforms and consumes both sword and shield. She must choose new Arcana for both on the next turn. Fortunately, the "consumed" Arcana regenerate at the beginning the turn after that, so she may select them again.

Variations

Within the Duel Arcane, there are variations designed to suit various whims and needs. Some mages are not satisfied with merely exhausting a hated enemy, while others want the contest to suit their personal talents and aesthetics.

Astral Duels: A location in the Temenos, where both duelists can meet, is sometimes a popular dueling field

for mages who wish to conduct affairs in private. It also guarantees a measure of safety (assuming a safe route to get there); even though "Squaring the Circle" functions normally here, astral duels cannot inflict Health damage. When a mage's Willpower drops to 0 she drops out of astral space as usual (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 284).

Astral duels allow mages to safely settle their differences, even when their physical locations are quite distant from one another. Yet this method is not without its flaws. First of all, each combatant, witness or other participant must journey into the Temenos (a 16-success extended meditation roll; see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 284). Secondly, participants must find each other in the chaotic universal dreamscape. Although there are few fixed reference points in the Temenos and beyond (see **Boston Unveiled** for examples), an experienced dream traveler can sometimes guide everyone to one that will serve as the field of honor. Otherwise, mages normally find themselves wherever their psyche takes them. It is therefore quite common for duelists to use magic to seek each other out. The "Astral Beacon" spell (see p. 71) is useful for this purpose.



Sanguine Duels: Even though mages are perfectly capable of killing each other within a normal dueling circle, there are those who believe that fates are best sealed in blood. It is fortunate for them that a Prime 3 variation of the "Squaring the Circle" spell lets combatants inflict bashing damage to each other's Health instead of Willpower (Prime 4 dueling circles allows mages to inflict lethal damage; Prime 5, aggravated damage). Mages fight these duels to first blood (typically, the first lethal or aggravated injury), incapacitation (the first to fall unconscious from injury) or death.

Shadow Chess: Mages who favor the spirit world sometimes conduct their battles in Shadow itself. The Shadow Realm is a forbidding battlefield. Would-be Shadow duelists need a Spirit 3 "Spirit Road" or other means to cross over. Even though "Squaring the Circle" is possible, it in no way shields the area from the resonance of combatants. Mages who fight protracted duels here often attract spirits who wish to feed from the energies of their conflict. Duels in the Shadow are not invisible. In fact, they tend to be even more spectacular than the mind's eye experience of normal duels, as the substance of the Shadow itself crackles with the manifest resonance of the duelists.

An even stranger possibility within the spirit world is "Shadow Chess."

Shadow Chess
(Prime •• + Spirit ••• or •••••)

Adding Spirit 3 (or 5) to the technique of "Squaring the Circle" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 223) focuses the duelists' magical power into animate forms: spirits that fight for the duelists. Some mages prefer "Shadow Chess" to the standard Duel Arcane.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert (in the Shadow Realm) or vulgar (in the Material Realm)

Cost: 1 Mana

Duelists within the "Shadow Chess" dueling circle prepare a dueling sword and shield, just as if they were fighting the standard Duel Arcane (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 286). Unlike a duel fought using "Squaring the Circle," participants fight using spirit proxies called Dueling Pawns. The Pawns attack each other and the enemy mage.

Each success a mage scores with her dueling sword does not (and cannot) inflict damage to her enemy's Willpower. Instead, each success temporarily generates a spirit out of the mage's raw, emotionally charged magical power. This spirit accumulates traits just as if it had been created using the spell "Goetic Evocation" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 325). The spirit resembles a cross between the mage's sword, a spirit common to the local Shadow and the mage herself.

A Dueling Pawn serves the mage that created it faithfully. It cannot survive outside of a dueling circle, and dissipates the moment that the spell ceases. Dueling Pawns created with the Spirit 3 version of the spell are insubstantial to everyone but the duelists. There is, however, a Spirit 5 version of the spell where the Pawns are substantial to everyone inside the dueling circle.

Each turn, a dueling mage may use her sword to stack additional successes upon an existing Dueling Pawn, create a new Pawn or order her Pawns to attack or defend any other entity within the dueling circle. A mage can direct any number of Dueling Pawns by mental command as an instant action, but cannot create or enhance more Pawns or cast a spell in the same turn.

Pawns inflict damage on non-spirits using their own dice pools, but to Willpower first, then Health. They may injure other spirits normally. Any Numina they might acquire that would allow them to inflict direct Health damage conforms to the above rule, instead. A shield Arcanum subtracts dice from attacking Pawns' dice pools as if it was Armor, but unlike a standard duel, mages may move about the local Shadow to "physically" evade attacks, and gain the benefits of Defense where applicable.

As they are inextricably linked to the sorcerer's will, Dueling Pawns can provide energy to stave off psychic defeat. As a reflexive action, a mage can divert Willpower damage that he suffered to the Resistance of a Pawn. If this knocks a Pawn's Resistance to zero, the mage suffers any excess damage and the Pawn is destroyed. Mages cannot sacrifice Pawns to stave off Health injuries however, so deadly Shadow duels often end in a quick, lethal "checkmate."

There are "Sanguine" versions of this spell that allow Dueling Pawns to inflict lethal or aggravated damage. These require Prime 3 (to let Pawns inflict lethal damage) and Prime 5 (to let them inflict aggravated damage).

Vulgar Duels: "Vulgar" duels cannot be properly defined as a mode of the Duel Arcane. Combatants use magic to directly affect the enemy or the victory conditions of the duel, instead of channeling it through sword and shield Arcana. **Mage: The Awakening** mentions several kinds of vulgar duels on p. 289, including curse contests and "fencing" with Space magic. There are many other traditions that prosper according to a mage's eccentricities, local custom or Consiliar fiat.

Despite the name, vulgar duels do not necessarily require vulgar magic. Nor are they consistently regarded as lesser contests. Instead, the title refers to the fact that these are more or less direct magical conflicts. Dueling carelessly can reveal magic to the uninitiated, invoke Paradoxes and inflict collateral damage. On the other hand, vulgar forms involve magical specialties; mages with those particular talents can use them to win. To prevent accidents, some vulgar duels specify that both parties must use covert magic or combine "Target Exemption" ("everyone except my enemy/the objective") into all spells that affecting anything besides the caster.

The Duel Mundane?

Even though willworkers exult in their ability to raise the Mysteries against their enemies, it is perfectly legal

and customary to duel without using any magic at all. Many such contests could benefit from magical enhancement, but there is a growing movement (especially in the Free Council) to refrain from this. Guardians of the Veil pride themselves on using little or no magic even when it *is* permitted. When the duel forbids magic, it usually falls on a duelist's second to ensure that the enemy isn't sneaking a spell in.

These matches often stride the line between "duel" and "game." Low stakes are more common. Sorcerers can thus test their ability to master common human tasks and beat the Lie at its own game. Contests include:

Athletics and Bloodshed: Footraces, swordfighting, hunting and wrestling test a mage's physical skills. Mages who enjoy hurting their enemies often prefer mundane fighting, since it's easier to hurt people this way, but harder to kill them. Adamantine Arrows believe that these contests strengthen the militant core from which their magic springs.

Riddles and Lore: Sorcerers test each other's wisdom with all kinds of puzzles. Some of these require a flare for logic. Others force mages to travel halfway around the world so that they will be the first to uncover ancient ruins or grimoires. Needless to say, Mysterium mages prefer these "duels" above others, but Guardians of the Veil have been known to choose them as well. They normally add the proviso that, if they win, they can hide whatever they have discovered.

Art and Performance: Grand initiation rituals and paintings riddled with esoteric symbolism were once a mainstay of Silver Ladder social conflict. Modern times have forced the théarchs to abandon such pursuits because they can no longer conceal them among the secret societies of rich Sleepers. It is troubling, then, that Free Council mages have taken up artistic competition with a crude flair, using modern music, digital video and performance art to establish their own pecking orders. Participants in these contests must agree on who will judge the "duel."





CHAPTER FOUR: THE WAY OF EARTH — MAGIC MANIFESTED

My knuckles are red from the cold and white from tension. I'm fighting the tight, resistant steering wheel of a logging truck as it shudders down the sloping, twisting pavement of an Oregon mountain road. Next to me, still inside a leather carrying bag, stands Pietro, Madame Shrike's freaking homunculus. In the black van giving chase behind are the yakuza-slash-Shinto whackjobs I liberated him from. He's mewling and shrieking in alarm, because they snipped his tongue out to shut him up. Why didn't I ever think of that? I'm wondering, as the massive rig fishtails behind me. Pietro always gave me the creeps, what with his action-figure dimensions, his rheumy forehead eye and his psoriatic, reptilian skin.

A S-curve looms ahead. I apply the brakes. No pressure. I curse; the homunculus wetly screams. This should not be happening. I've been downshifting like a bastard to maintain brake pressure. The cab leaves the road like a rearing horse; we sail toward the metal rail separating us from a tree-lined crevasse.

I flip on the mystic senses. Damn! The entire vehicle radiates the tell-tale stench of malediction. The truck's enchanted — cursed.

And it's eaten my luck for lunch.

THE HOMUNCULUS WETLY SCREAMS

When the soul awakens, the imagination becomes an engine of power through which the world can be made over.
— David M. Robinson, *Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism*

The element of earth represents manifestation and embodiment, the actualization in material form of ideas and concepts. To mages, this means items of magical power: Imbued Items, Artifacts and soul stones.

Enchanted Items

The following section expands on the rules for Enchanted Items.

Crafting Items

Willworkers craft enhanced items with a trio of Matter spells: the "Alter Integrity" spell, which increases the item's Durability, "Alter Efficiency," which enhances its equipment modifier and "Alter Size," which is self-explanatory. Alterations to Durability or Size also change an object's Structure.

Imbued Items are made via the Prime 3 spell "Imbue Item." To briefly recap, the crafter faces a target number equal to all successes required to cast all of the spells he wishes to imbue into the item with indefinite Duration. A further three successes are required if the item is to have the capacity to hold Mana. The Mana cost is one point per spell, plus any Mana required by the spells themselves, plus any Mana the crafter wishes to store in the device. The item's maximum Mana storage capacity is 10 plus the number of spells the item holds. Keep track of the crafter's Gnosis at the time of manufacture; this is used to determine the chances of Paradoxes should the use of the item ever trigger it.

"Alter Integrity," "Alter Efficiency," "Alter Size" and "Imbue Item" are collectively termed *finishing spells*.

Item Failure

Enchanting an item is a time-consuming procedure, prone to failure. Errors can destroy the mage's work to date, forcing him to start over from scratch. When an item creation spell is an extended action requiring multiple successes, the caster faces the possibility of spoiled work.

If any single roll in the extended action results in dramatic failure, the mage must restart the spell from the beginning. Mana spent on the spell is lost. Further, the willworker must roll Crafts + Gnosis to ensure that the item itself is not damaged. On a success, the item may be reused. On a failure, the item becomes warped, cracked or in some way unusable. The mage must procure a new base object to enchant before proceeding with a replacement. Though of little concern in the case of a common, inexpensive item, the loss of a rare or expensive object may provoke considerable gnashing of teeth. When possible, skimp on the luxuries, for example, in the case of cursed items: mages would sooner enchant a piece of cheap plastic costume jewelry from a dollar store than a dazzling necklace of platinum and emeralds.

When an item is enchanted with a series of spells, those spells may be performed in any order. Clever willworkers keep the economics of item failure in mind when sequencing their spells. Spells with lower dice pools should be performed early in the process. Those requiring Mana expenditure should be put off until the end.

Collaboration

Items are often manufactured by teams of mages working in sequence, each mage adding to an item's capabilities by weaving her own spells into it. For example, one member of a cabal might create an Imbued Item with his Prime Arcanum, while another increases its Durability with her mastery of Matter. A specialist in Mind might finish off a colleague's cursed item by adding, say, "Induce Hoarding Instinct," p. 138, to the mix. At the end of the process, one member of the team finalizes the item by casting "Imbue Item."

Relinquishment Costs

The standard method of creating permanently Enchanted Items exerts a toll some willworkers would sooner avoid. Any number of spells may be placed on an item. The mage then renders them permanent by casting "Imbue Item." Either immediately or at a later date, the spell can be relinquished, so that it no longer counts against the maximum number of spells that mage can actively maintain.

The spells listed in this section provide alternate costs to relinquish finishing spells, other than the loss of a Willpower dot.

Bundle Enhancements (Matter ●●●)

After casting more than one of the Matter-based finishing spells on a single item, the willworker bundles them together, so that they are treated as a single omnibus spell. They count as one spell against the limit of spells

the mage can actively maintain, and as one spell when the mage relinquishes them. The relinquishment cost may be the standard Willpower dot, or any alternative cost, such as those listed in this section.

The Matter-based finishing spells are "Alter Integrity," "Alter Efficiency" and "Alter Size."

Practice: Weaving
Action: Instant
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

This spell need not be woven by the willworker responsible for the finishing spells. Separate finishing spells may be placed on the item by more than one willworker. In the case of a group effort, the mage casting this spell may designate herself, or any other willworker who contributed a finishing spell to the item, as the mage actively maintaining the new, combined spell. Once the designation is made, only that willworker may pay the cost to relinquish control of it. The designated mage is not obligated to do so, and may instead simply cancel the spell. In this event, all of the Matter-based finishing spells are also canceled, and a permanently Enchanted Item is never created.

Silver Ladder Rote: Combination of the Forms
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Prime

Access to Enchanted Items is one of the perks of power for high-ranking climbers of the Silver Ladder. Many a promising mid-level operative has been routed to the order's laboratories, to churn out enchantments for his superiors. This rote is basic to the task.

Payment in Power (Prime ●●●)

This spell alters the usual cost of relinquishing a finishing spell. Instead of sacrificing a Willpower dot, the willworker pays Mana, spent over a period of days. Mana spent for this purpose is in addition to any other Mana costs required to make the item.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Instant
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 20 Mana; see below

The high Mana cost of this spell is exacted over a period of days. The mage spends 1 Mana at the time of casting. Twenty-four hours later, the willworker loses another point of Mana. The process repeats itself for 20 days, until 20 points of Mana have been spent. Mana losses occur whether the mage likes it or not. If at the end of any interval the willworker has no Mana left, all spells woven into the item (including those cast by collaborators) are dispelled. Worse, Mana continues to drain from the mage at a rate of one per day until 20 points have been harvested, even to the point of scourging the mage against his will to get them.

Free Council Rote: Conservation of the Will
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Prime

Free Council doctrine teaches that it's better to spend power, which is rare but recoverable, than to carve off a bleeding chunk of your selfhood just to create an item.

Spirit Pact (Spirit ●●)

The mage engages in a transfer of ephemeral energy with a willing spirit of Rank 3 or higher. The spirit sacrifices a Willpower dot on the willworker's behalf, which the willworker then uses to relinquish control of an indefinite duration spell. The Willpower point cannot be used for any other purpose.

Before casting the spell the willworker must make contact with the spirit; "Spirit Pact" does not call or summon the entity.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

The spirit must be a willing participant in this transaction. These deals are invariably pre-arranged. On rare occasions, a powerful spirit may volunteer this boon as a reward or gift to a mage to whom it feels a debt of gratitude. More often, the mage must seek out the spirit and offer a great and onerous service in return for the gift of cheap spell relinquishment. Expect the service to be difficult, dangerous and time-consuming; it will typically comprise a chapter or story unto itself. The quest may take place in Twilight, the Shadow Realm or the Material Realm. Agendas of spirits for the Material Realm are often bafflingly obscure.

Spirits who embody a particular concept or sphere of influence often require their mortal negotiating partners to perform acts of symbolic significance, which generate power for them in the Shadow Realm. For example, a god of storm may require the cabal to generate a mighty hurricane. A deity of lust could demand that the mage destroy the reputation of an anti-pornography crusader.

Only after the quest has been completed will the spirit fulfill its side of the bargain.

Mysterium Rote: Twilight Contract
Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Spirit

Operatives of the Mysterium, who attach a romantic



significance to quests and enjoy plumbing a tantalizing mystery, would sooner truck with enigmatic godlings than spend their own force of will to relinquish spell control.

Instill Mortality (Death ●)

The mage relinquishes an imbuement or enhancement spell without sacrificing a Willpower point. Instead, the willworker accomplishes the relinquishment by giving the Enchanted Item the capacity for decay and eventual demise.

Practice: Compelling
Action: Instant
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

A special dice pool, the Mortality pool, attaches to the item. Each time its user scores a failure in any task employing an Enchanted Item's powers or equipment bonus, one die is added to that pool. (When the item is used for an action that would not normally require a roll, the user must instead roll the original willworker's Death + Gnosis at the time of item creation.)

Before using an item with a Mortality greater than zero, the item's user first reflexively rolls its Mortality.

On a failure, the item remains sound, and can be used as normal during the current turn.

On a success, the item suffers one point of Structure damage. The item can still be used during the current turn, unless the item's total Structure damage exceeds the object's Durability, in which case the item malfunctions. None of its powers or enhancements can be used until it is repaired. If all Structure points are lost to damage, the item is destroyed.

On an exceptional success, the object is destroyed.

The item fails in a manner befitting its configuration: swords break, guns explode and vehicles crash. The object's demise unfolds as dramatically as possible without trespassing into outright vulgarity.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Consigned to Oblivion

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Death

Guardians don't like to leave Enchanted Items around where unworthy fingers might grasp them. "Consigned to Oblivion" provides the Guardians' favorite method of relinquishing control of item-bound spells, ensuring that any devices created with it will eventually self-destruct.

Instill Malediction (Fate ●●●)

The mage relinquishes a finishing spell without sacrificing a Willpower point. Instead, the willworker accomplishes the relinquishment by making the Enchanted Item a focus for unspecified future ill-fortune. This spell may not be used to relinquish control over curse spells.

Practice: Fraying
Action: Instant
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

A special dice pool, the Misfortune pool, is attached to the item. Each time its user scores a failure in any task employing an Enchanted Item's powers or equipment bonus, one die is added to that pool. (When the item is used for an action that would not normally require a roll, the user must instead roll the original willworker's Death + Gnosis at the time of item creation.) Before using an item with a Misfortune greater than zero, the item's user first reflexively rolls its Misfortune.

On a failure, the item remains sound, and can be used as normal during the current turn.

On a success, the item can still be used during the current turn, but at a dice penalty equal to the number of Misfortune successes.

On an exceptional success, a random curse permanently instills itself in the item.

The Storyteller chooses an appropriate curse given the narrative circumstances, or rolls one die and consults the following chart, adding one to the result for each curse already instilled in the item. See p. 136 for details on the curses.

Die Roll	Curse
1	Cursed Object (3rd degree)
2	Curse of Withering (one-week interval)
3	Curse of Ostracism (one-week interval)
4	Curse of Dementia (one-week interval)
5	Mystic Shackle (affects two Arcana)
6	Mana Leech
7	Bad Penny
8	Precious Malediction
9	Curse of Predation
10	Induce Hoarding Instinct

Silver Ladder Rote: Unstable Prototype

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Fate

This method of spell relinquishment is popular within the voluminous ranks of the Silver Ladder, as there's always a colleague lower down on the totem pole who can be forced to trade a functioning item for an Enchanted Item that has become laden with unpleasant curses.

Inadvertent Curses

Items that become accidentally cursed during creation are a genre staple. Storytellers who wish to import this element into their chronicles can use the following optional rule.

If an item's creator loses Wisdom through degeneration at any time from the casting of its first imbued spell or enhancement, to a day after relinquishing its finishing spell, the Storyteller secretly rolls Wisdom on her behalf. On a failure, the item bears a curse, randomly chosen using the chart for the "Instill Malediction" spell. The item's other imbued spells and enhancements remain in force.

In a more extreme version of the rule, Wisdom rolls to avoid curses also occur whenever the item creator gains Willpower from a Vice, as the dark side of her nature seeps into the item's magical fabric. Storytellers may roll randomly or choose curses from the list corresponding to the Vice in question.

Pain Harvest (Death ●)

After unwillingly undergoing an injury, the mage may intensify its severity, gaining a quantity of magical power that may be later used to relinquish control over a finishing spell.

Practice: Compelling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell may only be cast after the mage has suffered at least one point of bashing, lethal or aggravated damage. The spell works only in the turbulent emotional aftermath of a genuine accident or attack by hostile others. The appropriate mental state can never be provoked by incidents of self-harm, or harm inflicted by one's confederates. However, a qualifying incident may be engineered by provoking one's enemies.

The spell is performed after the conclusion of the violent incident, before the mage seeks medical attention, pain relief or other healing. During the spell's casting, the willworker uses a knife or similar implement to self-inflict up to three additional points of lethal damage. For each point suffered in this manner, the mage adds one to a pool of points known as a Pain Harvest pool. Only the self-inflicted damage contributes to the Pain Harvest pool.

The mage may at any subsequent time relinquish control over an imbued spell, curse, enhancement or defense installed in an Enchanted Item, by paying 12 points from her Pain Harvest pool.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Contracted in Sinew

Dice Pool: Stamina + Survival + Death

For Adamantine Arrow warriors, getting wounded is an everyday occurrence, affording frequent opportunities to top up their Pain Harvest pools. As an added bonus, the spell allows them to show off their stoic indifference to physical suffering.

Sacrifice Fortune (Fate ●)

The mage may forgo what would otherwise be an impressive success, pooling magical energy that may later be used to relinquish control over a finishing spell.

Practice: Compelling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell is cast immediately after the mage scores an exceptional success. The Storyteller may rule that

exceptional successes at attempts of little relevance to the ongoing narrative do not qualify; only events of significant import or risk generate sufficient resonance to activate this effect. Also disqualified are actions in which an exceptional success provides no particular additional benefit, above that of an ordinary success.

The exceptional success is downgraded to a standard simple success, and the mage adds one to a pool of points known as the Sacrifice Fortune pool.

The mage may at any subsequent time relinquish control over a finishing spell, by paying seven points from his Sacrifice Fortune pool.

Free Council Rote: Point Shaving

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Fate

The flashier risk-takers of the Free Council enjoy the show-boating nature of this rote, which allows them to simultaneously squander and profit from their grander successes.

Time Limit (Time ●)

The mage relinquishes control over a finishing spell, by accepting a time limit on the item's operations.

Practice: Compelling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

This spell is cast during item creation. The Storyteller secretly makes the spell roll for the character, noting the interval on the following chart.

Successes	Interval
1	1 day
2	1 week
3	1 month
4	6 months
5	1 year

At the end of the interval, all of the item's magical properties — not only the spell to which "Time Limit" originally applied — cease to function for the item's current owner. After a transfer of ownership, the item again functions for its inherent interval, then shuts down again. Previous owners may never again access the item's powers. If multiple instances of Time Limit are cast on the same item, the lowest interval applies.

Mysterium Rote: Acceptable Expiration

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Time

Though this spell results in eventually unusable items, the peripatetic experimenters of the Mysterium rely heavily on this technique of spell relinquishment when playing around with new concepts. If an item proves unsatisfactory after preliminary testing, no great inconvenience arises from the item's eventual shutdown. Truly compelling concepts, on the other hand, can later be remade using more costly but reliable relinquishment methods.

Platonic Exemplars

The philosopher Plato posited that the items we see around us in the material world can be seen as gross, imperfect expressions of their ideal forms, which exist in an ineffable realm of the abstract.

Willworkers have discovered that certain apparently ordinary objects contain concentrated resonances embodying these ideal concepts. Most radios are just radios, but one in a million is a Platonic exemplar, a radio that reverberates with mystic vibrations of radio-ness. Likewise for any other inanimate object you can name, from eminently useful items such as guns, cars and computers to quotidian Artifacts such as rocks, leaves and paper clips.

To a user of Mage Sight, a Platonic exemplar stands out in its environment like a shining star. All of the other objects around the object will radiate faint quantities of the prevailing resonance, whatever that might be. The Platonic exemplar strongly radiates the ideal the item represents. A sword emits sword-ness, a bottle of wine gives off powerful waves of wine-ness (or bottle-ness), a tambourine glows with indisputable tambourine-hood and so on.

Makers of Enchanted Items shudder with greed at the prospect of discovering a Platonic exemplar. A willworker who would kill to get a valuable Enchanted Item would happily wipe out an entire busload of children if he thought it would snare him an exemplar. A cabal publicizing its possession of an exemplar will be deluged with offers of cash, favors, information and other valuables. They'll also have to take extraordinary measures against burglary and sanctum invasion.

Platonic exemplars arouse this level of avarice because any spell can be relinquished into them at the relatively cheap cost of five Mana.

Platonic exemplars will, however, only retain spells whose functions relate directly to their particular forms. A radio can be used for communication-related effects, but not as an instrument of healing magic. Exemplar swords will kill but won't contain information — except, possibly, information about killing.

Creative enchanters can apply spells that relate to the object on a metaphorical level. An exemplar stapler will bind things together but can't be used to tear things apart.

Filled exemplars are as coveted as blanks, because Platonic objects are an erasable medium. With the right spell, the item creator can remove any spells currently inherent in it, replacing them.

Reset Platonic Exemplar (Prime ●●●)

The mage removes all spells woven into a Platonic exemplar, freeing up room for replacement magics.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Extended

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

"Reset Platonic Exemplar" usually removes all spells from an item. On a dramatic success, the mage can choose which spells stay and which ones go. The mage must touch the item during casting.

Note that the normal rules preventing the permanent dispellation of Enchanted Items do not apply to Platonic exemplars, which by definition are vessels used to contain an ever-changing roster of spells.

Mysterium Rote: Retune the Ineffable Essence

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Prime

Though Platonic exemplars arouse cupidity in even the most ascetic of mages, none covet these items with a hotter fever than the members of the Mysterium. Many learn this rote in the mere anticipation of one day acquiring such a treasure.

Bound Ghosts

Death mages bind ghosts to their Enchanted Items. The mages may do so to keep a cooperative ghost close at hand at all times, or to install an intelligent guardian in the device, protecting it from interference. They accomplish this with the following spell.

Transfer Anchor (Death ●●●)

The mage severs a ghost's relationship to its present anchor, designating a new one to take its place. The replacement anchor is often an Enchanted Item.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resistance reflexively (the target may choose not to contest the spell)

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Penalties may apply, depending on the nature of the original and replacement anchors.

Original Anchor	Penalty
Object	None
Place	–2
Person	–3

Replacement Anchor	Penalty
Object	–1
Place	–2
Person	–4

An additional –2 dice penalty applies when the nature of the original anchor differs from the replacement, for example, when the mage attempts to take a ghost anchored to a place and instead attach the ghost to an object.

If the ghost is bound to multiple anchors, a willworker desiring its full attention may wish to perform the spell multiple times, once per anchor.

Users of this spell often cast it in conjunction with "Lighten Anchor" (p. 60), granting the ghost greater flexibility in fulfilling the item owner's requests.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Spectral Relocation

Dice Pool: Presence + Larceny + Death

Guardians of the Veil covering up supernatural events sometimes find it necessary to whisk pesky ghosts away from the gaze of curious Sleepers. Guardians' warehouses are thick with relocated ghosts, knocking abjectly at crates where their new anchors are stored.

Luring the Dead

Some ghosts may be willing to shift their anchors. An existence spent in the footsteps of an adventurous sorcerer may be preferable to an eternity chained to the isolated location of one's protracted torture-murder. On the other hand, ghosts bound to their anchors through love, longing or force of habit stoutly resist efforts to attach them to anchors of no emotional significance to them.

Even when successful, "Transfer Anchor" does nothing to secure the loyalty or cooperation of the ghost. Magicians angling for ghostly allies seek their target ghosts' consent before installing them in their watches or cell phones. As with any long-term mutual relationship, the ghost must be given something it wants in exchange for its continuing cooperation. Mages may wish to research local hauntings, combing old spook stories for suitable candidates. A ghost who merely wishes to be liberated from its ectoplasmic chains may be an ideal candidate. Mages who can work the Death 5 spell "Quicken Ghost" can promise new invigoration and a restoration of lost personality traits and memories in exchange for service — garnering themselves a more potent ally in the process.

Sad or passive ghosts may prove easier to persuade than aggressive poltergeists or phantasms of horrifying aspect. Some ghosts resist all efforts at recruitment. Many ghosts are irretrievably insane, or lack sufficient consciousness for meaningful interaction. So-called tape loop ghosts, which exist as mere repetitions of old actions recorded in the stuff of Twilight, are unsuitable item inhabitants.

More self-aware ghosts drive hard bargains. A ghost who wishes to avenge his own murder may have a strong motivation to detach himself from a confining anchor, but will make extensive demands on the mage's time and resources. The ghost will withhold his services if the item's owner fails to make periodic and significant progress in investigating the slaying and bringing the killers to grim justice.

Mages whose plans do not rely on the ghost's consent may instead conduct research to locate the most formidable subject possible. They may seek out ghosts powerfully capable of affecting the material world, or equipped with rare special abilities.

This is not to say that it's impossible to strike a mutual bargain with an especially effective ghost. However, magicians should expect especially old or famous ghosts to be fully aware of their value, and to negotiate with cunning and fervor.

Conventional wisdom has it that ghosts are frozen in the personalities they possessed at their time of death. Owners of ghost-bound Enchanted Items may find reason to dispute this. When exposed to stimuli and allowed to interact with the living world in new ways, ghosts may undergo changes of outlook, behavior and interests. An initially cooperative ghost may balk as he learns more of his living partner's goals and modus operandi.

It may not be in a mage's best interests to completely satisfy a ghost's agenda. Whether you're punishing the ghost's killer or delivering a long-lost love letter, doing so may sever the connection tying the ghost to the Material Realm. If the incomplete narrative keeping a ghost earthbound achieves closure, all of its anchors, including the Enchanted Item you've transferred him into, dwindle, freeing it to move on to the true afterlife.

To anchor a ghost to an item is to make the ghost constantly and immediately available to an owner in contact with the item, per a "Ghost Summons" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 137). Contact can be by touch, or sympathetic magic.

Even an uncooperative ghost may prove useful when anchored to an Enchanted Item. "Control Ghost" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 138) forces the subject to execute simple commands. Less scrupulous users of ghost-anchored items often rely on the following spell to force obedience from the unwilling.

Scourge Ghost (Death ●●●●)

The mage subjects a ghost to nearly unbearable psychic agony. Fear of this ghastly punishment inspires obedience in even the most willful phantom.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; victim rolls Resistance reflexively

Duration: Concentration

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Few tortures are as complete as this direct attack on the very substance of a ghost's soul. The ghost is unable to take actions when the mage concentrates on maintaining its ghastly torments. It must make a successful Power + Resistance roll before mustering the courage to defy the mage's instructions again. With the possible exception of utterly vile, deserving victims, the use of Scourge Ghost is an act of hubris, calling for a Wisdom degeneration roll, just as if the willworker had subjected a living victim to a session of appalling physical mistreatment.

Mysterium Rote: Correct the Unliving

Dice pool: Presence + Occult + Death versus Resistance

Mysterium explorers use this rote to deter guardian ghosts, including the protectors of Artifacts and valuable Enchanted Items, from harming the mages. Ethical tomb-robbers employ it sparingly, keeping it active for the few moments required to make their point.

Empowering Ghosts

Whether motivated by mutual agreement or the threat of spectral torture, ghosts are often anchored to items to serve as their guardians. If an item is stolen, use of a "Summon Ghost" spell brings the phantom from the item to the mage's side, so that the ghost can reveal its present location. Ghosts capable of strong interaction with the material world can sound alarms, set off traps or even enter into physical or spiritual combat with would-be thieves.

One of the main reasons to anchor a ghost into an item is the ghost's ability (if it so desires) to execute complex commands requiring on-the-spot judgment. The mage can instruct the ghost to attack anyone who touches the item in a sneaky or furtive way. The ghost might be instructed to interrogate would-be users to determine their loyalties to an order. Ghost and mage can even enter into a pact requiring the phantom to perform certain duties after the willworker's death.

Whether the ghost acts as a passive guardian or an active agent of one's will, a ghost's chances of success may be enhanced by augmenting the ghost's ability to interact with the physical world, using the following spell.

Arm Ghost (Death ●●●)

The mage casts "Arm Ghost," then any other spell, with a ghost as the designated recipient of the second spell. That spell does not take effect; instead, the one-time



ability to activate the spell's effect passes to the ghost. The ghost can use the effect at any time thereafter, as an instant action. The roll for the subject spell is made when the ghost chooses to unleash it, using the mage's relevant dice pool. The ghost gains the benefit from any positive effects of the roll that would apply to the mage. Where story logic permits, however, all ill effects, including Paradoxes and dramatic failures, are suffered by the willworker, even if she is a great distance from the ghost when the spell is used.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resistance reflexively (the target can choose not to contest this spell)

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The spell itself provides no guarantee that the ghost will use its spell in the manner specified. Any such assurances depend on negotiation or coercion between willworker and ghost.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Bolt From the Grave

Dice pool: Intelligence + Occult + Death

The restless ghosts of fallen Adamantine Arrow warriors relish the opportunity to strike out against the enemies of their glorious order, and are anxious to be armed with spells of the most devastating caliber.

Curses

Mages curse Enchanted Items for two reasons. One is to protect a useful item from use by others. The willworker enhancing the item may designate certain classes of users as unauthorized, trigger curses when certain conditions are met or dispense dread punishment to anyone with the effrontery to lay hands on her precious property. Some slang labels for curses placed on otherwise useful items are "spikes" or "wrenches."

The second class of items has no useful purpose, except to harm or bedevil their users. The items are given the appearance and resonance of desirable items, to snare the unwary into handling them or attempting to use them, thus exposing themselves to the curse's negative effects. In mage parlance, these items are known as "shafts," "hoses," "monkeypaws" or "shitsticks."

An item need not be enchanted to hold a curse. Curses on real or apparent Enchanted Items entrap one's fellow mages. Sleepers or other enemies can be harmed through clever placement of ordinary items. To activate curses, vic-

tims must establish relationships between themselves and the objects in question. The victims may place the items inside their homes or otherwise in constant proximity to themselves. They may carry the items on their persons, or subject the objects to a great deal of handling. Perfectly ordinary items, such as shoes, belt buckles or MP3 players, make splendid receptacles for curses. These items much less likely to arouse suspicion than the standard trappings of occult fiction, such as sinister paintings, greed-inspiring jewels or voodoo dolls. These ordinary items are known as "bugs," "burners" or "blue-light specials."

Relinquishing Cursed Items

Cursed items are not relinquished in the standard manner. Instead of requiring a Willpower dot to let go of a cursed item's enchantments, its independence is powered by the nasty psychic residue left in the wake of an act of self-sacrifice, humiliation or cruelty. The minimum target number needed to relinquish the spell (not including any of the spell's other factors) depends on the severity of the act.

Self-Inflicted Wounds

Acts of self-sacrifice require the willworker to voluntarily suffer lethal or aggravated damage, either self-inflicted or by a knowing participant in the ritual. The more severe the injury, the lower the minimum target number (not including other spell factors) needed to relinquish the cursed item, as follows:

Target Number	Damage Suffered
5	5
10	4
15	3
20	2
25	1

If these injuries are healed by non-mundane means, the curse is immediately and permanently removed from the item.

Relinquishing cursed items also requires the following acts of humiliation and cruelty. Again, as with damage, the more severe the act, the lower the minimum target number for relinquishment.

Target Number	Act of Humiliation
5	Spend four or more hours partially immersed in vomit or feces
10	Get arrested for indecent exposure
15	Attend a social event with feces-stained clothing
20	Induce vomiting in public place
25	Attend a social event with food-stained clothing

Target Number	Act of Cruelty
5	Kidnapping and torturing an arbitrarily-chosen adult stranger
10	Killing a beloved pet, leaving the body so its owner will find it
15	Striking an unsuspecting child
20	Verbally abusing an unsuspecting child
25	Striking an unsuspecting, arbitrarily-chosen adult stranger

Acts of cruelty or humiliation must be performed no more than 24 hours prior to the casting of the spell.

Storytellers may permit equivalently horrible alternate acts of humiliation or cruelty. They should not shy from introducing various unpleasant repercussions from either. Acts of cruelty are often acts of hubris, too.

Cursed Object (Fate ●●●)

The mage imbues an item with bad luck, which rubs off on its primary owner or user.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana per degree (see below)

The Potency of this spell cannot exceed the caster's total Fate dots. To weave the curse into the item, she must spend one Mana and add five successes to the target number of the spell.

Whenever the user touches or makes use of the cursed item, the possibility of ill luck arises. (For this reason, it is essential that the mage installing the curse get rid of the item as soon as possible afterwards; until it changes hands, *she* counts as its owner.) The Storyteller rolls a single die; on a result of one, the curse activates, and the victim suffers a penalty to his next die roll equal to the Potency of the curse.

In some cases, the Storyteller may have to determine precisely which activities qualify as use of an item. In the case of an art object, for example, a roll may be required whenever the owner takes a moment to admire it.

Free Council Rote: The Monkey's Cell Phone
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Fate

Despite this rote's grimly jocular name, this curse can be cast on any communication device.

Bad Penny (Fate ●●●)

This spell further enchants a cursed item of any kind. When any owner other than the original worker of this spell attempts to dispose of it, a chain of coincidences conspires to return it.

A smashed ceramic statue might be laboriously glued together by a building superintendent and returned with an expectation of gratitude. A DVD thrown out of a car window is found by the owner's best friend and given to him as a gift.

When no possible further coincidence could possibly explain the item's return, it makes one final reappearance, shiny and new, after which point its owner is able to destroy or dispose of it. However, if that last disposal then opens up another possible coincidental return, the cycle continues.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The willworker must add five successes to the target number for each other spell or enchantment, including other curses, worked into the item.

Certain later manifestations of the Bad Penny risk triggering Disbelief, which can then act to dispel the curse, if the Sleeper accumulates enough Resolve + Composure successes to exceed the Potency of the original Bad Penny spell.

Silver Ladder Rote: Eternal Recurrence

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge + Fate

Silver Ladder mages are partial to this trick, symbolizing as it does their unswerving determination to ensure that those who are screwed by the hierarchy stay screwed.

Precious Malediction (Mind ●●●)

When cast on a cursed object, Precious Malediction detects when the object's owner intends to destroy it, and then alters the owner's attitude toward the object to one of frenzied, unseemly protectiveness.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Before the item's owner can attempt to destroy the item, or to induce others to do so, the owner must successfully contest Resolve + Composure against the spell's Potency. On a failed roll, the owner becomes fiercely protective of the item, and spends a period of one hour per point of Potency suffering severe anxiety over the thought of the object's possible destruction. During this time, the owner suffers a –1 die distraction penalty on all rolls with a Resolve or Composure component. Affected owners must do everything in their power to prevent the item from being harmed.

Before using "Supernal Vision" to determine if the item is cursed (see "Identifying Cursed Items," p. 139), a mage must successfully contest Resolve + Composure against the spell's Potency. On a failed roll, the mage is convinced that the item is not cursed, regardless of any supernal perceptions to the contrary. If the mage failing the roll is not the object's owner, the mage is possessed by an intense desire to become the object's owner. This powerful obsession lasts for one hour per point of Potency. During this time, the envious non-owner suffers a –1 distraction penalty on all rolls with a Resolve or Composure component. The period ends prematurely if the examining mage becomes the item's owner.

Mysterium Rote: Curse of the Collector

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Mind

Mages of the Mysterium, who tend to suffer a touch of obsessive-compulsive disorder regarding their Artifact hordes, can easily project the dark side of collecting mania into the cursed objects they create.

Curse of Withering (Death ●●●)

The magician weaves a curse into a physical object, so that it gradually drains the life force from its owner.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 5 Mana

To trigger the curse, a victim must take willing possession of the item. From that point onwards, the victim loses one dot in a Physical Attribute every time a predetermined interval passes. The shorter the interval, the greater the target number needed for casting:

Interval	Target Number
1 month	5
1 week	10
3 days	15
1 day	20

Dots are lost from the victim's highest Attribute first. When two or more Attributes have the same current value, the Storyteller randomly chooses between them. This Attribute damage is permanent until the item is destroyed or disenchanted, or is willingly acquired by a new owner. This gives knowing victims strong incentives to pass the curse along.

Mysterium Rote: Tome of Pain

Dice Pool: Presence + Crafts + Death

This rote is popular among Mysterium librarians and collectors as a measure against book thieves. The curse is woven into an especially rare and tempting volume. Its purloined pages poison the thief from a position of pride in his bookcase. This version of "Curse of Withering" immunizes the creator from the book's curse.

Curse of Ostracism (Mind ●●●)

Per the Death spell "Curse of Withering," except that the "Curse of Ostracism" spell drains the item's owner of his Social Attributes.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Blackball

Dice Pool: Presence + Crafts + Mind

Guardians shut the lips of babbling fools by eroding their ability to communicate with others. No one heeds the words of a frightened, drooling milquetoast.

Curse of Dementia (Mind ●●●)

Per the Death spell "Curse of Withering," except that the "Curse of Dementia" spell drains the item's owner of his Mental Attributes.

Free Council Rote: Instant Alzheimer's

Dice Pool: Presence + Crafts + Mind

Members of the Free Council use items infected with Instant Alzheimer's as poetic justice against those enemies who would stifle their intellectual freedom.

Induce Hoarding Instinct (Mind ●●●)

The mage ensorcels an item so that its owner becomes irrationally possessive of it, refusing to part with it even at the risk of self-destruction. This is most often cast to augment a cursed item, so that its owner cleaves to it even after its sinister purpose is revealed.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The owner of an item with this spell woven into it must roll Resolve + Composure before making any attempt to destroy, dispose of or regift the item. This is contested by the spell's Potency. Owners who fail to beat the item's roll relent, and are unable to take further action in regard to the item for a number of days equal to the difference between the two sets of successes. If another party attempts to steal, destroy or remove the item from the owner's presence, the owner must roll the contested Resolve + Composure roll to allow this to happen. Otherwise, the owner uses any available means, including lethal force, to protect his precious item.

Silver Ladder Rote: Thou Shalt Covet

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Crafts + Mind

When the Silver Ladder sends you a present, the order expects you to keep it.

Curse of Predation (Life ●●●)

The mage creates a cursed object, most often one carried or worn on the person, that attracts to its owner the attention of carnivorous animals. The item emits the distress pheromones of a wounded animal, triggering attack instincts of nearby predators. Depending on the location, these might include raptors, carrion-eating birds, coyotes, hyenas, hogs, wolves, bears or big cats. In urban settings, the greatest danger will come from domesticated dogs, whose feral instincts kick into overdrive when aroused by the presence of a cursed item. The density of dog populations in cities makes these items even more dangerous there than in wilderness areas, where predator populations are spread out in relation to their food sources. Still, a cursed item makes a handy addition to an enemy's sleeping bag as he prepares for a camping trip to a grizzly-infested mountain pass.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: Variable; see below

A time interval passes between each serious animal attack, as determined by the amount of Mana spent during item creation.

Mana Spent	Interval
1	1 month
2	2 weeks
3	1 week
4	1 day
5	12 hours

The item creator must also add five to the spell's target number per point of Mana spent.

Item owners may suffer additional inconsequential animal attacks between intervals, most often from small creatures such as swallows or gerbils, who are incapable of inflicting measurable damage. Dogs may strain at their leashes but fail to escape from their masters to attack. Note that under some circumstances, for example, while the owner is behind the wheel of a speeding car, even a swarm of small animals could pose a serious risk to life and limb.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Jaws of Fear

Dice Pool: Presence + Crafts + Life

Adamantine Arrow killers plant these cursed objects on their targets as part of an intimidation campaign, designed to distract and terrify their victims in the lead-up to assassination attempts.

Curse of Electrical Rebellion (Forces ●●●)

The mage creates a cursed item that will cause electrical components to short out, malfunction and otherwise stop working in the owner's presence. Computers, automobiles, elevators, heaters, hair dryers and cell phones comprise just part of the list of rebellious devices. Malfunctions range in seriousness from merely inconvenient to life-threatening.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: Variable; see below

The mage must add five to the target number per point of Mana spent.

Whenever the item's owner is in proximity to a functioning electronic device, and there is some chance that its malfunction might harm him, or seriously hamper his pursuit of his current goals, the Storyteller rolls a die pool equal to the Mana spent on this spell during item creation. On a success, the device malfunctions. On an exceptional success, the device's malfunction threatens the owner's life. (Bystanders may suffer collateral damage.) A one-die bonus accrues if the item owner is acting against the interests of the order the creating mage belonged to at the time of the item's enchantment.

Free Council Rote: Fatal Error

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Forces

Free Council technophiles enjoy bringing down their opponents with items that opportunistically monkey-wrench their gear.

Mana Leech (Prime ●●●)

The mage curses an item so that it drains its Awakened owner of Mana.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Whenever a mage wearing or carrying the item casts a spell with a Mana cost, that cost increases by one.

This item requires 20 successes to create.

Guardians of the Veil: Inescapable Taxation

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Prime

Guardians of the Veil punish overly flamboyant magicians with gifts that make their magic harder to work.

Identifying Cursed Items

Willworkers with Mage Sight can, under normal circumstances, tell that a cursed item is magical. Only the Prime version of this spell, "Supernal Vision," allows the mage to identify the item as bearing a curse.

Although no spells listed here allow mages to disguise the magical auras of cursed items, the "Precious Malediction" spell, p. 137, does make it harder for examiners to identify them as cursed.

Mystic Shackle (Prime ●●●)

The mage curses an item so that it penalizes the use of one or more Arcana.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: Variable; see below

For every five successes added to the target number of the spell, the mage specifies one Arcanum. Any mage casting a spell from any of the specified Arcana while wearing or carrying the cursed item suffers a dice penalty equal to the Mana spent during its creation.

Silver Ladder Rote: The Weighty Anchor

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Prime

Followers of the Silver Ladder who commit offenses against their leaders are sometimes, as a punishment short of expulsion or death, fitted temporarily with Weighty Anchors. Few who undergo this indignity are foolish enough to repeat their transgressions.

Defenses

The following spells augment an Enchanted Item, shielding it from the hostile intentions of would-be thieves and saboteurs.

Authorization

Many of the spells in this section allow effects to be activated when the Enchanted Item is touched or approached by an unauthorized person. If you are the current owner of an item with such a de-

fense mechanism, you are automatically considered authorized. You may specify other authorized users by name or by category, by expending a few moments intensely concentrating on the item. Common categories include members of one's cabal, Path or order. Complex categories requiring value judgments are not possible for this class; those requiring such fine-tuning are advised to install a ghost (p. 133) to make such determinations.

When an item changes hands, the previous owner typically cancels the current set of authorizations. The new owner attunes to the item in a moment of concentration, establishing new authorizations, including herself.

Death of an owner wipes out all authorizations. Unless the item has the "Last Testament" spell (p. 143) woven into it, the first mage to grab hold of it after its owner's demise can attune to it, transferring ownership.

Instill Elusiveness (Space ●●●)

The mage enchants an item so that it changes its position in space when it is touched by an unauthorized user. The item teleports to a new location within its range of movement. If there's a hidden or inaccessible location within that radius, the item goes there. Otherwise it moves as far away as it can without rematerializing within a solid object. The item may move in a random direction, or make a series of consistent hops in the same direction. Although the item is not blessed with intelligence, the object does appear to calculate its moves to engineer maximum exasperation in the interloper.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: Variable; see below

The item's range of movement depends on the Mana spent on the original enchantment:

Mana Spent	Item Moves Within Radius of:
1	10 feet
2	50 feet
3	100 feet
4	1/2 mile
5	1 mile

The target number is increased by five successes per point of Mana spent.

The teleportation effect evokes Disbelief in Sleeper witnesses.

Mysterium Rote: Hard To Grasp

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Space

Mages of the Mysterium go to great lengths to steal important Artifacts, and hate to think that someone with exactly the same predilections might come along to return the favor. This spell not only protects a coveted item, but allows one to thumb one's nose at the aspiring thief in the process.

Instill Shock (Forces ●●●)

The mage weaves a protective measure into an electronic device or other device capable of holding a significant charge of electrical energy. Unauthorized individuals touching the device receive a powerful shock.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 – 3 Mana, at caster's discretion

Shock victims suffer bashing damage equal to the number of Mana spent during item creation.

If Sleepers witness the same device delivering repeated shocks, Disbelief might come into play, unless the device is connected to a power source at the time, offering a plausible excuse for its effect.

Free Council Rote: Hands Off

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Forces

Free Council mages use this spell to protect their favorite Enchanted Items and other pieces of critical gear. For this reason, booting up a Free Councilor's laptop without permission is unwise.

Target Interloper (Prime ●●●)

The willworker adds a defensive mechanism to an item, allowing another spell, which must also be cast into the item, to target any unauthorized person touching the device. Typically, the spell must be capable of targeting an individual, without a complex set of options. However, if a ghost has been bound to the item, that entity can make any necessary decisions when the defense mechanism activates.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

When enchanting the item, add three successes to the target number for each of the target spell's dots to allow

the spell to target and trigger against interlopers. So, to allow the item to trigger the four-dot spell "Trigger the Lizard Brain," 12 successes would be required.

Upon successful casting of this spell, the mage then rolls her usual dice pool for an improvised casting of the subject spell. The defensive spell gains one Potency per success. If the subject spell requires Mana, the item must be infused with it, per the usual "Imbue Item" process, and the item must have Mana to spend when triggered by an interloper. Without sufficient Mana, the effect is not activated.

Silver Ladder Rote: The Artful Tripwire

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Prime

Silver Ladder mages appreciate the opportunities this spell provides to showcase both one's mystical ingenuity, and one's commitment to property rights.

Item Failsafe (Prime ●●●)

The magician enchants an Imbued Item so that its spells are inaccessible to unauthorized users.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

One success is added to the target number per imbued spell that is to be protected from unauthorized users.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: The Loyal Object

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Prime

Though less punitive than other protective enchantments, Guardians prefer the simplicity inherent in simply forbidding interlopers to make use of their Imbued Item s.

Telepathic Alarm (Mind ●●●)

When this defensive magic is installed in an object, a telepathic connection opens between the item's owner and any unauthorized person coming into contact with it. The owner senses the interloper's identity and can read his conscious thoughts. She may beam her own thoughts into the interloper's brain (in Sleepers, this triggers Disbelief). The connection establishes sympathy between owner and interloper, which, if he knows Space 2, allows the owner to cast spells at the interloper from a distance.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Weaving this into an item requires at least +5 successes on the target number. On +10 successes, the item's owner can choose to restrict the telepathic link to a one-way communication, in which the interloper remains unaware of the psychic eavesdropping.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Breath on the Back of Your Neck

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Mind

Followers of the Adamantine Arrow use the telepathic link to frighten interlopers via long distance, employing their typically formidable Intimidation skills to send chills through the thief's cerebral cortex.

Directed Havoc (Mind ●●●)

This protective measure permits an unauthorized user to employ any of an item's imbued spells that specify a person as a target of an effect. Whenever the user sets off an effect, however, this spell redirects the effect to affect a different target. When multiple alternative targets are available, the item reads the unauthorized user's mind, determining which target would displease her the most. A healing spell would therefore assist the



thief's enemies, while called lightning would strike her, or one of her allies.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell requires one success to install, but the mage may continue to add additional successes, if desired.

When the defense mechanism is activated, the Storyteller rolls a dice pool equal to 10 or the number of successes scored during item enchantment, whichever is lower. This is reflexively contested by the unauthorized user's Resolve + Gnosis. If the item is successful, its effect is retargeted.

Free Council Rote: Bitter Irony

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Mind

The rough poetic justice meted out by this item defense maintains a special appeal for the Free Council's more anarchic practitioners.

Shroud of Disinterest (Mind ●●●)

This defensive measure surrounds an item in a field of psychic energy, making noticing or remembering difficult. The object does not become invisible; instead it alters the observer's sense of priorities, so that the object fails to register as interesting or memorable.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Potential observers must reflexively roll Wits + Investigation to take note of the object's presence. Observers using Mage Sight may add Gnosis to the dice pool. A +2 bonus applies when the perceiver actively searches for the Enchanted Item with an instant action.

Whenever an observer's attentions stray from the item, the user contests Wits + Investigation against a dice pool equal to the spell's Potency. If the observer loses, he absent-mindedly allows the item's existence or location to slip out of his conscious thoughts.

A similar contest, using the same dice pool, occurs when an observer attempts to document the item's existence in notes, photographs or video footage. If the item wins, the observer neglects to take notes or distractedly fails to properly operate the recording device.

This spell is best cast on small, unremarkable objects that can easily be lost amid a room's background clutter, even when exposed to plain sight. Examples include pens, staplers, magazines, shoes, buttons, cushions, household tools and bits of packaging. Dice bonuses to the observers' rolls accrue when the item is large, ostentatious or strikingly decorated, or in some other way difficult to miss.

Type of Object	Observer's Dice Bonus
Snapshot	+1
Skis	+3
Gun	+3
Sword	+3
Car	+5
Jeweled scepter	+5
Taxidermied animal	+5
Truck	+10

The item's owner and authorized users are not subject to the above effects.

This spell may also be instilled in cursed items, in which case the item's owner is also subject to the effect, but the spell's creator is exempt.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Below the Radar

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge + Mind

Guardians of the Veil place curses into bits of detritus such as broken shoelaces, crumpled balls of paper, rags or even pest control devices. Weaving Below the Radar for good measure, they then sneak into a victim's place of residence, secreting the item in a hard-to-reach cranny: behind radiators, under couch cushions or beneath carpet edges. Alternately, Guardians may enchant items such as coupons, business cards, lip balms or dinner mints, and furtively place them in their victim's coats, wallets or handbags.

Instill Exclusiveness (Prime ●●●)

The mage weaves an enchantment into an item preventing anyone but its present owner from drawing on its imbued powers.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 3 Mana

Unauthorized users may still be targeted by the item's other defensive enchantments, if any.

The mage may, at the time of casting, exempt any of the item's magical properties from the purview of this spell. An item's enhancements are often exempted; exclusiveness would otherwise make the item less durable when handled by enemies intent on destroying it.

A spell that has not yet been cast on the item at the time Instill Exclusiveness is woven into it is automatically exempted from its effect.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Rights of Property

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Mind

Guardians rankle at the thought of grubby outsider hands making profitable use of their precious Enchanted Items.

Last Testament (Prime ●●●)

The mage enchants an item so that its owner may designate a rightful heir in the event of his death or long-term disappearance. Only that individual may then attune to the device. (See "Authorization," p. 139.)

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

A rightful owner of this item may designate a number of heirs equal to the spell's Potency. The owner names them in order, so that if the first heir fails to take possession of the item after a specified period, the next in line is then cleared to step up and attune to the item.

If all specified heirs are dead when the owner dies, the item becomes generally available. As with any item bearing an authorization-based spell, any mage may now attune to it.

Owners can alter their list of heirs at any time. Owners also may specify an interval of neglect, after which their heirs may claim the item as theirs. If an entire interval passes during which the owner has not used or handled the item, the first-named heir becomes the item's designated owner.

Mages inheriting an item in this way will likely wish to specify their own new heirs, rather than allowing the item to pass to the previous owner's second-named beneficiary.

Silver Ladder Rote: Orderly Succession

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Prime

Certain items belong to Silver Ladder hierarchy itself, as a perquisite of particular offices. The Orderly Succession rote guarantees that these items are passed to the new holders of these positions, and are not subsumed into officers' estates.

Augmentations

Augmentations are spells complementing the capabilities of an Enchanted Item.

Mask of Normality (Mind ●)

Cast on an item of unusual shape or aspect, this spell causes Sleepers to perceive the item as an everyday, contemporary object.

Practice: Compelling

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Although sometimes cast on an item at the time of manufacture, this spell is more often used to retrofit an antique object so that the user can openly carry and use it without arousing unwanted attention. Common examples include the following:

Actual Form	Apparent Form
Sword	Umbrella
Scepter	Walking stick
Diadem	Headband
Pocket watch	PDA
Armored helm	Bicycle helmet

The spell can also update an object's look, while maintaining its basic apparent form. A faience ring from the Egyptian Fourth Dynasty becomes a piece of bling any hip-hopper would envy.

To see through the illusion, onlookers make reflexive contested Wits + Investigation rolls against the spell's Potency.

Free Council Rote: Rhinestone Crowbar

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Mind

This rote gets a workout from the most overtly modern of orders. The Free Council's version of the spell, concerned as much with style as subterfuge, affects the Awakened, too. Mage Sight still reveals the item's original outlines.

Double Shape (Space ●●●)

The mage merges two objects into one, so that at any given time, one object exists in the Material Realm, while the other co-exists with the object in a pocket dimension. As an instant action, the item's owner can switch the two items, so that, for example, one's enchanted handgun disappears, to be replaced by its other half, an enhanced chainsaw.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Aside from the convenience of carrying the two-in-one item, this spell allows both objects to benefit equally from any further curses, defenses or enhancements subsequently woven into the combined device.

Additional castings of the spell allow for additional items to be added to the mix. Only one item exists in the Material Realm; all additional forms also go to the pocket dimension when not in use.

Switching an object between forms evokes Disbelief in Sleeper witnesses.

Mysterium Rote: The Right Tool

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Space

Whether you're exploring an ancient crypt or creeping uninvited into a secret library, carrying capacity can be a critical issue. Mysterium explorers like to keep a wide range of important tools at their disposal while still leaving room in their bags for any alluring Artifacts they may feel the need to liberate.

Borrow From the Future (Time ●●●)

The mage ensorcels an item so that users can borrow successes from their future destinies and apply them to their present circumstances.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

For every five successes added to the target number, the user of the item can borrow one success per roll on any action to which the item contributes an equipment bonus. The Storyteller takes note of the situation, type of action and number of successes borrowed.

In a subsequent scene, when the user undertakes a similar action, the same number of successes is subtracted as *dice* from that roll, even if this means reducing the dice pool to a chance die. This occurs whether or not the user employs the item in that attempt. The Storyteller times this settling of temporal accounts so that the failure carries negative consequences roughly equal to what the character would have suffered in the original incident.

Example: *A user borrows successes from his magic gun during a firefight with members of a drug gang. He can't erase his debt with a mere trip to the range to pop off a few failed shots. It will instead catch up with him the next time he finds himself in life-or-death combat.*

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Temporal Marker

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Time

The use of items enchanted with this spell reminds one of a popular Adamantine Arrow adage: "Kill your enemies today; let tomorrow fend for itself." This motto is sometimes engraved on the items themselves.

Instill Homing Instinct (Space ●●●)

This spell enchants an item so that it returns reliably to its owner's possession, even when the item's present location is unknown to her. The item moves of its own volition through a gateway in space, as if by "Apportation" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 234).

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 5 Mana

The Apportation effect triggers when the item has been out of the owner's possession for a period of time determined by the spell's Potency.

Potency	Trigger Interval
1	1 month
2	1 week
3	1 day
4	12 hours
5	4 hours

Disbelief is triggered in Sleepers who witness the Apportation effect.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Old Reliable

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Space

To warriors of the Adamantine Arrow, the phrase "trusty sword" need not be a mere figure of speech.

Anti-Item Spells

Once relinquished, an Enchanted Item's finishing spell can't be dispelled. The effects of other spells imbued into the item can be temporarily suppressed through the use of standard dispellation spells, but not the finishing spell. If the item is ever destroyed, though, the enhancement or imbuement is broken along with it.

Bearing this limitation in mind, the following spells are used against Enchanted Items and their owners.

Disenchant Item (Prime ●●●●)

Although an item's finishing spells cannot be dispelled, Disenchant Item allows the mage to permanently excise one other spell from an Enchanted Item. Disenchant Item may target an imbued spell, curse, enhancement or defense. The spell can also be used to remove the item's

ability to hold Mana, if any. All Mana in the device when this effect is used disperses uselessly.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; successes are compared to target spell's Potency, or, if the spell targets the item's Mana capacity, its total capacity

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage must have at least one dot in each Arcanum used in the targeted spell.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Righteous Pyre

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Prime

Entire cadres of Guardians devote themselves to cleaning up the trail of Enchanted Items left behind by careless willworkers. They protect unworthy eyes from esoteric secrets by disassembling the evidence, one object at a time.

Suppressing Items

Through the use of "Counterspell," "Dispel Magic," "Supernal Dispellation" and similar effects, a willworker can temporarily suppress the effects of spells imbued into an Enchanted Item, including defenses, curses and enhancements. Each dispellation must target a single spell instilled in the item.

On a successful dispellation, all effects currently maintained by the item are nullified, and the item's ability to generate new effects is suspended for a number of turns equal to the difference between the Potency of the dispellation and that of the suppressed spell.

Subvert Ownership (Prime ●●●)

The mage may specify a new rightful owner, set of authorized users or designated heir (per the "Last Testament" spell) for an Enchanted Item.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant and contested; successes are compared to target spell's Potency

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

A single casting of Subvert Ownership targets any and all spells woven into an item that depend on such designations.

Mysterium Rote: Changing Hands

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Prime

The Mysterium's shadier members are loath to allow mere technicalities of ownership stand in the way of a prestigious acquisition.

Alchemy

Now remembered by Sleepers as a medieval precursor to chemistry and metallurgy, the practice of alchemy dates back to ancient times, before the conceptual separation of science and magic. In popular legend, alchemists pursued the formula of the Philosopher's Stone, a wondrous alloy that conveyed either immortality, the ability to transmute base metals into gold or both. In reality, alchemy was primarily a technique for inner transformation, in which the manipulation of metals and chemicals served as an outward manifestation of the practitioner's inner transformation. Through alchemical inquiry, masters of the craft achieved Gnosis, and were Awakened.

Now out of favor in a world dominated by the precisely reproducible but spiritually unseeing scientific method, alchemy is no longer studied by significant numbers of Sleepers. However, insights gained from it continue to develop the occult understanding of the Awakened. When an alchemical practitioner gains a dot of Gnosis, he is no doubt honing his inner material with profound experiments conducted in his laboratory, acquiring advanced insight into the Secret Marriage of matter and soul.

As a side benefit, the practice of alchemy gifts its students with the ability to concoct a variety of useful substances to bolster their allies and harm their foes.

Alchemical substances are lesser Enchanted Items that are consumed during use and never possess indefinite durations. Some alchemical substances do, however, foster lasting but natural changes. Because they take effect only briefly and are then destroyed or used up, alchemists skip the onerous step of weaving indefinite spells and then relinquishing control of them. Instead, alchemists use one set of spells to create raw materials, or *gross matter*, which serve as containers for one-use, limited-duration castings of other spells.

Alchemical substances do not typically expand a willworker's portfolio of abilities so much as provide additional convenience or tactical advantage to what they can already do. Think of these substances as delivery systems for spells, which allow a mage to place a spell in another's hand, to stockpile Mana and, perhaps most crucially, to work effects from a safe distance, behind a cloak of plausible deniability.

To practice alchemy, mages must have access to a specialized laboratory (as represented by the Merit, below) and are well advised to take a Skill Specialty in alchemy (also below).

Merit: Alchemical Lab (● to ●●●●●)

Prerequisite: Sanctum

Your character maintains a laboratory suitable for both the spiritual experiments and the production of gross materials arising from the occult practice of alchemy. The lab is equipped with a mix of ancient and contemporary equipment. Forges, furnaces and cauldrons produced to medieval specifications may sit in a climate-controlled environment, monitored by thermostats and carefully vented to the outdoors according to modern industrial safety practices. Your lab may recall the dank basement of a Renaissance castle but is just as likely to resemble a whirring bank of antiseptic, automated machinery straight from the factory floor of Merck or Schering-Plough.

A computerized database may track your inventory of herbs, metals and pharmaceutical ingredients, or you might simply find what you need by memory, sorting through jar after jar jumbled together on cobwebbed, dusty shelves.

Your dots in this Merit serve as an equipment bonus when creating gross matter, the range of substances that retain and then deliver other spell effects. Additional dots also increase the chances that you'll have all necessary ingredients on hand when you set out on a new project. For details, see "Producing Gross Matter," below.

Occult Skill Specialty: Alchemy

You study and practice alchemy, the magical art combining elements of metallurgy, chemistry, botany and pharmacology — with a touch of demolitions thrown in for good measure. This Specialty grants you a +1 dice bonus while synthesizing gross matter, described below and may also prove handy while analyzing or neutralizing the alchemical products of rival practitioners.

Producing Gross Matter

Gross matter falls into several categories, each of which delivers a different class of effects in its own appropriate way. Categories include sprays, powders, salves and unguents, oils and jellies and pharmaceuticals of various configurations, from the ingestible to the intravenous.

The spell placed in any of these substances is called the *active element*. Traditionalists sometimes refer to it as the *masculine element*, with the gross material as the *feminine element*.

Each type of gross matter begins with a common formula, which must then be admixed with more exotic ingredients tailored to deliver each specific active element.

The first time a character synthesizes gross matter to deliver a particular active element, he must perform an ingredient check to see if he has all of its ingredients on hand. The character's dots in the Alchemical Lab Merit are used as a dice pool, contested by a dice pool equal to the dot rank of the spell comprising the active element. If he wins the roll, he has all of the ingredients already. If not, a rare, exotic and/or difficult-to-acquire substance is absent from his collection. He must seek out a quantity of the substance before proceeding. Its acquisition might be a time-consuming inconvenience or an adventure unto itself, depending on the Storyteller's present narrative needs.

After gathering the ingredients, the mage proceeds to the formulation phase. Each class of gross matter is created by a spell specific to it; these are described below.

Gross matter is synthesized as an extended casting.

The Potency of the spells one can imprint into gross matter is limited by the Potency of the gross matter itself. It will not hold spells of a Potency greater than its own.

The chosen Duration measures the substance's shelf life after a spell is instilled into it. (If stored in a cool, dry place, unimprinted gross matter remains fresh for around 18 months after manufacture.) When you intend to use an alchemical product right away, a low Duration may prove perfectly serviceable. Advanced prolongation can keep a spell instilled in the material indefinitely.

Additional successes during extended casting allow the production of multiple batches of gross material. One batch provides enough material for one dose or use of the end product.

Batches	Target Number
1	1
2	3
3	5
4	7
5	9*

*Add two additional successes to the target number per extra batch.

Batch sizes vary from one class of gross material to another but are generally very small.

Imprinting Gross Material

Any mage may imprint a spell into a batch of gross material, but those without the Alchemy Skill Specialty do so at a –2 dice penalty. The mage casts the spell as if using it in the field, making any choices allowed by its effect, and determining variables such as number of targets, target size, area and duration either through die penalties (in the case of instant spells) or additional successes (per extended spells). The willworker completes the spell by retargeting it into the substance itself. If the spell

is successful, the gross material absorbs the substance, transforming into the desired alchemical end-product.

It is not possible to extend the Duration of the imprinted spell via advanced prolongation.

Spells activated by alchemical products are still subject to the rules of spell tolerance. Merely carrying one or more unused alchemical products on your person does not affect your spell tolerance.

Manufacture Salve (Life ●● + Matter ●●●)

The alchemist manufactures gross material in the form of a salve, cream or unguent, formulated to contain a particular spell effect. To be imprinted in a salve, a spell must protect the beneficiary from harm or influence.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

The effect of the imprinted spell is triggered when the salve is rubbed on the beneficiary's body. The salve can be applied by the beneficiary or by another individual.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Adamantine Unguent
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Matter

Before battle, commandos of the Adamantine Arrow douse themselves in armoring unguents, such as those imprinted with the Life 3 spell "Organic Shield."

Manufacture Oil or Jelly (Matter ●●●)

The alchemist manufactures gross material in the form of a sticky, viscous substance. To be imprinted in a salve, a spell must bolster, degrade or otherwise alter inorganic matter.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

The effect of the imprinted spell is triggered when the oil or jelly is rubbed onto the target object.

Free Council Rote: Better Than Duct Tape
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Matter

Free Council technophiles often carry around vials of oil ready to heal ailing machines, or to unobtrusively sabotage the operations of functioning items.

Manufacture Spray (Matter ●●●)

The alchemist manufactures gross material in the form of a low-density liquid that can be easily dispersed into a mist via a sprayer or aerosol can. To be imprinted in a spray, a spell must harm or influence a person, creature or supernatural entity. (Certain entities, such as ghosts and spirits, may be difficult or impossible to target with a spray.)

Practice: Weaving
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

The effect of the imprinted spell is triggered when the liquid is sprayed on its target. These sprays are most often delivered with modified canisters originally used to contain mace or pepper spray. To use a spray canister, one must be within melee range of the target, and make a successful attack using Dexterity + Brawl or Firearms + an equipment bonus of 3.

Silver Ladder Rote: Whiff of Obedience
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Matter

Silver Ladder potentates often equip their underlings with sprayers laced with mind-influencing spells, allowing them to exact compliance from bureaucrats, functionaries and gatekeepers.

Manufacture Powder (Forces ●● + Matter ●●●)

The alchemist manufactures gross material in the form of an explosive powder. Any spell with an area effect can be imprinted onto a gross powder keyed to its specific effect.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

The powder is typically placed in an explosive device, most often a flash grenade. This may be detonated in the time-honored pull-pin method or via a timer device. When the powder ignites, the imprinted spell is triggered, with the location of the grenade as the center of the spell's radius.

Mysterium Rote: Fire in the Hole
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Matter

Explosive effects that can be detonated from afar provide a wide array of tactical options to explorers of lost cities, forgotten ruins and the hermetically sealed vaults of rival willworkers.

Manufacture Medication (Life ●● + Matter ●●●)

The alchemist manufactures gross material in the form of a pill or intravenous liquid. To be instilled in medication, a spell must act on its user's organic biology, healing him or bolstering his Physical Traits. (Sensory



spells are imprinted in drops, another form of gross material; see below.)

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Pills are swallowed, and take effect after a time delay based on the user's Stamina.

Stamina	Length of Delay
1	1 turn
2	2 turns
3	3 turns
4	5 turns
5	10 turns

By scoring additional successes during the creation process, the alchemist may exactly specify the length of delay between ingestion and effect, regardless of the user's Stamina. The greater the number of successes, the longer the maximum possible delay.

Maximum Delay	Target Number
1 scene	+1 success
2 hours	+2 successes
4 hours	+3 successes
8 hours	+4 successes
12 hours	+5 successes
1 day	+6 successes

The delay is fixed during manufacture.

Intravenous drugs are injected via hypodermic needles or easy-to-use auto-injectors, such as the pen-like devices used to rapidly deliver adrenaline to victims of anaphylactic shock. These drugs take effect in one turn, regardless of the user's Stamina. Hardened IV drug users may find it difficult or impossible to find usable veins to inject alchemical serums into.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Healing Stab

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Matter

An EpiPen full of healing magic has saved the life of many an Adamantine Arrow guerrilla.

Manufacture Drop (Life ●● + Matter ●●●)

The alchemist manufactures gross material in the form of a liquid to be dropped into the eye or ear canal. Spells that convey information to the user, or alter his perceptions, can be imprinted in alchemical drops.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The imprinted spell takes effect immediately after the drop is placed in the eye or ear.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Fluid of Revelation

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Matter

During investigations into indiscreet uses of magic, Guardian agents may make use of a pocketful of liquid information-gathering spells they themselves are unable to work.

Homunculi

The ultimate expression of the alchemist's craft is the homunculus, an artificial being created in the laboratory from gross material, magical energy and perhaps the occasional scrap of reclaimed human bone or tissue. Alchemists create homunculi as unquestioning servants, but often find that the vat spawn are possessed of strong wills of their own. Even those homunculi that must be periodically cajoled or threatened to follow their masters' instructions may prove invaluable in a host of ways. The lowliest homunculi serve as dogsbodies, lugging gear, fetching ingredients, even acting as cooks or valets. More robust creations may act as scouts, spies or bodyguards. Homunculi created without inherent intelligence can provide earthly shells for powerful spirits or the souls of the departed.

The creation of a homunculus is an elaborate process that generally takes place over many weeks, if not years. The alchemist works in stages, assembling the creature's body through multiple castings of essential spells. Mages often chip away at such projects, coming back to the lab to work on their creations between more worldly escapades.

As homunculus creation requires mastery of multiple Arcana, teams of alchemists may collaborate. One mage may construct the homunculus' physical form, then hand it off to another who will assemble its persona or prepare the homunculus for occupation by a ghost or spirit.

Unlike the complete, but mindless, biological organisms formed by the Life 5 spell "Create Life," the homunculus is an animate, sentient, but inorganic, being.

Construct Homunculus Form (Matter ●●●●●)

The alchemist manufactures the lifeless, inanimate physical form of a homunculus. The resulting artificial body is sometimes known as a proto-homunculus, or proto for short. The large number of successes required to work this spell can be racked up over time, with multiple instances of the spell. Any interval may pass between castings of the spell, provided that any organic or perishable components of the form are kept from decaying, either by magical means or through simple refrigeration. The Mana cost must be paid for each casting. Paradox, which may destroy or reverse one's progress, remains a risk with each session.

Practice: Making
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 3 Mana

First the alchemist chooses the homunculus' Size. Human-sized beings are easier to pass off as normal in Sleeper society. Tiny imp-like creatures are good at creeping into small places and spying undetected on one's enemies. If every mage were a 13-year-old boy, the earth would no doubt be crawling with towering, gigantic homunculi that would periodically meet to engage in titanic combat. Fortunately for everyone, the Guardians of the Veil take an especially dim view of such nonsense, and make destroying oversized, outré homunculi — and the fools who attempt to construct them — a top priority.

The alchemist must have access to an Alchemical Lab in order to perform this spell.

Size	Target Number
1	Basic success
2	+1 success
3	+3 successes
4	+5 successes
5	+7 successes
6	+9 successes
7	+11 successes

Next, the alchemist determines whether the homunculus resonates as human. If it has some human qualities, it can be affected, for good or for ill, by spells that target people. To permit human resonance, the alchemist must incorporate a quantity of human flesh and/or bone into his creature. This will in turn subject the homunculus to aging and decay, giving it a set lifespan, after which it will wither and die.

Lifespan	Target Number
N/A; homunculus is wholly inhuman	Basic success
1 year	+1 success
2 years	+2 successes
5 years	+5 successes
10 years	+7 successes
20 years	+10 successes
50 years	+12 successes
75 years	+14 successes
100 years	+16 successes*

*Add an additional two successes for each extra 25 years of life.

When selecting tissue donors, proto builders must also be aware that their personality traits may reappear, in exaggerated form, in the finished homunculus.

Next the alchemist infuses the proto with its Physical Attributes, at a rate of one success per dot, to a limit of five dots per Trait.

The alchemist may gift the proto with any number of Physical Skills, at one success per dot, to a limit of five dots per Trait.

The homunculus' outer surfaces may then be armored. As Armor increases, the homunculus' outward appearance becomes increasingly bizarre. At one point of Armor, its skin seems hard and woody. At two points, it gains a waxy sheen. At three points, studs of bone appear across the surface of the skin. At four points, a thick, horny plates, reminiscent of a dinosaur, manifest. At five points, the surface takes on a stony quality. At six and above, the homunculus becomes metallic. Highly armored homunculi are sometimes referred to as golems.

Armor Points	Target Number
0	Basic success
1	+2 successes
2	+4 successes
3	+6 successes
4	+12 successes
5	+24 successes
6	+36 successes

Alchemists with a taste for the exotic may equip their homunculi with natural weapons, from claws to horns to blades emerging from the forearms. As alchemists contemplate the baroque possibilities, they should remember that Guardians of the Veil hit squads have been known to target notably bizarre homunculi, and their creators.

Successes required for inherent weaponry are keyed to the damage dealt.

Damage	Target Number
1 (B)	+2 successes
2 (B)	+4 successes
1 (L)	+5 successes
3 (B)	+6 successes
2 (L)	+7 successes
3 (L)	+9 successes
4 (L)	+13 successes
5 (L)	+18 successes

Rare alchemical texts may include instructions for even more exotic bodily features, from wings to secret compartments. The success cost for such embellishments is left as an exercise for the indulgent Storyteller.

Creatures of inhuman appearance are subject to the same damage from Disbelief as fanciful beings created with the "Hereditary Change" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 192). They take Disbelief successes as bashing damage, once per scene, per witnessing Sleeper.

Failures on the casting roll to create a homunculus do not destroy a proto, but do deform it. With each failure, a small but noticeable visible imperfection appears on the proto's body. Examples include scars, blemishes, drooping eyelids, gnarls of flesh and malformed or missing teeth.

With each dramatic failure, the spell must be started over. If the same gross material is used on a later attempt, weird physical features manifest, even if the next spell is cast without failures. A notably horrific physical feature appears: a withered arm, shark-like teeth, a useless third eye, a second face on the back of the head, tentacle-like growths or whatever other unpleasantries strike the Storyteller's fancy.

Some mages deliberately handicap themselves for at least one casting, to ensure that their creation will be in some way imperfect. They thereby render the creation process less of an act of hubris — see the sidebar, below.

Mysterium Rote: Assembly of the Body

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Matter

Members of the Mysterium are by far the most promiscuous builders of homunculi. Some Mysterium mages manufacture bodies for sale or barter to others, never seeing life breathed into their creations.

Homunculi and Hubris

To create lasting life in one's own image, or a close facsimile thereof, is an act of hubris. When a proto is brought to life, every mage who willingly took part in the homunculus' construction and animation must make a degeneration roll, using the following number of dice:

Homunculus looks like the mage: 2 dice

Homunculus appears human: 3 dice

Homunculus appears human but is marred by notable flaws: 4 dice

Homunculus appears inhuman: 5 dice

Construct Homunculus Persona (Mind ●●●●●)

The alchemist pieces together a mind to be integrated into a proto-homunculus before it is animated. (Once animation occurs, the homunculus' persona can no longer be modified.) As with the construction of the body, the mind can be formed over a long period, with breaks between sessions. However, the Mana cost must be repaid with the commencement of each new session, and the risk of a Paradox always pertains.

A persona created in this way could also be infused into a biological creature formed with Life 5 "Create Life." In the case of non-human forms, certain body shapes and hard-wired instincts might prove incompatible with the artificial mind's long-term sanity.

Practice: Making
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 3 Mana

The alchemist forms the homunculus' Mental and Social Attributes, at a cost of one success per dot, with a limit of five dots per Attribute in Mental Attributes and two dots in Social. (Note that few mages can long bear to live with homunculi smarter, cooler or more charismatic than themselves.)

The homunculus' Mental Skills also cost one success per dot, with a limit of five dots per Skill. Social Skills obey the same limit but cost three successes per dot.

Next the alchemist determines the degree of loyalty the homunculus feels toward its owner at the beginning of its career. (Although disloyal homunculi rarely become more favorably disposed toward their owners over time, initially steadfast individuals come to gradually rebel when subjected to continual mistreatment.)

Degree of Loyalty	Target Number
Openly rebellious and vengeful	Basic success
Resentfully compliant	+3 successes
Noncommittal	+6 successes
Favorably disposed	+9 successes
Fervently loyal	+12 successes

Loyal homunculi reserve their obedience for a single master, unless an affinity for others, most often fellow cabal members, is built into their personalities.

Number of Mages Homunculus Obeys	Target Number
1	Basic success
2	+3 successes
3	+6 successes
4	+9 successes
5	+12 successes

Homunculi exhibit exaggerated, simplistic personalities. They generally model themselves either on the human donors of their organic tissue, if any, or on the alchemists who construct the homunculi's personalities. They conduct themselves as one-dimensional parodies of their models, which can be disconcerting, especially to the persons they're aping. By allocating five successes to the homunculus' personality, the alchemist can specify another role model. The creature will still seem off-putting, but in a different, presumably more acceptable way. The proto must be left to spend significant time with the role model during personality formation. Spirits and ghosts, as well as living persons, can act as role models. The model may be physically present or represented by extensive audio or video recordings. It is therefore possible to imprint a homunculus with the persona of a public figure, celebrity or even a fictional character.

When animated, this primal personality may be complicated by one or more derangements or Flaws (see below). The alchemist can prepare for this by choosing one derangement or Flaw for every five successes allocated for this purpose. If the homunculus does acquire derangements or Flaws, it gains those pre-selected by the alchemist, as opposed to merely random ones chosen by the Storyteller during animation.

Silver Ladder Rote: Formation of the Psyche
Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Life

Silver Ladder mages put extra time and effort into the personae of their homunculi, ensuring pliable and slavishly servile beings, grateful for existence and anxious to placate their every whim.

Animate Homunculus (Life ●●●●●)

The alchemist imbues a proto-homunculus, already gifted with form and a latent personality, with the final spark necessary to bring it to artificial life. To do so, the mage must permanently sacrifice a dot of Willpower.

Practice: Making
Action: Instant
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: None

The homunculus sputters to life on one or more successes, but, depending on the number of successes, may face such a traumatic transition from the realm of the inanimate that the homunculus gains one or more derangements and/or Flaws. The Storyteller chooses these either at random or based on the individual on whom the homunculus' persona was modeled. If the model suffers from derangements or Flaws, the homunculus inherits one or more of them. If not, the Storyteller envisions an insanely exaggerated version of the model and picks derangements and Flaws to suit.

The weaver of the homunculus' persona may have allocated successes to be able to personally select one or more of the derangements/Flaws.

The mix of defects suffered depends on the number of successes scored on the roll for this spell.

Successes	Defects
1	2 derangements, 2 Flaws
2	1 derangement, 2 Flaws
3	1 derangement, 1 Flaw
4	1 Flaw
5+	None



Mysterium Rote: Conjure Pneuma

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Life

Members of the Mysterium regard the creation of a homunculus as proof positive of alchemical mastery.

Secret Marriage (Death ●●●●● or Spirit ●●●●●)

The mage installs a willing ghost or spirit in a proto-homunculus, giving the subject a lasting body in the Material Realm.

Practice: Making

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (this spell uses the advanced prolongation factors)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The spell may not be used on a proto that has already had "Construct Homunculus Persona" cast on it.

The Traits of the new homunculus are figured as follows. Its Physical Attributes and Skills are as determined by "Construct Homunculus Form." The homunculus gains Intelligence and Presence dots equal to the ghost or spirit's Power dots, Wits and Manipulation equal to its Finesse dots and Resolve and Composure equal to its Resistance dots. The homunculus gains whatever Mental and Social Skills the Storyteller feels are appropriate for the type of spirit or ghost (if any), along with any Flaws and/or derangements. Any supernatural powers arising from their status as discarnate entities are unavailable to them while in homunculus form.

While some ghosts and spirits crave the ability to operate in the Material Realm conveyed by possession of a homunculus form, they generally feel this way because they want to pursue a specific agenda of some kind. Savvy mages should expect the average ghost or spirit to display only minimal loyalty and cooperation, except where their own interests converge with those of the discarnate entities they've gifted with physical forms.

The most loyal homunculi created in this manner are generally the ghosts of slain cabal members, who use their flawed new forms to further the collective goals they fought for while alive.

The Death version of this spell targets ghosts, while its Spirit equivalent works on spirits.

This spell is treated as a finishing spell. Any of the substitute relinquishment costs for Enchanted Items may be applied to it.

Similar to a finishing spell, Secret Marriage can't be dispelled, only temporarily suppressed. While suppressed, the entity remains within the homunculus but is unable to animate it in any way, including the use of speech.

If this spell is cast with a limited Duration, the ghost or spirit departs the homunculus body when the spell expires. The empty, inanimate homunculus may be reused, housing either the same ghost or spirit or a new volunteer.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Resurrect the Fallen Hero

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Death (or Spirit)

Heroes of the Arrow who die in the cause of duty are sometimes brought back as clawed, iron-clad killing machines — a consummation devoutly to be wished.

The Nature of Soul Stones

A soul stone is pure magic, carved from the Awakened soul of a willing mage and given form. Containing not only an intrinsic, unbreakable bond to one of the Watchtowers, a soul stone also holds within its demurely mundane shape hope, aspiration and the ultimate realization of a mage's potential. Few more potent tools are found outside of soul stones.

Shaping Soul Stones

No amount of mental coercion or control practiced today can force a mage to create a soul stone. He must desire to do so. For all the gravity of removing a portion of one's soul, the act can be begun and completed in almost no time at all. All the mage must do is leverage his will and magic against the sanctity of his soul, but many mages include other practices in the process. One common method is to cross the Astral Threshold into one's Oneiros, the astral plane of personal dreams. (Full rules for "Exploring Astral Space" may be found in **Mage: The Awakening**, on p. 283.) Once there, he explores his inner self, contending with personifications of his angers, hopes and fears until he finds an expression of his soul, made manifest in his state of dream. This can effectively add an additional point of Mana for the mage to use in the soul stone's creation, and success in his encounter can also help the mage maintain his sense of Wisdom and self.

While in his Oneiros, the mage seeks the aspect of his soul he wishes to release. He makes an extended Resolve + Empathy roll with a target number of three successes; each roll consumes an hour of time in the real world and an indeterminable period in the Astral Plane. If successful in this search, the mage returns to wakefulness, ready to create the soul stone; the sojourn gives him a +1 die bonus to the Wisdom degeneration roll he must make upon completion of the stone.

Other mages attempt to guide the shapes of their new soul stones, whose form usually depends on the state of the mage's soul, her Path and her most unconscious needs and wants. Some attempt to create a facsimile of the stone's desired shape before the stone is creating, using exotic and spiritually charged materials relevant to their Paths. The mage's player rolls his Wits + Occult. If successful, the stone's shape replicates the facsimile, though this is by no means a perfect method. Choosing a form foreign to the mage's Path or nature levies penalties on the roll. Failure indicates that her soul stone governs its own form.

The shape that a soul stone takes varies widely from mage to mage but reflects the mage's Path. An Acanthus' stone might be a small flower that appears alive (despite appearances, soul stones are not alive and do not change or grow unless intentionally shaped; see below), while a Mastigos' might be a small Escher-like carving. Even so, no two soul stones appear identical, even two made by the same mage. Having made his first soul stone, the mage is a different person when he makes the second, and that difference is evident in the stone's shape.

Some mages take advantage of these tendencies. A Thyrsus soul stone used in creating a Demesne might be surrounded by living animals and bestial trophies to prevent intruders from knowing which object to steal. Soul stones can be further shaped to change their form, usually to conceal them further. This shaping requires Mind 4 to shape one's own soul stone through magic and Mind 5 to shape another's; see "Shape Soul Stone," p. 67. Even then, the stone resists being shaped into something with too little resonance to the soul stone's Supernal Realm — the stone of a Moros must somehow reflect Stygia, and one for an Obrimos will always represent celestial energies.

Still, shaping one's own soul stone subtly can be helpful. If one's stone is a flower, shaping it to make it grow slightly over time can give others the impression that it is a real plant.

Detecting Soul Stones

Knowing how to perceive that a given object is a soul stone, or trying to find one, can be of utmost importance. It is a clear advantage for a mage to seek out the soul stones of his rivals and foes, and others spend decades searching for a portion of a fabled archmaster's soul.

But there is no *easy* way to discern a soul stone from the bric-a-brac that may surround it. A bit of soul shaped like a small idol of petrified wood looks and feels just like any other idol. The only way to truly tell the soul stone apart is to examine its resonance with Mage Sight. (See **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 277–278, for rules on scrutinizing resonance.)

Apply all appropriate bonuses and penalties to the roll: Denser materials have naturally inconspicuous auras, and using crystals or an appropriate type of Mage Sight can make the task easier. Powerful mages have powerful auras, and that brilliance spills over into their soul stones; if the soul stone's creator has a high enough Gnosis that his personal aura becomes more evident (see "Effects of Gnosis," **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 76), that die bonus also affects examining a soul stone. Additionally, if the stone's creator has any dots in Occultation, apply those dots as a penalty to the dice pools of those examining the stone's resonance.

A dead mage's resonance fades away, and any spiritual significance or concealment fades with him. When examining the soul stone of a dead mage, ignore the effects of Gnosis and Occultation.

One success on the scrutiny roll is enough to "fingerprint" the soul stone's aura. If the searching mage is familiar with the creator's aura, the searching mage can identify this object as something that the mage created or used — it registers in the same way a magical tool might. Likewise, one success determines that the object is not simply a book or chess piece, though a mage needs five successes to be certain that it is actually a soul stone.

Many who create soul stones enchant them with magic that conceals or alters their auras, making it difficult, if not impossible, to recognize their true natures. Death 2 "Suppress Aura" and Prime 3 "Disguise Resonance" are oft-used choices.

Mages have some special facilities with the portions of their own souls. They have little difficulty recognizing their own souls, even if a soul stone's shape has changed since they last saw it. A mage requires only a single success when scrutinizing the object's aura to determine that it is truly his soul stone.

When a mage uses a soul stone for some arcane purpose, the soul of which it was once a part reacts. If it is the stone's creator using the stone, there is little effect. But using another mage's stone alerts that mage, in a way she cannot mistake for anything else, that a bit of her soul is channeling magic. Using the stone to drain Mana evokes such a sensation in the target, which is how the she knows (beyond the loss of Mana) that her stone's possessor has used one of his traditional three favors. Most arcane uses for the soul stones of the living mentioned here function the same way, and mages subjected to them generally count them against the official three favors.

Why Three Favors?

As Latimas discusses in his *Meaning and Dogma of Atlantean Custom*, even the well-explored habit of using soul stones to create thralls among other Awakened retains its own mysteries. Foremost of all of them: why three?

One thought put forward in that book is that, once upon a time, mages practiced spells upon the soul stones of their rivals that truly compelled the stone's creator, forcing the recipient to perform even the most dangerous or demeaning tasks. No Consilium could offer redress for such absolute commands. Thralls could even be commanded not to seek it.

The spells or techniques for creating such influence are gone, lost to time or to the Abyss, but certain records suggest that they lost much of their power after being used for the third time, which perhaps is the basis for contemporary tradition. A mage who recovered this magic could wreak havoc with others' souls, especially if he first observed the "traditional" method of making thralls before resorting to the older way.

Other theorists venture other theories: holding a soul stone hostage for more than three demands fulfills an ancient condition that cracks the Tapestry and lets slip in a minor creature of the Abyss, creating a soul stone captures a personal demon inside it (and keeping it too long from its master frees the demon to wreak havoc), using a soul stone for such selfish and divisive purposes angers the Oracles (who act to withdraw the Watchtowers even further from the unworthy Fallen World) or using another's soul stone for more than three purpose forms a bond between the two that the abused can exploit.

Strange Inconstancy of Soul

The most common uses for soul stones are well-known. A mage who holds the soul stone of another can force his will on that mage, leveraging possession into as many as three favors from the mage who created it. This is not magic, but merely a social convention; it can be abused, although Consilii generally rule harshly against those who do abuse this ancient accord. One who holds his *own* soul stone and knows the proper spells can use it as a conduit for the power of the Supernal Realm where his Watchtower rests. Demesnes so created are valuable resources for everyone.

But there are other, more esoteric uses for a piece of a soul. Similar to constructing a Demesne, some feats can only be performed by a mage holding his own soul stone.

The "Anti-Demesne"

Referred to in ancient tracts as an "annullity," willworkers can use their own soul stones to create regions that hinder, rather than aid, magic. By invoking the stone's eternal sympathy to one of the Supernal Realms, the mage calls upon the stone's negative aspects rather than the positive.

Annullities are not truly the opposite of a Demesne. They do not make covert magic vulgar. Instead, an annullity damps the Tapestry's response to magic of certain Arcana. Used in far-gone times as protections or tests, an annullity subtracts two dice from any spells that utilize the inferior Arcanum from its Realm, much as may occur when a Paradox causes an Anomaly. This does mean that Masters of certain Arcana are less susceptible to these effects than others — only Forces (Arcadia), Matter (Pandemonium), Spirit (Stygia), Mind (Primal Wild) and Death (Aether) can be suppressed by an annullity.

This has led, by those who study and ponder such things, to some who consider the inequality proof that other Watchtowers exist. Others, of course, scoff.

Mages create annullities much as they do Demesnes: one must have mastered at least one of his ruling Arcana, and any mages assisting him with their own soul stones must have no less than one dot in their own. Scale for

an annullity depends on the number of soul stones used in the same way as for a Demesne. Using soul stones from multiple Paths increases the number of Arcana that suffer a penalty but not the penalty for any single Arcanum. Similar to Demesnes, the mages must acquire a number of successes equal to the number of soul stones used, and they must also extend the Duration lest the spell fade away.

Imbuing a Soul Stone

Weaving spells into a thing forged of one's own soul is made easier by the tool's natural sympathy for the mage's Path. Though a heavy price to pay for the purpose, the stone makes an effective receptacle for imbued magic. First, the Prime magic required to make the target accept permanent enchantment is easier: increase the Duration factors (either prolonged or advanced prolongation) by two steps automatically (the default Duration is thus 12 hours or two days, respectively). Second, the soul stone holds and channels spells appropriate to its type exceptionally well. Any spells imbued into a soul stone that share its Path's ruling Arcana add one die to any rolls necessary to activate them.

Example: *Esther, an Obrimos, desires an enchanted staff that lets her call down the godly fury of heaven on her foes. Moreover, since she intends to make the staff a signature tool, she feels it should truly be an extension of her self. After creating the soul stone in the desired shape, she begins the enchantment.*

With Prime 4, she casts the Prime 3 spell "Imbue Item." Because she is imbuing her own soul stone, she adds two Duration factors to the spell automatically. As a result, she only needs to devote three successes to the Duration of "Imbue Item" to make it indefinite. She then imbues Prime 3 "Celestial Fire" at the advanced level of an adept, so that it will inflict lethal damage. For good measure, she adds Prime 3 "Disguise Resonance" as a persistent effect. Whether or not Esther relinquishes control over the item is up to her.

As long as the soul stone remains imbued, Esther will be able to invoke "Celestial Fire" at a dice pool of Gnosis + 4 (the advanced spell's ranking) + 1 (Path bonus). This bonus does not affect "Disguise Resonance," because it is a persistent effect and its Potency was set during the imbuement. If Esther had decided to imbue the staff with Mind 3 "Psychic Assault" instead, the dice pool would be Gnosis + 3, with no Path bonus.

Only a soul stone's creator gains these advantages when imbuing a soul stone, though anyone can benefit from them afterwards. Turning someone else's soul stone into a permanently Imbued Item can be useful for other reasons, but there is no inherent edge to the act.

As in the example above, it is a common practice for disciples of Prime to cast "Disguise Resonance" on their soul stones for long terms, in order to conceal them from any who might do them harm.

Dedicated Soul

Imbuing is not the only advantageous use of one's soul stone. A mage may use her soul stone as a focus for her sympathy to her Watchtower. As long as the mage performs the ceremony to dedicate it, she may use it as a Path tool to reduce the threat of a Paradox.

When a mage uses a dedicated soul stone during the course of casting a vulgar spell, she reduces the Paradox roll by one die. This would be no more useful than a typical dedicated tool, but for one thing: a soul stone's sympathy is so strong that it may work at range. As long as the mage invokes the soul stone in some way while casting the spell, she may use the stone's benefit even if it is a short distance away. Maximum range for this effect is short, about equal to that of a minor Demesne — one or two rooms. The usefulness of this application is obvious. Only the great effort necessary to create one and dedicate one, and the great danger inherent in having a portion of one's soul outside of her body, counter this clear advantage.

Dispelling Vulgarity

By channeling a spell through his own soul stone, a mage can change the aspect of a single casting from vulgar to covert. She must spend an instant action before actually casting the spell focusing her will through it. This comes after the turn in which the mage builds power using Atlantean speech, should she choose to do so. Using a soul stone for this purpose only affects spells based entirely on the Ruling Arcana of the soul stone's Path, and costs a point of Willpower to invoke. This can only be done once per day per soul stone, and brings the risk of temporarily "burning out" the stone. Right after the affected spell is cast, roll the stone's owner's current Gnosis. A failure means the stone is temporarily inert; its special properties are suppressed for the next day (24 hours). This means that the stone can't be put to any other use (making a Demesne, serving as a magical tool, etc.) within that time. If a dramatic failure results, the stone is inert until the owner spends one point of Willpower to stir the stone, after which it will be inert for the next 24 hours and then work normally.

The Soul of Another

Any invocation of these powers, which require that a mage be holding the soul stone of another, alerts that stone's creator, with few exceptions. The mage may not

know how his soul stone has been used, but he knows it has, and he can mentally tick off one favor owed.

Patterns of Soul

Legacies are a matter of soul. With proper tutelage, a mage can work his soul's subtle substance as a master artisan works a block of fine ash or marble. As a mage increases in might and further shapes her soul, she changes the Patterns that Masters of Prime and other creatures able to inspect a mage's soul see within her. She also changes the appearance, if only slightly, of any soul stones she may have made.

The marks left by learning a Legacy are indelible, but they begin faintly. Not until a mage achieves her second Attainment can another mage make out the blueprint of her power. From that point on, a mage with the know-how can examine her soul stone and make an unwilling tutor of her.

In order to learn a Legacy from another mage's soul stone, the bearer must be able to scrutinize it with the Prime 1 "Supernal Vision" and must have the proper Gnosis as for any given level of attainment as though he were creating his own Legacy. He makes an extended roll of his Intelligence + Prime, with one day between rolls, and must achieve a number of successes equal to the Gnosis he needs for the attainment — four, six or eight.

With this method, why ever learn a Legacy the more common way? First, masters of a Legacy resent having their knowledge stolen. Requesting initiation is more diplomatic than stealing it, and a mage who is offended by the act will most likely bring her significant resources to bear against the thieving student. Further, learning a Legacy directly enables a student to begin earlier, without first achieving four dots of Gnosis. Finally, the Legacy is harder to learn. While there is no tithing of earned experience, the mage must spend 10 experience points per Attainment. This may be more or less than a mage would spend otherwise, but it is still costly.

Each attempt (not necessarily successful) to learn a Legacy in this way counts as the use of an official favor.

Empowered Dispellations

The soul of each mage carries in it a portion of his Supernal Realm, and each Realm has its strongest — and weakest — higher laws. Holding in hand a soul stone with affinity to any given Realm makes it easier for the mage to unravel the magic most foreign to that Realm. A mage who wields a soul stone during the act of counterspelling or dispelling a casting that involves that stone's Inferior Arcanum adds one die to the attempt. Additionally, wielding another's soul stone when trying to counterspell or dispel *that* mage's magic adds three dice. Only the latter use of this power counts as one of the three favors.

Mastering the Tapestry

Soul stones, just like mages, represent living sympathy with the Supernal World. And just as a mage uses her own sympathy to master those Arcana that come most naturally to her Path, she may use the soul stone of another mage to more easily master other Arcana. With part of a soul that walked a different Path in hand, she can draw an understanding of that Path's Ruling Arcana through it.

Doing so is a rare art, but those who practice it meditate with the soul stone for at least a full day. She must succeed in a meditation task (per the rules for "Meditation" in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 51). After this period, she may study the stone for clues to the Realm the stone represents, allowing her to exceed the dot-rank limitations of her own Path's Ruling, Common and Inferior Arcana, as if she were learning from a mage of the Path associated with that Realm. (See "Drawing Down New Realms," p. 132 in **Mage: The Awakening**.)

Should the mage lose possession of the soul stone, not just leaving its presence for a short while but actually allowing it to be stolen or lost, she must re-attune the stone before she can continue to use it in this manner.

Some texts and ancient masters whisper that there is a method for more perfectly stealing another soul's Path. By dissolving the soul stone and extracting its sympathy, the mage may bind herself to more than one Watchtower permanently. True or not, the suggestion is daunting to some and supremely tempting to others.

Soul Stone Soup

Tremere liches require souls in order to maintain their stolen lives. Sleeper souls are the easiest to get and most abundant, but, sadly, they are they least sustaining. Awakened souls, so much deeper and more meaningful, can keep one of the Tremere alive for much longer but are harder to catch.

Every once in a while, a Tremere lich finds himself in the fortunate possession of a mage's soul stone. While not nearly as effective as taking an entire Awakened soul, the soul stone of a mage is somewhat nicer to behold and can provide life for a short time:

Tremere's Age	Soul Stone Sustenance
1—50	Six months
51—75	One month
76—100	One week
100+	One day

To reap this benefit, the Tremere must destroy the stone and eat a tiny portion of it.

Of course, there are crueler, more *interesting* things a Tremere can do with a soul stone.

Targeting Spells

Having a piece of the target's soul in hand makes it easier to pick her out of a crowd (add +1 die to any Wits + Composure rolls to find her), and lending that affinity to one's spell makes it harder for her to avoid. When casting an aimed spell at her, using her soul stone reduces any benefit she derives from Defense by one die. This use of another mage's soul stone does not count toward the three favors.

Sympathy

Having a soul stone in hand naturally gives one mage an Intimate sympathetic connection with another. Even after being removed, the bit of soul continues to shift and change along with the soul that spawned it, and there are few more meaningful bonds.

But by using a soul stone for a spell *in conjunction* with any other object that provides sympathy, a mage can improve the sympathy her magic has with its creator. Because the soul stone still holds some resonance with the mage not unlike that of his true name, use of a soul stone in a spell fills the same role as knowing that name. Should she *also* know the target's true name, using the soul stone confers no benefit.

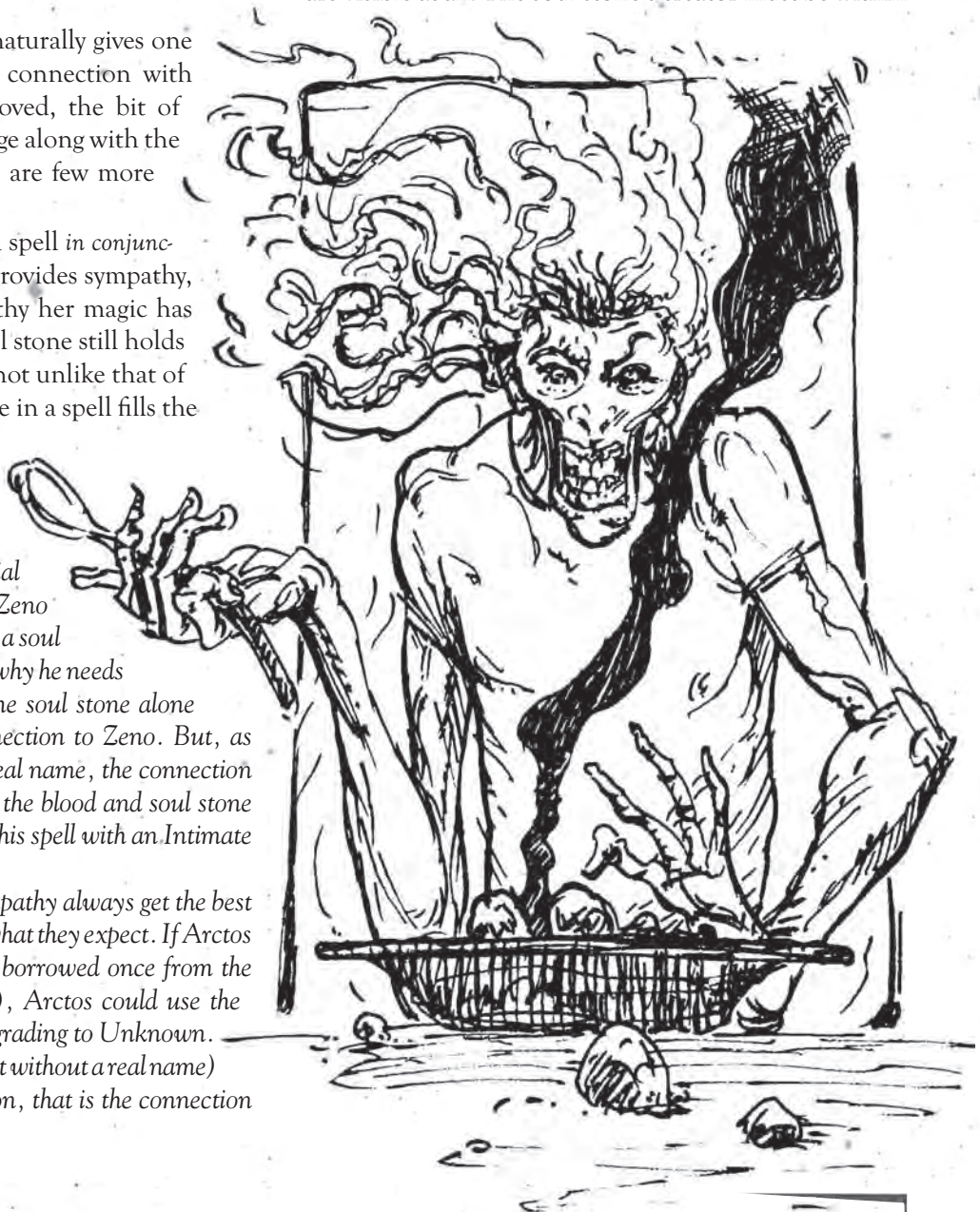
Example: *Arctos has a small phial of blood that allows him to target Zeno sympathetically. He also possesses a soul stone of Zeno's (incidentally, and why he needs to contact the mage). Blood or the soul stone alone would give him an Intimate connection to Zeno. But, as Arctos still doesn't know Zeno's real name, the connection worsens to Acquainted. By using the blood and soul stone together, Arctos can actually cast his spell with an Intimate connection.*

Mages using soul stones for sympathy always get the best sympathy possible, even if it's not what they expect. If Arctos were using a book that Zeno had borrowed once from the library (Encountered connection), Arctos could use the soul stone to prevent that from degrading to Unknown. Since using the soul stone alone (but without a real name) provides an Acquainted connection, that is the connection that Arctos gets instead.

Using a soul stone for sympathy does not count as a favor, and the target mage doesn't get any especial warning of the sympathetic magic.

Weakness of the Soul

Damage to the soul is difficult to heal. Thankfully, it is also difficult to cause. Forging one's soul into removable pieces tends to make such things easier. Holding the soul stone of an opponent allows a mage to translate a physically harmful effect into the realm of mind and soul. Instead of damaging his target's body, he can target the Willpower of the soul stone's creator by spending one Mana. Any magical attack can be so affected, from the natural-seeming Mind 3 "Psychic Assault" to the electrical damage from Forces 2 "Influence Electricity." Such attacks appear normal but somewhat ghostly, when they are visible at all. The soul stone's creator must be within



perceptual range or else the attacker needs to cast his spell sympathetically (the stone provides a connection, as described earlier). The attacking spell is resisted as normal, and each success on the attack consumes one of the target's Willpower points. After reducing the target to 0 Willpower, there is no further effect.

Borrowed Power

Should a mage know how, she can borrow the power of a soul stone's creator. For a brief duration, she acts as though her Gnosis or one of her Arcana (never both) were that of the mage who created the soul stone. This is not always to her benefit. Wiser mages investigate whether the creators of their stones were masters or apprentices of the 10 Arcana and how far they had advanced along the path to power before utilizing this aspect of a soul stone.

The mage can only transpose the Arcanum rating or Gnosis Trait for the construction of a single Imago, meaning that only one instant or extended casting is affected. Using a soul stone in this way requires the mage to perform a brief ritual before casting. It takes a single instant action before casting an instant spell, or a half-hour ceremony before each roll of an extended casting. In either case, this action comes *after* the mage builds power using High Speech, if she chooses to do so.

Borrowing a deeper understanding of an Arcanum allows the mage to more effectively enact his rotes, or to cast improvised spells that he could not otherwise invoke. Calling down the higher realms with a mightier mage's Gnosis gives him the ability to cast more powerful improvised magic or reduce the time between rolls for extended spells, but also increases the risk of a Paradox. Of course, a mage who borrows a Trait with fewer dots than he has naturally could easily sabotage his own spell. (Still, some mages do this to hide their own resonance, making the spell seem, to anyone scrutinizing it, as if it were cast by the mage whose trait was borrowed.)

Soul Stones of the Dead

Perhaps the souls of dead mages have gone on to their Supernal Realms. Perhaps the souls are being sorted in the mysterious Underworld. Whatever the case, the soul stone of a dead mage (colloquially called a "dead soul stone") has certain facets that are not found in living stones. Too many mages don't take the time to imagine that such a powerful object could do other things — the soul stones of dead mages end up becoming trophies of the powerful, sitting on mantels or inside glass cases.

Some mages are more experimental. Though any sort of magical innovation is potentially dangerous, that rarely hinders those Awakened inclined to that sort of behavior. The uses that follow have all been discovered and used by mages across the world — at least that's what they *say*. Despite the rumors, the conditions to make them work are not quite so certain.

Drawing Up the Dead

Several different occult texts, hidden deep within Athenaeums or private libraries, discuss the possibility of reviving dead mages. *Evoking Atlantis* and *Being a Treatise on Consulting with Lost Masters* are two of a small number that focus on soul stones, left behind by the deceased, as a method for returning them from the graves.

Despite differences in description, the two books agree that the soul of a mage long gone from the Fallen World can be revived, if only temporarily, and made to serve.

Of those who claim to have done it, some mages insist that the soul stone of the deceased must be anointed with the blood of one who shares the dead mage's bloodline, appearance or possibly resonance, depending on whom you ask. Others suggest that there are less violent, more moral methods for awakening the speck of consciousness that remains in a soul stone, involving the deceased's favored habits, locations and the like.

The result of a proper ritual is this: the soul stone's creator appears before the mage. The creator appears almost as he did in life, but is a shade in the Twilight, with his nimbus in full bloom. Use the rules for ghost mages found on p. 327 of **Mage: The Awakening** to create this creature. Even though the visible nimbus fades after a moment, the dead mage always appears touched by his Supernal Realm — Obrimos have an air of power about them, while a Moros may stink of the grave. Though the summoner and the dead may not share a language, they can communicate through High Speech.

Once summoned, the ghost remains until he completes one service, as set by his summoner. Sample services include training the mage in order to advance one of her Arcana, a Skill or a Skill Specialty, revelation of all the deceased knows on a single subject (to a maximum of one day's instruction if the subject matter has particular length) and performing a specific task for the summoner. There is no Consilium to which the dead mage can appeal if a given task is impossible. Instead, if the deceased understands that he cannot complete the task, he simply explains that and refuses it.

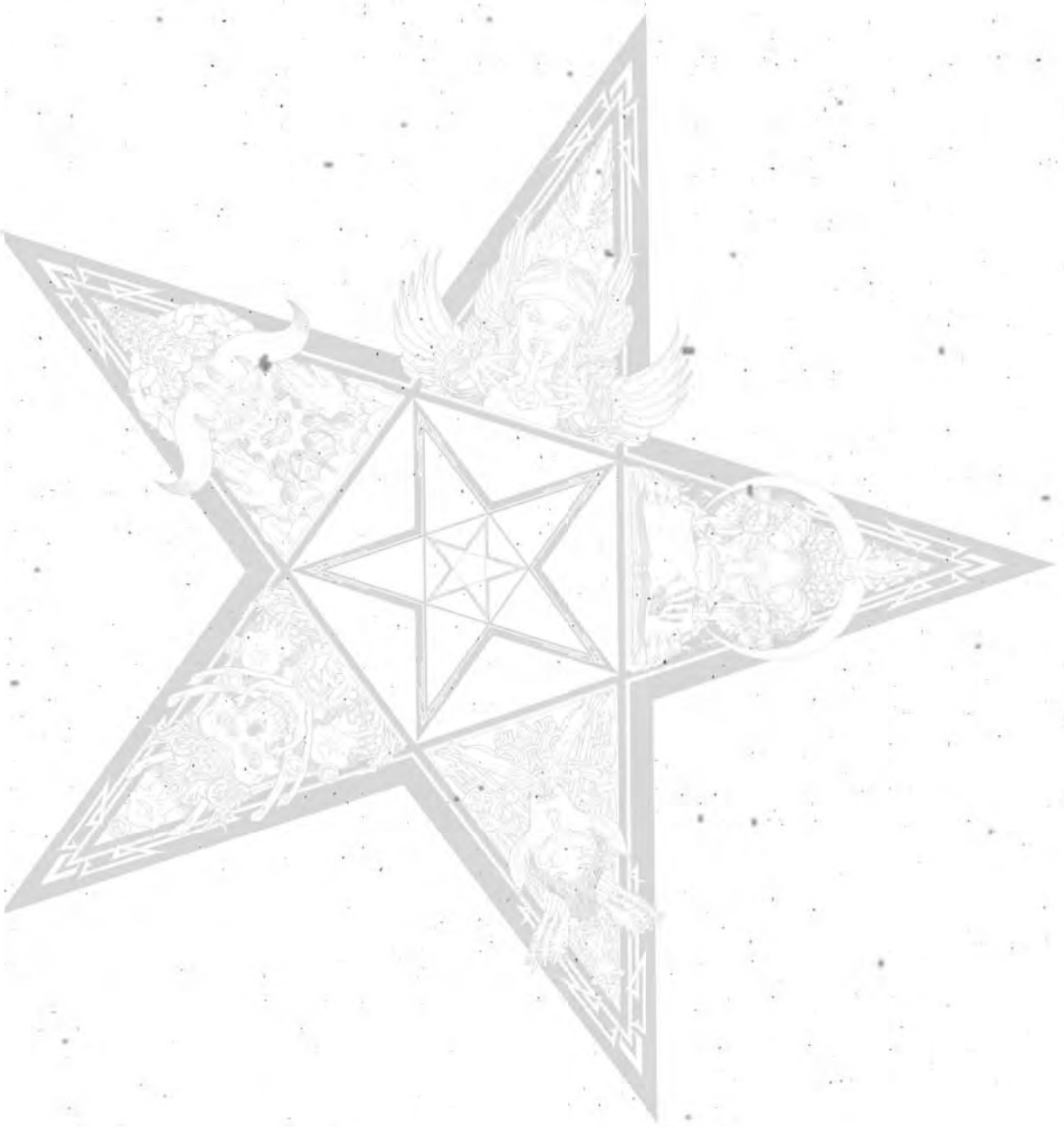
If the stone's creator left behind a ghost upon his demise, the summoned shade comes from its location, even if it exceeds the range of its anchors, and does not reappear there until its task is complete. Finding the soul stone left behind by a troublesome ghost mage can be a

powerful key to eliminating it. One might even command the spirit to divulge its history, Ban or other weaknesses, forcing it to assist in its defeat.

Though he retains his old, living personality, the shade has no aspirations of his own other than to retrieve his extant soul stone and return to sleep forever. Typically, both summoned and summoner understand that after performing a third task, the living mage owes the dead his soul stone (by destroying it), so that the deceased may rest in peace.

Temporal Sympathy

Soul stones serve as excellent source of temporal sympathy (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 259) for when the stone's creator was alive. It acts as an effective Acquainted sympathy, unless the dead mage was particularly closely involved in the relevant events, in which case it serves as Known sympathy. Using a soul stone in this way doesn't count as summoning or tasking the dead mage, though it can only be used once a day.




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Chapter Five: The Way of Void — Greater Secrets

Zeno was Nowhere again.

This time, Nowhere's purplish sky hosted bright-plumed birds. They looked like peacocks and screamed like dying men. Nowhere had brass and silver orreries instead of trees, but the birds could pierce the apparatuses with their beaks. They sucked something red and reeking from the glittering, filigreed planets.

"It's like any other chantry: a hated dream." The speaker was a small, black-haired boy. "It reflects Supernal majesty, but mocks it with imperfection." The accent was Spanish, but the boy wore Bedouin robes.

"No time for that, Xaphan." Agitated, Zeno stamped the red grass with a boot, but bowed to the boy. "This isn't philosophy. It's business."

"If you have the quintessence, it's both, enfante," said the archmage. "If I twist the skein of her poor fate for you, will she be the same woman, or a doppelganger that made a more convenient choice than the original?"

"I'd say turning Scelestus is a fuck of a lot more than a matter of convenience." He handed Xaphan a small, velvet bag. The boy opened it; jewels tumbled into his little brown palm.

"All tears from children who were orphaned by Supernal power," he said, "shaped like gems by an Art that does not change them to ice, diamond, glass or any other thing. Though solid, they are still salt, water and sorrow. I do not have this Mystery, much less the dedication to find the needed unfortunates."

Zeno glanced at his hands and said nothing.

"They are perfect for this spell, enfante Zeno! All shed for dreams dashed, wasted on the dead and beloved. Magic reaps this otherwise wasted quintessences for the sake of your lover. May I ask how you got them?"

"No, you may not," said Zeno. "And your spell will guarantee that I'll never know, either, because it will have never happened. Get on with it."

As Xaphan cast his circle, Zeno remembered a sobbing girl. Her father burned at Zeno's hands and cried like the bird from Nowhere.

Because it will have never happened, he thought, and for now, the thought was a jail for his guilt.

BECAUSE IT WILL HAVE NEVER HAPPENED

One is the Magus: twain His forces; four His weapons. These are the seven Spirits of Unrighteousness; seven vultures of evil. This is the art and craft of the Magus but glamour. How shall He destroy Himself?
— Aleister Crowley, *Liber B vel Magi*

The fifth element is that of void, also called ether or sometimes spirit. The void indicates that which is mysterious and not fully known, or that which is not materially "real," such as ephemera. Mages associated it with secrets and archmastery, but also with the Abyss, for that dire aspect of reality cannot be truly known, only experienced.

Storyteller Characters and Spellcasting

The characters of **Mage: The Awakening** are capable of immense versatility in their magic. Given some time to prepare, mages can set up powerful spells with coded triggers, cloak themselves in magical armor strong enough to repel bullets and see their enemies coming from miles — or weeks — away. A player in a **Mage** chronicle, of course, has the luxury of coping only with the myriad of possible spells available to one character: hers. The Storyteller, however, has the responsibility of dealing with the supporting cast. If that cast includes mages, even a single cabal, then the Storyteller has to contend with all of the magical knowledge that these characters bring to any given situation.

Maintaining the characters as the stars of the chronicle in the face of other, more powerful and knowledgeable mages is difficult. If the cabal is dealing with a threat that might affect all of the Awakened in the area, why can't the cabal members go to the Consilium higher-ups for help? If the cabal is dealing with hostile spirits (for instance), and the Hierarch is a powerful Thyrsus, as in Boston (see p. 388 of **Mage: The Awakening**), why can't *he* deal with the ephemeral threat? Isn't it his job?

Likewise, dealing with multiple mages as a Storyteller is a logistical challenge. A fight involving a troupe-controlled cabal of five mages and a Storyteller-controlled cabal of five mages requires the Storyteller keeping track of who has cast vulgar spells recently (and how many), what spells the Storyteller characters have already cast and whether those spells exceed active spell and spell tolerance limits, what spells Storyteller characters could conceivably cast versus which rotes they know and what effects Paradoxes will have upon the Storyteller characters' magic. If the mages have Merit-related allies among the Awakened, the Storyteller might find himself in the position of rolling dice against himself.

This essay seeks to make dealing with Storyteller-controlled mages, in combat and otherwise, a little easier.

An Ounce of Prevention

Before commencing with advice on how to manage complicated situations, let's briefly consider how to avoid them. Following are some suggestions on how to structure your chronicle so that the players' characters are the most important characters, but can still enjoy contact with the Awakened.

Know the Awakened Community

Take some time before the chronicle begins and decide what condition the Consilium is in. How many orders are represented? Who are the key figures? What is their history? What are the prominent cabals? Is the troupe's cabal seen as a significant factor? Indeed, consider how the characters are viewed in Awakened society. You don't need to draw up game traits for every single mage in the area, but you should know how the power structure works and at what point the powers that be are going to become involved with the players' characters (that is, how much trouble do they have to cause before the Consilium takes note?).

You don't have to do this by yourself, of course. If the characters have Mentors, Allies, Contacts or Retainers among the Awakened, ask the players to detail these people and even to add a "layer" in mage society. For instance, a player of a Mysterium character might decide that her character's mentor is a high-ranking member of the order. As Storyteller, you might ask this player to think up names and Paths of three or four other Mysterium mages (whether members of the mentor's cabal or not) and their relationship with the mentor.

While considering *who* is in the area, consider also *what they do*. It's best to do this after the players have already created their characters and made some decisions about the cabal's primary interest and niche in the Consilium. If, for instance, the cabal has a vested interest in ghosts and the undead, it might be wise to stipulate that no other mages in the area have much information or desire to pursue this type of creature. That means that when a threat involving the undead arises, the Consilium can

legitimately turn to the characters because they're known for "being into this sort of thing." Another option, of course, is to deliberately include mages with similar interests but different motivations or theories about those interests, in the spirit of healthy (or bitter) competition among the Awakened.

Don't Box Yourself In

Don't feel compelled to include every type of mage when populating the local Consilium. If the Adamantine Arrow doesn't have a presence in the area, that's fine (but do consider *why* this might be the case — have the local mages learned to solve their problems without violence? Did the order make some terrible mistake in the past and wind up banned from the area?). This extends to Paths, and even to Arcana. Maybe, just due to a fluke, there are no Mastigos in the area. This means that Space and Mind spells are harder to come by, because there aren't as many mages able to teach them. (Again, of course, this doesn't have to be a fluke. It might be that the area in which the chronicle is set doesn't resonate with Pandemonium at all, and mages Awakening here don't find their way to the Kingdom of Nightmares. This can make for interesting stories, especially if the troupe's cabal includes a Mastigos, but it all goes back to the principle of deciding ahead of time what the magical landscape is like and why.)

The point of leaving niches open like this is to give the players' characters something to aspire to, and to leave some "holes" in the expertise of the Consilium's members. If the Ruling Council includes one mage of each Path and each order, and those mages are Masters of their respective Ruling Arcana, what possible threat could arise (from outside the Consilium, anyway) that they couldn't handle?

Even if the area boasts a large number of mages, and all of the Paths and orders are represented, that doesn't mean that they get along or are willing to help. If the only members of the Mysterium belong to the same cabal and tightly restrict new members to the order locally, that cabal might be in possession of information that another cabal in the area needs. As Storyteller, you can make sure that this information is of a type that the troupe's cabal might be able to supply, uncover or obtain from the Mysterium cabal.

Screw the Man!

Naturally, the players might decide to create characters who couldn't care less about the Consilium and its members. The players might wish to face the World of Darkness alone, not relying on more powerful mages to do their work for them or even to provide advice. From a certain perspective, this attitude makes your job as Storyteller much easier; you won't have to worry about why the powerful Mastigos Sentinel can't simply find the characters' enemies for them if the characters ask, and you won't have the headache of running a combat involving several powerful mages. Of course, a loner cabal faces its share of challenges (learning rotes, for one, is going to be difficult), but these are bigger problems for the players than for you.

It's still worth giving a thought to the Consilium, though, for two reasons. First, the cabal might cross a line someday and need to face discipline from the Consilium, which creates the opportunity for some superb stories involving themes of freedom, responsibility and authority. Second, the players might well change their minds and become less cocksure once they find out what's waiting in the darkness for them.

Mages as Supporting Characters

The advice in this section pertains to mages as supporting characters. It's assumed, of course, that these characters will be used in a **Mage** chronicle, but the principles set forth here apply just as much if you choose to use the Awakened as antagonists, allies or foils in other **World of Darkness** games as well.

Motivations

Before deciding on how many dots in Arcana a supporting character has, consider what role the character is to play in the chronicle and his motivations for doing so. An enemy might be motivated by a desire for revenge or by loyalty to a cause that happens to conflict with the players' characters, and either of those agendas will color his tactics and thus his magic. Character motivation should provide a road map to what kind of rotes that character knows, and what sorts of spells he typically casts. A mage who has a death wish might not bother with an Armor spell. That makes him easier to harm, but also means he has more active spell space for magical enhancement. A character who wants to help the characters but not to lead them by the nose might become practiced in casting spells on other mages, enabling the players' characters to benefit from Mage Sight and armor that they normally wouldn't.

Motivation should also color interaction between the Storyteller characters and the players' characters. A Storyteller-controlled mage who fears the cabal, for whatever reason, probably isn't willing to enter combat

with the players' characters and might well have set up an escape route ahead of time. A mage who lusts for a member of the cabal might focus his magic on making himself more appealing to her.

Decide on possible avenues of development for Storyteller characters, too, based on their roles in the chronicle and the motivations you've chosen for them. A character who is teetering on the brink of ruin and insanity, but who presents a fairly composed face when dealing with others, might actually be salvageable if the players' characters say or do the right things. Alternately, they might push him over the edge if they act irresponsibly or insensitively. Decide on a role in the chronicle for your characters, but don't make those roles so rigid that the players can't change them. The chronicle is supposed to be about the troupe's characters and their decisions and actions, after all, so make sure you take those actions into account when making choices about the supporting cast.

Knowledge

One of the most frustrating Storyteller character archetypes is the knowledgeable figure who won't share his knowledge despite having clear motivation to do so. This archetype shows up in fantasy literature, but in literature the reader usually understands why the person cannot come clean. In a roleplaying game, though, the players almost always approach a situation with problem-solving in mind (which doesn't mean, by the way, that they can't also approach a situation from their characters' perspectives) and characters who should help but *don't* are annoying. Wise old mages who drop cryptic hints, appear and disappear at convenient moments, wink, simper or use phrases such as "that's not for you to know — yet" probably fit into this archetype.

One way to avoid Storyteller-controlled mages falling into this trap is to decide ahead of time what the character knows and what he doesn't. If a player-controlled character's mentor doesn't know anything about the Scelesti, he can't tell her about them, no matter how much he might want to (he can, however, recommend other avenues of investigation, but this just allows you to send the players deeper into the plot of the chronicle). Likewise, nothing says that a Storyteller character doesn't have information that is misleading or downright incorrect, or might know what the character seeks but deliberately chooses to mislead her. This plays into motivation, again. Before taking a mage's advice as gospel truth, the seeker would be well-advised to be sure that she can trust the mage.

Morality

One of the most important things to decide upon for supporting characters is Wisdom. Even if you don't create full game Traits for the character, decide upon what level of Wisdom the character has risen (or fallen) to over the course of the chronicle. Starting **Mage** characters have Wisdom 7, and this is a good "default" rating for young mages or those Awakened who actively work to maintain their Wisdom. But the World of Darkness wears other mages down, and it's not uncommon to see powerful wizards who have become jaded, immoral and downright mad over their magical careers.

This isn't to say that you should arbitrarily assign a mage a low Wisdom score just because he's old or powerful, but rather that you should consider that mage's history and decide whether he has managed to maintain his Wisdom (and his sanity, which is a separate issue) throughout. A mage of the Adamantine Arrow might have slain foes in combat during the course of defending himself and his cabal. As such, it's reasonable to think that he might have lost some Wisdom, but might also have regained it through diligence and careful attention to his moral development. Likewise, such a mage isn't likely to exhibit derangements (but then again, if he becomes too enamored of himself and his ideals he might manifest Narcissism or even Megalomania).

A mage of the Guardians of the Veil, on the other hand, might also have killed in pursuit of her order's goals, but the deaths she inflicts come through poison and espionage rather than face-to-face combat. It's a safe bet that she hasn't weathered the experience as well, and her Wisdom score might be low as a result. Alternately, her Wisdom might not have fallen very far, but she might be coping with some serious derangements as a result of the acts she cannot reconcile with herself.

Wisdom score helps to gauge a mage's threshold of action. A mage with a low Wisdom score is capable of taking rash action without immediate effect (the truth is, of course, that such action has *already* affected her), and so if the characters run afoul of such a mage she might respond with detrimental or deadly magic without just provocation. She might also suggest courses of action that the characters themselves might find repugnant, and might be quite persuasive in convincing them that, for example, magical coercion is a perfectly reasonable tactic to employ. In a story with themes of temptation and responsibility (very appropriate for **Mage** in general), the characters might learn the hard way that just because a more powerful mage endorses an action doesn't make it morally sound.

A mage with a high Wisdom rating doesn't have to be a kindly saint, however. A mage with such a strong moral foundation might be humble and helpful, or she might be insufferably self-righteous. Likewise, she might not want to force her behavioral standards on others, but might well not offer to help cabals that don't adhere to certain codes of conduct.

In short, a mage's Wisdom rating provides a convenient yardstick for her behavior, and to the degree to which she is a threat to the cabal. Take a moment when designing supporting mages to decide upon their Wisdom and any derangements they might have accrued.

Description, Portrayal and Nimbus

In the write-ups for the Storyteller characters in **Mage: The Awakening** (and in other **World of Darkness** sourcebooks, for that matter) you'll notice sections for "Description" and "Storytelling Hints." It's well worth your time to prepare something similar for the supporting cast of your **Mage** chronicle. Consider the following questions when designing these characters:

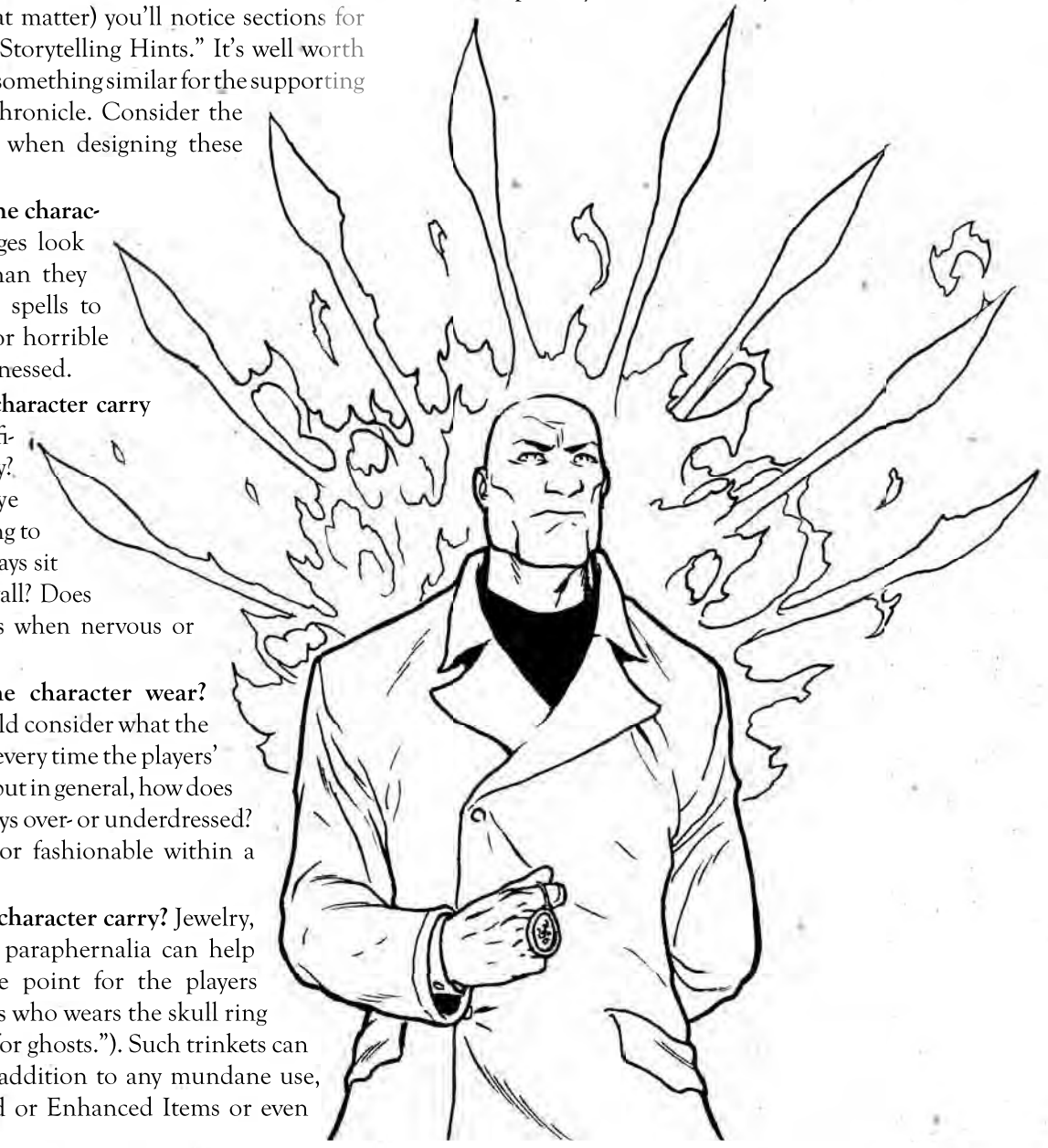
• **How old does the character look?** Many mages look older or younger than they actually are, due to spells to keep them healthy or horrible things they have witnessed.

• **How does the character carry herself?** Is she confident? Meek? Haughty? Does she make eye contact when speaking to others? Does she always sit with her back to a wall? Does she wring her hands when nervous or excited?

• **What does the character wear?** Obviously, you should consider what the character is wearing every time the players' characters meet her, but in general, how does she dress? Is she always over- or underdressed? Is she fashionable, or fashionable within a given subculture?

• **What does the character carry?** Jewelry, weapons and other paraphernalia can help serve as a reference point for the players ("Oh, it's that Moros who wears the skull ring — we'd better check for ghosts."). Such trinkets can be magical tools in addition to any mundane use, or might be Imbued or Enhanced Items or even Artifacts. These sorts of items can simply be part of a Storyteller character's makeup, or can be MacGuffins for the story itself.

• **What does the character's nimbus look like?** This is an important detail, because the mage's nimbus should give a clue to her magical style, Virtue, Vice and psychological makeup. An attractive, helpful Acanthus whose nimbus seems to turn angles oblique and shift perspective might be a fair-weather friend, abandoning the characters on a whim. A Moros mage might be gruff and belligerent, but if his nimbus makes him seem carved from solid rock, the characters might see him as steadfast and trustworthy. The nimbus also helps the players (and you, if you have many Storyteller characters to keep track of) keep one mage straight from another. This is especially true if the Storyteller characters have



the same Path, order or Arcana aptitudes — remembering which Obrimos has a dragon-like nimbus and which one has a corona of blue-white light can be a good way to differentiate them.

• **What spells does the character usually have active?** Most mages cast an armor spell at the beginning of the day, but some cast other spells when dealing with the Awakened, such as Mage Sight or (if applicable) "First Impressions." If the character commonly casts such spells, decide what they are and perhaps the spell's Potency (should the characters decide, for whatever reason, to counter it). Remember that mages can only have a certain number of spells active, and can only tolerate a number of spells on their own bodies before their Patterns start to suffer. If a mage is willing to suffer such disruption in order to have more spells placed upon her, she might be a force to reckon with or she might be spread so thin that she can barely concentrate. Either makes a strong statement about the character.

• **Other details:** Scars, tics, habits and other such foibles provide handles for players to grasp onto when identifying supporting characters. These details also provide methods for you to engineer double-bluffs, impersonations and deceptions, of course. Don't drown players in details when describing supporting characters, but do give the players enough information that they see the character you're portraying as a person rather than a "Storyteller character." If you do that, the players will be all the more affected by that character's eventual role in the story, be it death, betrayal or heroic sacrifice.

Spellcasting for Supporting Characters

Of course, the most challenging aspect of handling Storyteller-controlled mages is spellcasting. It might be possible to memorize every spell possible for a given mage, but this isn't desirable or necessary. This section presents some advice for managing such characters in a dramatically appropriate manner, without stealing the player-controlled characters' thunder.

Thinking Ahead

When designing supporting mages for a chronicle, you can save yourself considerable headache in play by doing a little work ahead of time. If you know that the mages are going to play a direct role in the chronicle (that is, they are going to be with the characters in situations that will require casting spells, especially combat), it's a good idea to nail down their full game Traits. You can, if you wish, go to the trouble of deciding how much experience the character should have and spending the points, but it's much quicker to simply give the character the dots and Traits you feel necessary.

If you want to do a minimum of work on the character, you can decide on Arcana, Gnosis, Wisdom and derived Traits (Willpower, Health, Initiative and the like). If it becomes necessary to "stat" the character in full later, you can reverse engineer the rest of his Traits from what you already have (if a character has a Willpower rating of 7, for instance, you know his Resolve + Composure total). Likewise, if you have to make up a character and choose dice pools on the fly, jot down how many dice you roll so that you can later write up the character's Traits and remain consistent.

Decide what rotes the character knows, and write down the appropriate dice pools, including bonuses derived from order Specialties. It's also a good idea to write down the page numbers where the rotes can be found, just in case a question about their usage comes up during play. Note that Banishers, apostates and mages who, for whatever reason, don't have much contact with their orders don't tend to learn rotes often, so keep this in mind when deciding how many rotes a mage knows.

Probably more important than rotes, though, are the spells that the mage prefers to cast. Death 3, for example, is capable of a wide variety of spells useful for attacking and intimidating other mages. A Necromancer who prefers "Quicken Corpse," though, is a different sort of spellcaster than one who makes common use of "Summon Shadows." Make a quick list of the spells the mage is likely to use and in what situations, and be sure to note which ones are vulgar. You can even note what *kind* of magic the mage prefers to use. Does she see magic as a tool to ferret out information? Spells that allow for Mage Sight and other Unveiling or Knowing Practices are appropriate. If she sees magic as a method of manipulation, then spells of Weaving or Patterning are more likely. Such preferences are just that, though — just because a mage prefers to use her magic in a given way doesn't mean that she has any difficulty "switching gears" when necessary. If anything, she's more likely to know rotes that correspond to her preferences, but there are no game penalties associated with using magic in unfamiliar ways.

How much Mana a character has when he encounters the troupe's cabal is another consideration. The rule of thumb, of course, is that he has Mana equal to his Wisdom, but you should put some thought into this decision, too. A mage with access to a Hallow (or who is willing to perform blood sacrifices) has a greater supply of Mana than one who doesn't, and thus might be more willing to spend that Mana. An apostate with no home of his own, though, probably doesn't have any to spare and thus won't spend it unless forced to do so. Keep in mind that in order

to cast improvised spells outside of his Ruling Arcana, a mage *needs* to spend Mana. Therefore, it's not exactly fair to the players if your Storyteller characters start whipping off improvised spells left and right beyond their capacity to do so. Beyond any notion of "playing fair," though, if you have to keep track of an antagonist's magical resources, it forces you to come up with some kind of strategy for his magic — and a mage who fights with a strategy, rather than standing there throwing "Telekinetic Strikes," is an interesting and believable opponent.

Finally, have a look at the rules for adding Duration, Targets and other factors to spells and decide whether the Storyteller characters have the expertise to employ these factors. Figure out how many dice the character's magic pools would lose if she wished to affect all of the troupe's characters with a spell, since this is probably the most likely factor. If the character often makes use of a spell but has more dots in the Arcanum than necessary to cast it, check and see if she can use advanced factors. For instance, a mage with Life 2 can cast "Transform Base Life" to change plants into stinging insects, a nicely disturbing and cinematic (if vulgar) spell. If the mage has Life 3, however, she can do this at sensory range, and that makes a great deal of difference in the spell's utility. This is the sort of thing that you'll find helpful to have written down, rather than having to flip through the **Mage** book during an exciting scene.

Paradoxes

One of the main reasons that knowing a mage's Wisdom rating is important, as mentioned above, is that lower Wisdom ratings make Paradoxes more severe. In the case of Bedlam Paradoxes, a low Wisdom rating makes it more likely that the madness will be contagious. Many Paradoxes last longer when visited upon mages with low Wisdom ratings, and a Paradox in the same vicinity as the players' characters can have disastrous effects on them.

But working out the exact effects of a Paradox can take several rolls, and, if the Storyteller isn't familiar with the intricacies of the system, can bog the game down. If you are comfortable enough with the Paradox system that you can handle it on the fly, feel free to do so. Below, however, as some tips for making Paradox adjudication for Storyteller characters run more smoothly:

• **Mitigation:** Storyteller characters can spend Mana to mitigate Paradox, and you might assume that if a Storyteller character does so, the Paradox roll automatically fails. If the mage continues casting vulgar magic, of course, she'll probably either run out of Mana or the Paradox dice poll will climb beyond her ability to mitigate it, but you can probably dodge the first one or two Paradoxes this way.

• **Lie:** If having a Paradox would derail the scene, just roll the dice behind a screen or otherwise out of sight and say that the roll failed. Paradox dice pools aren't usually too large anyway, so it's perfectly feasible that no successes come up.

• **Backlash:** Keeping track of a mage's Health means bookkeeping of a different sort, but it's much easier than worrying about what sort of Paradox occurs, how long it lasts and whether the troupe's characters are affected.

• **Plan ahead:** Look over the Paradox rules and decide on possible results for Bedlam, Anomaly and Branding for Storyteller characters before the story begins. Jot them down with the notes you've made about the appropriate character, and check them off when you've used them. Havoc, of course, varies from instance to instance and thus is hard to plan for, and Manifestation is such a significant event that this effect should probably become the focus of the story, at least for a short time, if it occurs.

• **Avoid vulgar magic:** It might seem obvious, but the simplest way to avoid having to deal with Paradoxes for Storyteller characters is to avoid having them cast vulgar spells, or do so very infrequently. As mentioned, the first Paradox roll for a given character in a scene is usually easy enough to mitigate with Mana, and unless the character continues to use such magic having to deal with Paradoxes probably won't become an issue. Mages with any degree of training or experience understand the risks that Paradox poses, and they aren't in a hurry to place themselves in harm's way.

• **Make Paradoxes work for you:** Paradoxes can actually be a tremendous boon for the Storyteller. A well-placed Bedlam can force a previously tight-lipped mage into revealing an important plot point. An Anomaly can actually tip the odds in the characters' favor, enhancing their magic. And, of course, a Havoc Paradox can have nearly *any* effect, allowing it to be a kind of panacea for a struggling plotline. Don't be afraid to decide what kind of a Paradox a supporting mage suffers and to what degree, regardless of what the dice say, if you can make it benefit the story.

Other Concerns

Finally, a few general notes about spellcasting for Storyteller characters:

• **Counterspells:** All mages have a limited ability to counter others' spells, provided they know the Arcana that their opponents are using (and that their opponents use vulgar magic). If a player's character uses a vulgar spell and the Storyteller character recognizes it, the defending character might attempt to counter it, but consider whether this move is a) appropriate to the character

and b) tactically sound. If the mage is member of cabal facing off against the players' characters (or, worse, a lone character), then countering the spell is probably a good move. If the Storyteller character is alone, however, she sacrifices her only action for a turn in doing so. Depending on the spell, it might be better just to let the opponent cast.

If a Storyteller character has Prime 2, she's capable of using both the "Dispel Magic" and the "Counterspell Prime" spells, and thus (in theory) capable of countering any spell the players' characters might use, and dispelling at least some of them (those for which she knows the requisite Arcana). This includes unweaving pre-existing spells such as armor, in which case it's important to know the Potency of such spells. It's a good idea to have the players write down how many successes they rolled when their characters cast such spells, just in case.

• **Fallibility:** It can be tempting when portraying Storyteller characters to have them act as though they know everything that the Storyteller knows, but this is a mistake and a disservice to the players. The Storyteller characters aren't omniscient or infallible, and they can make mistakes in judgment just as the players' characters can. In fact, if the Storyteller is dealing with the problem of powerful supporting characters overshadowing the troupe's characters, she would do well to remember this. Mages are prone to hubris and arrogance, and an error made because the mage was impatient or egotistical is both appropriate to the game and serves as a good object lesson to the players.

• **Making actions count:** Each character only gets one action in a turn. A Storyteller character surrounded by an entire cabal should probably flee or negotiate. Most people don't stand and fight to the death, and neither should your supporting characters, for the most part. A given character might actually charge headlong into bloody combat, but that in itself should give the characters pause — either this mage is insane, under outside control or honestly thinks she can win, and until the cabal figures out which of these is the truth, it probably shouldn't take hasty action.

The Many Faces of Paradox

Despite many, many efforts in the times since the Fall to analyze and categorize Paradoxes into some sort of pattern that can predict what type will occur and when, no mage has been able to claim an unequivocal success. The unpredictable nature of the beast that is a Paradox defeats them all.

Mages have sought correlations in all possible places, examining the effects of the time of day, the planetary alignments, galactic turning, temperature, relative distance to Hallows and Demesnes, the number of mages in proximity and the affected willworker's age, disposition, health, Path and order. Throughout history, several mages each century discover some sort of design in what defines a Paradox given certain conditions. Each time, no one else can reproduce the data.

There is a special kind of Mad mage among those who believe that such a pattern can be found. These mages deliberately invoke Paradoxes or drive other mages to do so in order to study the "phenomenon." Such mages typically have short lifespans.

Others choose to study the nature of each Paradox itself, rather than try to apply reason to the random. What does it mean, they ask, when a Paradox strikes a mage? There are almost as many answers to that question as there are mages. Most pick up one of the various answers that have a following, but for every mage who accepts another's theory, there's another who rejects it and forms her own opinion.

Below, along with examples of the variegated Paradoxes, are various interpretations on what causes a Paradox, and how. There may be no true answer to the question.

Optional Rule: To the Limit

There is a way for mages to step beyond the limits of their understanding, reaching beyond what they know to accomplish what even they can only imagine. Using this rule puts greater powers in the hands of the players (and Storyteller mages, for that matter) but only at the risk of great danger.

By guessing at what the Supernal World might hold for him, the mage grasps blindly and pulls down great tangles of magic in order to get his will done. In the end, he may be able to sort out the many higher laws, contradictory and barely within his comprehension, to release his desired effect. Or maybe not.

Using this rule, a player may once per scene opt to have his mage cast an improvised spell of one dot ranking higher that he could otherwise cast. The mage must have at least one dot in any Arcanum necessary for the spell. He uses a base spellcasting pool of his Gnosis + Arcanum (his personal rating, not the minimum needed to cast the spell) for his dice pool, because he can't have any rotes at that level.

Here are the catches: The spell is vulgar, even if it is normally covert. Also, the attempt adds three dice to the Paradox roll. Paradox dice can still be removed through mitigation and the use

of magical tools. Finally, it costs one Willpower point to cast a spell rated higher than the mage's normal comprehension allows.

Should the spell result in a Paradox (as it's likely to), determine the Paradox at the spell's dot ranking, not the character's personal ranking. Furthermore, determine its Duration as if the mage's Wisdom were reduced by one.

The result is that mages have access to about a fourth of the spells in the book from the very start. But using the most powerful of those is much more likely to drive them *really* mad or open the door for a powerful creature from the Abyss. A common use is to gain advanced prolongation Duration factors for a five-dot spell, a feat that normally requires the mage to know six dots.

Havoc

The simplest of Paradoxes, potentially common even among young mages, is Havoc. Externally, other mages can see the Paradox's effect: it changes the spell's target and, sometimes, completely reverses the intent of the spell.

To all appearances, the spell's final target develops at random. When the spell's effects change, on the other hand, an unknown will seems to guide the magic toward a result counter to the mage's original intent. Questions naturally arise among the Awakened because of this juxtaposition.

Many willworkers suggest that it is the Abyss personified, reaching into the Fallen World to twist a spell as it is released. This empty malevolence causes the Paradox. The Abyss doesn't care who suffers the spell's effects, but it reads the mage's desire and acts contrarily when the mage is weak enough to let it.



The idea that there is an Abyssal awareness, watching over the mages of the Fallen World with enough devilish perception to know what a mage meant and the ability to twist a spell completely around is — frightening. *Something* reads what the caster wants and bends his magic so it ails instead of aids, helps rather than hinders. Mages who accept this cosmology fight all the more against evoking Paradoxes, because the enemy is already so very strong. An already paranoid society grows more so, and insular, never knowing what is or isn't the Abyss looking in on them.

Mages who practice more self-honesty give less credence to an all-aware Abyss. To them, the others' irresponsibility prevents them from understanding the truth: their casting was flawed. A basic tenet of magic, oft overlooked, is that what the mage sees in his mind's eye — the Imago — happens. If the spell does something different, then *that is what the mage imagined*. It is a flaw in the caster's focus, not a twist in the spell, itself.

Awakened are, by nature, imaginative. They need that creativity, that flexibility of vision, to even believe that their will could become reality. But the human imagination is not known for its stability, and mages are all too human. Only their training allows them to focus their wills so dependably that they can make their whims truth. For most people, focusing on a single image long enough and clearly enough is difficult. This leads to the cause of Havoc: the imagination is a fluid thing, and a mage makes the mistake of letting his Imago slip. *What if*, he momentarily thinks, *I were to accidentally strike my friend?* Or, wondering which of his comrades he should heal might shift the image in his head.

Only the most self-disciplined and harsh mages insist on this interpretation of these Paradoxes. For the very reason that these mages prefer it — on whatever grounds, they prefer to blame themselves for their failures than any outside force — most other mages spurn it. It is hard to bear all the blame on one's own shoulders.

There is a middle ground, one held by a number of mages who are not comfortable with either extreme position. They know it is not impossible for even their well-trained minds to stumble, but they also know how to abort a flawed spell before it comes to fruition. Knowing that magic can only act out an Imago, they consider that the Abyss may prey on their own weaknesses for its Paradoxes. When a mage errs, letting his mind wander about the many available targets of a spell or allowing fear of a miscasting to color her imagination, the Abyss is distracting them. The ancient flaw of the Atlanteans returns as a flaw, overconfidence or ignorance or something other, in modern mages, such that they fail to notice their faulty Imagos and cast anyway.

In this case, it is not a malevolent and frighteningly competent Abyss affecting the course of cast magic. Instead, it is the mage's own fears — fear of a misplaced target, fear of a mistake in the spell or the common fear of a Paradox — that warp his Imago. If the Abyss does anything, it misleads the mage, making him believe his Imago is untarnished or simply distracting him from the truth. Mages who believe this, or one of its many variations, don't feel blameless. Tighter reins on their enlightened wills, greater confidence to defeat their fears or more humility to notice their deception could all have saved them grief. But at least they know that now.

Reversing a Spell

Ten Arcana and 13 Practices. Do the math, and it ends up that there's a hell of a lot of magic to be done. Which suggests in turn that there are many, many unpredictable Supernal occurrences that could hit a mage's blind side. In the interest of making life just a little bit more predictable (and survivable) for mages young and old, here are a few guidelines to what you can expect when Havoc does more than just pick a new face for your Imago — when Havoc reshapes the whole of your Imago.

Remain in Arcanum: Separate from what the mage is trying to accomplish, she knows what threads of the Tapestry she's tugging to get it done. A Paradox won't make her lash out with Telekinesis when she's trying to look at what happened yesterday, and won't degrade a pistol to nothing when she's trying to make it lucky.

Nothing You Couldn't Do: When an Adept of Time loses a Time 4 "Temporal Stutter" spell to Havoc, he knows he's in for a bad time. But at least the caster can be relatively certain that the reversed effect won't be anything as horrible as the Time 5 "Stop Time" spell. A Havoc spell doesn't get more powerful than anything the caster himself could do with that Arcanum. In this case, the Time 4 "Chronos' Curse" spell is a good template for what might happen to the caster.

Oppose the Intent, Not the Event: In order to have an effective Imago, the mage must keep the desired effect separate from anything else passing through her mind. Even her reasons for casting the spell do not enter into the crystal-clear image of what she makes happen. As a result, when the Imago loses integrity and warps into something different, it changes into an effect contrary to the mage's spell — but not an effect designed to make the mage's situation worse. There's a good chance that it will anyway, but the reversed spell doesn't have any particular skill at fighting the mage in the longer run.

Resistance: No mage sits still while an unknown spell settles around her Pattern. While it may not be obvious to all present that a spell has gone Havoc, the mages probably *will* know whether or not their friend was trying to cast a spell on them, as opposed to the common foe — or the nearby tree. Random targets innately resist being targeted by unknown magic, so almost every Havoc spell, even the most beneficial or benign, should be resisted in some fashion.

Stay on Target: Just a reminder, but the targets for a Havoc spell are only counted from among *valid* targets of the type in the spell's original Imago. When dealing with the Life Arcanum, for example, not all effects consider all life forms valid targets until the caster reaches a high enough mastery of that Arcanum. If the Havoc spell's final effect can't affect median or higher life, the random target is chosen from among all examples of base life within range. If a mage who cast the spell instead had Life 5, the Paradox would most likely consider all living things valid targets for its effects.

Example: *Ulman's cabalmate Sterling is, believe it or not, being dangled over a pit of acid by a Seer of the Throne who's watched too many Albert R. Broccoli flicks. Enraged and scared, Ulman casts a Forces 3 "Telekinetic Strike" at the Seer. Ulman's haste is his undoing, and a Paradox changes the spell's target and, as it happens, its effect.*

The Storyteller now works out what the Havoc spell should do. Since the original spell was a Forces effect, so is the new spell. The spell's intent was to harm the target, so the new spell will help the target. Looking at what the original spell does — telekinetically smacking someone — the Storyteller decides that the Havoc spell will steady the person with invisible forces, lending subtle pressures to help him keep his feet and balance. Considering it, the Storyteller concludes that such an effect is within the purview of Ulman's three dots in Forces. The only valid targets for the spell are Ulman, the Seer and Sterling.

Randomly selected as the spell's new target, Ulman gets to resist the spell's new effects as he realizes that he's completely lost control, and he doesn't know what's about to happen to him. The Storyteller decides that ripples in the air rush

toward the target, much like the original spell, then apply gentle forces to keep him balanced. Ulman may choose to subtract his own Defense from his subsequent spell roll — the wise thing to do, since he doesn't know that it has reversed itself, just that it's gone wrong. He also applies the one-die penalty for the single success on the Paradox roll. If his spell still succeeds, he gains a +1 die bonus to all attempts to balance or not get knocked down. Though the duration of "Telekinetic Strike" is lasting, the Storyteller decides the balancing effect will fade after five turns.

It's worth noting, as in the example above, that a Havoc spell is out of control, but doesn't have to be detrimental. The random target of a healing spell might be another ally, or Havoc might invert the spell into a degrading attack that randomly hits an enemy.

Bedlam

With the paranoid discrimination Awakened society levels upon the Mad, no wonder so many fear Bedlam. A mage who is unable to control himself or act with reason and Wisdom is nothing less than a menace, and Supernally powerful menaces must be stopped. Perhaps Bedlam is actually why the orders hate and fear the Mad so much. The orders are afraid that the next Paradox will put them in the same position, and they wonder how many Mad mages put down by the Pentacle were functional and sane just an hour or a day before.

How does casting a spell cause a mage to lose his mind? Many wave away the problem, blaming it on adverse presence of the Abyss and leaving it at that. But there's no solution there, no wisdom to be gained in an answer so plain as to be almost meaningless. Other mages seek to better themselves and their brethren by pondering the problem more deeply.

When a mage calls down one or more of the higher laws from the Supernal World, those hallowed powers must travel through the taint of the Abyss. Not truly sitting physically between the two worlds, it lies between them sympathetically, like a film of oil on the birdbath. Covert spells make not so much as a ripple, but anything vulgar is metaphysically large enough to drag a little of that yuck along with it. Sometimes a mage is skillful enough to finesse the spell through without much trouble, and sometimes really, really not.

That Abyssal taint sticks to the spell. As a result, the spell is harder to get off, and it probably goes haywire as a Havoc spell. Worse, the Abyss can slick off the spell and into the caster's mind. That's when a mage starts to go a little crazy — and the crazy sometimes rides along into other mages nearby.

Some mages consider that explanation something of a sophism. As some think of Havoc spells as Paradoxes caused entirely by the Abyss, they also like to think of Bedlam as an unavoidable occasional side effect of casting vulgar magic. Their philosophical opponents insist that a mage must accept more responsibility for a Paradox that he causes. Arguing for responsibility, this faction declares that Bedlam does not invent a psychological problem — it only builds on what is already there.

If the Abyss can take advantage of a mage's weakness to conceal a distorted or wavering Imago, then the next step up might be to amplify the ambiguities and contradictions in a mage's consciousness, or to quiet all but the most troubling thoughts. Some mages still insist that Bedlam has nothing to do with the Abyss, but is nothing more than a weak mind being disjointed by the stress of casting. They are less common than like-thinkers about Havoc. It's easier to see a mage losing control of the Imago and casting a wayward spell than it is to see a mage randomly losing her mind.

Studies that examine correlations between a mage's mental stresses and the forms of his Bedlam do show some connection between the two. An overproud mage might be prone to narcissism in his fits of Bedlam, or an inferiority complex as his pride breaks; a nervous one tends toward a phobia or suspicion. These are hardly hard-and-fast rules, but good guidelines to help you know what might be coming.

Optional Rule: Paradoxical Castings

For a more adversarial World of Darkness, you can make it a little more difficult for a mage to cast magic without fear of a Paradox. A mage's Path attunes the mage to one of the five Realms and two of the 10 Arcana. Her skill with those two Arcana are paramount, but she has a harder time mastering the other eight — one especially. As a result, she doesn't have the natural skill to merge those higher laws into the Fallen World without greater chance of error.

In short, a mage runs a greater risk of a Paradox when playing with the Inferior or Common Arcana of her Path. Here are a few variations to play with:

— Vulgar spells of her Inferior Arcanum add one die to all Paradox rolls.

— Casting a combined spell that includes anything other than her Ruling Arcana adds one die to the Paradox roll; such spells become vulgar if they are covert.

— Vulgar spells that require five dots in her Common Arcana add one die to Paradox; spells of three, four or five dots from her Inferior Arcanum do the same.

Using this rule does make Paradoxes more likely, but so would just adding one die to all Paradox rolls. This method will reinforce a mage's niche in the game by ensuring that she can more safely cast vulgar spells of her Path's Ruling Arcana than any mage of another Path. If that's not a positive result for you, but you're still interested in upping the number of Paradoxes, you should simply add a die to all Paradox rolls instead.

Anomaly

As nearly every text that discusses Anomalies notes, they are eminently unpredictable. The most common warning a young mage receives about Anomalies is that they might have some effect based on his Path realm. Or not.

One facet of Anomaly as a Paradox is that no right-minded mages can argue that there's no tinge of the Abyss in it. No mage has the power to break reality the ways that an Anomaly can. Or mages might, but it's incredibly difficult and often beyond the understanding of the mage who was supposed to have done it.

Whether mages insist that the Abyss flowed into the Fallen World with the spell or through the spell into the mage and her surroundings, no one really believes that the Abyss isn't there.

Not every Anomaly twists the world based on the spellcaster's Path, though many do. Other noted patterns follow.

Common Arcana

A mage's Path determines which are his Ruling Arcana and which is his Inferior, but of the remaining seven only the mage himself can determine which he'll choose to pursue. This simple alternate schema for Anomalies instead creates effects such as those suggested by Path realms (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 271–272) but determined by which of the mage's Common Arcana he has studied the most. When two Arcana vie for the highest ratings, multiple realms may contribute to the Anomaly's effect. The effects could instead depend on the Arcanum used to cast the spell.

Gnosis

• All spells cast in the area of the Anomaly suffer a penalty of –1 die.

• A mysterious force counterspells all spells cast in the area of the Anomaly with a dice pool of the invoker's Gnosis.

• Any mage in the area of the Anomaly has an effective Gnosis of one less than usual for all purposes, including improvised dice pools, Resistance and maximum Arcana ratings.

• Improvised magic dice pools in the area of the Anomaly lose three dice.

Vice

• Money and other forms of wealth within the area affected smolder, burn, tarnish or otherwise degrade (Greed).

• People look and act uglier, forming blemishes and rude habits that disappear slowly after they leave the area of the Anomaly (Lust).

• Living creatures must make Resolve + Composure rolls each turn in order to refrain from assaulting the nearest targets (Wrath).

• Buildings, equipment and other possessions in the area degrade quickly, losing one point of Durability every 10 minutes (Sloth).

• Every few turns, random inanimate objects turn into festering bundles of rotting meat (Gluttony).

Derangements

Anomalies caused by a mage who is suffering from a derangement, whether the product of Bedlam or natural instability, may display effects associated with those disorders. Sometimes this even occurs after the mage has worked through his derangement.

• Sentient creatures in the area act as though they were suffering from the same derangement as the mage.

• Living creatures develop hostility for the mage as a result of standing in the area of the Anomaly, which the creatures express any way they are apt. This is a lasting effect (paranoia).

• Objects begin to talk about their situations. "I gotta open, it's just what I do," says the door, while the potted plant mumbles about the watering can (vocalization).

• No one makes any decisions within the area of the Anomaly until it ends. In fact, decisions originally posed to those within the area affected remain undecided for a number of days equal to the mage's Gnosis (anxiety).

• Something (be it person or object) in the Anomaly becomes irresistibly attracted to something else, and begins to move toward it at a deliberate pace. the moving object or person cannot be stopped. Every few minutes, another such attraction develops, until the Paradox ends (fixation).

• The minds of any creatures nearby switch every few minutes. Human or animal, it doesn't matter. Any minds that leave the area of the Anomaly automatically change back at the end of the Paradox (multiple personality).

Branding

Not all Brandings affect the mage's appearance directly. Some color and taint only the things he touches. No matter Brandings they appear, though, they mark the mage.

Arcanum Dots	Brand
2	Hoar
3	Ill Touch
4	Scarred World
5	Hell's Choir

Hoar: The mage leaves behind a strange but subtle characteristic on things that she handles. Metallic things may feel cold and clammy for a few moments (Lust), people may have rumbling stomachs or look angry to others (Gluttony or Wrath) or things she touches just appear paler, less vivid than usual (Sloth). In addition, she has an uncanny nimbus.

Ill Touch: Things the mage touches develop more prominent and odd features. Grained wood darkens as if burned (Wrath or Lust), glass surfaces and mirrors crack or shatter (Envy, Greed) or she leaves imprints of her feet seared on concrete or stone surfaces as she walks (Pride). In addition, she has an uncanny nimbus. She suffers a –1 die penalty to Social rolls with Sleepers (except for Intimidation).

Scarred World: The mage harms the things she touches, something that is evident to any who care to notice. Everything she comes close to touching suffers searing pain, as by great heat, and objects blacken as if burned (Wrath or Envy; touch inflicts –1 wound penalty, but no actual wounds), things that she looks specifically at drain of all color and remain so for several hours (Greed or Gluttony), things that touch her move more slowly (Sloth; half Speed) or wind whips around her but never touches her (Pride). She suffers a –3 dice penalty to Social rolls (except for Intimidation).

Hell's Choir: Things around the mage break or deform in obviously demonic or fantastic ways. Objects near her take on her shape over the course of several turns, shattering to pieces several minutes after she leaves the area (Pride, Greed, Envy), inanimate objects that come in contact with her reduce to their original unworked forms (Sloth or Lust; glass becomes sand, paper becomes wood, most metals become several different elements) or many large, monstrous bite marks appear in things as she walks or stands by (Gluttony or Wrath). She suffers a –5 dice penalty to Social rolls (except for Intimidation).

Enchanted Items react differently to these effects. Sometimes, the items resist the Paradox's changes entirely, or the items may change temporarily but shift back after the Paradox's duration ends. What actually happens varies, but they are never permanently ruined.

These aren't necessarily the only other kind of Branding. Others might affect the mage's actions (when he tries to open a door, all nearby latches struggle to open themselves) or solely his voice and other sounds that he makes (caressing a lover's skin sounds like fingernails on chalkboards).

Manifestations

Every mage eventually invokes what is potentially the most troublesome of Paradoxes: an Abyssal Manifestation. Young mages may take the words of their elders seriously, taking great care over their use of vulgar magic, and in that way they avoid Paradoxes. But a life without suffering a serious Paradox eventually leads to carelessness, and the time comes when overconfidence takes its toll.

For this reason, some mentors temper their admonitions against loosing a Paradox. They hope to let their students make their own mistakes, at a time when the result will be a strong deterrent without being a true danger. Better to warp the world around you than release something nearly godlike from the Abyss.

The Abyss Inside

More so than perhaps any other type of Paradox, the existence of Manifestations leads to some interesting — or bizarre — theories. Among those who believe that a Paradox is an expression of the soul's inner conflict between expression and secrecy, the possibility that that self-flagellation could produce an entity commonly agreed to be from the Abyss raises questions.

When a mage punishes himself with this sort of Paradox, does he subconsciously open a doorway to the Abyss and pull the demon through? Few, if any, mages know enough about the Mysteries of the Abyss to perform such a feat. The suggestion that the capability is within one of the Awakened, though, is impressive. Or does the mage *create* the creature, again an enviable skill that few mages could wield even after years of study?

More mages wonder if the Abyss truly rests, metaphysically, between the Fallen World and the Supernal. The ability of a mage to punish himself by releasing one of these creatures into

the world suggests that the Abyss is closer to the souls of individuals than the majority of the Awaken believe. What if, some ask, it is not a fault with the *world* that makes magic difficult, but a problem with the *mages*? After all, the mages open the Fallen World to the Abyss, and through them the Abyssal entities enter the world. And the acamoth, most famed of the Abyssal choir, needs access to a mage's Oneiros before the acamoth can commune with its home — why so, if it is not where the Abyss lies? Perhaps finding true Wisdom will rid a mage of this affliction.

While these questions may never be answered, more than a few cabals are angered to be blamed for the very existence of the Abyss. In short, it's not a very popular theory, and the mages who hold to it vocally don't get invited to many parties.

Some sample entities from the Abyss are included here.

The Bookworm

The Bookworm is a brand of impling born of mages' lesser Manifestations. Each Bookworm believes itself to be completely unique in the world and the Abyss, and assumes a level of importance far above its actual Rank. The Bookworm rarely lives long enough to learn the truth.

When a Bookworm enters the Fallen World, the impling seeks out the nearest repository of books, writing and knowledge. Once there, the Bookworm takes up residence and begins playing jokes on those who come to visit. The impling delights in the loss of valuable information.



Bookworms appear as small, bulbous children with miscolored skin.

Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 1, Finesse 3, Resistance 2
Willpower: 3
Essence: 10 (10 max)
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 7
Size: 3
Corpus: 5
Influence: Knowledge 2
Numina: Fetter, Innocuous, Manifest (dice pool 4; the Bookworm can manifest its presence by throwing or ripping books, quills and pens, old scrolls or other recording devices)
Ban: Bookworms destroy old knowledge, not new. A Bookworm cannot harm a person or object anointed with ink until the ink dries.

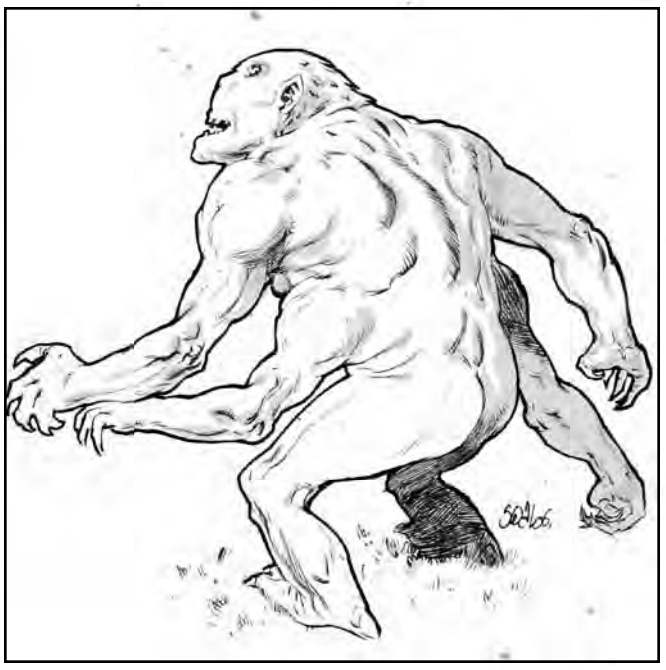
Balmreft, the Thief

Balmreft's first memory is of appearing to a traveling mage in the desert, long, long ago. Remaining in hiding, Balmreft accompanied the mage for months and denied him every necessary comfort. Water was tepid or an oasis was dry. Favored foods had turned sour. Balmreft's first summoner (or creator) died in unhappiness, and the creature's first task was successful.

Since then, he has served his purpose for many mages, ensuring that they do not receive that which they need to feel comfort. His is their continued pain, and he loves what is his.

Balmreft appears as a tall humanoid with strong legs and four strong arms. No clothing covers his ivory skin.

Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 6, Resistance 3
Willpower: 11
Essence: 20 (20 max)
Initiative: 9
Defense: 8
Speed: 15
Size: 5
Corpus: 8
Influence: Misery 4
Numina: Blast (dice pool 14; whatever the target most wants appears in a deadly or tainted form and strikes him from all sides), Harrow (dice pool 14),



Living Fetter (dice pool 14), Materialize (dice pool 14), Wilds Sense (dice pool 9), Destroy Need (dice pool 14; as Matter 4 "Annihilate Matter," usable only on an object his Living Fetter needs for soothing or comfort)

Ban: Balmreft cannot defend himself against attacks or spells from his Living Fetter.

Archmastery

In game terms, an archmaster (often called an archmage, Invisible Master or Magister Mundi, instead) has attained the sixth dot in an Arcanum. Mages call the superlative ranks (6+ dots) of the Arcana the Imperial Mysteries. The following section does *not* describe how to attain archmastery or detail the Imperial practices that drive Arcana of the sixth and higher ranks. The nature of the Invisible Masters is the subject of much speculation. The vast majority of Awakened only know myths and rumors about them.

Even so, there is enough consistency among the tales for lesser mages to compose a partial picture of the lives of the archmasters. We proceed from there to talk about the most important part of archmastery: how it affects lesser mages.

Archmaster Initiations

A hodgepodge of Atlantean memory and modern occult ritual has coalesced into a relatively stable pecking order that most mages use to gauge each other's magical skills and personal influence.

When a mage attains archmastery, she leaves it all behind. Social rank becomes a social game from a more innocent time. If an archmaster chooses to play, she almost always wins, but even the most politically ambitious Masters seem to walk away from it all once they learn Imperial secrets.

Why? Some of the Wise believe that would-be archmages must undergo a special ordeal to break a barrier separating a "lesser" Gnosis from that required to learn Imperial Arcana. Legends speak of a second soul journey or mystery play that allows the mage's very soul to be reborn. If this is true, the second journey must transform the mage as much as the one that Awakened her.

Kingdom of Secrets: Archmaster Agendas

Apprentices fantasize about archmastery. They dream of resurrecting the dead and twisting the tides of the earth. Disciples discover that fantasy alone is not enough; they need to study, train and investigate the hidden world. Adepts, tasting mastery in their future, look beyond it, because they want to surpass the masters who hold court above them.

And Masters? Masters fear to tread any farther. A wise master can sit at the pinnacle of Awakened society for decades. He knows that he is powerful where he stands — and knows that there are even greater powers that could destroy him if he takes a step too far. Folklore holds that the Invisible Masters warn such candidates about the risks of greater knowledge. Allegedly, Magisters Mundi have sometimes revealed something of their collective agenda on occasions when they have sent cabals on secret missions. This is why lesser mages know something of archmasters' responsibilities. If the Awakened were to break these stories down to common elements, they might reveal the following interests:

Study the Imperial Mysteries

Archmastered Arcana are called Imperial Mysteries in reference to the Imperium Mysterorium: mastery of oneself through mastery of magic. This is sometimes called the "Road of Gold," because it inspires magical works of unparalleled beauty — and horror. Instead of withdrawing into her own soul, the mage expresses her inner nature in ever-more ambitious spells. She reshapes the world in accord with her desires to better understand them, in the hope of attaining Supernal Ascension.

Similar to the lesser ranks of the Arcana, Imperial Mysteries include particular Practices. The type and scope of Imperial Practices are unknown to lesser mages, and

it is said that Invisible Masters suppress this information themselves. It is also rumored that the archmages can reach beyond even advanced Practices; grimoires hint of "transcendent" and "supreme" degrees of understanding. These practices are the root of legends where wizards enthrall armies or split mountains.

Some Awakened know that archmages cannot cast their mightiest spells without crucial components or rituals. The Imago and mortal will are not enough for some Imperial powers. These magical components, or *quintessences*, are not always within arm's reach. Invisible Masters often recruit cabals to acquire a particular quintessence, or to destroy one before it falls into the hands of an enemy.

Resist the Exarchs

The Exarchs have a thousand tools to use against Masters and their charges. The cults, government conspiracies and Seers of the Throne that bedevil them are just not as effective against a Magister Mundi's anonymity and raw power. Nevertheless, archmages have destroyed the Exarchs' plots before. Young mages have witnessed these conflagrations and counted themselves lucky to have survived. On the rare occasions that they have been able to question these archmasters, the responses seem to indicate that these actions are minor (if flashy) moves in a much greater game.

Archmasters hate and fear the Exarchs — and the Exarchs (if they still possess emotions at all) seem to return the favor with much more zeal than they have for the average mage. As individuals, archmages appear to be the personal enemies of particular Exarchs. This reason, more than any other, seems to explain why the Invisible Masters merit the title. As powerful as they are, even they cannot stand openly against the ministers of the Lie.

Lesser mages tell of the powerful entities that Exarchs are said to occasionally send down against the archmasters. These are called *ochemata* (singular: *ochema*): "soul sheathes" that are thought to be fragments of the Exarchs themselves. Ochemata are Astral entities, but most have the ability to manifest in the Material Realm. Unlike the simpler dream-creatures of Astral Space, ochemata have complex personalities and enough power to foil an archmaster. Some mages, however (usually Libertines), claim these creatures don't exist, that they're bogeymen used to maintain the myth of the Exarchs and keep lesser mages "in line."

The Tetrarchy and Solitaries

This section primarily concerns archmages of the Pentacle orders, but they aren't the only mages who learn the Imperial Mysteries.

Seers of the Throne have their Ministers and Tetrarchs. A Minister is one of the most powerful mages of the Fallen World — as powerful as a human (or more accurately, an entity that was *once* human) can ever become before Ascending to the Supernal Throne itself. Legends say that each Minister is the personal thrall of an Exarch: a living tool that channels enough temporal power to invisibly direct Fallen nations. Seers have mixed reactions to such legends. While few would willingly sacrifice their identity to attain the post, many have faith that each Minister has an infinite Supernal region to explore within the ruling Exarch's soul, or that one merely learns to perfect oneself to the point where one is very much *like* an Exarch, but not one with it. Ministers are constantly in danger from Pentacle archmages and ambitious subordinates, and are thus some of the best-guarded entities in Creation, attended by honor guards of lesser Seers, private armies and, allegedly, ochemata.

Below the Ministers, the Tetrarchs guide the global directions of each Ministry. Unlike their Pentacle counterparts, the Tetrarchs are fully integrated into Seer society. Conflicting rumors say that the title comes from a fourfold initiation scheme that begins with mastery and ends on the cusp of the Minister's seat, a numerological rule that says that each rank may only have one quarter of the members of that above it or that there are four elements of rule — each Tetrarch embodies one of them. It's possible that all of these are true answers, or lies that various Seer factions have sculpted into facts.

There are also archmages with no particular allegiance to the Pentacle or the Throne. These archmages are often devoted to an intensely personal interpretation of the Mysteries. They are enlightened, but even more difficult to communicate with than "normal" archmasters. Stories say that these individuals have redefined the laws of magic to suit their own method, but no proof exists.

Mercifully, arch-Banishers and Left-Handed mages are unheard of outside of a few paranoid legends. Most of the Wise believe that other archmages cooperate to destroy any who would learn the Imperial Mysteries. But what if the Wise are wrong?

Preserve the Pax Arcanum

Archmages transcend Awakened society. The laws of their lessers cannot really temper the power at their command. Nevertheless, tales of the archmasters reflect a certain consistency, as if they followed another code. They

rarely kill lesser wizards who stumble into their paths, or use naked force to accomplish their goals. If archmasters duel, they do so through lesser proxies, quiet magic or in forbidden realms. Their vulgar spells are the stuff of legends: powerful, terrifying and extremely rare.

Invisible Masters have spoken of an "understanding" that exists between them (and apparently, other entities). They've used many names for it, but the Mysterium has seen fit to call it the Pax Arcanum. Mystagogues who study the subject might break down the custom into the following three rules, but these are not formal categories among either themselves or the archmasters.

Deterrence

If an archmaster attempts to shake the Fallen World with vulgar Imperial magic, other archmasters are duty-bound to stop or destroy him. This duty sometimes extends to well-founded *rumors* that another archmage is planning to assault the world. This is not to say that such a feat would ever be easy in the first place (and the Lie may have an inherent resistance to such vast alterations). Invisible Masters may *quietly* meddle in Sleepers' lives, but may not do so in a fashion that might reveal the secrets of magic. It has been argued that these arrangements could never be stable, but even a lone, insane archmage must deal with enemies who routinely look into the future. The kind of madness that would inspire a scheme to twist the universe would seem to preclude the forethought needed to evade prophecy.

Subtle Government

The Invisible Masters seem to agree that none of their number should retain office and open lives among their inferiors. Even though anonymity is the most practical way for a Magister Mundi to pursue her interests, there is always the danger that one of them will take the helm of a Consilium and turn it into a sword against her enemies. Thus, archmasters do not openly identify themselves as such unless there is an overwhelming need, and oppose direct rule by their brethren. This rule is apparently not a hard and fast one, since Invisible Masters do in fact gather small armies of allies, but these groups are always hidden within Awakened society.

Property and Territory

Archmages claim various people, places and objects for themselves. An archmaster need only announce it to her equals. There are many cases in which an archmage claims the magical wonders that lesser mages find (and believe that *they* own). The archmage need not even physically collect it herself; the claim is usually enough to keep another archmaster from taking it. Similarly, archmasters claim lesser mages as agents and students, often without the subjects' knowledge. Some archmages magically mark their "property" or "territory" to avoid accidental conflict. This always includes the archmage's sanctum, including her chantry (see below). Using magic to affect another archmage's claim is considered to be an act of aggression, but the exact consequences are not known.

Guide Lesser Mages

Even though the archmasters conceal themselves from most mages, they still influence other sorcerers. The extent of this is a matter of intense debate. While a minority thinks that archmasters are the secret actors behind the significant events of Awakened history, most mages don't believe it. After all, how different would the Pentacle mages be from the Seers of the Throne if they were equally enslaved? Furthermore, the idea of a pervasive conspiracy seems to run counter to the basic urges of the Wise. Mages exalt their freedom and doubt they would unknowingly trade it for a new set of shackles.

According to most accounts, an archmage disguises his nature as much as possible. As a teacher, he is a true eccentric, given to forcing vision quests and grueling trials in return for his profound occult knowledge. As an ally, he is a canny, ruthless bargainer. He rarely levies threats; his magic is better used on rewards that no other mage could possibly provide. Archmasters do this for many reasons. They cultivate bonds that help them acquire what they need for their own projects and strengthen mages against the Exarchs. The latter benefit is not entirely generous; the more dangerous the "common" mage is, the less time the Exarchs will have to oppose the archmasters' wills.

Ascension

Without fail, every archmage wishes to transform herself into some greater being, forever free of the Lie. Invisible Masters study magic and bend lesser destinies to this end. This Ascension is an enigma — the Mystery of Mysteries — and is always a factor in their myriad plots. An Ascended mage is at peace with his desires and may enter the Realms Supernal. They say that the Abyss has no power over him.

A famous grimoire says that there are 84,000 roads to Supernal Ascension, but only one will lead any single mage back to the true reality. Archmages taste enlightenment more keenly than the less talented, but rarely seem to be truly closer to attaining their goal. Many archmasters favor the so-called Road of Gold, where they bend the cosmos to act in harmony with their own souls. Other legendary Roads of Ascension aim for godhood or true immortality. Some test a seeker's psyche beyond Pandemonium's worst nightmares.

Of course, power will tell. Mages do not indulge each others' whims easily, so the archmasters' powerful magic is an integral part of their ability to hold themselves apart from other Awakened. The Imperial Mysteries beyond mastery are these potent powers. Archmages do not openly display them too often, but when they do, they can leave unbelievable changes or incredible devastation behind — evidence that they are more than a collection of hermits.

Lesser mages do not know exactly what powers Imperial Arcana represent. They do not even have formal names for Imperial Practices. Perhaps these were codified at the zenith of Atlantis; if so, the knowledge has been lost, save for a few stories of dubious provenance.

Rumored Powers

Legends and hearsay have trickled down to the rest of the Awakened about Imperial spells. It is said that some of the Invisible Masters' allies serve them in exchange for magical services that require Imperial ability. These mythic spells include:

Agelessness and Immortality

Some archmages are said to be centuries old. Stories tell of spells that send the mage's soul into a succession of bodies, grant eternal youth or fix him between life and death. True immortality is said to be either a prerequisite or one benefit of Supernal Ascension. These spells come with legends of brutal sacrifices, in which the archmage hides his heart outside his body or steals powerful souls to survive. Members of the Tremere Legacy believe in these legends — they themselves are proof of their accuracy. The search for a spell that frees liches from the corruption of their souls is a temptation for nearly all Tremere, and some have fallen under the sway of archmasters who promise it.

Impossible Wonders

Sleeper and Awakened myths speak of the strange and wondrous things Imperial Mysteries can create. Objects such as solid lightning, crystallized dragon's fire and the preserved footfalls of cats figure in these stories. Some of these legendary items are sought after for their power. The Welsh blade Caladbolg (later called Excalibur) was said to be forged from lightning and able to cleave anything in twain. Other items are enigmas that archmages create to explore a particular Arcanum, or quintessences they create to assist an ally.

Resurrection of the Dead

One rumor that seduces potential servants is that an Imperial spell may bring the dead back to true life. Tales say that the archmaster must travel to the Underworld and steal the soul back from the gods that are rumored to dwell there, but there are variations that also put the quest in Stygia or the Abyss. Some spells of legend guide a soul's reincarnation, so that a future individual remembers his past life. Tales that frame the spell in religious terms say that the mage must be a saint or messiah, and that resurrection of the dead is only available to the truly enlightened.

Dynamic Creation

Many mages can cast spells of an indefinite Duration, but archmasters are said to be able to set in motion dynamic processes that grow, change and react to their environment. Most of these stories involve living or lifelike entities, but a few involve magical objects. Some Temple Guardians (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 328–329) are thought to arise from such spells. Archmages of legend create fertile species, supernatural creatures that pass their blessings (and banes) to successors and wondrous items whose powers grow and change with the owner.

Supernal Travel and Summoning

Most importantly, archmasters are said to be able to travel to the Realms Supernal, and call down their inhabitants: the angels, devils and gods that inhabit the true reality. Even in myth, such visits are temporary and fraught with danger. Ochemata and Abyssal nightmares are said to guard the Supernal Realms. A Magister Mundi travels there to obtain spiritual insights, Supernal Artifacts and perhaps even instructions from the Oracles. Less optimistic tales say that archmages may only climb a little higher up their Watchtowers in a journey that mirrors their original Awakenings.

As for the beings that an Invisible Master might call: these are said to be more than mere spirits, infused with unparalleled dominion over the Arcana of their homes, but so strange and self-willed that regardless of magical might, the summoner risks his soul.

Storytelling Imperial Magic

How do you tell stories involving Imperial Arcana without solid rules? First of all, assume than an archmage can cast far more powerful versions of standard spells, without many of their in-built limitations. For example, Imperial Time spells might be able to permanently alter a target's history. Imperial Forces spells could manipulate nuclear energy.

Secondly, an archmage might be able to cast spells that ignore some of the supposedly inviolate "laws" of magic. Examples include the ability to fundamentally alter a supernatural template or alter Paradoxes.

Most importantly, every Imperial spell should be a part of a coherent story that involves weaker mages. Archmasters don't fling off world-altering spells on a whim. Exarchs, other archmages and threats unknown to the average willworker prevent them from destroying the core assumptions of the World of Darkness. If you run a crossover game, this is especially important to note, since you might be tempted to use Invisible Masters to affect all vampires or werewolves. It's likely that these beings have patrons and representatives that are just as powerful as an archmage. Otherwise, the World of Darkness would have a far different secret history.

Of course, the setting is ultimately yours. Ignore what you like, but consider the consequences carefully!

Scale and Paradoxes

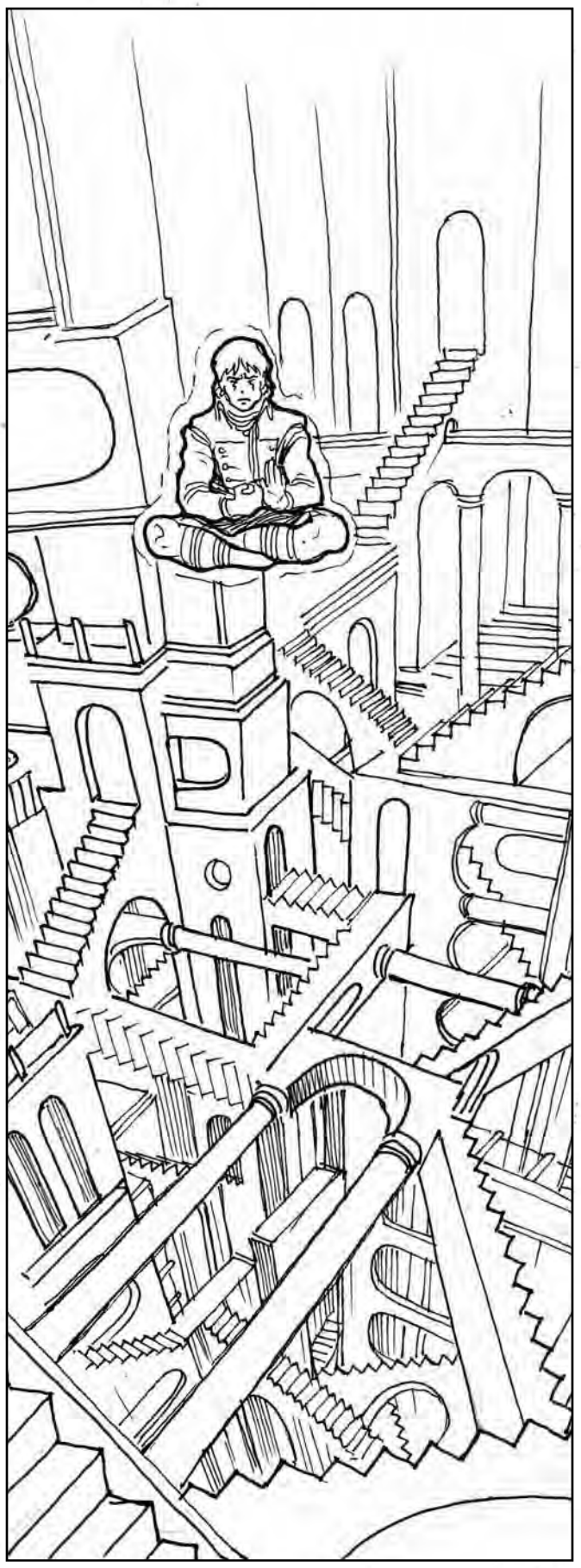
Archmages can cast incredibly powerful spells, but the risks balance out the benefits. Many legendary spells do not feature particular strange effects, but these effects are more potent and widespread than any lesser mage could hope to make them. Accordingly, the same stories describe devastating Paradoxes: prison realms cut off from the rest of the cosmos, angry gods and enough destruction to sink islands and rouse volcanoes.

Imperial magic is notorious for its physical scale (affecting entire cities or regions) and persistence (lasting centuries or more), but subtle spells are said to have the greatest scope. Mages sometimes postulate that various oddities in the Fallen World arose when an Invisible Master casts a potent but quiet spell. Storytellers can find inspirations for such events in the core **World of Darkness** series, including **Mysterious Places** and **Antagonists**. Mages know that supernatural enigmas help their quest for wisdom. Are these phenomena subtle lessons left by the archmasters themselves?

Chantries

Archmages seek well-protected sanctums. When the Material Realm becomes too coarse a tapestry upon which to weave their wills, they seek an alternative. These are the Invisible Masters' chantries.

A chantry is a sanctum that exists outside of the Material Realm, usually within a sub-realm created solely by magic. Chantries are said to reflect the souls of their creators to such an extent that archmasters do not normally invite outsiders. For a lesser mage, a visit to a chantry is something akin to an out-of-body experience or alien abduction. Invisible Masters usually forcibly summon



their "guests" to both ensure attendance and prevent anyone from seeking the chantry out.

Depending on a Magister Mundi's temperament, the chantry can be a wonderland or nightmare. Archmages are said to be able to cast any spell here without invoking Paradoxes or offending rivals. Some abductees have undergone strange changes, such as shapeshifting or unbreakable psychic conditioning. The experience is never without a purpose, but the meaning is often difficult to decipher. Lesser mages sometimes consider chantry visits to be almost as important as their Awakening visions.

How are chantries made? The dominant theory is that is that they are products of some Imperial practice that shapes an Arcanum into a self-sustaining realm. Chantries likely require a special soul stone, a constant supply of Mana, or both.

True Names

Mages customarily take shadow names to confound sympathetic spells. But this kind of elementary precaution won't stop a powerful, determined enemy. Archmasters acquire a so-called True Name for extra protection. Of all the Imperial spells, True Names are perhaps the best known. Archmages sometimes give their agents temporary True Names to guard them during their missions, and a permanent True Name is a potent boon. As Invisible Masters have given other willworkers True Names in the past, this is one of the better documented Imperial spells. The Imago and Practice used are still unknown, but the True Name has several properties: It replaces the subject's birth name for the purpose of casting sympathetic spells (the birth name is no more potent than a shadow name), and no known spell can forcibly steal the True Name from the subject's mind or make her forget it. Regardless of who granted it, it the True Name is, by default, only known to its owner. A mage with a True Name may tell another mage what it is, but never does so lightly.

Mages theorize that a True Name rewrites the name on the recipient's Watchtower, but as archmages have reputedly given True Names to Sleepers, other supernatural entities and even objects, this does not appear to be a complete explanation.

Quintessences

Archmages have one limitation on their power that a few astute mages have managed to discover and record. While this limitation isn't exactly common knowledge, it is fundamental lore for all who study the Invisible Masters. This limitation is the necessity of the quintessence: the secret essence of every Imperial spell.

Every Imperial spell requires a unique quintessence. Each one is an object or entity that must be incorporated into the casting of the spell, whether as a tool, a sacrifice or just something that needs to be present during casting. The quintessence is not the target of the spell but a pre-condition for the spell's casting. Theories abound as to why archmages need quintessences; one of the most popular is that a Magister Mundi needs an especially strong conduit to the Realms Supernal. An archmage is said to discover the quintessence he needs by using a combination of meditation and research. The quintessence is a metaphysical link between the Truth and the Lie that is compatible with the spell's Imago. Most mages do not know whether a quintessence is consumed upon its use, or can be utilized several times.

Quintessences are usually very, very rare. Many of them are one of a kind; these often figure in Sleepers' superstitions. Whether an archmaster can create her own quintessence is unknown; there have been cases when archmasters have searched for things they might have been able to make themselves. Past possible quintessences have included the following:

People: A child born by caesarean during the new moon was once the target of an archmage's search. Others have included the seventh son of a particular lineage, an imprisoned serial killer and individual Sleepwalkers. These people often carry a strange fate with them or have supernatural gifts.

Other Entities: Invisible Masters have sent allies on quests for particular spirits, ghosts, werewolves, vampires, cryptids and other creatures. Some archmasters have asked for a rare specimen of a mundane animal, such as a spotless red heifer or a tiger without stripes. Legend has it that a Magister Mundi seeks one of the True Dragons of Atlantis to craft a spell that will renew the Celestial Ladder. Obviously, he hasn't succeeded yet.

Artifacts: In addition to items imbued with Supernal power, crafted things of all kinds have supposedly served as quintessences for particular spells. Stradivarius violins, Muramasa blades and Gutenberg Bibles are easier to acquire examples of such quintessences. Archmasters have also demanded Atlantean relics and even strange objects that exist deep in the Astral Reaches.

Materials: Uranium and orichalcum (alchemically perfected gold) have been used on several occasions. Archmages have sought bones, blood and tears from a variety of beings. Some of these have been Astral or Shadow spirits, leaving the problem of how to preserve them in the trek across realms. All kinds of exotic minerals and herbs have served as quintessences for specific spells.

Secrets: Sometimes, archmages do not demand people or objects, but obscure knowledge. This benefits mages of lesser rank, because they often find these secrets useful,

too. In game terms, secrets provide Arcane Experience. Other secrets have been surprisingly mundane, such as the password to a particular safe, the birth names of certain individuals or even the eye color of a figure on a painting.

Grim Sympathy: Abyssal Magic

The ever-widening oblivion that lies between the Fallen World and the Supernal is thought by most to be either an obstacle to magic or a consumptive apocalypse whose powers of negation grow every year. One expects that no mage could make friends with the Abyss; that dark chasm is why magic is so difficult to draw down in the first place.

Some mages, however, have learned a rarely spoken truth: they can let the Abyss into their magic, a little at a time, and modify their spells. This seems simple on the surface. The mage merely needs to concentrate her will, and as the magic leaves the Supernal and passes to the Fallen, she allows the Abyss to touch the spell, leaving its mark and color upon the casting.

That brush with the Abyss has a number of potential effects, most of which help a mage control Paradoxes (or, in some cases, redirect a Paradox's effects elsewhere). The reason behind this lies with the notion that humanity has unwilling sympathy with the Abyss. As mortal souls long to stare upon the glory of the Supernal, those souls become mired in the yawning void. Abyss touches all humanity and helps keep them Quiescent. When a mage performs magic but leaves a gash in the Tapestry, reality does not healthfully repair itself. No, human souls shudder, and the Abyss is drawn through that tear in the fabric and fixes it with rotten cloth. Each Sleeper, with his Abyssal sympathy, is a conduit for that tainted emptiness, that nihilistic negation. Hence, when a mage pulls some of the Abyss into her magic, she is creating within herself that very same sympathy that normally helps to unravel magic. Except here, the sympathy provides protection.

This protection always comes with a cost. This cost is never easy to pay, regardless of what a mage is told or believes. (Some surely believe that the cost outweighs the reward, but others believe that the painful initial price is of inimitable value.)

What follows are three ways of coloring (or discoloring) one's magic with the nothingness of the Abyss. Each way is a kind of path upon which a mage can choose to walk. Some paths are easier to leave than others, though such paths do not provide the same reward.

Define Your Terms

Mages do not truly agree on what the Abyss actually is. Its effects seem clear enough, but its identity is not so easy to discern. When a mage, be it a Storyteller character or a player's character, chooses to pledge any part of himself to the Abyss, it's important to know just what that mage believes about it.

Many accept that the Abyss is nothing. It is a nihilistic hole, cruel only in its purposelessness. The Abyss is far emptier than even the bleakness of space, for this is a vacuum empty not only of matter but of spirit and soul. Others suggest that, for all its emptiness, the Abyss is not entirely without substance. These mages say that unknowable entities dwell in that dark space, floating like gods or planets out in the oblivion. These arcane personalities subscribe to labyrinthine laws that are barely intelligible to the lesser human mind — but with the proper deference and ritual, a mage may gain the attention (and therefore, some of the power) of these timeless entities. Stranger theories about the Abyss abound, as well. Is it perhaps a dimension opposite of our own? Perhaps the Abyss is the soul of the first mage, rent apart by his own hubris and left hollow and hungry. Maybe there is no Abyss at all, and it is only a mage's own foolishness and self-hatred that truly colors magic and makes that Art so difficult and dangerous.

First Path: Befouling

Many mages begin drawing down the Abyss with the Befouling. This is the short and brutal method of allowing the Abyss into one's magic. Befouling requires no long-term pledge, no commitment to the void. With this, the mage chooses to touch her rote or spell with the Abyss one time only.

The strength of will necessary to find and grasp the Abyss enough to pull it into the magic is difficult — at least, the first time she tries it. The mage must succeed on a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll to attempt the concentration necessary to bring some of the Abyss into her Imago. If successful, she may bind the Abyss to her spell with a subtle sympathetic connection. She is actually remembering her own Quiescence, from before she Awakened, and bringing some of that feeling into her Imago. This roll is necessarily *only* the first time the character wishes to find the Abyss and touch her magic to it.

It's worth noting that mages don't just *do* this. Few mages are even aware of the possibility of tainting their magic thusly. Most are told (often by another Abyssal practitioner, or by a mentor as a word of caution) of the possibility and are tutored on how to remember their Quiescence; few learn it on their own. Occasionally a spellcaster of low Wisdom will stumble upon this possibility by herself, but this is uncommon.

Reward

A quick touch of the Abyss is almost like a kind of camouflage in the Fallen World. Because the void touches so much (including the souls of humankind), cloaking one's magic in the stuff helps ease its transition. Some mages think of it as a toll booth on a highway: pay the cost, and you're free to drive the main roads. What follows are the advantages given by coloring one's spell with the Abyss:

• **Paradox Attenuation:** If the mage's spell would have required a Paradox roll, the Abyss helps to lessen the possibility and effects of that Paradox. The Paradox roll benefits from a –2 penalty. The Abyss in this way works with the magic as opposed to against it.

• **Aggravated Damage:** If the spell is one that would normally cause damage, the mage can choose to instead deliver aggravated damage, regardless of his dot-ranking in the Arcanum. He must still spend the usual one Mana for aggravated damage. The Abyss is insidious; the emptiness of the void helps to magnify normal wounds.

• **Positive Feeling:** Connecting to the Abyss provides the mage with a quick glimpse into a powerful sympathy. It leaves the mage reeling and feeling surprisingly good. Mages experience different "good feelings" — some feel a frenetic rush, others feel overwhelmed with personal power. The feeling is never truly positive or altruistic, however. It never allows feelings of love to grow (lust, perhaps), and it certainly does not show the mage the error of her ways. Regardless of the feeling's exact nature, the mage regains a spent Willpower point (her total points cannot exceed her dots). This positive feeling lasts for an hour after the spell is cast.

Cost

Even the faintest brush with the Abyss comes with serious cost to the mage.

• **Debilitation:** One hour after the spell is cast, the positive feeling (above) expires and leaves the mage with deleterious physical effects. The effects are different depending on the primary Arcanum cast in that spell. Space or Time, for instance, may cause a terrible headache. Life might cause a mage to experience awful nosebleeds or vomiting. Matter and Mind may make her feel like the world is closing in on her. For the next 12-hour period, the mage suffers a –1 to *all* rolls. Of course, if she casts another spell touched by the Abyss, she can stave off this feeling (at least for an hour).

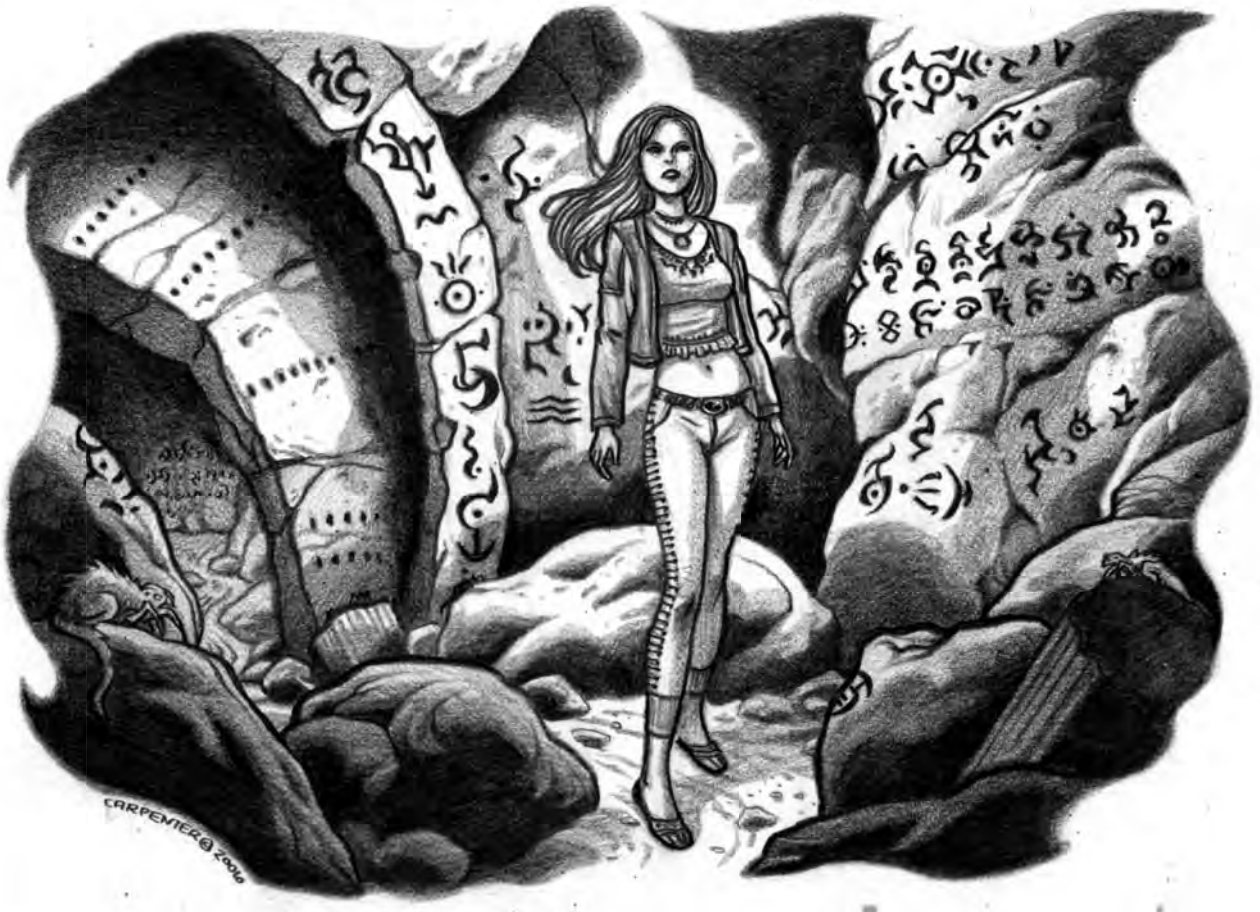
• **Infection:** The Abyss looks for further ways to infect the mage. *If* the mage takes any kind of damage over the next 12-hour period, that damage becomes automatically Resistant (see "Resistant Damage," p.124, **Mage: The Awakening**). The Abyss contaminates all wounds received during that time frame.

• **Addiction:** The taste of the Abyss is deceptively sweet. After that first time drawing down that oblivion, to do so again can be tempting. The more the mage gives into this urge, the harder it is to resist the next time. For up to one week after casting the spell touched with the Abyss, the mage must make a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll the first time she casts a spell in any scene (she does not need to roll for any other castings she performs within the same scene). Failing this roll means she *must* taint that spell with the void, gaining all the rewards of doing so and paying all the costs. Worse, every time she gives into this urge, resisting the next time becomes harder. For every time after the first, the mage suffers a cumulative –1 die penalty to the roll to resist. She can help to lessen this urge by not casting *any* magic at all: she can reduce the total penalty by –1 die for each 12 hours in which she does not cast magic. Each 12-hour period that passes without using magic at all negates *one* of those –1 penalties. If at any point the mage's Resolve + Composure dice pool is reduced by these penalties to zero dice (leaving a chance die), she is automatically put onto the Second Path: The Joining (see below).

Why?

Why would a mage bother grasping at the Abyss when the costs are so high? Well, why do humans try drugs or enter into sexual relationships that are risky from a disease standpoint? Why are sentient creatures self-destructive at all?

For one thing, a lie is probably involved. One Abyssal mage rarely tells the full story when trying to convince another to draw down the void into her magic. Also, once a mage manages to pull the Abyss into her spell, the initial feeling is a good one. It helps convince her to do it again. Finally, the human response is usually that "I can quit anytime," or worse, "I can beat the negative effects if I try hard enough." An overly confident mage can easily look past the costs and see only the bliss, however much a lie that may be.



Second Path: Joining

Most mages expect the Abyss to be truly empty, swallowing light and shadow equally into its vacant maw. Not so. The void is oddly reflective, offering vague mirrored impressions from both sides of the gulf, Fallen and Supernal. One of the things reflected here, like an image upon an oily puddle, are the Watchtowers. Each Watchtower has an Abyssal likeness, and a mage may pledge herself to the Abyssal image of her own tower.

This pledge is the first step on the second way toward the Abyss. A mage does not choose to initiate this step, not directly — it must be chosen for her. Some come to this juncture because they have become addicted to the little tastes of dark and empty magic. Becoming hopelessly compelled to bring the Abyss into one's magic eventually leads the mage to this point. The other way is for another mage — be he mentor or stranger — to open the door and lead her to the possibility.

The mage is given glimpses — sometimes in dreams, sometimes even in waking life — of her own Watchtower, though it inevitably looks *off*. Oily water may drip from crumbling abutments, the lightning flashing in the background may be blood red instead of electric white and all things may be cast in a grimy veneer. These glimpses are a preview, and are the last chance for a mage to turn easily away. If she denies it, she will never be given another glimpse of that Abyssal reflection — moreover, she may never again bring the Abyss into her magic. Those who are addicted and come to this feel no more addiction; the choice is made, and the possibilities of the Abyss are gone. A mage brought to this point by a mentor or friend also loses the possibilities, though she may face personal castigation by the sorcerer who brought her to this point.

If she accepts the vision instead of denying it, she essentially experiences another smaller mystery play similar to the one featured at her Awakening. The world shifts and distorts. She suffers hallucinations. This ends in an initiation at the Watchtower. While she is technically not re-Awakening, and this does not reconfigure her soul in any overt manner, it does ask her to write her name in whatever weird or grim reflection of the Watchtower that appeared to her in the previous glimpses. (Carving her name into a wall may make the wall bleed. Thorn-ridden vines may tangle around her ankles. The place may smell strange, like dizzyingly sweet flowers mixed with fresh vomit.) The place — which always feels empty — is almost like a funhouse reflection of her original Watchtower.

In her original initiation, the mage establishes her sympathy with the Supernal. In *this* initiation, she gives some of that sympathy — not all, for that would destroy her magic — to the Abyss. This is what some call "the Joining."

Denying the Abyss

Once the dark sympathy is established, the mage is given over to all the costs and rewards (listed below). Removing the Abyssal sympathy once a mage has joined with it is possible, though not painless. For one, spurning the Abyss is permanent. The mage can never go back, can never reconnect with oblivion. This act does not require any more time than a single second — but that moment in time can be very painful, painful enough to kill the mage. See, the Abyss is truly invasive. Its taint touches all of the hollows in a mage's mind, body and soul. This taint grows throughout like a root system — and to rip it out can be quite damaging.

Denying the Abyss means that, first, the mage suffers one point of aggravated damage. This damage is Resistant, meaning that it cannot be healed by magic, but must heal naturally. In addition, she rolls a number of dice equal to her Gnosis. Each success inflicts another Resistant aggravated wound. The more "enlightened" she is, the deeper the root system has grown and the harder it is to remove.

The second problem is a little more long-term. For a time, Paradoxes become more likely when the mage casts magic. Why this is, few understand. Some speculate it is because the Abyss remembers the mage and seeks revenge; others are sure that the void isn't sentient, but denying it outright is like a vaccine that gives a little bit of sickness in the hopes of creating a permanent cure. For the next month, any spells that would normally require a Paradox roll are made with a +1 die bonus. After that, the likelihood of Paradox returns to normal.

Reward

What follows are the benefits gained by pledging oneself to the Abyssal reflection of a mage's own Watchtower.

• **Paradox Alternatives:** The mage's sympathy with the Abyss gives her new choices when it comes to Paradoxes. If a Paradox roll is required, the mage has two options. She can first accept attenuation of the possibility, taking a –2 penalty on the Paradox roll, mitigating reality's repercussion. Alternately, she can choose have the normal Paradox roll made — and she can then take those successes and force them on another mage's casting roll. The successes therefore do *not* subtract from her own spellcasting, and instead are taken away from another's magic roll. However, she must force them on another within the following hour. Doing so requires no roll, only that she be in sensory presence of the caster at the time of the casting. If she cannot release those Paradox successes onto another during this time and the hour passes, she suffers an automatic backlash equal to one Resistant bashing point per success. This second choice may only be performed once per day.

• **Aggravated Damage:** As with the First Path, p. 182.

• **Sleeper Sympathy:** Sleepers are said to have Abyssal sympathies, and now so does the mage. Because of that, sympathetic spells cast upon a Sleeper target do not require the usual expenditure of a point of Mana.

Cost

The Joining is not without its cost. While some of that cost is paid upfront (the commitment is, as mentioned, difficult to break), the Joining features other repercussions as well:

• **Bad Nimbus:** The mage's nimbus takes on a permanently upsetting feature. Her face may appear as a hollow skull, she may seem surrounded by flitting insectile shadows or maybe the aura gives off a bad odor or discordant noises (this nimbus is likely chosen by the Storyteller). The nimbus is hard to control. Rolls to cloak it *and* uncloak it suffer a –2 penalty. Moreover, Sleepers can occasionally see the mage's nimbus due to the Abyssal connection. A Sleeper witness to spellcasting reflexively rolls Wits + Composure with a –3 dice penalty; success means he glimpses the nimbus for a brief moment.

• **Weak Mind:** The Abyss plays tricks on a mage's mind. The Abyss may give her nightmares. She may suffer waking visions that unsettle her. Voices may whisper to her from nowhere. Upon pledging herself to her Abyssal Watchtower, she gains an immediate derangement (see "Bedlam Derangements," pp. 269–271, **Mage: The Awakening**). This may be a mild mental illness, but if she already possesses a mild derangement, that is automatically upgraded to the severe version. She retains this derangement until such a time that she denies the Abyss, as described above.

Wisdom of the Void

Letting the Abyss color one's magic in any way is a sin against Wisdom. This hubris in its lowest form is likely to require a degeneration roll.

Merely touching the Abyss (as is shown in the First Path, the Befouling) is an act of hubris for mages with Wisdom of 3 or higher, while pledging oneself to either of the subsequent paths (the Joining or the Offering) is a degeneration challenge for mages with Wisdom of 2 or higher. Leading another toward the Abyssal ways is an act of blindness for mages with Wisdom of 4 or higher, as well.

The Third Path: Offering

Some mages take a path entirely separate from the other two. These mages — such as those of the Scelesti Legacy — do not accept that the Abyss is truly a void. These mages believe that entities dwell in that deep chasm (though such entities are certainly not easy to find). Few can agree on just what these beings really are, and in fact there seem to be various "things" out there in the darkness. Some commune with faceless overlords, others pray to gelatinous beasts formed of brittle bone, rotten meat and glistening chitin. A few even claim that there are *mages* out there in the vast gulf between worlds — though, the madness of such hollow ones is troubling to consider. (The weirdest yet has to be one mage who claims he found *himself* out there in the void — admittedly a distorted reflection of himself, but the identity of the being was undeniable.)

Rarely is it that a mage discovers one of these Abyssal entities by himself. The mage is more a target and a pawn than an intrepid explorer in such cases; a being, hungry for power in the Fallen World, comes to a mage with promises of power. Some mages are easier targets than others. For instance, those who have already been gazing into the Abyss or poisoning their own magic with the touch of the void (i.e., those on either the First or Second Path) make excellent pawns. An entity might approach with offerings of "true" power above and beyond what the mage has already seen. Alternately, many such spirits and beings cannot muster the power to personally visit those desired, and instead send other mage thralls to do their convincing.

Stepping onto this path does not provide the same benefits or costs as the other two. The prior paths — Befouling and Joining — establish sympathy with the Abyss. Some of that deep emptiness inside all Sleepers is now allowed to enter the mage. Those sorcerers come to understand the Abyss as either a living (but perhaps non-sentient) being or simply a *way* of being (a dark Tao or nihilistic dharma). Those on the Third Path establish no sympathy with the Abyss itself, and instead become tied to the creatures that live in that vast vacant space. The powers gained and costs paid are different for every entity followed.

The majority of mages on this Third Path forge their own souls into a unique Legacy or join a pre-existing Legacy. The Scelesti are only one of these groups (though, curiously, many of the Legacies are called Scelesti or Nefandi, i.e., the "Accursed" or "Unutterable"). When creating such a Legacy, no concrete rules exist, but the following guidelines may help.

Abyssal Legacies

Below are a few elements that might help a character or Storyteller design an appropriate Abyssal Legacy:

- The Abyssal entities do not (and perhaps cannot) approach mages with Wisdom of 7 or higher.
- Many Legacies are known as the Scelesti, but are not specifically the teaching mentioned in **Mage: The Ascension**. They may have entirely different Attainments and perform oblations unique to a specific entity. And yet, the common term remains as a point of either pride or scorn.
- Oblations may be overtly evil (harming children, sacrificing humans, torturing any living being), but many are quite subtle. A mage may be asked to spread hopelessness (convincing a homeless man that life is not worth living or helping an oppressed high school student commit a massacre). The mage may simply break hearts in such a dastardly way that he leaves a trail of emotional wreckage in his wake (perhaps collecting tears and sexual fluids along the way for odd rituals). Alternately, some Abyssal beings command a mage toward truly bizarre oblations that only make sense once completed (the mage may told to let loose a single honeybee that then goes onto sting a woman who dies from anaphylactic shock and whose family then spirals into a terrible depression).
- Attainments are usually geared toward corrupting, reducing, weakening. Rarely are they about destroying things outright: the Abyssal spirits seem more empowered by acts that let others destroy themselves. Attainments may help to foster addictions, exploit physical weaknesses, twist the resolve of existing spirits, spread disease or degrade matter.
- Those who end up joining such Legacies are not outright evil (at least, not to begin with). They may be psychologically damaged, or otherwise given strongly to their vices (sex, money, food, power, etc.). A few are so obsessed by their Virtue that their intentions can be perverted in the name of "doing what's right."

A Fourth Path?

Some speak of a singular way to gain an Abyssal connection: Awakening to an Abyssal Watchtower. No proof of this has been yet uncovered, but it is said that some mages do not find themselves drawn to the normal Supernal Watchtowers, but instead are pulled to the *reflection* of the appropriate Watchtower, giving that mage a permanent sympathy with the Abyss.

It is suspected that those that Awaken in this manner must've been monsters prior to that initiation: child molesters, rapists, mass murder-

ers. Any of those human predators given access to magic is a frightening possibility. Though, some whisper that even normal, non-monstrous humans run the risk of Awakening to the Abyss, chosen by the darkness to be its soldier. Surely that's just an urban legend, right?

Abyssal Magic

Casting magic that has been touched by the Abyss brings a few unique elements into play. The magic itself is changed, and those that look hard enough might be able to see how.

Resonance

If a mage chooses to use the Practice of Unveiling upon an Abyssal sorcerer, the mage may gain a glimpse into the taint that possesses both caster and casting. Scrutinizing a mage's nature might show a dark tinge or offer a dizzying glance at utter emptiness. Exposing a spell's composition is perhaps more revealing if successful: the spell appears for a moment to be dead and almost without magic. For only a second, the spell offers no smell, no sight, no clue at all as to what Arcana were used. In this utter and inexplicable emptiness is the clue of the Abyss (by its seeming absence, it can be identified by wise practitioners). That said, the Abyss is clever. It knows to hide itself beneath layers of aura. The scrutiny rolls suffer a –2 dice penalty when a practitioner seeks to examine anything touched by the Abyss. Also, many Abyssal-pledged mages foster the Occultation Merit, which further increases the penalty. (See "Unveiling Resonance," pp. 277–280, **Mage: The Awakening**).

Revelation Through Paradox

A mage can inadvertently reveal his Abyssal sympathy when a Paradox affects him with Havoc. This isn't too common, because generally that sympathy confers special protection against Paradoxes happening. Still, sometimes it falls that a Sleeper witness draws upon his own Abyssal sympathy and the mage is hammered with a Paradox. In cases in which Havoc occurs, the spell goes wrong in a way that is perhaps unusual to onlookers. Other mages may note that a lightning bolt may be tinged suddenly with a fierce shadow. A mage trying to fly may be struck down by a whorl of dark smoke. A reflection in a mirror meant to divine the future shows oily blood running down the glass. The Abyss comes through, filling the gaps and making its presence known to perceptive mage onlookers. Note that this is only likely to happen during instances of vulgar magic gone awry. If this happens in the Shadow (thankfully unlikely), negative spirits are drawn quickly to the caster.

Path Tools

Mages using Abyssal magic cannot use the normal Path or order tools to mitigate Paradoxes. Whether it's a one-time spell touched by the Abyss or regards all spells cast by a mage on the second path, it matters little. Any magic touched by the Abyss cannot be eased with the use of normal Path and order tools.

That's not to say, however, an Abyssal mage cannot have his own tool. The trick is, he can use his old tools *provided* he confers upon the object some kind of overtly negative association. A knife may draw blood from an innocent. A mirror may be cracked. A precious gem or crystal may be made flawed by a hammer and a small chisel. Somehow, the item must be sullied. Once that is done, the mage may rededicate a subverted tool with the appropriate Gnosis + Composure roll (see p. 90, **Mage: The Awakening**).

Storytelling the Abyss

Using the Abyss in a story, whether as a Storyteller or a player, is tricky. Forging a connection with the Abyss, however temporary or permanent, is a slide to the dark side and should be undertaken with caution. Such a connection threatens to unbalance the story if care is not taken. What follows are a few guidelines to help make this element of magic a successful part of your story.

Glimpsing the Void

The Abyss represents a powerful element. The Abyss is not only the very eye of emptiness, but it represents the opposite of what magic truly is. A seedling of this nothingness waits in every mortal and is what helps create Paradoxes in the first place. Giving a player's character the appropriate glimpse into that Abyss is a good way to instigate conflict as well as teach just what truly separates the Supernal from the Fallen. *Most* characters are likely to turn away from the glimpse without seeking that power, for it comes with mighty cost. Should they choose to continue down the path (whichever of the three is available), the player should be told the ramifications. If a Storyteller is uncomfortable with such a journey, it should not be made available.

Darkening of the Light

Here's the thing: the Abyss does not demand evil. The Abyss doesn't demand *anything*, really (though its entities surely do). Mages on the First or Second Path are not required to commit atrocity to taint their magic. They needn't harm children or animals to achieve the power granted by the Abyss. Aye, but there's the rub. Playing with the Abyss damages the mage's soul. Wisdom is

likely to drop. Madness is made manifest. The taint of the Abyss does not demand evil, but certainly opens the door for it. A story using the Abyss can fall on the safe side, if need be, but should never be allowed to exist without consequences. As a mage continues to commit acts of blindness and begins to suffer the depredations of insanity, the story must surely turn darker. The tale needn't be about genocide or serial killing, but the darkness will surely begin to affect the mage's life. He abuses mortals more easily with magic, he disdains help when needed, he acts erratically and brings danger down upon his cabal-mates' heads. Signs of Abyssal taint should be made more and more obvious as time goes on to keep the conflict and consequence omnipresent.

Redemption

A game involving Abyssal sympathy can just as easily become a game about redemption. If a mage comes to clearly see the path she walks upon, she may decide to turn an about-face and crawl back toward the light. While the systemic possibilities of doing so seem relatively straightforward, other consequences exist that must be considered when telling such a story. The mage may be able to leave the path of Abyssal casting, but she is likely left more hollow by the experience. Her Wisdom surely takes a hit, and she is left psychically scarred and manifesting one or several derangements. These things must be overcome if she is to *truly* step off that path. An entire story can be devoted to a mage's or cabal's slow crawl toward release and salvation. Consider, too, that other Abyssal mages do not appreciate it when some of their sheep stray from the fold. Not only is there an internal conflict with the mage and her own soul, but the conflict becomes external as others come looking to drag her back into darkness — or destroy her utterly.

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